



NEWS & NOTES

First Baptist Church of Long Prairie, MN
April, May, June 2019

PASTOR'S PAGE

Three weeks. First, we have the Silent Messengers coming back to share the “rest of the story” with us. That is going to be another unique opportunity to be reminded of Jesus, as our greatest gift ever. Then Tom and Barb Ward are going to be home to share about what God has been doing through them working with the Muslims in east London. The third week we have new missionaries coming to share about God’s call on their life before they head out to field in Ireland. Now two weeks of missionaries in a row is exciting to me. I love to hear about how God is moving around the world. That makes three special weeks in a row, following this last week’s service and baptisms and then leading up to Easter weekend... what a great time to be here!

Three weeks. Three whole weeks! It also means three weeks without preaching! Someone once observed that a pastor ought to get four weeks off a year. If he was good, he deserved the time to refocus, relax and refresh. If he isn’t very good in the pulpit, the congregation deserves the time to ...

Now contrary to the idea that preachers only work one hour a week, that does not mean I will get these weeks *off*. There are several people I need to catch up with. My office needs help (and we do have a dumpster outside... ☺). This allows time to plan for Good Friday and Easter. Plus, I have a couple of other projects I want to be working on. So, there is still plenty to do, but it does free 15 to 20 hours a week, which if not a vacation still feels like a fresh spring breeze.

It also means three weeks out of the pulpit though. And if I know me, by the end of the second week, I’ll be getting anxious. Three weeks is a long time to not be using your gifts for God! When God created you, He did so with the utmost care, carefully crafting you just exactly how He wants you to be. Then when someone accepts Jesus as their Savior, and the Holy Spirit moves into their life He gives them gifts to be used for His glory and the building up of His Kingdom. He has filled you with talents and gifts.

They need to be developed. Just because you have a God given gift doesn’t mean that it necessarily comes easy for you or that you were born good at it. Too many people look for something that is easy for them and expect that is where God is going to use them. In the generations that are coming up, the quickest and easiest rewards come from video games. But God’s calling in our life is not limited to what we can do with joystick! It may even take some work to discover what it is that God has created you to do for Him. But once you discover the satisfaction and joy of fulfilling what He wants you do, it is hard to walk away. You will want to be right back in the center of it as quickly as you can.

What are you doing for God this week? How are you using the gifts and talents that He has given you? (is that a long pause with crickets singing in the background?) When was the last time you put your gifts to work for God? Remember, we were called to be His servants... and to be His servants we need to be actively serving others. Sure, I am confident that you have earned a slight respite. Use it to recharge that battery so that you are ready to jump back in! There is so much work left to be done for the Kingdom!

God Bless, Pastor Matt S

Deacon's Corner

Living a Life of Purpose - April 2019

The sun is shining as I write this, and warmer weather continues to slowly work its way back to us here in central Minnesota. It is Sunday, March 17, and it will be one month tomorrow since a freak accident nearly took my brother's life. The accident caused a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and he had to be airlifted to Fargo where he spent 8 days "sleeping" in the ICU. For him to spend 8 days unconscious, only 18 days in the hospital, and then attend church today for the first time since the accident is pretty incredible.

As I reflect back on the past 4 weeks and how quickly things can change, I'm extremely grateful for the swift action taken by the 3 people who were with him on that day. God used them, along with the first responders and many doctors and nurses, as instruments to carry out His plan in my brother's life. While he still has a ways to go, I feel pretty confident that he'll eventually be his old self again (or close), and believe that his rapid recovery is nothing short of miraculous. Clearly God is not done with Rodd just yet.

My brother's ordeal got me thinking about how fragile life can be, how temporary our time here on earth is, and why we are really here in the first place.

Exodus 9:16 says: But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth (NKJV).

WOW does this verse resonate with me now more than ever. I believe that God is the creator and giver of all life and we are designed for His purpose, because He wants to show His power in you, He wants to show His power in me, and He wants to show His power in Rodd (and through this situation).

Proverbs 19:21 reads: Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails (NIV).

I chose the NKJV version of Exodus 9:16 and the NIV for Proverbs 19:21 because both used the word "purpose". God had a plan and a purpose in giving each of us life, we were all raised with a purpose, and He wants all of us to live our lives WITH purpose, and to do so specifically for His purpose.

My brother has a pretty incredible story to tell and I'm excited to see how God reveals His purpose through it (and how God will use it for His glory). Most of us won't receive a massive blow to the head or experience such a life-changing situation... BUT, this can be a reminder to all of us to live our lives with purpose, for His purpose, and for His glory.

For the deacons,
Kent Gustafson

Youth Page

Lately, the thought and idea of “transformation” has been on my mind. It seems to be happening everywhere I look. The change of season is an obvious transformation, and quite a welcomed one! This winter has been a very long one (at least it has felt that way...). It is such a blessing to enjoy fresh air and beautiful sunshine again.

There’s also transformation happening in the church building! The renovations taking place in the foyer, bathrooms, and offices are all very exciting.

But there is one form of transformation that has been even more present on my mind than these others. Romans 12:1-2 reads the following...

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” [**Emphasis** added]

A large theme throughout the New Testament is this idea of life transformation, said in many different ways. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” In response to Paul’s thought-provoking words, it makes me wonder... How different am I *really*? If someone were to compare me side-by-side with another person who was not a follower of Jesus Christ, could they see a difference? I’m afraid that often the answer might be “No”. Sure, I might be a little more morally conscientious, but is that all the Holy Spirit is capable of doing inside of me?

If we were all to walk with the Holy Spirit and really allow Jesus to transform us, I believe people couldn’t help but notice how different a people we are. A people that is **loving** unconditionally, **joyful** in all circumstances, filled with **peace** in the midst of life’s storms, **patient** even with the most difficult circumstances, **kind** to all, seeking the **good** of others over their own, **faithful** perhaps to a fault in some eyes, **gentle** in word and deed, and is in full **control** of their actions and thoughts. It is this kind of people that God uses to bring others into His loving embrace.

As we undergo a lot of physical transformation with the seasons and the church building, let’s also take a moment to check our hearts. Are we in-line with the Holy Spirit’s leading? Are we consistently approaching God with a willingness to change? Let’s allow transformation to begin in us as we then bring transformation into the world around us through the good news of Jesus!

In Christ,
Pastor Jonathan Finke

Family Ministries

Romans 12:1-2

"I urge you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

For me, part of the excitement of Spring is watching the Lord breathe new life into His creation. What a beautiful picture of his goodness in our lives. In each season of our lives, we are given the gift of being a living sacrifice. We are now alive from the dead as we enjoy new life in Christ's resurrection! I encourage you all to spend time as spring arrives to reflect on this past winter. How has God been working in your life? How has he been upholding you? As we seek the Lord, it is important to share our testimonies of how the Lord is working RIGHT NOW. These daily testimonies help open our eyes to where the Lord is moving. They also help open the eyes of the person with whom you are sharing the testimony. With that encouragement in mind, I would like to share with you one of the many ways I saw the Lord move this winter.

The Lord has continued to place his hand of blessing on our Quest 4K Family Nights. We have had more and more family members attending and joining in the fellowship. This February we hosted a particularly special event. We had such a blast at the first ever Quest 4K Derby! I have seen pictures of how full the church's gym used to be for the Awana Grand Prix and I know that many people were excited to see it starting the Derby again. It was so amazing to see the Lord breathe new life into this beloved event. Thank you God!



I hope that you have been encouraged by reading about one of the many ways God has been moving this year. I also hope that it has helped you think of some ways that you have seen God moving. I urge you, please, share your stories. Share with me, and with your other brothers and sisters in Christ. There is power in your words. Revelations 12:11 says that we will be conquerors by *"the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimonies."*



As we welcome spring, may we share boldly the ways the Lord is breathing new life into us.

Blessings,

Jackson Standafer

April, May, June

Birthdays & Anniversaries

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

04/17 Judy & Vern Matheson
04/17 Diane & Larry Brandes
04/21 Diane & Bill Hollenbeck
04/28 Jim & Lori Larson
04/28 Cheryl & Matt Junkin

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

04/01 Danielson Betty
04/06 Marissa Lentz
04/07 Hazel Warner
04/08 Ray Schneider
04/12 Cheryl Schneider
04/14 Roxanne Bergman
04/14 Elsie Puck
04/16 Don Peterson
04/23 Carol Peterson
04/26 Sara Hibbs
04/26 Dan Johnson
04/27 Sara Gustafson
04/28 Finley Gustafson
04/29 Jim Larson
04/29 Alice McMurray

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

05/02 Tracy & Jonathan Kemper
05/05 Roxanne & Scott Bergman
05/16 Lisa & David Wright
05/21 Dorie & Steve Twist
05/21 Erin & Jon Finke

MAY BIRTHDAYS

05/01 Karli Gustafson
05/04 Iris Galligan
05/04 Judy Matheson
05/06 Dave Petersen
05/10 Glen Park
05/13 Luke Gustafson
05/15 Elyse ffitch
05/27 Logan Kemper



Remember -
our fallen heros.
They are the reason
that we are free.

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

06/06 Vicki & Ross Munson
06/07 Gretchen & Ron Hibbs
06/08 Anne & Arnie Rocholl
06/13 Diane & Bob Gustafson
06/14 Jeanne & Byron Cook
06/17 Faith & Dave Petersen
06/23 Anna & Dennis Pastian
06/26 Cathy & Randy Swanson
06/26 Beth & Marcus Nelson
06/29 Iris & Jack Galligan

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

06/03 Bob Gustafson
06/05 Steve Brunswig
06/05 Tanya Hesse
06/12 Barb Copley
06/12 Jack Galligan
06/12 Luke Stacey
06/16 Connie Sonsalla
06/19 Jeanne Cook
06/21 Adelyn ffitch
06/24 Jim Fisher
06/25 Paul Stacey
06/27 Mike Brokke

Welcome
Spring

SUMMER
FUN!