



NEWS & NOTES

First Baptist Church of Long Prairie, MN
April, May, June 2020

PASTOR'S PAGE

Why is it?

Why is it that the things we know we are supposed to NOT do are so hard to avoid?
(*Anybody wanting to itch their eyes right now?*)

Why is it that the things we don't want to do are so easy?
(*I can resist anything but temptation... please pass the chocolate chip cookies!*)

And why is it that the things that we know we are supposed to do, and we may even really want to do... are so hard to keep doing?

There were two different stats that I heard in the last six months. I remember where I heard them and basically what they said, but can I find the source right now? NOOO! So sorry.

The first was at a Pastor's conference in MSP last fall. They were talking about personal Bible reading and pointed out that almost universally we agree that daily Bible reading was a positive thing. They then broke down the percentages within our churches that are actually actively reading their Bible daily. Less than 50%.

The second stat was shared with me by a local pastor friend. He was watching a video that was discussing the effect the Bible has on our lives. The interesting thing about that stat was that if we are in the Bible 1 or 2 times a week, it has very little effect on how we live. Even if we are in it three times a week (*remember when we were all in church Sunday Morning, Sunday Evening and Wednesday night?*) the over all change in our thinking, our beliefs and our actions was only mildly different than the world around us. It wasn't until we were in the Word 4 times a week that it began to have a major impact our lives.

Now, if we KNOW that we SHOULD be reading the Word.
And if we KNOW that we should be reading the Word REGULARLY...
Why is it that over 50% of us struggle to do it on a daily basis?

According to the first group's research, the number 1 reason that we do not read the Bible is that we do not know how. Okay, now I was raised in the American Public-School System. I know that we are not readers like the generations before us, but we DO know HOW to read. Sunday School is no longer necessary for the general public's literacy rates!

Depending on the translation that we are using, the Bible isn't really that hard of a read. Sure, the King James Version was written in Shakespearean English, and the New American Standard is written at a 12th Grade level, which is tougher than most of us choose for easy reading. But the NIV and NLT are written at a 4th grade level, the same as the Readers Digest, so the difficulty of the translation is no longer the issue.

The problem isn't knowing how to read or finding a readable translation. So then is the problem perhaps that we have lost sight of *WHY* we are reading it? If we have a good grasp of *WHY* we are reading it, it may become easier to find a way to read it; or better said, a way to read it more meaningfully.

In the adult Sunday School class, we have finished up the Truth Project. I am not sure when the virus is going to allow us to resume classes, but my goal for the rest of the year is going to be exploring as a group *WHY* we want to read the Bible, and then from their developing the skills and a plan to read it for all it is worth.

I hope you can join us. It may just be revolutionary in your life!

Until then, God Bless, *Matt S*

Deacon's Corner

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 (NIV)¹³ "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people,¹⁴ if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

These are uncertain times, I feel like we can pretty much always say that, but there are things being changed, at least temporarily right now, that very few of us have seen in our lifetimes. We hope and most certainly pray that the Coronavirus Pandemic doesn't end up being as wide spread and devastating as they predict, but it may be. Small pox I believe predates all of us, as does the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, although just by a little for the most experienced members of our congregation. Certainly there are those that can remember the wide spread attack of polio, which according to my research had a major outbreak during the summer months every year from 1916 on, with the peak in the 1940's and 1950's, before the vaccine was officially released in 1962. These diseases killed hundreds of thousands to millions of people. We live in a world that gets better at treating diseases all the time, but the threat of this disease is real. As much as we need to trust God more than ever in this situation, he does I believe, call us to use the powers of logic and reasoning he's given us to adjust to this threat. Larger gatherings, which include church services, are going to need to be limited and possibly not exist as we're used to for some period of time. The church staff, deacons and others are working towards making a live streaming service available on the internet soon, possibly by the time you read this.

We all need to take the opportunity to comfort and reassure our friends, family and neighbors throughout this situation. We will have opportunities to speak about our Lord and his having this under control with people we wouldn't be able to have these conversations with under other circumstances. This is something I learned very much first hand after my accident, hospitalization and recovery last year. No doubt many others in our congregation have had similar experiences with illnesses, accidents, tragedies, etc. Because of the new terminology added to our vocabulary "social distancing" your communications may not be sitting down for coffee, but via phone, text, email, cards, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Yada yada, Ding-a-ling, or whatever other social media platform I know nothing about. For some of us that will be a real change and very few of us actually like change. I'm generally more traditional myself than most people my age, so I get it. We have to be okay with that, stick to the truths in God's word and adapt them to the new normal. The Bible didn't say we all needed to be shepherds, wear robes, or suits and ties, live in tents, ride camels, or whatever. We're to love God, follow him and make disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Respectfully submitted for the Deacons, Rodd Gustafson

Youth Page

Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. – Philippians 1:18b-26

Many people fear death. It really just translates as the fear of the unknown. As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, it appears that mortality rates haven't changed. Everyone will still pass away some day. All that is different now is that more and more people are aware of death. That reality is why we are seeing panic and fear among our world and even ourselves.

This Bible passage from Philippians is easy in peacetimes. It is with great ease we can proclaim "TO DIE IS GAIN!" when death still seems far off... It becomes much more difficult when we are reminded that death can come from something as small as a microbe.

Church, do we believe it? Do we believe that in Christ "to die is gain"? **Because if we do, it means we are free to risk it.**

During the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, health workers were pleading for volunteers. Few ever stepped forward. In Philadelphia specifically, the head of emergency aid pleaded for help in taking care of sick children, and nobody stepped forward... for fear of the unknown. But we, Church, are free to risk it. There is no damage death can do to us.

This courage by no means should create in us a reckless attitude toward the virus; we should be listening to health experts and our governing officials. But it does mean that we need to be ready to step up to the call. If the hospitals need people, will we respond with willingness? If food became scarce, would we share from our own pantry? Or would fear cripple us once again?

It's time to snuff out the fear of this virus, for all it could do to us is bring us to the One who loves us the most. **And that is gain.**

*Wash your hands, cover your cough,
but most importantly love others.*

Go bless,
Pastor Jonathan Finke

Family Ministries

Every year I look forward to Spring. Don't get me wrong, I love winter, but about halfway through February I am totally ready for sunshine and green grass! This year is no different, I am ready for SPRING! But before I shift gears into the spring ministry season, I want to take some time to reflect on all of the great things God has done for our Family Ministries this winter. Here are some of the highlights!

This January, our children's ministry was able to attend a weekend retreat at Camp Lebanon. This Mega Fun retreat (3rd-6th graders) certainly lived up to its name. Our group of 13 (10 students and 3 leaders) got to enjoy the winter fun, and learn that we can live a life without fear because of our relationship with God!



In February we hosted our 2nd Annual Quest Grand Prix. The return of the grand prix has been a huge success over the past two years. The kids look forward to designing and racing their own cars, and it is an excellent opportunity for children and parents to work together. I want to give a sincere Thank You! to all of the volunteers who made this event possible. In addition to the Grand



Prix in February, our Children's Ministry has continued to make Family Nights a major priority. We partnered with the American Lutheran Church in town to put on a family skate event at our local hockey rink near the end of February. Please continue praying as we seek to maximize the impact of our family nights. We want to see entire families come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Our goal is to equip parents, so that they can do ministry in the most influential place - The Home!

Over the past couple of months, I have been preparing a sermon as a part of my Communication of Biblical Truth class through Moody Bible Institute. Through the process, God has been working on my heart with this probing question, Where are you placing your faith? James 1:5-6 says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind."* (ESV).

I invite you all to examine yourselves with me as we wrap up this winter season and enter into spring. When you encounter trials, when you lack wisdom, where are you putting your faith? What do you let motivate your actions? As children of God, He has promised us that he will provide for our every need. And when we encounter trials, God has promised that He will provide wisdom, growth, and even joy for us! All we need to do is ask in faith. So each of us must ask ourselves, am I putting my faith in the right place? The only sure and worthy place for our faith, is in our great God. So let us ensure we are placing our faith securely in Him.

Blessings, Jackson Standafer.

April, May, June

Birthdays & Anniversaries

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

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

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

04/01 Danielson Betty
 04/03 Mari Ludwig
 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
 04/18 Tim Ludwig
 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
 05/15 Elyse ffitch
 05/27 Logan Kemper



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

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

06/01 Linds & Andy Barnhart
 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
 06/11 Dennis Midthun
 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



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