



# *NEWS & NOTES*

First Baptist Church of Long Prairie, MN  
January, February, March 2023

## **Pastors Page**

Life has a way of surprising us sometimes. Everyone knows I am not a big reader. I don't even pretend to be. And the things I tend to read, are often not listed on an English teachers' "greatest literature top 100"! However, even a non-reader like me finds a few titles that are worth attention. So, when I hear that one of my older kids, who reads well hasn't read one of the classic Christian works, I am always surprised at the "gap in their education" which we seek to remedy very quickly!

I know that the interest level within our church in reading varies greatly. Some are more like Lori or my mom, loving a good book. Others have as much passion for reading as I do for shoveling snow. But friends, there are some books that are worth sitting down with. Here are a few of my favorites that may make great additions to your 2023 bucket list.

"Through Gates of Splendor" By Elisabeth Elliot. This is the book that got my mind thinking. At one of our friends' house this Christmas we were able to see an authentic spear which got my son Jack asking questions. The spear and this book have a common heritage and a message of the gospel spreading into all the world. It is a heartbreaker... in more than one way.

"Ethics" by Dietrich Bonhoffer. This is not a smooth sales pitch from a celebrated ethics professor sitting in an ivory tower away from reality. These are the notes of a man of God in prison for attempting to kill his national leader.

"Humility and how to get it" by Charles Spurgeon. One of my favorite topics covered by one of my favorite preachers. This is not an easy book to find, but if you are willing to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you, is a valuable look at something we American's do not do very well.

"On Wealth and Poverty" by John Chrysostom. While your copy may be brand new, the original text for this one is about 1,800 years old. While the text for this book is ancient, the content in it is still relevant and has helped me answer many tough questions about life.

How many authors can you recommend EVERYTHING they ever wrote? But I'll tell you what, if you find anything wrong with anything A.W. Tozer said, please let me know. A couple of his more famous titles include: "The Knowledge of the Holy", "The Pursuit of God", and "Experiencing the Presence of God". Do yourself a favor and put Tozer high on your list.

Another couple of classics that Christians should re-read every decade or so are "Witnessing without Fear" by Bill Bright and "The Master Plan of Evangelism" by Robert E. Coleman. Perhaps they do not say anything revolutionary, but they say what we know to be so in such a way that we want to make it so!

When people hear C.S. Lewis, their first thoughts often go to the children's lit. However, his thoughts in "Mere Christianity" and even "Letters to Malcom on Prayer" are thought provoking and will call you to a deeper faith.

Friends I know there is a ton of "newest and greatest" Christian literature out today. But may I encourage you to do yourself a favor and pick up some of these Christian classics? Your soul will be glad you did. God Bless, Pastor Matt S.

## Deacon's Corner

Wow! How is it Christmas already? (Beth would say to me, already? You've been hunting for three months...) Well possibly it's January already by the time you read this. Another year has come & gone. We've all gotten another year older and a few more of our older members have gone on to glory. To tell the truth my turn to do News & Notes for the Deacons really snuck up on me this time. We are all so "busy" with "fill in the blank", our family, our job, our favorite hobby, etc. Often we look forward to Holidays or special occasions & then blink, they're gone. Seldom was it as incredible as we had hoped for & then it's on to the next thing.

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

I think we all struggle with contentment, certainly some more than others. We need to be content in our jobs, with our families & in our personal lives in general, but often we're striving for more, more, more. One place we probably shouldn't be so content is in our spiritual lives & in what we can do to further the kingdom of God. If you're like me, this is the place we tend to be more content. Well I go to church most Sundays. I do my devotions almost every morning. I pray before meals & for my friends & family when they're sick or in a tough financial situation... These are all good things. I believe things Christ wants us to do. There's such a fine line between trying to work our way to Heaven, which the Bible tells us we cannot do & being willing to do what God wants us to do.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

I most certainly do not have that all figured out, I'm still learning. In many cases it feels like slower than most for me. I think, why get so angry that something didn't go just right? Did I forget that I'm not perfect & make mistakes all the time? Does God expect me to be perfect, or does he just want me to be willing to try to do what he asks? Does God care if the napkins are all folded the same & the fork is on the correct side of the plate or does, he just want someone to be willing to setup the table for a funeral? Does he care if I'm an eloquent speaker or does he just want someone to be willing to pray or teach Sunday School or talk to my neighbor about him? (No these aren't specific examples someone told me about, they're hypothetical.) Why can I remember some actor's name & a lot of the movies they've been in, but struggle so much to remember scripture references? Why can I remember I need minnows to go fishing, but can't remember to get the milk or bread my wife asked me to get?

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Clearly, I have many more questions than answers, but I know that God wants me to try to do my best. He wants me to care about people. He wants me to support other Christians who are trying to do the same, but still make mistakes or don't do something the way I wanted them to do it. We need to give each other grace. If someone is willing to do something that needs to be done, that I don't have time to do or am not willing to do, I shouldn't grumble about how they do it. Almost all of us do that at least occasionally. That's not Christ working, that's Satan. We need to love each other & show grace whenever possible.

Hebrews 12:8 Wherefore we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

I didn't remember any of these verses verbatim or by their reference. I had to look them all up. We CAN look them up, our concordances or even Google can help us find the scriptures we need to hear, if we just remember to think & look. These may not be the most applicable verses or the ones you'd have chosen, but I trust that God can get his message through in spite of our limitations.

For the Deacons, Rodd Gustafson.

# Student Ministry

Over the past few months, I have been reflecting on our family's time in Long Prairie. Somehow, this is already our fifth school year in the community, as I started here at the church in September of 2018. The five-year mark (coming September of 2023) has been one that I have looked forward to with great anticipation. I am so thankful to be a part of this community and this church body. I am sure I will do a longer reflection when that time comes.

In the Winter of 2018, when I had been on staff for about 3 months, I wrote my very first News and Notes. I wrote about Quest Kids (known at the time as Quest 4K) and our recently started Monthly Family Nights. The Family Nights have continued since that time, which prompted me to try and figure out how many Family Nights we have had since 2018. My best logic leads me to believe that last week, we held our Forty Seventh (47th) Family Night! The only time over the past four and a half years that we paused was during the onset of Covid 19. Aside from this brief break, Family Nights have been a consistent part of our Calendar, and a fruitful part of our Children's Ministry. This means that we can anticipate our 50th Quest Kids Family Night this March!

In addition to Quest Kids, we continue to minister to Children through Sunday School, Nursery, once a month Children's Church (Thank you to Nate and Emili Hibbs for leading this ministry area), and we are excited for our annual Mega Fun kids retreat to Camp Lebanon.

As I like to tell families on the last night of Quest Kids, ministry doesn't stop after 6th grade. Our Youth Group continues to pour into students in 7th through 12th grade. This semester, our Youth Group has spent time studying what the Bible says about LOVE, emphasizing an understanding of God's love for us and our response of love. Another highlight from the past month was our Fall Fire retreat, hosted by Camp Lebanon. This truly was an epic retreat as we learned all about the meaning and application of Mark 12:30,

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (NIV).*

The Lord provided great chapels and small group discussion, while also blessing us with some great fun, games, and very deep relationship building conversations. The fun games included an impromptu Football Tournament which was spearheaded by our Youth Group, brought in right around 100 students and leaders, and ended with our Youth as the Champions (an epic if I've ever heard one). However, It is those deep conversations that have stuck in my mind and heart as the most impactful ministry God provided on this retreat.

Our Youth Ministry is now looking forward to a deep dive study on the book of Hebrews as we start the New Year. Please be in prayer for our leaders and students as we seek to gain a deep understanding of the book of Hebrews, and its implication on our Faith and daily walk with God.

Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year,  
Pastor Jackson

# January, February March Birthdays & Anniversaries

## JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

01/07 Dave & Lynell Blanchard

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

01/01 Margaret Halverson  
01/02 Kitie Hollenbeck  
01/05 Dave Blanchard  
01/06 Ron Hibbs  
01/09 Gretchen Hibbs  
01/10 Lori Larson  
01/10 Lori Stacey  
01/12 Jessica Arenson  
01/17 Seth Hibbs  
01/18 Makenna Koltes  
01/20 Levi Hibbs  
01/25 Erin Blanchard  
01/25 Bernie Dolezal  
01/25 Sally Hanson  
01/27 Audrey Stevens  
01/28 Benjamin Larson  
01/28 Mary Beth Miller  
01/30 Jackson Standafer

## FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

02/01 Ted Stacey  
02/02 Zackary Larson  
02/02 Dorothy Park  
02/04 Ray Miller  
02/09 Megan Lentz  
02/09 Faith Petersen  
02/10 Lisa Wright  
02/10 Abby Barnhart  
02/11 Sofia Kemper  
02/18 Sierra Larson  
02/20 Tracy Kemper  
02/21 Josie Stacey  
02/21 Rosie Stacey  
02/23 Snookie Noble  
02/28 Jonathan Kemper

## MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

03/02 Steve & Mary Beth Miller

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

03/01 Alaina Wright  
03/05 Leland Sheneberger  
03/07 Raelyn Miller  
03/11 Jennifer Meagher  
03/12 Dan Stacey  
03/15 Alison Wright  
03/16 Nathan Hibbs  
03/19 Heidi Puck  
03/22 Darla Peterson  
03/25 Carol Moulton

