

THE WINDOW

On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world.

July 2025

Kindness Across Borders

By Michaella Dunn

"Como Jesus no hay otro amigo, ni uno hay, ni uno hay!"

Choruses of "There Is No Friend Like Jesus" sung in Spanish filled the sanctuary on Friday June 20th as West Hills families and members of our upcoming mission trip to For His Children in Ecuador joined together to create a special video to send to the orphanage. As one part of our summer Rewind Be Kind celebration, we enjoyed performing one of the VBS songs the kids at For His Children will sing with our mission team. The video will be used to help teach the VBS song to the children as well as to show the kids and staff the faces of those people who are praying for them back in Omaha, Nebraska.

This Rewind Be Kind evening offered many chances to think about ways to show kindness across borders. In addition to singing for the video, the evening included time to learn about our ministry partner, For His Children, and ways our congregation can show kindness to those involved in that ministry. It also included a chance to learn about the country of Ecuador at the Ecuador museum. Created by Kathy Padilla, the museum allowed us to become more familiar with the people, land, climate, and food in Ecuador. Kids and their families got to try on Ecuadorian clothes, play Ecuadorian games, eat plantain chips, and pretend they were straddling the equator at the Mitad del Mundo Monument.

We finished our time together by creating VBS craft packs for our mission team to use at For His Children and writing notes to the staff thanking them for the care they provide for the children. It all fits together with our Rewind Be Kind theme verse:

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

We learned this verse at our first session of Rewind Be Kind on June 6th. During our first session, we focused on showing kindness to our families through learning Ephesians 4:32, playing kindness games, and singing some new songs. After practicing kindness in our families, we were ready for our second session of Rewind Be Kind where we learned to extend kindness to the world around us. At West Hills, this is the summer of learning to stop, rewind, and choose kindness.

Caregiving as a Spiritual Practice

By Juliana Scheopner: Deacon for Congregational Care

As I was thinking about this article and reflecting on the things I learned in Stephen Ministry training, I wanted to take some time to write about experiences of grief. At some point (usually many points), grief touches every life. And yet, there is a lot of cultural discomfort around the ideas of death and grief. We use euphemisms or avoid the topic entirely, so afraid of saying the wrong thing that we choose to say nothing at all. Recently, I read “A Spirituality of Caregiving”, a collection of Henri Nouwen’s reflections about the beauty and difficulty of caregiving as a spiritual practice. In his writings, Nouwen frequently returns to the complexity and nuance of caregiving, acknowledging that there are both joy and challenges in giving care, and also in receiving it. However, he also reiterates the significance and privilege of walking with each other through every aspect of life. At West Hills, we are committed to being on a journey with the Living Christ. We recognize that this isn’t done in isolation: in every community that we are part of, we can carry the hope and presence of God.

With this in mind, how can we work through our discomfort in order to more effectively care for people who are grieving?

- Show up. It’s okay if you don’t know what to say. Just being there is important. God will work through your presence and through tangible care that you provide.
- Practice active listening. Don’t try to steer the conversation or fill every silence. Be present, listen, and be comfortable with silence.
- Follow the grieving person’s lead. Some days, they may want to talk about their grief; other times, they may want distraction. Follow their lead to know how to best provide care.
- Avoid platitudes. A general rule of thumb is that you shouldn’t begin a sentence with “At least...” Clichés and platitudes are often well-intentioned, but can end up coming across as dismissive of the person’s valid feelings of grief and pain. Instead, express your sorrow, validate their experience, share memories, ask questions, and just be present.
- Avoid putting pressure. Don’t expect a grieving person to act a certain way. Some people may cry, some people may not, some people might want to organize everything — each grieving experience is unique and there is no “right way” to express grief. Just be there without expectations.
- Say their name. Don’t be afraid to mention the person who died. Saying their name is a way of showing the grieving person that other people also remember and miss their loved one.
- Keep showing up. I know I said this one already. Grief doesn’t have a timeline. It’s important to continue your support for weeks, months, and years. Keep checking in, especially if you know of holidays, events, or seasonal traditions that may be especially difficult for the grieving person.

Grief is a natural, normal, and necessary part of the human experience — and while we can’t take away someone’s pain, we can offer something important: our presence. Henri Nouwen says that “to care is the most human of all human gestures.” When we follow the example of our God who stepped into a human body with all the messiness, sorrow, and joy of human life, our care is centered in the belief and practice of radical, incarnational presence.

Living Your Best (Small Group) Life

Have you ever been part of a church small group? Depending on which church or what era you were part of a small group, it might have been called a covenant group, a connection group, a church circle, a life group, a city group, a discipleship group, etc. Each of these names tells something important about the intent of the group, but the central idea is people in the church growing in faith together. Small group ministry is sometimes called “the church in miniature.”

West Hills has a long and rich history of small group ministry. Two former West Hills pastors have published books about small group ministry, with many of the practices they wrote about being implemented and perhaps formed or refined during their work with

I've never been in a small group.

What should I expect?

All small groups vary a little, but here are some ideas:

- Small groups often range from 8-12 people, though some can be a little smaller or a little bigger.
- You'll meet at a time and location that works for your whole group, usually in a home, at church, or rotating between homes of the group members.
- Many small groups meet twice a month, but frequency is decided by the group. Some meet weekly, and a few meet once a month.
- The time together usually includes time to check in with each other about life, time to study a topic that helps you grow in faith, and time to pray together.
- Some groups include a time of musical worship, share refreshments, and/or schedule service or social opportunities from time to time, but none of these are essential to small group living (unless your group decides they are essential for you!)
- Above all, you can expect that as you invest in each others' lives, you will grow in your faith and build deep spiritual friendships.

small group ministry right in this congregation. For a number of years, people wanting to join West Hills participated in an eight-week long practice small group experiment in which they tried out small group life as part of the new member class. Small group ministry is at the heart of West Hills' relational way of fulfilling God's mission in the world.

When we talk about small group ministry, what exactly are we talking about? Some churches have rigidly defined small groups with set leaders, scripted questions, and prescribed group membership parameters. Some churches have age and life stage or interest-based small groups. Some churches have open small groups where people rotate in and out every few months.

At West Hills, there is flexibility to allow small groups to take the shape of the spiritual growth needs of the members. Small groups at West Hills can be intentionally short, lasting for less than a year or they may be long-lasting as they adapt and change in membership or structure over several decades. West Hills' small groups can be led by a designated leader or they may choose shared, rotating leadership. Some groups pursue discussion about a current event, mission partner, or topic of interest explored in light of faith. Other groups focus on questions that arise from the sermon, a book, or a Bible study.

No matter what form the small groups

Living Your Best (Small Group) Life, continued

take, they have some things in common:

- A desire to grow in faith together
- Regular, intentional gatherings
- Genuine care and concern for one another, expressed in many ways

Jesus's disciples give us a model for small group life. They spent time together, ate, talked, and shared experiences, asking Jesus to help them understand and live according to his teaching. They didn't get it all right, but they did grow in faith together. We can do the same with our fellow Christ-followers. As Jesus's disciples, we, too, are invited to grow in our understanding and practices of faith alongside one another. We can challenge, encourage, support, pray, and care for each other in small groups.

- If you've never been part of a small group, what about this idea interests you? What about it challenges you? Would you be interested in trying it out?
- If you have been part of a small group ministry in the past but aren't currently in a small group, what did you appreciate about it? What were the hard parts? Would you prayerfully consider being part of a small group again?
- If you are part of a small group now, what do you enjoy most about your small group? Have you recently reset expectations or is it time to check in about how it's going? Is your group interested in adding new members?

Check out these observations from people whose small group experiences have helped shape their faith journey:

- *My small group has been a supportive community during a time of grief and loss.*
- *Our small group is valuable not only for me and my spouse, but also for our children. It's a spiritual community where they have other adults to look up to who are walking with Jesus*
- *We study in the Word or a guided study, and we hold each other accountable for putting these lessons to use in our daily lives.*
- *My small group has become a group of friends I can share things with.*
- *It's a support system to share the ups and downs of life with one another.*
- *A small group provides Christian fellowship. There is a deep relationship formed over time with people we come to know well.*
- *I love this chance to hear different people's perspectives on scripture and how it can be understood and applied.*
- *We pray together and for one another when we're apart.*
- *We share the challenges of life.*
- *It's a group of friends in the church that have become like extended family*
- *I learn so much by watching other people's lives; my small group helps me to become a better follower of Jesus and a better parent as I see how other people are living out their faith.*
- *We have fun. We can be very serious. I love family get-togethers, and small group time is a family get-together.*

As fall ministry resumes in September, you'll see sign up tables in Geneva Lounge, where brand new small groups will be forming! We hope you'll pray about growing in faith in community this year as part of small group ministry - for the first time, or for the first time in a while!

In the meantime, if you have questions or thoughts about small group ministry, please connect with Connie Huck or Jessica Scheopner at jessica@whcomaha.org.

Session Notes

- Session discussed chapters 5 and 6 from Richard Foster's, "Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home."
- Session discussed member concerns about the church website. The church staff have worked with an outside consultant to begin consideration of larger changes to the website. Content updates can still be made in the meantime.
- Session approved a member's request to hold a wedding ceremony at WHC on July 4th.
- Session discussed several ways to improve communication. Staff and congregation members will address these in the coming weeks.
- Session discussed the creation of a team to record short video testimonies about ways individuals from our congregation experience faith in everyday life. These stories will benefit faith formation and could be used in worship and other ways. Stories about "going and growing" could move WHC further into Casting Nets of Hope.
- Session does not plan to meet in July but will resume monthly meetings on the third Tuesday in August.

Book Suggestions

By Debbie Chadwick

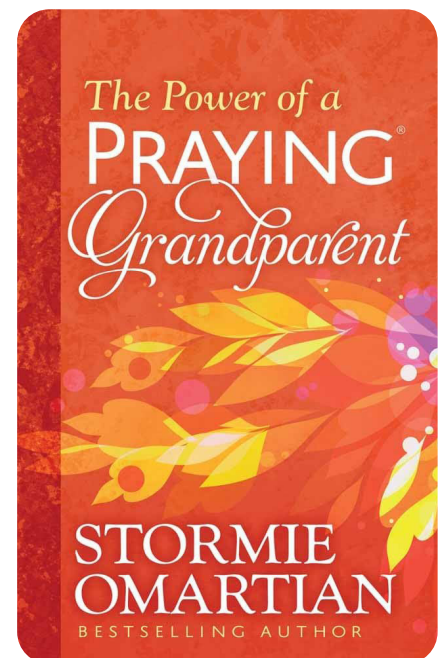
It has been said that becoming a grandparent is one of God's greatest gifts. The book "The Power of a Praying Grandparent" by Stormie Omartian is similar in format to her other books:

The Power of the:

1. Praying Wife
2. Praying Woman
3. Praying Parent
4. Praying Husband

According to one book review, this new book, "contains great examples of how to specifically pray for God's guidance for [grandchildren] throughout each day and each facet of life".

In May 2002, according to Goodreads, Omartian's book, "The Power of a Praying Wife" broke a 21 year industry record by claiming the top spot on the Christian Sellers bestsellers list for 27 consecutive months. The author, and her husband Michael, have been married for 40 years and have two married children. They are now grandparents.



Bible Quiz by Gloria Zinn

1. Who were the last two judges over Israel? A) Samson B) Eli C) Gideon D) Samuel

2. Which judge destroyed thousands of Philistines at Gaza? A) Jair B) Samson C) Gideon

3. Who killed 69 of his half brothers, made himself King over Israel, and eventually was severely wounded by a woman? A) Zebul B) Jotham C) Abimelech D) Adonijah

4. When Solomon became king what did he ask God to give him?
A) riches and honor B) a discerning heart
C) safety from his enemies
D) a long and prosperous life

5. Who wrote: "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain?"
A) David B) Solomon C) Samuel
D) Nathan

6. What was Jeroboam's sin that led to the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel?
A) appointing priests from tribes other than Levi B) establishing golden calves for the people to worship C) changed the dates of the annual festivals D) shifting the center of worship away from Jerusalem and the temple

7. Which one of God's prophets was cared for by ravens and a widow? A) Jeremiah B) Malachi C) Elijah D) Elisha

8. Which king of Israel made an Asherah pole (sacred pole used in pagan worship) which provoked God to anger more than any other king before him? A) Omri B) Baasha C) Ahab D) Elah

9. Who hid 100 prophets from Jezebel during the time she was killing God's prophets? A) Obadiah B) Elijah C) Jehu D) Ahaziah

10. Which king of the northern tribe (Israel) was instrumental in destroying the idols and ministers of Baal worship? A) Ahaziah B) Jehu C) Menahem D) Jehoash

11. Who refused to sell his vineyard to King Ahab and was executed?
A) Baasha B) Ahijah C) Jehu
D) Naboth

12. Which one of these 2 prophets were more focused on individual and community needs, performing miracles to ease suffering? Elisha or Elijah

July At A Glance

Sundays:

- Worship at 10 am is livestreamed and in-person. Following worship, join us for fellowship in Geneva Lounge. For those not attending in-person, we welcome you to watch the service by livestream at: whcomaha.org/live
- During worship, families with children may choose for their children to attend Bible Time! — a special sermon-time Bible lesson for preschool and elementary-aged children following the Family Ministry Moment, with children rejoining their families after the sermon.
- Young Adult Group meets off-site at 4:00 pm. Contact the Church for more information at 402-391-8788. They generally discuss whatever is on their minds, but also use topics from “*Can I Ask That?*” by Jim Candy.

Mondays:

- Cones & Conversations: Rising 6th - 12th graders - From now - August 4 (excluding July 14), each Monday from 2:00 - 4:00 pm taste and rank local ice cream spots and laugh about the stories of a legend who has ties to West Hills - a man who knows how to put the love of God into action and tell a great story. We'll talk about “Love Does” - Bob Goff's classic first book of how life's crazy adventures help point to God's amazing love. [Click here to sign up!](#)

Tuesdays:

- Men's Bible study meets at 7:00 am in Room #275. They study the upcoming Sunday Sermon.

July 27 - TreeRush Adventure 2025! WHC Youth (6th - 12th graders), join us for a fun afternoon tackling ziplines, rope walking, and climbing in the tree tops! This team building event will begin after worship on Sunday, July 27 where we'll meet in the lower level Youth Lounge for a quick lunch, then caravan to Fontenelle Forest, and return to WHC west parking lot at 4:30 pm. Cost is \$30 per climber.

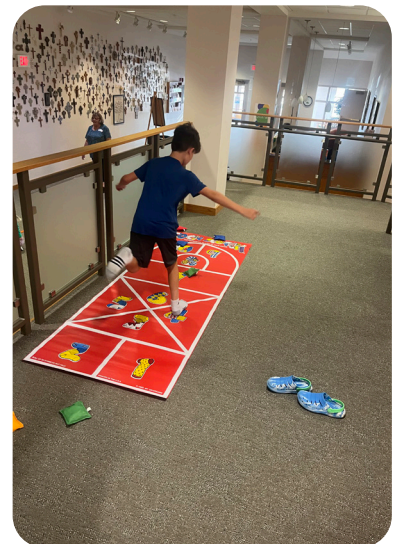
[Click here to sign up!](#)

July 28 - 31: Summer Good News Club! Join West Hills Church and Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) for a four day Bible club where children will play exciting games, read Bible stories, learn memory verses, and enjoy snacks and prizes! Invite your friends to these fun-filled days! [Click here to register today!](#)

July 31 - Take Me Out to the Ballgame! Men's Ministry invites EVERYONE to an evening at Werner Park (12356 Ballpark Way, Papillion, NE 68046) for the Storm Chasers baseball game on Thursday, July 31, from 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Cost: \$14 per adult, \$5 per student. [Click here to reserve your seats today!](#)

Memories

Rewind. Be Kind. Part 1 Summer Family Fun



Summer Kick-off



Rewind. Be Kind. Part 2 Families on a Mission



Rewind. Be Kind. Part 2 Families on a Mission, continued



Youth Group Escape Room 2025



One Session Book Club



June 2025 Silent Retreat



West Hills Church Monthly Revenue Report

Fiscal Year January 2025 - December 2025

The culture of generosity and mercy continues to allow our Church to fulfill it's Mission: what an amazing gift!

With gratitude & hope, we say - THANK YOU!

June 2025							
Weekly Revenue	6/1/2025	6/8/2025	6/15/2025	6/22/2025	6/29/25	Month End	Year to Date
Giving	\$5,532.00	\$4,000.00	\$18,080.00	\$13,210.00	\$6,319.00		
Building Use				\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
Ministry Specific	\$38.00	\$175.00	\$839.00	\$60.00	\$314.00		
Grant							
Actual Weekly Revenue Total:	\$5,570.00	\$4,175.00	\$18,919.00	\$14,270.00	\$7,633.00	\$44,997.00	\$326,628.04
Budgeted Revenue	\$15,384.50	\$15,384.50	\$15,384.50	\$15,384.50	\$61,538.00		\$331,221.00
Overage/Shortfall							
Other Collections							
Capital Campaign Gifts	\$870.00	\$160.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,692.00	\$560.00	\$5,282.00	
Emergency Fund Gifts				\$300.00			
Gathering Info						Average Attendance	
In Person Attendance	105	153	113	109	120	120	
Online Attendance	30	38	24	36	35	33	



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

BIBLE QUIZ ANSWERS: 1) B & D 2) B 3) C 4) B 5) B 6) ALL 7) C 8) C 9) A 10) B 11) D 12) Elisha



Happy Birthday!



July

2 - Bud Nelson
Noreen Johnson
3 - Alisha Sauer
Alison Kopperud
Caitlin O'Hare
7 - Greg Schuchmann
Rina Degand
Tim Weller
8 - Emelia Weaver
9 - Alex Jansen
11 - Jenn Julich
14 - Karen Jarvis
Andy Hamer

17 - Julie Wollen
18 - Joseph Morgensen
Everly Petersen
19 - Cosmo Deakins
Katie O'Reilly
20 - Terry Gadwood
21 - Rachel Overby
Heather Hipp
Caroline Hamer
23 - Janet Laughlin
Michaela Dunn
27 - Joe Saunders-Robb
Paul Springsted

28 - Brian Nodes
Sarah Weller
29 - Sunny Gill
30 - Jeanette Capps
Paul Anderson
Jonathan Scheopner
Avry Hixenbaug

August

1 - Patti Brownlee
2 - Hal Capps
3 - Wesley Peterson
4 - Sandy Jernigan

9 - Theresa Hamer
10 - Ken Blatny
Bennett Roberts
11 - Heidi Cruz
12 - Kelley Deases
Luke Burns
13 - Fred Morgensen
14 - Abby Olson
15 - Grace O'Reilly

*The complete list of
August birthdays will be
in the August newsletter.*