

THE WINDOW

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

May 2023

Where Everybody Knows Your Name

by Rick Mason, Elder for Spiritual Formation and Discipleship



I assume many of you remember watching the classic sitcom in the 80's - Cheers "Where Everybody Knows Your Name". Don't we all want to be a part of something where life seems so carefree and friends willing to listen to you

when you need a pick-me-up? Do you experience that in life - at work, at your favorite getaway place or perhaps even at church?

This past year, we have made concerted efforts to rebuild relationships that were perhaps lost or damaged during the pandemic. I think we have come a long way to build back that trust, hosting events like Wednesday night "Community Nights", "Table Talk", "Men's Retreat" and "Women's Silent Retreat" not to mention a multitude of class offerings yielding the chance to grow together in Christ. Do you feel like you are a part of something at this point? I know I have reconnected with some friends and have built new relationships that help me stay connected. And that I am thankful for.

Beyond connections though, the Bible tells us that we are accountable to one another, to support, serve and love the way Jesus did with his disciples. How do we make sure we are accountable? First off, join in one of a host of Bible study offerings throughout the week. Jump into a class on Sunday mornings for an opportunity to connect, learn and discern what a relationship with God looks like. Can't make a class? Maybe a small group is more your style. Let us know you're interested in being part of a small group by emailing jessica@whcomaha.org.

Why is all this important? Jesus has instructed us, His people, to share the Glory of His Gospel not only with those within the walls of West Hills Church, but with those outside who have not had the privilege of knowing the Good News.

Sometimes I believe we take this for granted, but God has indeed given us the task of sharing and that can only be done by doing.

Romans 1:16 - 16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.*

John 12:48 - 48 *There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.*

These are not just ancient words that have no meaning today. As we know, the Bible is the Living Word. We believe it has as much relevance to life as the air we breathe or the water we thirst for. Jesus is the Word and Jesus is the Life-Giving Water. As Jesus shared with his disciples, let us abide together to share with others. Be active, be in the Word daily and let's live life together that we may share the Joy of Christ with those outside the walls of West Hills Church.

Grace is free and all we need for salvation, but leaving it there seems selfish. Devotion is proof that love comes at a cost, which is often our time and sometimes our resources.

Rather than sharing a beer at Cheers, let's welcome others by sharing time together and show the love of Christ is ready to be shared with them as well. Join a class, join a small group, join an event - as the saying goes - "we are better together" and there's nothing we can't accomplish with Christ in control.



Church of the Year!

West Hills received "Church of the Year" from Heartland Hope Mission.



West Hills friends, this award is because of you! If you helped with, or donated to, the Clothing Closet, or you brought food/hygiene items for a drive, or you worked at the pantry, your generous time and resources have helped many people in the Omaha area. Thanks to Peg Shirley for being our mission team lead and organizing us so that we can fill the need where it is felt the most. What an honor and privilege to partner with Heartland Hope on their mission of helping clients rise above poverty and economic crisis.

Love Your Neighbor Boxes

by Jonathan Scheopner,

Mission Team Member



This Lenten season, West Hills Church partnered with Abide to fill and distribute Love Your Neighbor Boxes. Containing pantry items and other necessities, West Hills managed to pack 38 LYN boxes! We

distributed these during Abide's Second Saturday Serve on April 8th. In partnership with Abide and other churches from across the Metro, we served 1,394 members of the North Omaha community! We'll have the amazing opportunity to fill **even more boxes in the month of July**. Thank you, WHC!



Looking Ahead in Women's Ministry!

by Patti Brownlee

All Christian sisters high school or older are encouraged to come to a **"Sharing Session"** on **Tuesday, May 23, at 6:30 p.m.**, in Geneva Lounge to talk about possible classes, service projects, and programs for the Women's Ministry at West Hills Church for this summer and into the fall. As women who love Jesus, it will be exciting to discover together what amazing plans God has in store for us! We hope you will put this date on your calendar and come share your input and show your support.

Spiritual Correspondence by Jana Prescott



James 4:7a : Submit yourselves, then, to God.

Last month, I talked about prayer, which is the most important way for all of us to talk with God. But there are still other very important ways for everyone to bring Christ into our lives. Things like reading a daily devotional or other Christian books; talking with people you know; being friendly with a neighbor; just showing love to anyone you meet. I'm sure there are endless ways for each one of us to echo Christ by showing how He's loving each of us.



May At A Glance

At West Hills our mission statement . . . On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world, provides us with the framework for how we live our lives. Here are notable activities this month in the life of our church, seeking to connect us to God, others, and the world.

Sundays:

- Crosswalk Kids and Youth wrap up a great school year Sunday, May 21.
- Spiritual Formation & Discipleship will offer a new class beginning June 4 at 9 a.m. in the Chapel on "Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance.
- Worship at 10 a.m. 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.

Tuesday Mornings - Men's Bible study meets at 7:00 a.m. in the large conference room #182 in-person. The group studies the scripture passage for the upcoming Sunday sermon.

Wednesday Mornings, beginning May 31, Women's Bible study will meet at 9:30 a.m. in the Chapel. This group will be studying "The Beatitudes" by Matt Chandler.

Wednesday Evenings - Men's Bible study at 7 p.m. in the large conference room #182.

Thursday Mornings - Men and women are invited to a Bible study at 9:30 a.m. in the Chapel on the Life of the Apostle Paul until May 25. They will regroup in September with a new study.

May 16 - Session meets at 6 p.m. in the Chapel.

May 18 - Sloppy Joe Ministry Drop Off at the church. Come between 10-4 to the north circle drive and drop your cooked sloppy joe seasoned meat and hamburger buns in the bins. Make as much as you'd like. The food will be taken to the Stephen Center to be enjoyed by many!

May 21 - HymnSing! at 9:45 a.m. in the Sanctuary.

- Youth Commitment Sunday

- Capital Campaign Town Hall Meeting in Fellowship Hall. A light lunch will be served.

May 28 - Memorial Sunday - During worship, we will acknowledge loved ones that we've lost in the past year.

Join us for lunch and the Capital Campaign Town Hall Meeting on Sunday, May 21, following worship in Fellowship Hall. The purpose of this meeting is to get your input regarding what building maintenance and projects are most urgent for us to address. Denis Greene from Church Development in Kansas City will join us to be our meeting facilitator. **We would welcome your input.** Hope you can attend!

Stephen Ministry is Alive and Well at West Hills

by Laura Meyers, Deacon of Stephen Ministry

I hope you have heard of Stephen Ministry long before reading this article, but in case you have not, Stephen Ministers are lay congregation members trained to provide one-to-one care to those experiencing a difficult time in life such as grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or relocation. Stephen Ministers come from all walks of life, but they all share a passion for bringing Christ's love and care to people during a time of need. We offer Stephen Ministry services to anyone, regardless of whether they are member of the church or not, free of charge. If you or someone you know is struggling with a challenge in life right now, you do not have to walk through it alone. We have Stephen Ministers available to listen and walk that journey with you.

West Hills Church has proudly offered Stephen Ministry for over 40 years and would like to continue to offer this vital service for years to come. Please help us get the word out regarding this invaluable service our church has to offer. We are also in need of more Stephen Ministers – especially men. Our current plan is to offer a training class this fall. Stephen Ministers receive a total of 50 hours of care ministry training. By the end of training Stephen Ministers are well equipped with the principles and skill that equip them to provide high-quality, Christ-centered, emotional and spiritual care to others. Please let us know if you feel you may be called to this ministry.

Stephen Ministry truly is alive and well at West Hills Church. If you are wondering if a Stephen Minister could be beneficial for you or a loved one, or if you have any questions regarding Stephen Ministry, please contact Andy or one of the Stephen Ministry deacons by sending an email to info@whcomaha.org.

April Session Notes

Session approved:

- The Session approved the use of the consulting firm Church Development (CD) to aid with the Capital Campaign.
- The Session is reading and discussing "Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership" by Ruth Haley Barton.
- Kathy Padilla is training to be a Commissioned Pastor, more commonly referred to as Lay Pastor. Kathy will be finishing up her training soon but is currently available to provide Pastoral Care support for 10 hours a week at West Hills.
- Session discussed ideas for how to reconnect with members who are less engaged.
- An open house will be held for Atonement Child Care at a date to be determined.

FOOTNOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

NEW ARRIVALS!

Thanks to a generous donation, the Soul Café has received a complete set of books from Guideposts publishers. It is a series called "Sugar creek Amish Mysteries." They are Christian fiction books set in the real location of Sugar creek, Ohio. Ask Bob and Jan Drake about the location. They have visited Sugar creek and eaten at the Honey Bee Diner which is a place where some of the action takes place. So, if you are interested in Christian cozy mysteries, stop by the Soul Café and . . .

CHECK IT OUT!



Congregational Care

by Kathy Padilla



Last month in the article Andy wrote for the newsletter, he shared how God's been at work (isn't He always at work?) in our congregation growing and equipping members and staff to serve in different ministries.

I wanted to share with you a little bit more about my journey and the training I've received to serve as a Lay Pastor.

I first became aware of this role while serving on our most recent pastor nominating committee, which ended with our congregation extending a call to Andy to be our minister of Word and Sacrament, or teaching elder. I learned that our denomination is facing a shortage of teaching elders and that only about half of the churches in our Synod, which is comprised of Presbyteries in parts of Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Wisconsin, have an installed minister of Word and Sacrament. Many small congregations are served by commissioned ruling elders. Because the need is so great, our Synod, The Synod of Lakes and Prairies, created a program to train ruling elders so that they can be commissioned to serve particular congregations. This program is called The Academy.

The Academy consists of eleven classes that are taken over a two-year period. The classes are things like Old Testament, New Testament, Mission Formation, Presbyterian Polity, Preaching, Worship and the Sacraments, Spiritual Formation, Pastoral Care and Leadership. I started taking these classes in the summer of 2021. I have two classes left: Ministry Formation and Old Testament. I add this training to the MA I earned in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University in 2004.

In addition to taking these classes over the past two years, I have also taken a series of personality tests (turns out I have one!) and have been under the care of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) for our Presbytery. My hope is that I will be commissioned in the fall.

In the meantime, I would love to work alongside Andy and our amazing deacons to do some pastoral calling to people who aren't able to easily be present in person in worship on Sundays, or who are in the hospital. Because I still teach full time at Creighton, I will be available for about ten hours a week during the school year, and then will have more availability during the summer months.

As I have been on this journey, praying and discerning how God might use this training, I have felt very blessed to be able to take these classes. I have met other people who, like me, did not go to seminary, but who have a love for Jesus and his people, and feel called to serve in this way. They are a police officer in Iowa, a chaplain from Wisconsin, a fiber artist from Minnesota, and a property manager from Nebraska to name just a few. We have read books, written reflections, prayed and worshiped together, shared our stories, and laughed. We took a test on Presbyterian Polity that had almost 200 questions! The training has been worthwhile, and I hope some of you will consider taking these classes, because we are part of the priesthood of all believers, and we are called to minister to one another. As it says in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."



FOOD TRUCK PARTY

ON A ROLL WITH GOD!

Family Fun Food Truck Party!

We'll wrap up the weekend with a Summer Celebration lunch for all!

To register for VBS scan the QR code or go to our website: whcomaha.org/events

When: June 23-25

Friday 5p-8p (includes dinner, VBS, and dessert food truck)
Saturday 9a-12p (donuts, juice/coffee, and VBS)
Sunday 9a-12p (VBS, worship, and lunch for all)

Who: Preschool and elementary kids and their adults.

Cost: \$35 per family. Price includes music, games, crafts, food, and fun!

Another relationship built . . . moving 'Forward'

by Mike Overby, Building Use Team

In looking for opportunities to better utilize our church facility and reaching toward our strategic initiative of "go build relationships," the Building Use team connected with Atonement Child Care and its need to relocate its child care services. Over the course of several months of challenges in that transition to WHC, the team additionally began to think forward. 'Forward' included building vitality within the congregation in living out its faith, while actively and joyfully engaging with our community and the world. 'Forward' also meant how do we finance this project. Enter into the relationship circle, Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation. This organization's mission and vision is to "*Share God's abundant love by supporting the ministry of our church and the community it serves.*" After submitting our letter of intent, the formal application, and our interview with the executive director, the decision

to grant a partial award to WHC of \$25,000 for the project (named "*Outside Activities Areas for All*") was approved in late April. The blessings of this grant from NPF does allow us to move 'Forward.' The project will be staged into designed phases. **PHASE 1** will consist of the playground structure (install, safety surfacing), new fencing (expanded area), and ADA compliant sidewalk. **PHASE 2** will include a shelter/pavilion structure. The foundation was pleased with the overall outreach of the project and depending on its progress we would be encouraged to apply again in June 2024 for additional funding. Look for the work to begin here in early summer.



Now Open: Interactive Worship Space

by Han Wagoner, Spiritual Formation Assistant

We're excited to announce we have an **Interactive Worship Space (IWS)** located in the upstairs Youth Chapel on Wednesday nights from 6-8 pm in May and on Tuesday nights from 6-8 pm in June.

The Interactive Worship Space will be a place where you can come and go, spending as little or as much time as you'd like in the presence of God. Whether you play an instrument, sing, or simply want to spend time in reflection, this space is open to everyone.

We will have a variety of resources available, including art supplies, prompts, and a selection of prayer guides to help guide your time of prayer and reflection. There will also be opportunities for group worship, as well as quiet time for personal reflection and meditation.

We believe that this Interactive Worship Space will be a powerful way for us to come together as a community, seeking God's presence and guidance as we grow in our faith and our love for one another. So, mark your calendars for Wednesday nights in May and Tuesday nights in June and come join us in this beautiful space of prayer and worship.



Bible Quiz compiled by Gloria Zinn

1. **Who were the two men who buried Jesus, according to John's gospel?** A. Joseph of Arimathea and Simon of Cyrene B. Nicodemus and John C. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus D. Nicodemus and Simon of Cyrene
2. **Who conspired with her husband to lie to Peter about some property they had sold?** A. Michal B. Sapphira C. Tabitha D. Tamar
3. **Where was the wedding where Jesus turned the water into wine?** A. Gaza B. Cana C. Jerusalem D. Nazareth
4. **What everyday substance was changed into a plague of gnats?** A. dust B. leaves C. hair D. water
5. **What was the name of the son that Boaz and Ruth had?** A. Jesse B. Shechem C. Elimelech D. Obed
6. **Who was Joseph's mommy?** A. Rebekah B. Leah C. Hannah D. Rachel
7. **Who plunged three knives (javelins or daggers) into David's son Absalom's heart as he hung from a tree?** A. Nathan B. Joab C. Eleazar D. Ziba
8. **Who was Jesus talking to that surprised his disciples?** A. Mary of Bethany B. the bleeding woman C. the Samaritan woman D. the prostitute Rahab
9. **Who came to Peter late at night and released him from prison?** A. Paul B. Timothy C. The jailer who became a believer D. an Angel
10. **Whose daughters became the mothers of the Moabites and the Ammonites?** A. Jacob's B. Lot's C. Zelophehad's D. Esau's
11. **Which woman was cured of evil spirits and diseases by Jesus?** A. Susanna B. Martha C. Pilate's wife D. Dinah
12. **In 1st Peter, what animal does Peter compare to Satan?** A. a conniving serpent B. a roaring lion C. a slippery eel D. a puffed up dragon

***Answers are on the back.*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



MAY

1-Deena Candler
2-Ed Leach
Haley Wohlgemuth
4-Dan O'Reilly
5-Lisa Backer
Kathleen Hamer
Evie Thede
Callie Freeman
6-JoAnn Tate
12-Pam Thomas
13-Erika Hanna

17-Todd Carlson
18-Gloria Zinn
20-Esther Miller
22-Barb Spiecker
23-Wendi Meyer
24-Pam Culek
25-Matt Huck
Deb O'Reilly
26-Joyce Vana
Reid Zimmerman
Spencer Zimmerman

28-Grace Burns
Kennedy Stoffel
31-Henrik Hanna
Han Wagoner

JUNE

1-Beth Anderson
Kim Sedivy
2-Debra Chadwick
4-Rhona Yetts
5-Everly Hanna
7-Michael Wohlgemuth

9-Rosemary Frandeen
10-Warren Powell
11-Rene Padilla
Andy Jansen
12-Kathy Leach
15-Linda Springsted

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