When does this ride slow down?

by PASTOR JEFF BROWNING

Like so many people we know, our family always looks forward to summer. We enjoy being outdoors in the warm weather. My children and my wife (a teacher by profession) all appreciate a well-deserved break from school. In our minds, summer promises an opportunity for much-needed leisure and relaxation, time off from some of the stress that feels all too prevalent during the other seasons of the year.

In the weeks after Easter, the sense of looking forward to summer really begins to hit full stride. We start by brainstorming, most every evening. We list all the places we want to go, all the events we want to attend, all the goals we hope to accomplish, and all the people we want to see. We look at the calendar, trying to figure out what might work. We tell our friends, “Let’s plan to get together this summer.” Summer seems like a wonderful dream. But like many wonderful dreams, what we had envisioned often proves too good to be true.

Because every single year, when summer comes, so many of our plans never materialize. The calendar fills up very quickly. Like many of our contemporaries, my family often struggles with a tendency to overschedule. There are very few actual free days. As many parents know, summertime commitments for school-aged children are increasingly comparable to the rest of the year. Work still has to happen. We still have doctors’ appointments, car appointments, etc.

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What about you? Do you feel that you’re an effective part of that mission? First of all, it’s not the Church’s job to save anyone; that’s Jesus’ job. He uses us, for sure, but we are all powerless to actually save anyone. We are all, however, called by Christ to be a witness to His Salvation for us, and for all people. But that doesn’t necessarily mean you have to stand up and give a sermon. Chances are, you are already doing some of the work necessary to share your faith and make disciples.

That’s what Pastor Greg Finke suggests in his book, Joining Jesus on His Mission; How to be an Everyday Missionary. We all have the sense that we should be doing something. We come to church and are involved in some other ministries, but we all have this sense that we should be telling somebody about Jesus. Most of us, though, are too nervous. We might say the wrong thing, and then we give up. It’s a difficult thing to do.

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and a variety of other necessary errands that we scheduled for these summer months, because in our minds we were more available these months. The activity or get together that seemed like a fun idea back in the spring becomes a source of stress—just another item on that long list of things we have to do, one more thing we are trying to squeeze in.

In recent years, I have come to realize that, apart from the weather, summer is not much different from the rest of the year. Summer is busy and stressful. Actual rest and relaxation gets forgotten, cast aside because in all the planning and in all the hustle and bustle, it was never put on the schedule.

REST! Human beings need rest. Jesus says, “Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” For some of us, we hear those words and the initial impact is stressful. Jesus feels like something additional to fit into the busy schedule. This is the opposite of what Jesus intends, I think.

Jesus reminds us that we can’t keep all of this up. All the busyness, the full schedule, the stresses and burdens of trying to do everything and please everybody, eventually it will get the best of us. Inevitably it will disappoint us. When it does, Jesus is there waiting with arms open to you. His unconditional forgiveness and love reminds us what’s most important, and calls us to bask in what is most necessary.

Reprioritize. Whatever we are doing in our lives, we can’t do it without rest, and we certainly can’t do it without our God. But our God reminds us that we find the peace and the rest that we most need in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Joining Jesus

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thing. Our conversation may not be well-received. We could lose a relationship.

That’s why Finke wants us to flip the script a bit on being a witness. Take the pressure off yourself. Don’t assign yourself the task that belongs to God. Jesus didn’t just ascend into heaven and say, “I’ll see you all at the Resurrection!” He said he would be WITH US till that time comes. Jesus is on a mission in the world to save people; that’s His job. Yet He invites you to join Him. He, as well as the Holy Spirit, goes before you, working in people’s lives, in ways we can’t even comprehend. And the most effective way for the Good News to reach people will be through you.

But it doesn’t have to be complicated. You can just Love your Neighbor as your-
Handwritten note: The special guest was Jane Lottes, Head of Advancement at Long Island Lutheran Middle and High School (LuHi). She had arranged with Resurrection staff to present Pastor Browning with a surprise award. He stood nearby with a slightly puzzled look, as she read a letter outlining the details. Following is an excerpt:

Dear Pastor Browning,

We rejoice with you today as you receive the 2018 Long Island Lutheran Middle & High School Randy Abbe Christian Service Award. Your selection honors you for the beautiful impact you have had on so many lives and on the life of your congregation. You are a selfless leader who encourages, engages, supervises, mentors, and counsels individuals in your church, the wider Lutheran church including LuHi, and the greater community. You do this whether those people are members or not, whether they live far or near. You constantly evaluate and review programs of your congregation working to reach as many lives as possible with the love of Jesus. While the pastoral ministry may be your job, it is definitely a calling you fulfill with generosity of time and spirit and with a humble servant’s heart.

In the spring of 1980, our school received a substantial cash gift from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous. This gift has made it possible for LuHi to create the Randy Abbe Christian Service Award. It carries with it a cash gift of $500, plus a beautiful medallion. It is understood that you are to use the cash award in a self-indulgent manner. That means you are to spend it on things for yourself!

Pastor Browning, please accept this award as recognition of your loyal and faithful service to God’s people with the profound thanks and admiration of the entire LuHi family. May the Lord give you many more years of dedicated and selfless service to the Church.

Pastor Browning reacted with genuine surprise and humility as the congregation erupted in a rousing ovation. 😊

Review by Micki Dolan
Getting to Know . . .
Michelle and Walter Woicyk

Michelle and Walter Woicyk are an integral part of the worship life at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection. Michelle has been a church deacon since the beginning of 2012. Walt serves on the Church Council as treasurer and plays the drums in the Saturday Worship Band.

The Woicyks are born-and-bred Long Island people. Walt grew up in Suffolk, attending Huntington High School and then Adelphi University in Garden City. Michelle grew up in Franklin Square and attended Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. Michelle joined Resurrection in 2003 and Walter about five years later.

The couple met around 1998 at Syosset High School, where Walt taught Chemistry for 33 years until retiring in 2016. Michelle still teaches social studies, as she has for the last 20 years.

“Walt and I are just morning people and liked to get in to school early to get organized and prepared,” says Michelle. “There were not too many other teachers in the building at 5:45 a.m., and we kept running into each other.” The couple married at Resurrection in 2009.

For fun, the Woicyks like to play golf together. Michelle enjoys reading, especially American history. She also enjoys cooking and baking.

“Walt is the chief dishwasher and quality control tester in the house and is endlessly patient with my need to use every kitchen utensil when I am cooking,” she says.

They also enjoy visiting family in Massachusetts, Delaware and Texas, and “taking short trips around the country, especially to any place historical,” Michelle says.

After the tragic death of Saturday worship drummer Steve Gonzalez, Walt taught himself how to play the drums. He began playing on Saturdays two and a half years ago.

“It is my way of participating in the service. It is very rewarding being part of the worship band,” Walt says, and also “a way to honor Steve Gonzalez’s memory and Steve’s love of being part of the worship band.”

Michelle began on the road to being a deacon after Pastor Browning “encouraged me to enroll in the diaconate classes. As a deacon, to have the trust and support of the congregation, church leadership and pastors is a humbling experience. The ministry of a deacon is Word and service. I like to help—whether it is with VBS, worship services, or fellowship events.”

Michelle and Walt say, “We feel blessed and very thankful to be part of Resurrection and truly consider Resurrection an extension of our family.

“We love not only the varied worship experiences but the fellowship opportunities that enable us to spend time with our Resurrection family.”

Michelle and Walter Woicyk
The Woicyks: Walter and Michelle met while teaching at Syosset High School.

Ken Meyn
Handbell Choir Director and occasional organist. He retired after 38 years at The New York Times.
Hi, Resurrection Family!

This is Jessica Stevens writing a very long-overdue update from Monterrey, Mexico.

I’ve wanted to update sooner, but up until now, I have not been in a place physically, mentally and emotionally where I could write.

I know so many of you have followed Pastor Browning’s updates and my family’s updates via Facebook. I have had every message and card read to me when I was too sick. And once I was stronger, I have re-read them, and gained so much strength from them.

When we last wrote an update for the Lamplighter (April 2013), I was living back ‘home’ with my family in Florida after returning from Mexico where a series of experimental Ketamine coma treatments had put my condition, Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD) into remission. I had gone from being bedridden for years, tube-fed, full of ulcerating skin lesions and daily seizures to living a full life! I had enrolled in college where I was studying to become a Physician’s Assistant, and traveling around the U.S to share my testimony of God’s healing and faithfulness. In September 2013 I returned to Resurrection to share my story at my true ‘home.’ That will be a day I will never forget, a ‘full circle’ moment, and one I have clung to and re-lived in my mind to help me through what would come ahead.

To make a long story short, in the summer of 2014 I found out I needed a surgery, which is always a giant risk with RSD, and unfortunately, after those wonderful years of remission, I suffered a full relapse.

Since then, my health has been a rollercoaster of ups and downs. There have been many long hospitalizations and more tests, procedures, infections and surgeries than I could count.

These past years have been devastating and have tested me in ways I have never been before. this time around has been so much harder to deal with than the prior years of illness ... especially after experiencing and enjoying the healthy life I had worked so hard
Jessica’s Journey—Next Chapter

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to have. I never imagined dealing with any of this again, yet here we are.

I hit my lowest point a year ago, when the burning RSD skin lesions continued to spread; I became critically sick and developed septic shock. I was dying, and we were faced with the dire reality of needing to amputate my right leg to save my life.

My mom was told at this time, once again, that she should let me go. It was unlikely I’d survive this, and she should make her peace with that. But she has never ever left my side or given up hope for me, and she wasn’t going to now.

And so we entered into the unknown.

And Pastor Browning mobilized to help make it happen. When I found out that he had reached out to the Resurrection congregation to enable us to afford my life saving surgery, how did I feel?


I could come up with a thousand words, yet none would ever properly express what my heart feels to know that so many, whether old friends from Resurrection, or complete strangers, would come alongside me to help save my life. Without your generous donations, the amputation, nor the continuing treatments would have been financially possible.

So... how do you begin to say ‘thank you’ for that? Thank you for your love, support and most importantly, your prayers. Thank you for being the hands and heart of Jesus, and continually showing me His love in such a tangible way. I am eternally grateful, and I thank God for you all every day.

This amputation was for the best. It not only saved my life, but for the past five months, I have been completely free of infections and off intravenous antibiotics for the first time in years! That—in itself—is a miracle.

But the ‘best’ has also proven quite painful. I have experienced some very dark times, where I lost myself, felt defeated and depleted dealing with the setbacks and complications.

In the midst of all the challenges and extremes, there have been many beautiful days and moments, not because they lacked challenge or pain, but because of Jesus. A message that shows up at exactly the right time, a beautiful sunset over the mountain outside my window, having so much love surrounding me physically near in Mexico, and afar from my homes in Florida and New York, I’ve learned you can continue traveling down the hardest roads when you’re traveling loved and not traveling alone. I’m blessed I’ve never had to.

Please turn to page 7

The Reformation—Part Two

Many of us attended the Reformation series Pastor Browning conducted last summer to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The way the Christian faith was practiced in Martin Luther’s German homeland was changed forever. But the Reformation didn’t end there! That was just the beginning, and this summer, Pastor Browning will explore with us how that event continued to change the world.

This year’s summer series, “The Reformation in England,” will explore the way Luther’s beliefs and those of other reformers influenced Christians beyond Germany and changed the history of the entire world. The Protestant movement quickly spread, and this was a direct result of the actions of Martin Luther. We will explore how this took place, what happened and the earth-shaking results.

The series will begin on Wednesday, Aug. 1 at 7 p.m. and will go on for five weeks.

This is a great way to spend a warm summer evening, refreshing your knowledge or learning new things with good friends. Since the Reformation is included in Part 2 of the NY State Regents course, “Global Studies,” if there are teenagers in your home, this is a great opportunity to get an excellent preview of that course for the coming year. Pastor Browning promises, “Refreshments will be served.”

Micki Dolan

Is a retired teacher, still actively tutoring, and a freelance writer. She and her husband Jim are the parents of two children and three grandchildren.
Humor is also a wonderful coping mechanism, one my crazy family makes sure I am never lacking. For example, when I awoke from the coma after my amputation, my mom had gotten me two shirts made. One shirt said, “Lost it in ‘Nom” with a picture of a gingerbread cookie missing his right leg, and the other shirt said, “It’s official... I’m on my last leg.”

I’ve also seen that in all days and all things, Jesus will meet you right where you are. The circumstances of each day can and will change, but who He is and His character and love will never change. If each trial begins and ends on His faithfulness, the victory is already ours.

**Specific prayer requests:**

For endurance and strength for my amazing Mom, Gina, who has once again given up her entire life to devote herself to mine.

For my youngest sister Michelle, who has also rearranged her life and transferred her studies to Monterey to be here, fight by my side, and help with my care every day. Helps make it feel so much more like home.

For my middle sister Katherine and her husband, who are expecting their first baby! I’m going to be a Godmother!

For my Dad, who deals with continued health issues and struggles with not being able to be physically present when I am facing big decisions or setbacks.

For my incredible doctors: Their devotion to my care knows no limits, and I am so thankful for their skills and wisdom. Pray that they continue to find ways to carry my body through whatever comes, and thankful prayers of praise for all God has done through their healing hands.

For your Pastor, his visit with me this past week here in Mexico was wonderful for my mind and spirit.

And me? Pray for infections to stay far away, so that I can continue to take the small steps of progress needed every day. For strength physically and mentally. At the moment there is an issue with my stump where my leg was amputated, and prayers that it resolves with treatment and not further surgery, are very appreciated! Ultimately, for quality of life; a life outside of a hospital bed and four walls; for patience as I wait for the rest of my journey to unfold.

**Finally, I’d like to pray for you all:**

“Lord Jesus, I thank You for my amazing Resurrection ‘earth angel’ family, I feel their prayers, and I am carried and lifted by them every day. Thank You for their generosity toward me, thank You for their love that encourages me to fight, to live and to overcome the challenges of the day and whatever challenges may lie ahead. Please bless and watch over them, and may they feel your love, presence, joy and blessings, the way they have been that example of You to me. In Your Son Jesus, I pray, Amen.”

In the words of Paul, “I give thanks to God every time I think of you.” Philippians 1:3

With a heart full of eternal gratitude,
Jessica Stevens 🕉️
“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

Jeremiah 23:5

The prophet Jeremiah, some 600 years before the birth of Jesus, calls the people of God to look forward. Their great king, David, who oversaw the golden age of their history, had been dead for 400 years. The power and influence of their nation had continually eroded over the centuries, and they were threatened by much more powerful regional neighbors. The present seemed bleak, the near future looked even worse. But Jeremiah promises a new king, and a great future. The king will bring wisdom, justice, and righteousness to those he rules.

As Christians, we recognize that these words are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the great King who died and rose again, and His kingdom will have no end. We all face so many challenges throughout our lives. As we live, we do so knowing that we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, and our King shares His grace and His perfect righteousness with each of us.

THINK

These words bring to mind one of Jesus’ most poignant statements, as recorded in John 16:33: [Jesus said] “I have said these things to you that you may have peace. In this world you will have troubles. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” Jesus’ words (and His crucifixion) remind us that no one is immune from challenges and difficulties. At the same time, He blesses us with the divine privilege of looking forward, knowing that our worldly struggles are finite, just a fraction of the perfect eternity that Christ has won for us and given to us.

PRAY

Gracious Father, the troubles of this life bring us down. Give us the strength that we need to meet all of our days knowing that Christ loves us and forgives us in the present and invites us to look forward to our eternal future with Him. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DO

Recognize that Jesus is with you in the present, and He has secured your eternal future. Dwell on that joyful hope and invite/encourage those around you to do the same.

Pastor Jeff Browning