

WATCH – We Are The CHurch

We Are The CHurch is a spiritual renewal weekend designed to further your relationship with God and other Christians. WATCH is a rare opportunity to escape from the temptations and traps of the world, enabling you to focus on the two commandments that are the essence of the Christian walk - “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Matthew 22:37-39)

Preparation is under way for **WATCH #10**, which will take place on **September 27-29, 2013** at Rainbow Christian Camp, Converse Indiana. There is room for more than 30 guests. The WATCH community (anyone who attended a previous WATCH) is inviting people, but if it happens that you don't get asked personally to attend, please know that you are invited. All you have to do is fill out one of the many colored registration forms that you will find at the Welcome Center and turn it in to the WATCH box at the Welcome Center or the WATCH mail box in the church office. This is an individual spiritual retreat weekend NOT a couples retreat! We hope to see you there. Below you will find comments and typical questions asked about WATCH.

Where did WATCH come from? Did someone invent it? And if so, who was he or she?

Spiritual renewal weekends have become a way to call people to faith and discipleship. The whole thing started in the Catholic Church in Spain in 1944 with the introduction of “Cursillo” which in Spanish means “short course”. The Cursillo movement came to the United States in 1959. Since that time, dozens of Christian denominations have taken the concept and developed their own unique spiritual renewal weekends. One such development came out of Peoria, Illinois. A group of pastors and lay people adapted Cursillo into WATCH, which is written according to Lutheran doctrine. One of the authors was Pastor David Peter, at the time the pastor at Trinity Lutheran in Peoria. It was his connection to our own former Pastor Sommerfeld which brought WATCH to our church.

How many sermons will be preached? Actually, none. There will be “talks” in which people you probably know will talk to you about how God has worked in their lives. ***So, there won't be any pastors there?*** Actually, there will be two. ***If the pastors aren't going to preach sermons, what will they do?*** They will each give a “talk” about their faith in Christ. They will also be available for one-on-one discussion, if you so desire.

What all goes on during the weekend? Well, we have a set order of activities – talks, discussions, prayer, music, meditations and worship - but each participant will come away with a different viewpoint of what happened because God works uniquely in each person's heart. As one participant put it (paraphrase) –“if people only knew, there would be a line to sign up!” There is still time to register for this rare opportunity to get all the way out of the world and meet with our Lord. You will not regret the experience!

Do I need to register before the WATCH weekend? Registration helps us understand who is planning to come, identify special needs and helps us plan for food and supplies. We ask that you sign up as individuals. Couples wishing to go together may but should understand that this is not a marriage retreat. Women and men will be sleeping separately and couples will be put in different small groups. Each individual should fill out his or her own form. You will be sent a confirmation letter. **Registration deadline is September 22.** If you have registered and not received a confirmation, please contact Pastor Akers at church (453-0969) or Gene Miller (765-453-3636).

What should I wear and what do I bring? Dress is casual and comfortable. There is no reason to dress formally unless you want to. After you register, you will be mailed a letter with a list of items you need

to bring. The list will include things like a pillow, a sheet and blanket, toiletries, etc.

At WATCH, will we be watching anything specific? Actually, the concept of “watch” is all over the Bible. God “watches” over His people (Psalm 1:6). Pastors are called to “watch” over themselves and their flocks (Acts 20:28). And what about the rest of us? Do we just let God and our Pastors “watch” for us? We believe the Bible calls us to “watch” too and we have found that the WATCH weekend helps show us just how to “watch”. Next, we will start counting the ways.

We have found that the WATCH weekend is a helpful tool in fulfilling our charge to keep “watch” (Mark 13:35). How so? First, some background. The Jewish people divided the night into three military “watches”, posting a sentinel who could warn the people in the city or camp of advancing enemies (Judges 7:18 and 1 Samuel 11:11). The Romans divided the night into four watches (Matthew 14:25). The guard watched alertly, his heart's desire being to protect his people. Maybe this has a spiritual parallel for us!

Should we be guarding or watching out for something? In biblical times, a watchman was on duty all night, his purpose being to protect his people from enemies. We believe there is a spiritual application in this for us. But what are we to guard? “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23). From the heart, spring our thoughts, emotions, motives and actions. It is the wellspring or source of our lives. Also, our hearts are where the seed of God's word is hopefully planted (Luke 8:15) and therefore, where the Holy Spirit resides (Ephesians 3:17). We believe guarding our hearts is a worthwhile endeavor and that the WATCH weekend provides a golden opportunity to improve our watchfulness.

What are some of the enemy threats to our watchfulness? What do our “words” our “wants, our “ways” our “work” and our “warts” have in common? Besides the fact that they all start with “w”, all these things are strong indicators of what is in our hearts – love of the world or love of God. We cannot love both (1 John 2:15-17). Let's start with our words. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, “...out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks”. You might want to read the context there in Matthew 12. Our mouths are indeed a gift that we should utilize prayerfully because with our mouths we are either acquitted or condemned (vs. 37). We believe the WATCH retreat provides a necessary refuge from the world, thereby helping us to become ever more watchful for clues about what is in our hearts. Many have found that the 42 hours spent at Rainbow Christian Camp are well worth it. In the meantime, keep a watch on your words. Do they suggest anything about the condition of your heart?

What do our “wants” indicate about our hearts? The condition of our hearts should be of the utmost importance to us because they are of the utmost importance to our Lord (1 Samuel 16:7; Romans 10:10). What do we desire? Nicer things? More things? Success? While these pursuits may not be sinful in themselves, they can be when they replace the pursuit of God in our lives. Too often, the desires of the world take over our hearts without us even realizing it. And love of the world cannot coincide with the love of God (1 John 2:15). As believers, we are called to seek first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33). How do we truly do that? It takes time and it takes humbling and quieting our hearts. We believe WATCH is an ideal tool, which God uses to mold and shape our hearts and therefore, our desires.

What do our “ways” indicate about our hearts? From reading the bible, we can figure out that our ways are not the same as the Lord's ways and that we need to be taught His ways (Exodus 33:13). Furthermore, in the book of Isaiah, we find the Lord declaring that His ways are higher than ours – much higher (55:9). So, what are our ways? Have you ever written down everything you do in a day

and the time spent on each activity? Is there mindless motion? Bad habits? The ways of the Lord are loving and faithful (Psalm 25:10). We believe the WATCH weekend is a prime vehicle for evaluating our lives, particularly such things as our “ways”.

What do our “warts” tell us about our hearts? Now this is a tricky subject! If you think this does not pertain to you, please turn to 1 John 1:8. That is a good verse to memorize because we tend to notice ***other*** people's warts rather easily while our ***own*** go unrecognized. Another problem is that while some warts are blatant and visible, others are hidden in our hearts – such as pride and bitterness. These kind of warts will show themselves through our “words”, our “wants” and our “ways” and therefore, are trickier to detect. Often, we need God to open our eyes to the reality of our warts. Uncomfortable? For a time, but our God is One Who redeems! (Psalm 51) At WATCH, you can experience this blessing of recognizing your warts. By the way, “warts” is just another word for “sin” - we wanted a “w” word!

What do our “warts” tell us about our hearts? Part II – People whose minds are warped by sin (that’s all of us!) can lean toward two extremes when it comes to “warts.” One extreme is a legalistic approach which Jesus loathed (Matthew 12:1-14). Another extreme is a free-wheeling approach often called “cheap grace” where forgiveness is counted on as a license to sin (Romans 6:1-2). The bottom line is that God’s grace is transforming, meaning it will motivate us to deal with our “warts.” We will understand that our “warts” blind those around us to God’s grace. In other words, we cease to be tools when we are steeped in sin. Again, we believe the WATCH renewal weekend is an ideal way to allow God’s transforming love to transform your approach to your “warts.”

What does our “worship” tell us about the condition of our hearts? Jesus tells us we should worship “in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23-24). At the WATCH weekend, we believe the separation from worldly concerns is an ideal environment for authentic worship. As one WATCH participant testified, “what a powerful worship service that was!” That is not to say our weekly worship services are in any way deficient; after all, the quality of the worship is entirely up to the worshiper. We simply believe that a separation from the world increases the opportunity for a powerful experience. Why don’t you pray about giving this a try?

What do our “walls” tell us about the condition of our hearts? As you might know, back in the time of Jesus, the Jews and the Gentiles pretty much avoided each other. The Jews knew they were God’s chosen and had to deal with the fact that Jesus’ Gospel message was intended for the Gentiles as well (Colossians 1:27). Then they had to figure out how to get along! Paul states that Jesus’ blood on the cross has destroyed this “wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14). Jesus’ blood also made peace between us and our holy God (Colossians 1:20). But sometimes, we resurrect the “walls” by staying in our “comfort zones” or by avoiding what we do not understand or like. We believe WATCH is a tool in revealing the “walls.” The revelation can be “ouchy” but excitement and freedom follow.

What does the bible say about “watch”? A lot! For instance: “Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know what day your Lord will come.... you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” (Matthew 24:42, 44) WATCH helps keep watch.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)