

Covenant Presbyterian Church Newsletter

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A Christ centered covenant community;

Loving God,

Loving people,

Making disciples

August 2019

Pastor's Ponderings

Quick: what is your primary purpose as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

In answering you might have said, "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever" (especially if you are a recycled Lutheran who had to learn the Westminster Catechism as a child). Or you could have said, "to love God with all your heart (worship), to love my neighbor as myself (ministry), to go and make disciples (evangelism), to baptize them into God's family (fellowship), and to teach them to do all these same things (discipleship)." This might have been your answer if you have done Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* series at some point along the way.

In coming to be your pastor I asked the Session to consider and implement several parts of something called EPIC Evangelism, a program I have put together to help our church in evangelize and make disciples. In brief, EPIC is an acronym that includes

Equipping – learning how we can effectively share our faith with others

Prayer – being mindful to actively pray for those who are far from God

Invite – as we have been doing with our postcards and cookie visits to new residents

Create Community – a part of EPIC we have not decided to do just yet, involving ongoing fellowship opportunities through a Newcomers Club.

We have already been working on prayers and invitations, and beginning the first Sunday in August we will start getting equipped through a new sermon series we will start at that time.

But here's the truth: we have sent out over 600 postcards to new residents, and made 30 in-person visits carrying plates of cookies. Response so far from these efforts has been minimal.

Now, we will continue to sow this seed, claiming the promise of our Lord that while some of our seed is falling on the path, and some among thorns, and some on the rocky ground (especially the part about the sun rising and scorching, because let me tell you, it's hot taking those

cookies from house to house! Thanks to the elders who have been assisting with this effort!). But some seed, said Jesus, will fall on good soil and bring forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matthew 13:3-9).

So, as I say, we will continue to send out postcards and deliver cookies, but woe to us if we think these things alone are fulfillment of our Lord's Great Commission. No, God's PLAN A has always been individual Christians like you and me, gently and lovingly sharing our faith with the people who are close to us, but far from God. And to do that we need to be equipped!

We will spend August looking at questions we need to ask ourselves, questions like whether we might be fearful (yes!), and who it is God may have put right in front of us (but who we have overlooked). We also need to look at whether we are a fisher, a flinger, and a follower.

Then, as we move into fall we will look at questions we need to be ready to ask of our friends and family who are far from God, questions are modeled on the questions of Jesus, questions like what are you looking for?, and who do you say that Jesus is?, and what do you want him to do for you?, and what must you do to be saved?

Finally, we will spend time looking at some of the common objections people raise when talking with us. Objections like, how can there only be one true religion?, and how could a good God allow suffering?, and doesn't a biblical faith collide with science?, and really, how accurate could the Bible be? If you've ever talked with someone about faith, you've probably heard one or more of these questions, and we'll explore some solid answers.

That being said, please don't wait until the end of this series to share your faith with family or friends if the Spirit provides the opportunity! God will use all our efforts, frail but faithful, to call people into the Kingdom!

Blessings,

Brant

FROM THE CLERK

We are so blessed to have a Pastor who truly knows how to be a caregiver. It is so reassuring to know we have Pastor Brant's prayers, love and support in our times of need. He emphasized to the Session that he wants to be informed of the needs of our congregation even if he is on vacation. Please remember to give him a call, text or email if you or a loved one are facing a medical or other trial. We also have a great group of Deacons, small groups and fellow congregants who want to help you too.

The church office has been reorganized and seems roomier and more efficient. Our new lighted sign in the office is up and running with our name on it to start. The sign can do some amazing things and is rather complicated to program so the

Session asked Derek Moore who in turn passed the job on to his 11-year-old son, Brayden to figure out. Thanks, Brayden!

Ready to build another Habitat for Humanity house? Please be ready this Fall to help in some way to be part of this wonderful mission. Our Mission Team also gave over \$1100 from our generous congregation's 5th Sunday offering in June to the Home of Hope. The September 5th Sunday offering will go to the Seeds of Hope.

Thanks to Rex Little who is leading an adult education class once a month and the other volunteers who are working in teams to provide lessons for our children on Sunday mornings. You too can be teamed with someone to help these children know how much God loves them. Please volunteer or say "Yes" when asked to help.

Keep praying that our community will feel the nudge and filling of the Holy Spirit as we continue to reach out to newcomers. Also remember to invite family and friends to join with us and to know the fullness of God's love and grace.

Tina's Insights

Three doves were sunning themselves in the back yard the other morning. The three of them snuggled down under a sparkling spray of water, shaking their bodies and rolling slightly back and forth, side to side. One kept lifting its wings, stretching them high up and out, evidently to bring the spray underneath its wings. As it lifted each wing, first one and then the other, and finally both at the same time, it looked as if it was reaching up with a psalm of praise for double dipping the rays of sun and water.

They lay there in the sun and man-made shower for some time. I was entranced by the one who seemed intent on a full body wash. While its two companions soon flew away, this one remained, cocooned in an indentation near the bird bath. With its wings pulled to its body, it was almost impossible to see. If you did not know it was there you might mistake it for a rock or piece of wood. It had tucked its head under a wing, resting. Then it got up, stretched and walked toward the bird bath, lifting its wings, one by one to the sky, basking in this refreshment, seemingly content to be alone, at peace with its circumstances.

The same sun warming that dove had seeped into my body. I had been miserable all night, my mind was filled with concerns and having forced myself to turn on the sprinkler I now found myself aware of the day. Other doves were cooing somewhere nearby. Three cactus had laughed in the face of 110 degrees and sent out deep red blossoms. My little Shi Tzu was tugging on a squeaky toy, making it chirp loudly.

Some verses from the sixth chapter of Matthew rose to the surface of my thoughts: "...do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor for your body as to what you shall put on. ...Is not life more than food and the body than clothing. Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow neither do they reap...yet your heavenly Father takes care of them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

Had those doves been expressing a thank you for God's touch of sun and those drops of water? The one who decided to stay was just as alone as I, yet content to enjoy the moment. It seemed more assured of that Bible verse than me. As my wind chime played its haunting tune I glanced up at the puff of cotton clouds, down at the wise little dove, over at my playful canine companion, and drew in a breath of fresh air, hot as it was.

I am so grateful for a Savior who cares enough to use a dove, a cactus bloom and an eleven year old "puppy" to express His care and comfort for His child. As I stepped inside, I uttered a heartfelt 'Amen'.

-Author, Tina Hudson

Tina Hudson was a beloved former member, who for a while wrote devotional thoughts for the website. Over the coming months we will post her devotions in the newsletter...

"Summer's End" Musical

Our sister church, Horizon in Ahwatukee, is hosting a "Summer's End" musical event on Sunday, August 11th at 5:30pm. Dr. Jana Minov and Dr. Olga Kim will be joined by their equally talented spouses, for an evening of piano, guitar, and vocals. Refreshments will be provided and a free-will offering taken, designated for the music program expenses. Horizon is located at 1401 E Liberty Ln, Phoenix, AZ 85048. For more information contact Sandy Castle sandracastle@aol.com or 480-221-9779

Men's Bible Study

The men of the church meet at the church each Thursday at 11:00am. All men are welcome and you can bring a sack lunch if you like.

Neighborhood Help Team

The Neighborhood Help Team is continuing a service for those who could use a little bit of help. We would like to help you in replacing A/C filters or with some landscape trimming on the 4th Saturday of each month. Contact Nelson Moore in person or call him @ 520-483-0461.

August Calendar

- 4 Holy Communion
- 8 Worship Team, 1:00pm
- 11 "Summer's End" Musical, 5:30pm, Horizon Pres. Church in Ahwatukee
- 15 Session Meeting, 6:00pm
- 18 Adult Sunday School after Church, "Proof of Noah's Flood"

August Birthdays

- 2 Richard Taylor
- 11 Joseph Lenhert
- 15 Gayle Leniger
- 23 Olga Sylvestre
- 29 Chet Dorsey
- 29 Jake Sylvestre

August Anniversaries

- 15 Darold & Lois Wiege
- 22 Rev. Brant & Karen Baker