

Covenant Church Newsletter
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A Christ centered covenant community;

Loving God,
Loving People,
Making Disciples

August 2020

Pastor's Ponderings

I've been spending time this summer re-reading Dallas Willard's great book, *Renovation of the Heart*. This is a great book, and one I highly recommend!

At one point, Willard notes that spiritual formation is always profoundly social. Anyone who says that their relationship with God is only between themselves and God has misunderstood God, and anyone who says that what they do is their own business has misunderstood the business God has given us to do. Our relationships to other people affect and inform our relationship with God, and vice-versa. That's why, says Willard, Jesus gave us this sure way to measure the outcome of our spiritual growth-that we love one another. In John 13:34-35 Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (p 182-183).

If you think about it, the early church grew by showing just this kind of mature, Christian love. It wasn't because they had flashy advertising (they didn't), or because they had awesome buildings (nope), or even because they were all natural-born evangelists (not even close). No, the early church grew because secular people saw how the Christians loved one another and realized it was refreshingly different and life-giving.

Of course, the only way we can love one another is if we first understand how God has loved us. God sees us quite differently than we tend to see our self, and it is only as we see our self as God sees us that we are healed and restored and set free to love others with sincere forgiveness, free of pretense, pride, and self-protection. This is the genuine kind of love that Apostle Paul spells out so completely in Romans 12 (go read it right now!).

Once we have accepted ourselves as God accepts us, and then entered into relationships based solely on our identity in Christ, we are then able to give ourselves to serving others, which is to say we are pro-actively showing the love of Christ. People outside of the church are simply not used to being treated in such a way, and they will eventually become curious, and perhaps even desirous, of our ability. Of course, we know it is not our ability at all, but Christ's ability in us that allows us to be in relationships without attacking or withdrawing, but seeking only and always to bless.

Jesus told us to love one another, and as I read in scripture about how he did that with his own community of faith (that is, with the disciples), I see mostly that he was unendingly patient with those guys! And that's how we are to be with one another: patient, forbearing, filled with forgiveness, not holding on to offenses, and as Paul says, outdoing one another in mutual affection.

May we continue to be that kind of Christian, and that kind of church!

In Christ,
Brant

SUPER IMPORTANT P.S.!!

Last Sunday I announced that the Session has concluded its work on developing a new mission statement, which is that Covenant Church will glorify God and make disciples by sharing God's word and helping people grow in Jesus.

We will unpack this more and more in the coming weeks, and in particular, **please make a point to be in worship on Sunday, August 9th**, for the unveiling of a new and significant outreach plan we will undertake starting in 2020. Excitement ahead!!

FROM THE CLERK

Have you been in the office lately? It's much roomier and easier to control the temperature. Check out the new toddler area that is ready for all of us to invite some young families to share with us. We will also be able to resume using our current Sunday School room for the older children. Adult/Older Youth Sunday School classes are also being planned.

Dr Baker has been hard at work leading your Session into some new territory which has been pretty exciting to think about for Covenant Church and Casa Grande. Watch for news and pray that our congregation will be willing and ready to follow where the Wild Goose (Holy Spirit) guides all of us.

Thanks to all who have been so faithful and generous in supporting Covenant and our missions with their tithes, offerings, and special offerings. It really helps as we plan to move forward in doing the things God has planned for us.

Men's Bible Study

The Men of the church meet each Thursday at 11:00am, all men are welcome, and you can bring a sack lunch if you like. Wearing a mask is optional. If you would like to be part of the Bible study, please call Brant for more information (520-876- 2888 or 480-458-7628).

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

- 2 Communion
- 12 Prayer Night, 6:30pm at Carol & Wiley's.
- 13 Worship Team Meeting, 1:00pm.
- 20 Session Meeting, 6:00pm.
- 26 Prayer Night, 6:30pm at Carol & Wiley's.

August Birthdays

- 2 Richard Taylor
- 10 Wendy Brown
- 15 Gayle Leniger
- 29 Chet Dorsey

August Anniversaries

- 15 Darold & Lois Wiege
- 21 Norm & Chris Sandblast
- 22 Rev. Brant & Karen Baker