



NEWS & NOTES

First Baptist Church of Long Prairie, MN
January, February, March 2019

PASTOR'S PAGE

My Katie has just published her first book! (available on Amazon). So, for this News and Notes I have made an executive / pastoral decision... let the writer write! When she got home, we talked it over, I gave her the idea and she ran with it. Merry Christmas to you all, but as you move into the new year... don't let the turkey leave you sleepy!

Well, everybody, in the words of Johnny Mathis, "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas... everywhere you go!"

Minus the snow. I come back from college, and it's colder in Virginia's banana belt than it is here in Minnesnowta! But even if we don't have a white December, there are plenty of things that are making Long Prairie look like Christmas.

Every radio station has on a Christmas song or two (or three or four or a hundred); I've seen a wide assortment of inflatable snowmen, Santas, and reindeer; and we just put up our Christmas tree. I suppose that that is one of our Christmas traditions – putting up the tree. We always use a real tree – Jack is in charge of watering it, and quite enjoys his job, I think.

Other holiday traditions in the Stacey house would include wild rice soup on Christmas eve, caramel rolls or monkey bread Christmas morning, and of course a delicious Christmas dinner. Our lovely parents never go to bed before 2am the night before, and the younger, energetic kids are out in the living room at 6 (they're not allowed out any earlier, but it's *definitely* no later) to open their stockings. The rest of us are forced out of our nice warm beds at 7 to open presents (any longer and the littles might pop!). Then, after the chaos has settled, we have those caramel rolls.

That's Christmas morning in the Stacey house. I wouldn't be *too* terribly surprised if your Christmas is something similar – especially the afternoon. You can adjust it to fit your household, but I have a theory that Christmas afternoon might look something like this:

You stuff yourself with turkey, mashed potatoes, bread and butter, stuffing, gravy, green bean casserole (er, hot dish), and apple pie until you have a very full tummy and two no-longer-hollow legs. Then, you watch some football or wash some dishes (and snitch a little more turkey), read your new book or play with your new toy (and snitch a little more turkey), and play a board game or take a nap (and snitch a little more turkey).

By the end of the day, you're positively stuffed to the brim with turkey, and feeling a bit drowsy.

I'm afraid that American Christians too often looks like Americans after a long Christmas day - we've been fed really well, and now all we want is snitches of something good and a nap.

Let me explain a little better. For so long, we have been beyond blessed. We have fifty million other pastors available to us over the internet, more Bibles than we know what to do with, and freedom to worship without any sort of punishment. We can celebrate Christmas! We are fed constantly by a thousand and one devotional books, blogs, Facebook quotes, podcasts, radio, etc., etc.

But a lot of those things aren't really feeding. An image on your social media is not going to be sufficient spiritual food – it's more like those little snacks of turkey. It doesn't (or shouldn't) satisfy, rather, it just gives a nice little taste in our mouths. And the sad thing is, those little tastes are keeping us away from the good stuff! We're not hungry for the word anymore! Instead, we just end up lazy or exhausted.

I think we need to switch the way we feed our faith. “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (I Peter 2:2-3) We need to get back to the craving stage, instead of just snatching whenever we feel like it.

But on top of that, look at what Hebrews says. “Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.” (I Corinthians 5:13-6:1a). We need to go *beyond* just spiritual milk – the light snacking on our Bibles – to a full-on Christmas feast on the Word.

We need to get to a Psalm 119 love of the Word. “I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word... Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law... My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word... Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.” (Psalm 119:14-16, 18, 81, 97)

And, then, after we’ve tasted and seen how wonderful God is (because good gravy, he is good!), we need to keep the faith – but not to ourselves. We need to get so full of Jesus that we couldn’t even think of keeping the leftovers hidden away until they are forgotten. We need to share it.

So, with that in mind, have a Merry Christmas! But don’t let it go to waste. Keep the Reason for the Season in mind and share it with everyone you meet. And more than everything, *crave* Jesus.

Merry Christmas!

~Katie Stacey
I Cor. 15:58



Deacon's Corner

When I attended Bethel, I was very faithful to attend the chapel services whenever they were held. No, I don't say that to brag. That's just how it was. I do not recall most of them. I do remember one, specifically, out of all of them. Students often gave their faith stories, but this one stands out. Patricia was an education major. One semester the students were learning to teach math by using a particular text book. Patricia was not happy about using that book. She felt it was out of date and did not apply to what she wanted to learn about teaching math. She asked the instructor if it would be possible to use a different text. It was not. So, Patricia continued studying that text book.

During the Summer break, many students went on mission trips to various countries. Patricia was one of them. She went to teach math to the children of another country. I do not recall which country it was. I do recall that when she arrived, the text book she would be using to teach those students was the very same one she had learned in her education class. It was very easy to teach that book because she had spent an entire semester learning it. Her story in chapel that day was that God had prepared her for her Summer teaching. She just didn't know it while learning that text book.

*Esther 4, verses 11–16: Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or women, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and **who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?** Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.*

Esther was willing to accept whatever God had for her at that moment. Patricia did not have the challenge that Esther had. Each, however, was led by God in her respective setting. For me, I never had questions about going to college and seminary; about being a pastor; or working at Cathedral Press. One day, the thought crossed my mind that perhaps it was following that path that led Faith and me to be in a position to care for her parents.

Perhaps you are in a situation today where you do not understand the what or why of what is happening in your life. You are encouraged to be faithful in what God has given you for this time and place. Some day you may be able to look back to see that all the events that preceeded today's situation have prepared you for now. If looking back does not give you answers, then be patient until God shows you the thing for which He is preparing you.

David Petersen
writing for the Deacons

Youth Page

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47 ESV

Yeah, I know we've been in this section of the Bible for a while now. People are probably starting to get sick of it. I'm still not over it... There is still so much on my mind regarding Church... the way the disciples did it. I mentioned a few weeks ago, if there were ever a Church to mimic it would be the original Church, the Church led by the ones closest to Jesus while He was here.

The picture that Luke creates here in Acts 2 is something I deeply long for. Unity, connectedness, encouragement, generosity, joy, gladness, wisdom, and fellowship... the Church should be a group of people that is overflowing with those attributes. But the sad part is I do not always see this. Why is that? What needs to change?

I can really only speak for myself, but I know what needs to change in my heart... Church needs to be made less about the "program", the "service", the "events", the "obligations" and made more about *relationships*. As I read Acts 2 more the clearer and clearer it tells me that *relationships* are foundational to healthy Church life. There is not one singular noun referring to people in Acts 2:42-47. Why? Because in a description of healthy Church there simply is no "I", there is no "me". It is "us". It is "we".

So, where do we go then? How do we go from where we are, to where God calls us to be? Well, let's just start by doing things together. Watching the Vikings this Sunday? Do it together. Getting coffee at Hats Off Coffee during your lunch break? Do it together. Having a family board game night? Invite another family to join you. Praying? Do it together. Studying the Bible? Do it together. Take initiative and do it!

Now, don't misunderstand me, there is a time and place for solitude; finding alone time with God. I fully understand that. Rather, I am encouraging that we fight against our "Lone Ranger" mentality. Life was designed by God to be done *together*. Let us begin there.

In Christ,
Pastor Jonathan Finke

Family Ministries

As we head into 2019, I wanted to give you all an update on what has been going on in Children's Ministry this fall, and where we are headed in the new year.

For anyone who doesn't know, Quest 4K is our Wednesday night children's ministry for kids preschool age through 6th grade. We meet every week at 6pm and start with a group worship time. The kids then get to separate into different age groups to rotate through game time and lesson time. This fall, the kids have been learning about the Exodus and the amazing ways that God provided for His people, the Israelites. We had many families step up and volunteer to teach these lessons. Thank you so much to everyone who has helped. The importance of encouraging and teaching children as they grow in their faith is of great importance. We see this importance clearly outlined in Deuteronomy 6...

“ 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. “

Another way that we have seen God at work is through our monthly “Family Night.” On the first Wednesday of every month we invite all of the children and their families to join us for a different activity. In October we all gathered to carve and paint pumpkins. The kids had so much fun and it was a blessing to see the family interaction. In November we gathered for a delicious Thanksgiving feast. This month we traveled to two different nursing homes to sing Christmas Carols. This family night was particularly special. As I spoke with some of the residents after we sang, one woman looked up at me with tears in her eyes as she thanked us for coming. Family night has been such a great opportunity to get to know that parents and siblings of the children we get to see each week. The Lord has been so faithful in the past three months of ministry and I know that He will continue to provide exactly what we need as a ministry.

As we look forward to 2019, we will be having a Family Game Night on January 2nd. We are hoping for another great night of family interaction. In February we are planning for the return of the Pinewood Derby! Kids will get the chance to make their own car and race it for the first-place trophy!

As of the first Sunday in January we will be offering **Children's Church** during our Sunday morning worship service for kids ages 3 through kindergarten. We are so excited about the growing number of kids in our church and we want to be sure that we are using our opportunities to teach them about the gospel! If you would like to volunteer with the Children's ministry, please let me know.

Please pray for the children to come each Wednesday and Sunday with open ears as we open the Word. Please pray for connections with parents, and that children and families as a whole would come to know the saving grace of Christ.

Jackson Standafer
Director of Family Ministries



October, November, December

Birthdays & Anniversaries

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

01/07 Dave & Lynell Blanchard

01/13 Jim & Joni Fisher

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

01/01 Margaret Halverson

01/02 Kitie Hollenbeck

01/05 Dave Blanchard

01/06 Ron Hibbs

01/06 Dolly Parish

01/08 Joni Fisher

01/09 Gretchen Hibbs

01/10 Lori Larson

01/10 Lori Stacey

01/12 Jessica Arenson

01/13 Erin Finke

01/17 Seth Hibbs

01/18 Makenna Koltes

01/20 Levi Hibbs

01/25 Erin Blanchard

01/25 Bernie Dolezal

01/25 Sally Hanson

01/27 Audrey Stevens

01/28 Benjamin Larson

01/28 Mary Beth Miller

01/30 Jackson Standafer



FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

02/01 Ted Stacey

02/02 Zackary Larson

02/02 Dorothy Park

02/04 Ray Miller

02/06 Laine Larson

02/09 Megan Lentz

02/09 Faith Petersen

02/10 Lisa Wright

02/18 Sierra Larson

02/20 Tracy Kemper

02/21 Josie Stacey

02/21 Rosie Stacey

02/23 Snookie Noble

02/24 Kaylyn Hibbs

02/26 Josh Lentz

02/28 Jonathan Kemper



MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

03/02 Steve & Mary Beth Miller

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

03/01 Alaina Wright

03/02 Arnie Rocholl

03/05 Leland Sheneberger

03/07 Raelyn Miller

03/12 Dan Stacey

03/16 Nathan Hibbs

03/19 Heidi Puck

03/22 Darla Peterson

03/25 Carol Moulton

