



NEWS & NOTES

First Baptist Church of Long Prairie, MN
January, February, March 2012

PASTOR'S PAGE

As I have listened to our interactions about Christmas this year, one thing has stood out. Christmas is about Jesus. Obviously, this is quite an understatement. However, this year we seem to be more aware of our cultures attempt to remove Jesus from Christmas. We may not be able to influence all of our culture, but we can have a voice in the lives of the people around us. My hope for us this Christmas season is that we will be very intentional in keeping Jesus at the forefront of all that happens.

Our refocusing on Christmas pushes my thinking to a broader question. For us, as followers of Jesus, what about the remainder of the year? What is our year about? Is Jesus just the focus of Christmas and Easter, or should He be the focus of our entire year? In Philippians 3, Paul speaks very boldly on this issue.

⁷ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Our challenge is to make Jesus the focus of our lives all year through. This encompasses all facets of our lives. If Jesus is our focus, this impacts how we filter family, play, hunting, fishing, vacations, finances, relationships, work, etc... If we truly drill down on this question, it compels us to look at every aspect of our lives through the filter of Jesus. How does Jesus want me to live? How do I glorify and honor Jesus through each activity? How does Jesus want me to prioritize my life, my talents, my resources, my time? These questions do not have standard answers. In some ways the answers may look similar from one person to the next, but in other ways they will be very different. As we look at this coming year, I would like to challenge you to take the time to drill down on these questions in your life. Jesus deserves to be our focus at Christmas but he also deserves that same kind of intentional focus all year through.

Resting and Rejoicing in Jesus,

Pastor Andrew

Deacons' Corner

I am writing this on Sunday, December 18. That is my absolute deadline. I have been thinking most of this weekend and all of today what to write about. I am going to share my day with you. Got up this morning and got prepared for a day on the road, immediately following my Sr. high Sunday school class. Great bunch of kids but today I think we had only about 8 or 10. We're in the middle of a video series by Ken Ham about the importance of taking Genesis literally. The guy is way smarter than I am but he is getting me to think. If the beginning of a book or movie is important, then why isn't the beginning of the Bible important? Even the Gideons only include Psalms and Proverbs in many of their Bibles. If you get a chance, check out his video series.

After Sunday school we headed to the big, bad city to visit our 5 day old grandson. To look at a new baby and not see the hand of God is not possible for me. His parents, grand parents, and future church family have a lot of work to do in young Luke's life (at this moment he thinks the world revolves around him) but I am confident that Luke will someday know, love, and follow Jesus.

From Luke's house we went to my folks home in Vadnais Heights. We celebrated "Bennett Christmas" the way I remember it being celebrated 50 years ago in Chicago. We read the story of Jesus birth from Luke 2 and prayed before any gifts were opened.

We arrived home about 12 hours after leaving. I was tired and still had to water and feed the sheep and stoke the fire in the boiler. I went out in a less than great mood but God had a Christmas present for me. The sky was clear and there were a million stars out. Four different signs that God was and is in control. I guess it is possible to have a great day away from home, in the car, and in the city!

Hoping your Christmas revolved around Christ!
Barry Bennett

Youth News

2012 Mission Trip Announcement

It seems like most people have an opinion when it comes to missions. Some people believe that it is best to take international trips and experience other cultures. Others are under the conviction, "Why go half way around the world when there are needs in our own community?" Well, since I find value in both arguments, the 2012 Mission Trip will be in the Yucatan Peninsula (that's in Mexico) AND in Long Prairie, MN (that's in Todd County)! Confused yet?

It is no secret that (although the minority) we live in a heavily populated Hispanic community in Long Prairie. Because of this, we have some amazing and unique outreach opportunities outside our front doors. However, generally we have done a poor job reaching out to this community and specific culture. Therefore, a mission trip to Mexico, where we become the minority, has the potential to be a stretching and life altering event. While in the Yucatan we will have the opportunity to do service projects such as construction, repair work, painting and landscaping. We will also have the chance to do mercy ministry like visiting hospitals, prisons, senior citizen centers, orphanages and shut-ins. We will participate in evangelism by handing out Bibles, door to door conversations and participating in church services. Besides this, there will be plenty of sports and children's ministry to do including playing soccer, football, basketball volleyball, Frisbee and other large group games.

So, where does Long Prairie fit into the picture? Upon our return home, we will immediately put into practice all the things we have learned by hosting a VBS program at our church by partnering with Trout Lake Camps. During the summer, TLC takes the camp experience on the road by accompanying local churches in hosting four-day vacation Bible school programs. Each VBS is complete with chapel times, singing, snacks, crafts, mission times, discussions, lunch, games, community service projects and a closing outreach program.

The dates of the mission trip are June 14th-28th and this will once again be a multigenerational experience. Therefore, individuals don't have to be a "youth" in order to attend although some restrictions may apply. The cost will be approximately \$1000 but don't let the price tag scare you! In the past four years of leading trips, nobody has had to cancel or stay home due to lack of funds - that's what fundraising is all about!

Over the past five years we have taken some amazing and life changing mission trips to places like Toronto, Washington D.C., Minneapolis and Alaska. We have shared some incredible memories at Six Flags Theme Park, Progressive Field, Niagara Falls and while searching for moose or white water rafting. Both students and adults have been stretched and challenged to step out of their comfort zones and share their personal lives and stories with families, fisherman, strangers and the homeless. As impactful as all of these trips have been, one thing I believe that the participants have yet to experience are broken hearts. That is my hope and my prayer for the summer of 2012.

If you are feeling led by the Lord and interested in participating, please prayerfully consider joining the team this summer. See me (Pastor Craig) ASAP. The deadline for all applications, completed interviews and deposits is January 29th,

Go bless, *Pastor Craig*

January, February, March

Birthdays & Anniversaries

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 7 Dave, Lynell Blanchard
- 25 Army, Florence Westerberg

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Kitie Hollenbeck
- 3 Lyle Danielson
- 4 Helen Holecek
- 5 Dave Blanchard
- 5 Marlene Bromeling
- 6 Ron Hibbs
- 6 Dolly Parish
- 8 Wes Edin
- 8 Calliann Brunswig
- 9 Gretchen Hibbs
- 10 Lori Larson
- 13 Frank Sadlovsky
- 15 David Anderson
- 17 Gladys Edin
- 17 Seth Hibbs
- 18 Makenna Kollltes
- 22 Kyle Nelson
- 25 Erin Blanchard
- 25 Sally Hanson
- 25 Bernie Lentz
- 27 Audrey Stevens
- 27 Sara Petrie
- 28 Mary Beth Miller
- 28 Benjamin Larson

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Kaylyn Van Norman
- 1 Opal Sadlemyer
- 1 Caleb Anderson
- 2 Dorothy Park
- 2 Zackary Larson
- 4 Ray Miller
- 5 Laine Larson
- 8 Brandon Johnson
- 9 Lenard Bennett
- 9 Faith Petersen
- 9 Megan Lentz
- 10 Lois Haaland
- 10 Lisa Koltcs
- 10 Kyle Brown
- 11 Hannah Sonsalla
- 18 Sierra Larson
- 23 Snookie Noble
- 24 Kalyn Hibbs
- 26 Tiffany Johnson
- 26 Josh Lentz
- 26 Renee Hibbs

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Arnie Rocholl
- 3 Jon Parish
- 5 Leland Sheneberger
- 7 Darla Finke
- 7 Raelyn Miller
- 8 Irving Larson
- 8 Lexi Larson
- 12 Midge Hollenbeck
- 13 Courtney Miller
- 15 Faith Petrie
- 15 James Petrie
- 16 Nathan Hibbs
- 19 Dan Moulton
- 22 Darla Peterson
- 23 Mason Moore
- 24 Monica Miller
- 25 Carol Moulton
- 26 Joo Schneider
- 31 Graham Hollenbeck

