



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DOC)

MARCH 2023

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Depending upon the day you receive this newsletter, it is 9 more days until Easter. Easter is that one day that is the culmination of all of the teachings of Jesus Christ, the son of God on earth. Not only that, it is the fulfillment of prophecies long ago and even ever since that God dwells with his people. The testament of old is now fulfilled by the living of God among his people in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Easter may be described as one of those days long ago that changed nothing. There was no big revolt among the nations. The next day was just the same as the day before. Life went on as usual, at least for a few days. Rome was still in charge and the Roman legions were still an occupying force in Jerusalem.

It seems like the human situation, that culture where we are stuck merely going round and round in circles and cycles, is one that never ends. We seem never to get out of the rut of going back and forth, neither finding any center ground, compromise, or that which moves us forward. I would have thought with all of the things that we have, the knowledge that we possess and use, the education and experience that we possess; all these things would have given us less division and more unity. Our technology along with the strides in science and medicine should make this time in the history of the world a time when all nations have peace and harmony. Yet we find that is nowhere near the case. We might come to realize that life, the human situation, is really all about sin and redemption. Just as in the New Testament we may finally realize that wholeness is about forgiveness and reconciliation, often exposing the truth, but working both seamlessly and transparently in our total lives; personal, business, religious, political, economic.

So many words beckon us today. The messages who said that we should "fear not". The celebration of Easter for many, far too many, change the nothing. But for some, beginning particularly with a small group of rugged and uneducated followers, it changed everything. It was those three words that changed the course of history. It was three words that made tomorrow more sweat than today. It was three words that cause a revolution to happen. Those three words are "He has Risen". And those three words began to change the world. Now hope prevailed and that hope did not disappoint us.

Each of us must ask the question individually "how much did Easter change us?" Are we different people because of Easter? Are we living in fear or in faith with our walk every day? And perhaps most of all, are we darkness or are we light in our world? He has risen indeed!

Decisions?? What to do, which way to go. We make innumerable decisions everyday! Do we make wise decisions? Here is some information that might help?



Former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher's comment about decision-making: "Standing in the middle of the road is very dangerous, you get knocked down by traffic from both sides."

C.S. Lewis said, "Every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you, the part that chooses, into something a little different than it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all of your innumerable decisions, you are slowly turning the central thing either into a heavenly creature, or into a hellish creature by simply making the decisions that you make."

David Jeremiah, "Think Big, be decisive, and partner with God for every choice you make."

The above quotes are from some very intelligent beings. So being undecisive is a little dangerous because of traffic or because others might make the decisions for you and that might not be pleasant. We need to be sure we don't turn into that "hellish creature" so we must make good decisions.

So if we make innumerable decisions everyday, how can we be sure of the right or wrong in our decision making.

King Solomon was very wise. Where did he get this wisdom? God told King Solomon he would grant him whatever he asked. In 1 Kings Solomon asks God for wisdom.

1 Kings 3:7-10 states: ⁹ "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" ¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this."

If we want to make good decisions, we need God's wisdom for who is wiser than God? Jesus promised to be with us always, even to the end of the earth and he left with us a comforter that would guide us, do we listen to him?



BOOK CLUB

**APRIL
2023**

In April we will read “Egypt's Sister” by Angela Hunt. This story takes place during the “silent years”. Chava is the Hebrew daughter of the royal tutor. Urbi is an Egyptian princess. They became close as sisters being raised together in the Alexandrian palace. Urbi unexpectedly ascends the throne as Queen Cleopatra. Chava thinks their bond will be strong enough to survive. But power has a way of changing everything. Cleopatra changes, and her ultimate betrayal rips Chava from all she's known and sends her to the lowest rung of Roman society where she has to choose between love and honor and between her own desires and God's will for her life, if she ever hopes to rise again.

In May we are reading “Destined For You” by Tracie Peterson. This is from the “Ladies of the Lake” series. Gloriana Womack is trying to keep her family together after the deaths of her mother and two siblings to scarlet fever. She cares for her father and younger brother in Duluth, Minnesota. Her father is gone fishing on long trips to provide for them in the waters of Lake Superior. Luke Carson has come to Duluth to bring the arrival of the railroad to the city's port. But there's competition for the railroad to come to Superior, Wisconsin to their port. Luke is also eager to be reunited with his brother and family who also live in Duluth. Gloriana and Luke soon find their lives linked together when tragedy strikes and they must help each other through their grief. Can they survive the trials ahead and find they are destined for each other all along? Come join us and find out!

We meet once a month, on the first Monday at 1:30 pm. Please read the entire book before you come and be prepared to ask questions for all of us to answer. Please order your book from Amazon, or wherever you buy your books.

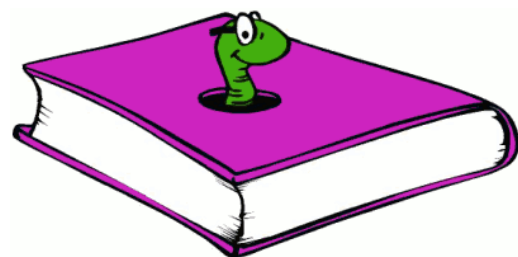
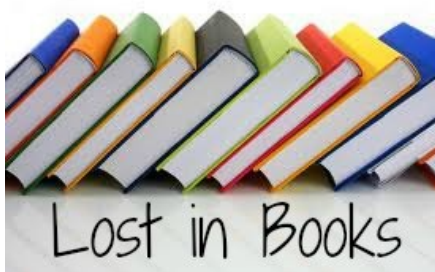
Our next meeting is Monday, April 3rd at 1:30 pm in the church library.

Here are our next books coming up:

May 1st, “Destined For You” by Tracie Peterson

September, “The Hidden Prince” by Tessa Afshar

Submitted by Jaquae L. Sands, 382-3428





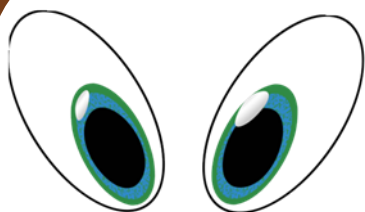
CHOIR NEWS

(April 2023)

Easter is here and with it comes changes with the music. We are bringing back several favorite anthems we haven't done in years. It's a good time to be part of the music department! Make sure you come and bring a friend to church so you don't miss anything!!! See you on Sunday!

Keep in Tune,

Jaquae



Are you keeping your eyes open for unsung heroes in our church? Please submit someone's name that should be recognized for the little things that are done for the church.



A big thank you to all who participate in counting the offering gifted to God's work each and every Sunday. It is sometimes a daunting job. So thank you to all who participate in this very necessary matter that helps to keep our doors open for worship!

TAX CORNER

As tax season comes to a close, I'd like to offer two ideas for 2023:

If you pay for items for the Church (for example, purchase food for the food bank or the Church community suppers), but do not ask the Church to reimburse you, you may give a copy of the receipt to the Church Treasurer and receive a tax statement that you can use to substantiate a tax deduction on your personal federal income tax return, if you itemize your deductions.

The tax code has increased the standard deduction and reduced the advantages of itemizing deductions on personal federal income tax returns, so many taxpayers are using the standard deduction rather than itemizing deductions for charitable contributions. For those of you who are at least 70 ½ years old and are required to take a minimum distribution each year from your IRA, there is good news. If you instruct your IRA custodian to issue a check from your IRA directly to the Church (not to you), it will be counted toward your required minimum distribution, and it will NOT be subject to federal income tax. The net result is that you save taxes and still can take the standard deduction on your federal income tax return.

If you have questions about either of these concepts, let me know.

Bill Hinline, Finance Committee chair.



February 16, 2023

A Word from Our Regional Minister

Postcards from the Road

As I travel around Florida, spending hours in my car, I keep busy by listening to podcasts. One of the ones I enjoy is “The Next Right Thing” by Emily P. Freeman. She offers a gentle conversation about making a life, one next right decision at a time. We don’t have to know all the answers, or where the journey is necessarily leading, to discern what might be the next right step along the way.

A couple of weeks ago, about 120 of us from across the region gathered at The Retreat at Silver Springs to have a conversation with Katie Hays about what Next Church might look like. She offered some great insights about discerning your congregation’s unique niche in the community and some thoughtful observations about what church might look like in the next 10 years. And she created a lot of energy about what might be the next unique steps for our congregations. As the gathering was ending, I heard a group from one congregation excitedly talking about where they would go from here and planning to continue the conversation.

It can be overwhelming to think about mapping out a full strategy for a congregation or a life. We don’t always know what’s around the next corner. We don’t necessarily know exactly where God is leading. Sometimes that uncertainty can lead to paralysis. Instead of mapping out a long term strategy that will be written in stone and take you 50 years into the future, maybe the next step is simply to figure out the next step. Maybe that’s gathering information about who is in your neighborhood. Maybe that’s gathering information about the unique resources and gifts of the congregation. Maybe you already know that, so the next step is to design an experiment: try something new and then evaluate how it went. Maybe the next right step is to devote a season to prayer and conversation, seeking God’s leading for the next right thing.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr is quoted as saying, “Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.”

What is your next right thing? What might be the next right step for your congregation? (And even if the next right step turns out to be the wrong step, if it gives you information and you learned that making mistakes aren’t the end, it can still be the next right step after all.)

Grateful to be walking this journey with you,

Sandy