



The Life and Times

Florida's Light & Life Park, Inc.
Newsletter

August 1, 2024

Volume 12 Issue 8 Page 1

FLORIDA'S LIGHT & LIFE PARK, INC.

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Lakeland, FL 33810

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Park Administrator: Stan Welton
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greg.t@lightandlifepark.org

Office Assistant: Lori Jones
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sherry@lightandlifepark.org
(Cell: 863-255-3776)

Office Hours:
November 15-April 14: 8 am- Noon
April 15-November 14: 9 am - Noon

Lots Available for Lease

There are currently no lots available to lease for a RV or Park Model.

The following lots are available for a modular home to be put on them:

5359 Beulah Land

5885 Shiloh Path

Call the Park Office at 863-858-7504 for information.

News from the Park Administrator

Wow, it's August. The weather here has returned to a more normal heavy late afternoon rains and mild, sunny mornings, but it is still quite humid. We've had several large downpours so that the pond and the Jordan have returned from the brink of dryness. In fact, over the last few weeks the levels for each have risen several feet.

Progress has been slow at our continued cleanup of 5580 Deeson Rd. Many more immediate situations have arisen that needed attention. Really, we're just saving the work for you all when you return. Actually, as staff and volunteers have time and are willing to work in the hot, muggy air, they put some time in. We are still picking up pavers, cement blocks, and coral rock. It is difficult for me to understand why there were so many.

Recently, we collected water samples for testing the levels of many different chemicals and pollutants. This is done every three years unless there have been any exceedances. Once again, none of the elements that are checked exceeded the minimum acceptable levels. Samples were also collected from ten (10) residences for testing that is done every year. So far, those results have not been received. When they are, I will let you know.

If you do not have someone taking care of the trimming around your residence, you **MUST** make those arrangements now. The green stuff (you know, grass and weeds) is growing at several inches **a week**. I will be sending out notices soon to anyone whose residence has not been cared for.

Please be in prayer for the staff this summer. There have been many important interruptions that have kept us from working on larger projects that have deadlines looming ahead. Your prayers for God holding back interruptions are coveted.

Continued next page.

Continued from previous page.

Last month, the Board authorized the purchase of the remaining tables and chairs for Hood Hall. Although the table and chairs are here and set up, adequate funds have not yet been raised for this upgrade. So, if this is something you would like to help with, please send a check with "Hood Hall Tables & Chairs" noted at the bottom. Here's an early look:



Here it is near the end of July and there has been only one hurricane, and it was the earliest on record. However, the dust storm from Africa is not going to last forever, and then we will be seeing much more tropical activity. As a reminder, if you are visiting the Park during hurricane season, it is important that we know you are here and when you leave for an extended time. As a resident during this time, you need to be prepared should a hurricane be headed our way. Loose items must be stored inside or anchored securely so they cannot be blown around and cause damage. Please visit www.ready.gov for more information about how to prepare.

Have a great rest of the summer. Enjoy your time with friends and family. See you soon.

San

Check out the park website!

Copies of the newsletter, the Park calendar, places for sale, and much more can be found there.

www.lightandlifepark.org

Office News

Summer is in full swing. We are finally getting the afternoon thunderstorms that come with summer. This is much needed rain. A good tropical storm with rain and lighter wind would be good for our water levels. We just don't want any hurricanes. It is important that we have accountability of the people in the park during hurricane season. Please let the office know if you are a year-round resident and you are leaving the park for more than just a few days. If you are having guests or family stay at your place, please let the office know.

We have had lots of rain in the evenings, lots of cleaning to do after the rain and wind.

Hope you are having a great Summer.

There were no closings during the month of July.

The Following Places are For Sale:

1. Rex and Bethel Root, 5311 Sharon Trail
Block Home, \$120,000.00
2. Doug and Lori Jones, 5352 Bethany Way
Block Home, \$65,000.00
3. Michael Gardner, 5333 Hebron Ct Travel Trailer, \$6,300.00
4. Deano and Darlene Pulice, 5337 Ebenezer PI Travel Trailer, \$12,500.00
5. Estate of Julia McDonald, 5315 Hebron Ct, Travel Trailer, \$8,000.00
6. Dean and Barbara Rockwell, 5319 Hebron Ct. Park Model, \$35,500.00
7. Debbie Roberts, 5326 Ebenezer Place, Travel Trailer, \$38,000.00
8. Criag and Cindy Ewing, 5833 Moriah Place
Singlewide, \$50,000.00
9. Wes and Marilyn Crist 5422 Bethany Way
Block Home, \$140,000.00

Lori Jones, Office Secretary for

Greg Thomas, Office Manager

News from the Board of Directors

Visionary. (*especially of a person*) *thinking about or planning the future with imagination or wisdom.*

In Light and Life Times, August 2023 issue, we wrote an article about the history of our Park. (reference the Park website published article *Park History*). From the initial purchase of 40 acres in 1964, we grew and grew as more and more property was acquired throughout the years. Our early leaders had the “imagination and wisdom” to set the foundation of what we enjoy today some 60 years later. With the purchase of the newest property this year we now have 126 acres.

We again find ourselves asking what should we do with the latest addition? How do we move into the next phase to serve not only the longtime residents but the next generation of members coming in? From early on it was quite evident that many wise and talented members were involved in setting the direction of what we enjoy today as Florida's Light and Life Park.

Throughout the writings of the *Park History* several points stand out:

- 1) It wasn't just a few people; it was the involvement of many.
- 2) The focus was on building the infrastructure of the Park but also recreation
- 3) The church was not just in the center but the “heart” of the Park
- 4) Many volunteers have been involved.
- 5) Extra funds were raised by donation and/or planned giving.

So, what does it mean to be Visionary? There are many similar words: inspired, perceptive, imaginative, discerning, innovative and far-sighted to name a few. But, how about this? *The ability to see the big picture and the potential for what could be.* **Call it Future Planning. To advance the Light and Life Park into the future one of our duties is to have a broad perspective and make wise judgments.**

Continued from previous column.

Psalm 119-105 reads: “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”. Our hope is that He is leading the way as we are in the Word. Please keep praying that we will all be able to continue leading with vision.

God Bless

Larry Putnam

Summer Dinners

Monday, August 5th at 5:30 pm.
The cost is \$6.00.

If you are willing to help with set-up or clean up, please let Dave Cook know.

The menu for August will be Lasagna, Garlic bread sticks, salad, & dessert.

Sign up in Hood Hall by Friday, August 2.

Looking Forward:

The **September** dinner will be a Baked Potato Bar with salad and dessert.

It will be September 9th at 5:30.

Please look for the sign-up sheet after the August dinner.

Dinner at the Max!

5:00 pm Friday evenings

Bring a dish to pass
enjoy **Dinner** at the Max
and **Game Night** immediately following.

Of course, you may enjoy either dinner or games...whatever fits your schedule!

Where to Donate your Goods

The donations given at the Park to help others are appreciated. **Please take your donations to the following places:**

Food donations for Briarwood may be left on the designated table in Hood Hall.

Slightly used linens may be donated for Senior Orphans in Hood Hall. Please refer to Senior Orphans article in this newsletter.

Jean Whipple takes several items to Talbot House weekly. See that article in this newsletter for details.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Metal Cans

There are containers over in the enclosed space by the Garbage containers for recycling your metal cans and are picked up by Errol.

Pop/Soda cans are to be placed in the bins designated for aluminum cans and are to be separated from other metal cans.

Errol uses the proceeds from the metal to support his son who is a Pastor of a very small church.

Thank you for your support.



Talbot House Ministry

The ongoing deliveries of prescription bottles, unused medicines, **good clean clothing** that you no longer use, and small household items is an ongoing project. Please continue to save these helpful items for the homeless shelter and the Good Samaritan Clinic.

Please put all clean, washed clothing as well as all other items in bags and leave it in my porch on Fridays. We will deliver on Saturdays. If it is not clean and/or bagged it will be thrown out. I am not able to do that part anymore. Thanks for your cooperation.

Should you wish to help financially or take your own items yourself the address is: 814 North Kentucky Avenue, Lakeland.

Thank you! Jean Whipple

Stamps for Missions

Alliance Stamp Ministry has generated over **ONE MILLION DOLLARS** towards Spanish Sunday School curriculum used by forty different denominations in Latin America, Spain, and the USA since its inception in 1972. It took 46 years to reach that first million-dollar goal; that's \$21,739 average per year, \$1811 per month.

POLITICS!

Especially around elections you may feel inundated with persuasive mailings. Many postcards, flyers, and letters do have postage stamps, some presorted, pre cancelled, nonprofit, or bulk rate. Remember to cut these stamps (cancelled or not) with 1/4 - 1/3" borders on all sides whenever possible.

Actual stamps and computer-generated postage (with an illustration, photograph, or mosaic) and preprinted stamp pictures on envelopes are acceptable BUT no information printed on paper, no metered mail nor permit number of businesses and organizations.

I know it gets confusing, when in doubt save it. Doing so supports Spanish Christian literature efforts; we're working towards our goal of \$2 million raised.

**Save them until fall;
take them to Hood Hall.**

Thank you for your participation!

Marilyn Stone
Coordinator



Medical Equipment Available

Maxwell Commons at The Villa has some medical equipment available that can be borrowed by any Park resident. Call someone you know in the Villa to help you. Please sign out the equipment you are borrowing. There are wheelchairs, walkers, rollators, portable pots, and shower seats. Please notify a Villa member when you are returning an item, so we know it has been returned. Please **don't** leave it on the porch. We are **not** presently accepting any equipment donations due to lack of storage space.

SENIOR-ORPHANS

In need of your help:

As you know, John and I have moved to an area about 2 hours east of Lakeland. Therefore, I am looking for someone to oversee the Senior Orphans donations ministry here in the park. It would require that you transport things from Hood Hall on an as-needed basis when the bins have enough donations to warrant a trip to the coordinator's house right off N. Galloway Rd. It is right on our way to Wal-Mart, so it is very convenient to drop things off if/when we're

making a Wal-Mart run. 😊 I ask that you **prayerfully consider becoming the coordinator of Senior Orphans donations in our park**, and if you have any interest or any questions, please contact me. 🙏

Thank you, and God's blessings to you.

Humbly,
Terri Boda

Fellowship Dinner with Programs

Fall will be upon us before we know it. Our dinners with programs on the first Monday of the month will resume in November.

The fall schedule begins Nov 4 with Carol Zeller planning another interesting program, then a Dec 9 Christmas event under the guidance of Carolyn Lindley. 2025 dates: Jan 6, Feb 3, Mar 3, Apr 7, Nov 3, and Dec 8. **Easy way to remember** always the first Monday except Dec when we give more time after Thanksgiving dinner.

If you like to do skits, vocal or instrumental music, plan, organize, coordinate set-up/clean-up, invite new residents, post flyers, be greeters/helpers at the doors, host a table, etc. please contact me.

God bless you all and hope you join us in the fall!

Marilyn Stone, chairman jaxstone68@gmail.com

The Board has authorized several projects to which you can make donations.

1) chairs & tables in Hood Hall, 2) the purchase of 5580 Deeson Road, 3) the improvements to the pickleball court, and 4) installation of a new tennis court.

Blood Pressure

Since many people are heading north for the summer, the blood pressure clinics have come to an end.

However, since I am here year-round you can still get your blood pressure taken on a regular basis if necessary.

I can come to your house, or you can come to mine, 5437 Bethel Dr.

JoAnn Willet RN
989-615-8430



Dear God, shape our hearts
to show others the same
unconditional love You
shower on us each day.

HOME BIBLE STUDY

Come join us in the Church Annex for this informal Bible study. **Everyone is welcome.**

Monday at 2:30

We are currently studying **Romans.**

Cindy Igel: 716-803-3961 Pam Hill: 863-808-3779

Email: church.llfmc.org

Gad-About 2025

- Jan 09 IKEA Shopping n lunch
Bahama Breeze in Tampa
- Jan 23 Circle B-Bar Reserve Trolley n
Lunch in Bartow
- Feb 13 Scenic Boat Tour n lunch at
Harborside Restaurant in
Winter Haven
- Feb 27 Christian Movie n Lunch at local
restaurant in Lakeland
- Mar 13 Russell Stover's Outlet n lunch
Sumner Lake in The Villages
- Mar 27 Lake Mirror Gardens n lunch
Garden Bistro

Flo Grabowski Cell 931-797-2639
coachfollc@gmail.com

Peggy Dunn Cell 248-766-5537
pegjim2000@yahoo.com

L & L Aqua Splash Water Aerobics

Come & enjoy fun in the sun with a low-impact workout in the water to enhance health & wellbeing.

Hello L&L Friends! Happy Summer!

We are currently battling the weather and summer holidays. Please let me know if you are here in the Park and would like to resume our weekly schedule.

Watch neighborhood news and Face Book for upcoming dates.

As always, remember to go at your own pace, modify moves as needed and drink water after participating

See you poolside. 🌴🕶️

Happy Swimmers!

Karen Castle-Williams
allforyum@aol.com
 704-502-0466.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST

**CALLING ALL MODEST GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY COUPLES**

If you are celebrating your 50th anniversary in 2025 and are too shy to say so, let me encourage you. You might not like the spotlight, but it is a blessing for the park residents to honor you on this accomplishment. For many, it reminds them of when they celebrated 50 years. For others, it is an inspiration that your faith and commitment has kept you together through good times and bad. For some of us, it is just an opportunity to have a party.

Last year there was at least one couple that wasn't sure they wanted to participate - but remarked afterward that they were happy they did because it was a lot of fun.

We all know that it is a blessing to bless others. When we allow people to celebrate with us, we are allowing them to share in the blessing.

You won't be alone - there are at least four other couples who are being honored, so that spotlight won't be fixed squarely on you.

Think about it, and please let me know if you will allow us to honor your marriage in this way.

Carolyn Lindley
carolyn_lindley@yahoo.com
 50th Anniversary Chair

Bucket Listers



Have you made your plane reservation to return to Florida yet or have you started counting the days until you return to Light and Life Park? Enjoy your summer wherever you are because summer will be over soon.

The Bucket Listers will continue to offer Tuesday Night Movies and Tuesday Night Trivia, in Hood Hall, during the months of January, February and March.

We will also offer a hot dog lunch during the craft show in December!

As a result of your support, we can do amazing projects in our park!

This summer while you are cleaning or going to yard sales and you spot some newer 300- or 500-piece puzzles put them aside and save them for Florida. We appreciate your donations!

Enjoy your summer and we will see you in the fall.

Mugs on Monday

We are looking forward to a great season of MUGS ON MONDAY the second and fourth Mondays of each month, **January through March at 8:30 AM in The Hood**.

Everyone is welcome to come fellowship, drink coffee and eat a donut, if you choose.

The purpose is to get together and enjoy our time smiling a lot and getting to know each other better. Come join in.



Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to those who have donated to Operation Christmas Child/ Shoe Box Ministry. It is a joy to find the wonderful items you dropped in the tote at Church.

We are almost halfway through 2024 and I am looking forward to boxing up 200 plus shoe boxes this year. So, we need at least 200 of everything.

Remember you can box the plastic shoe boxes too.

Please continue to purchase items. We have storage in Hood Hall. Your donations are also welcome.

Please keep praying 🙏 for Operation Christmas Child. We want every child to know God and to receive this blessing.

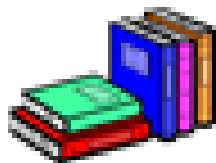
With all glory to God, I found a Barbie size shoe box and put them on a tiny tree at the Church. Photo below for your enjoyment too.

Sometimes it is hard for me to wrap my mind around all we have (like tiny Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes) when some children have nothing and do not know how much Jesus loves them. Let us use this tree as a reminder to show as many children as possible the love and the message of Jesus.



Kathy Miller
716-598-1924
Kathymiller5159@gmail.com

Library Information



Library Notes

What's Happening

We are working diligently to have the books in the main room of the library updated with new Labels and information in the database so patrons can look up information more efficiently. When you come back in the fall or winter, the 248 section, which is Christian Living, will be categorized into smaller sections and will be easier to understand.

When checking in books this week, I realized that covers on brand new books were being damaged due to people rolling back the front covers. This causes the book covers to bend and come apart at the edges, thus in need of repair. Please be careful how the books are handled so they can have a longer shelf life.

Have a great summer and see you next fall!

Book Review

Hillbilly Elegy A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis

by J. D. Vance (President Trump's Running Mate)

We want to know about J. D. Vance, Trump's running mate for Vice President under the Republican ticket. As a Christian we want people who have accepted Christ as their savior leading our country. We are all unsure of who Mr. Vance is, so when asked if we could find books about this person, I eagerly looked up information.

J. D. Vance is a U. S. Senator from Ohio, who was in the Marines and is a graduate from Yale University School of Law. He is from a "Rust Belt" town, an area

Continued from previous column.

of the United States which has experienced a significant decline in the economy, which comes with loss of higher income jobs therefore increased poverty rates. It reminds me of the Oil City, PA area after Quaker State moved its headquarters to Texas.

From the information provided: There are so many areas of the U. S. which can be included in the Rust Belt stigma. This book seems to show significance of this type of problem facing many Americans today.

The Vance family story begins in postwar America. J. D.'s grandparents were "dirt poor and in love," and moved north from Kentucky's Appalachia region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility.

But as the family saga of *Hillbilly Elegy* plays out, we learn that this is only the short, superficial version. Vance's grandparents, aunt, uncle, sister, and, most of all, his mother, struggled profoundly with the demands of their new middle-class life, and were never able to fully escape the legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma so characteristic of their part of America. Vance piercingly shows how he himself still carries around the demons of their chaotic family history.

A deeply moving memoir with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures, *Hillbilly Elegy* is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.

This book is coming to our library within the next week. It will be in the new section of the library as soon as I process it. It will offer you some insight into the Republican nomination for Vice President.

Gloria Welton
Librarian

2025 CPC Golf Tournaments!

Mark your calendar!

January 17th, 2025

Two-person (men and women) Tournament (18 holes Scramble)! Bring your partner! Men & women divisions. New date (Friday) Start time 10:00 AM

February 21st, 2025

Club Championship Tournament (two flights each for Men & Women (18 holes) (Friday) 10:00 AM start time.

(Note: closest to the pin and longest drive contest will be held as part of the Club Championship)!

March 21st, 2025

Two-person Blind Draw tournament (18 holes) Men & Women Categories (\$50 to each winning team). Plus, names on a trophy in Hood Hall.
(Friday) Shot gun start at 10:00 AM.

April 1st, 2025

Three club Co-Ed tournament (Play your own ball).
(Monday) 18 holes. 10:00 AM

FYI, the above dates are subject to change if they conflict with more important events in the park.

Cars and Coffee

2nd Saturday of every month

August 10, 2024

8 am to 10 am.

Vehicles of all years, sizes, and shapes are welcome at Light and Life Park, 5730 Deeson Road (at the end of the road) Lakeland, Florida.

The gates will be open. You can see cars parked in the parking lot under the trees on the left. Come have coffee and donuts. Join in the fun!

Larry Thomas 540-447-0458

Library2Go

Thursday August 1st

10 AM to 11 AM

Each stop provides an opportunity to:

- Register or renew a library card.
- Place holds on library materials.
- Pick up materials placed on hold.
- Return library materials.
- Check out from a selection of popular materials: regular print fiction & nonfiction books, large print fiction books, magazines, and DVDs.
- Use wireless Internet access for personal devices.
- Print wirelessly.

Annual Park Christmas Craft and Bake Sale

Friday, Dec 6th
at Hood Hall.

More information to follow.



Thank you,
Becky Smith
231.349.2993

Salvation Army Crafting Event

Join us in Hood Hall

Friday August 16, starting at 1:00 pm

Saturday August 17, starting at 8:00 am

Bring your projects to work on in a light hearted atmosphere.

Come and go as you please. Cost is \$20.00 for a half of an eight foot table where you can work on your project.

All proceeds go to the Salvation Army Transitional Housing Program.

We will be collecting **Baby things** which you can bring to HH anytime during those Two days

BUT anyone is welcome to just come and watch.

Also, some of the ladies have things to sell.

Best Regards

Cindy Lower

Our beautiful Park



Water

Is

Back

Visitors

To

Church



Thanks Cindy Lee

The Bowling League

Our next season will start January 7, 2025, the organization meeting will be January 6 at 1pm at Hood Hall.

The Bowling Alley has a new look.



Barb Hartson, President. bfhartson@gmail.com

Shuffleboard

Welcome to the amazing Florida summer - The courts **are always open**, and the pucks will be waxed. You are always welcome to play regardless of the sun, heat, humidity, and the typical afternoon rain deluge. Enjoy! Looking forward to resuming a regular schedule in the Fall.

☐ Regular Tournament:
January 30, 31 and February 3, 2025

☐ Challenge Tournament:
February 27, 28 and March 3, 2025

Bill Sones President

Beautification Committee



Beautification Parade

The Beautification Parade for 2025 will be on the 27th of February.

The theme for the parade will be.
"Individual Entrees Choice".

You decide what you want your theme to be, remembering that the scoring is based on originality, 360-degree visualization, identifiable theme, and an incorporated biblical affirmation.

If you have any questions, contact:

Tom Lake

Laket001@yahoo.com

Beautification Committee President

Newsletter Deadline

Please be sure that your submissions to **The Life and Times** are delivered to the newsletter editor, Barb Hartson by the 20th of the month prior to publication.

Please use this email: bhartson@gmail.com Email is the preferred method.

The September deadline is August 20th unless the activity is in the latter half of the month. Then check with me to see if you can still make it in.

Barb Hartson Editor

The 3rd **Annual Saturday Before the Fourth Picnic** was a success!

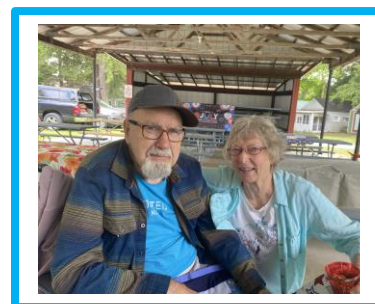
Thirty-five current and former residents of Light and Life Park gathered for a picnic on June 29, 2024, at Manton Christian Camp in Manton, Michigan.

Thanks to all who came and brought delicious food! It was good to see everyone and catch up on what they had been doing so far this summer.

Mark your calendar for the 4th **Annual Saturday Before the Fourth Picnic** to be held 6-28-25!



It was especially nice to have Rex and Bethel Root join us for the picnic.



Light and Life Free Methodist Church

5730 Deeson Road
Lakeland, FL 33810
Phone: (863) 858-6361
Fax (863) 858-3982
Email: church@lflmc.org

Pastor: Jeff Bellinger
Associate Pastor: Roger Haskins
Secretary: Pam Hill
Email: church@lflmc.org

A Note from our Pastor

²³ I am in them and You are in Me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent Me and that You love them as much as You love Me." - John 17:23

Observations...

There should be no doubt of the love the Father has for His one and only Son, in whom He is well pleased (Matthew 3:17).

Jesus declares that...the Father loves us! just as much as He loves Jesus!

As we let that soak in to our relationships with one another, there should then be a spirit of unity that settles into our relationships with one another.

Look, live and love like Jesus. Why? How? Because the Father loves us just as much as He loves Jesus.

Dr. Roger Haskins, Bishop Emeritus

Roger.haskins.jr@gmail.com

585.301.8610 cell (US)

The Light and Life Church Office Hours

New hours for the summer.
Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday
9am – 2pm

Pam Hill Secretary

Missions Moment

Free Methodist World Missions is exciting!

Did you know?

Since 1890, the Free Methodist Church has expanded its ministry to over 100 countries. The current FM membership around the world is over 1.5 million.

Most Free Methodist members are African with over 940,000 members.

Did you know?

There have been more than 2000 conversions in Ethiopia in the past few years.

In Latin America, 1000 house churches have been recently planted with 6000 new believers.

Did you know?

The Free Methodist World Missions goal in Asia is to reach one million people for Christ.

Did you know?

God is using the link with the refugees coming out of Ukraine to tell the good news of Jesus Christ.

In the Middle East, over 6000 house churches have been planted in 8 countries.

Did you know?

There are approximately 100 missionaries that currently serve with the FM World Missions.

Did you know?

Our Light and Life Church supports three Free Methodist World Missionaries?

Josh and Susy Fajardo – serve as the FM Europe Area Director in Spain with Impact Ministries.

Dennis and Kyle Leon –serve in Costa Rica with FM 360 Missions District.

Michael and Maria Long – pastor the FM Thessaloniki Church in Greece.

Did you know?

You can be a part of this exciting FM World Missions movement right here at our church with your prayers and financial support.

Blessings,
Vonnice Denton
dentonbv@gmail.com

**Why Politics and Religion Don't Make for
Nice Company"**
From The Wake Up Call Daily Devotional
by J.D. Walt

Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." Acts 23:6–11 (NIV)

CONSIDER THIS: On the one hand, it looks like Paul pulled a trick play right out of the playbook of Sun Tzu. A common enemy produces allies, but if the allies can be turned against one another the focus on the common enemy is lost. And if the alliance can be broken by appealing to a deeper bond between the common enemy and one of the allies, all the better. You've heard the saying, "My enemy's enemy is my friend." Paul, as a Pharisee, knew the Pharisees believed in the Resurrection of the dead and that the Sadducees

did not believe it and further that it was a point of bitter dispute.

Though it's not a great analogy, Paul knew Sadducees and Pharisees were something akin to the Democrats and the Republicans today. They weren't so much political parties as they were theological parties. In my estimation, they weren't so much theological parties as they were ideological factions. ***Whenever an ideologically partisan faction masquerades as a theological movement it quickly gets political, and people get murdered in the name of "God."*** (It's a much larger and more nuanced conversation but this is the essence of Christian nationalism.)

You've heard the saying, "Politics makes strange bedfellows"? That's what we see here. Some of the leaders of the Pharisees, the ones trying to kill Paul, actually took Paul's defense. In the end, though, it didn't work. Rather than getting the attention off from himself, Paul had to be forcibly removed by the soldiers to keep him from being literally torn to pieces. He became the proverbial rope in their game of ideological tug of war.

This is our first sign that the conflict is far more ideological than theological in nature. Do you remember the day when avowed enemies, Herod and Pilate, shook hands in a common alliance against Jesus? That's the problem with so many religious disputes. They are often just power battles clothed in theological garb. When theology devolves into ideology it's a short step to idolatry (manipulation and control) which inevitably

pushes out doxology (surrender and worship). The power of the gospel, by its very nature as the power of God, threatened to undermine and undo the power of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

I think there's a word tucked in here for Christians in an embattled and embittered election year. Religion and politics don't make for nice company. However, worship and prayer make for "good" church.

This kind of thing continues to happen in the church among the people of God to this very day because we choose to stay at the level of religion and politics. In our efforts to fight what we consider to be false ideologies with what we believe to be good theology, we usually wind up becoming counter-ideologues ourselves and the whole thing becomes about power and winning. We tend to slaughter our opponents not so much with weaponry as with our words; and yes, it still happens in the name of "God."

Unless our theology becomes doxology it is really only veiled ideology that turns to idolatry (i.e., control).

So how does theology become doxology? Thanks for asking.

Get down on your knees. Declare aloud, "Jesus is Lord."

By way of qualification let me say this: The gospel is political though Jesus is not a partisan. And the kingdom of heaven does mean societal reformation (though we should be wary of social engineering). And certainly, a democratic constitutional republic is worlds different from an ancient imperialistic empire.

In the midst of all this complexity, the real worship of God under the lordship of Jesus Christ matters most. Despite all our differences in this society and across the world, we must labor to find each other underneath the banner of the cross in true humility and self-giving love.

Only here might we bury our broken politics and behold the resurrection of genuine political engagement. This is what the church is. This is what a great awakening looks like.

Submitted by Pastor Jeff

OUTREACH

Please be in prayer for this ministry. Truly miraculous things are happening. We are slowly building relationships with children and teens. That has made parents curious enough to want to meet and figure out these weird Christian people that bring food weekly and why? Jesus loves us and wants us to share the love. Sometimes love looks like a heavy gallon of milk.

We need your prayers, donations of items and financial support. Please consider what you can do.

Love to have school supplies. Hygiene items are a huge hit with teens so save those hotel freebies.

Are you a yard sale fan? We could use rice cookers, crock pots etc. to teach folks the benefits of preparing food at home.

Did you know a 2-pound bag of rice is the same cost as 2 cups of prepared rice?

Did you know you can make several easy meals for the price of one trip to McDonald's

If you did know these things you are blessed. My mother taught me so much, but some folks have never learned. It appears to be generational. Can't teach what you don't know so that is our mission to teach and change lives.

Physical hunger may keep people from realizing true hunger is for Jesus Christ.

Chris Aurich

Director

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