

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you and watch over you..



THE CHURCH THAT CARES . . .

In our last newsletter, there was an article on all the families who have lost loved ones in recent months. These families are hard-hit; they are even now 'walking through the valley of the shadow of death.' Who will be walking with them, I wonder?

In this Sunday's message about the value of COMPASSION, I am pouring out my heart story about a church that seemed to abandon my family - following the death of my dad, long, long ago. After the funeral, there didn't seem to be much, if any follow up care, coming from church staff, or church members. So, after some time, our family seemed to fade away from the church, and away from the family of God.

God created the church to be a loving family, a family which cares for its own very well, and likewise, cares for neighbors very well. We are even to care for sojourners very well (people who are just passing through). Unfortunately, in our times, we have become consumed with 'busyness'! The busyness of:

- Working for a living. Many work above and beyond what's needed, to advance materialistic goals.
- Enjoying hobbies. Reading, TV-watching, game-playing and many other personal, self-directed pursuits can crowd out any time that might be available to invest in actual human relationships - compassionate relationships.
- Focusing on the family. Spending time with nuclear and close biological family seems to be a very high priority in these parts; nothing much wrong with that. But too much of anything can be . . . too much! Jesus taught a new meaning of family: the family of Christ - the Kingdom family - the Eternal family - is what counts. Balance!

So, we live in a very distracted time. We are all 'extremely busy.' I even hear retirees comment 'I am busier than ever now! I don't know how I ever had time to work!' Busy with work, busy with family, busy with hobbies, travel and leisure; when do we ever have time to do what disciples do - carry out acts of kindness, compassion, and mercy towards those who most need it - in the church family, in the community in which we live, and in the world?

Another factor that compounds the problem (Christians not being very compassionate, or not acting on their compassion) is this: the assumption that 'someone else will deal with that.' Somebody in the church has experienced a death in the family, or is going through a divorce, or has been diagnosed with cancer, and know that and yet we think: # 1) I'm busy enough already, and # 2) someone else can take care of them. (Probably the pastors, pastors are never too busy, right?)

I think the church was functioning at its best when it was very young, and very new. The Word of God (The Bible) puts it this way:



They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Advancing two chapters further into Acts, we find a similar theme:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (Acts 4:32-34)

The early church family had heart - great heart. Warm, compassionate, sensitive, generous, very open to giving to those who had need. What was this? Was it communism? No, it was generosity and grace. The grace of Christ. It was a focus on Christ first, others second, self a distant third.

One of my passions in ministry over the last 20 years or so since Christ got hold of me is this: Recapturing that early and passionate essence of love, of family, of caring and compassion within the church family. To recapture the spirit of the church that is recorded historically, and biblically - the church that made a difference. The church that cared. The church that was on the move - that was growing rapidly - because of its lavishly caring reputation.

Here's the issue: "Houston, we have a problem!" (Words spoken following an explosion on Apollo 13). The church has a problem today.

Not only are many churches today lukewarm (something Jesus warned of in the book of Revelation), they are cold. Cold hearted. Uncaring. Perhaps caring for self, or a special few, but not really sensitive to caring for those who are hurting.

And why does that matter, Pastor Art? It is because of this: when people who have entered into the church expecting love, and connection, and family - fail to have those needs met, they figure 'the church doesn't work.' And then they figure, 'Christianity doesn't work.' They may even get to the point of 'God isn't real, or God doesn't care.' And, they leave. Just like my family did, so many years ago.

We have seen this happen, many times at Salem. People come in, people go out. It's like a revolving door. People aren't sticking. Many don't become family. Maybe because we are too busy. Our calendars are full. Family, work, hobbies, and leisure (sitting) take up all of our spare time. And besides, others can care for people who have needs, right?

My leadership vision for Salem is to become one of the finest, most authentic (read that Spirit filled, genuinely Christian, caring) church families around these parts. I see that happening. We are moving in the right direction.

Of course, we still have folks 'falling through the cracks.' People who are hurting, or lonely, and we don't notice, and don't care. We need to keep up our vigil, our watchfulness. We need to embrace folks into our family - even if they aren't our cousins. Because they are still our brothers and sisters in Christ.

So, a preview - some food for thought - as we approach this Sunday's message. Hope you will find it helpful!



NEW MINISTRY: STEPHEN MINISTRY

I want to let you know about something that Pastor Jason, and I, and our board are very excited about - the beginning of a new ministry at Salem. It's a ministry of compassion - to take care of our own people very well.

As noted in the previous article, one of the sad things for pastors is to watch people - and families - who we love - to watch them fade away, and disappear. Often, it is a repeat of the story of my own family. They come in, with high hopes and expectations to become part of a loving church family, maybe hoping to feel like they are PART OF a family for the first time. To be in a family that truly cares for them. And things may go well for awhile. And then, at some point, they hit a rough patch in the road, and things don't go so well. And they begin to feel that the church - the church family - does not know, and does not care. And after some time, they begin to drift away from the church. And nobody seems to notice that they're not around. And that convinces them that they were never really part of the church family to begin with. And then, they're gone.

This new ministry, Stephen Ministry, is named after one of the first deacons in the church. Stephen. Stephen was very much like Jesus. He had compassion on people. He cared enough about people to be honest with them about their need for Christ. And he did not even hold it against the people when he was being stoned for his faith in the Lord.

Stephen Ministry trains our own people - in depth - to truly care for our own people. So that if someone has lost a loved one, has lost a job, has lost a child, has been diagnosed with cancer, has been going through a divorce, or has trouble with the kids - there is someone who can care about them, walk with them, pray with them - and encourage them - regularly.

Our own Sandy Ibaugh will lead this ministry. She is leaving, on a jet plane, Sunday. And I do know when she'll be back again - Saturday night. After five full days and fifty hours of intensive Stephen's Ministry training in Dallas, Texas.

When she gets back, she will be our well trained ministry leader. But she'll be looking for ministers - for those who have caring hearts, who want to encourage those who are sad, suffering, and lonely, folks who are willing to walk with other folks through hard times.

So pray for Sandy this week. And pray about your own calling to be a Stephen's Minister - and care for those who are hurting.



**A NEW FACE AT SALEM . . .
BRADY STEINOUR**

I would like to invite those who feel close to the Lord when singing contemporary praise choruses to come to the 11 AM service this Sunday, where we will welcome again Brady Steinour from Shippensburg, as he leads us with acoustic guitar and piano music.

Lee Ann Hoover and our Raining Grace worship team are taking a very well deserved vacation from worship leading for two Sundays. They have served us well week in and week out for years, rarely taking a break. Well,

it's summer, and summer vacation time, and Brady has stepped in to help us for two Sundays, last Sunday, and this one, Sunday, July 9th.

Brady is a young musician, who is a graduate of Shippensburg High School. Music and worshipping the Lord has become his passion. He is attending Messiah College, undertaking a degree in Music and Worship, and supports himself financially by running a small landscaping business.

I think you will be well blessed if you should choose to come on Sunday, and you will encourage this young man as he leads us. I found last Sunday's worship to be very spiritually deep and meaningful myself.

Also Brady would like to invite our family of faith to come to a community worship celebration to be held later this month in the Borough of Chambersburg - see the advertisement below. It's free, and it's in the great outdoors. So pencil that in our your calendar - for the Lord loves the praise of His people!

UNITED BRETHREN NATIONAL CONFERENCE, LANCASTER PA

Next week our rather small but very faithful denomination will be celebrating 250 years of service to the world! It has

been 250 years since Martin Boehm and William Otterbein met in Isaac Long's Barn in Lancaster, and Otterbein, after hearing a revival sermon from Boehm, hugged him and pronounced 'Wir sind bruder' (We are brothers!). Our movement, United Brethren in Christ, was created over the shared value of the warming - the conversion of the heart.

A number of Salem families and pastors will be attending this year's conference, which runs from Wednesday, July 12 through Saturday, July 15. A few special notes about that week, and weekend:

On Saturday, July 15, our own Pastor Gener Lascase is being ordained as a full elder of the church; which is quite an honor. Pastor Arthur Page, and Pastor Jim Bolich will be standing with him and praying for him as the Bishop invokes upon Pastor Lascase his elder's orders.

During the conference, there will be many seminars intended to strengthen the ministry of local churches, as well as business meetings, opportunities for fellowship with ministry peers, and tours of United Brethren Historical sites.

On Sunday, July 16, because of the nearby conference, we will have a number of special guests with us in church at Salem:

- ✠ Several administrators from Huntington College will be present and will give greetings during our services;
- ✠ We will have a church leader from Liberia, Moses Somah, staying over for the International Conference which occurs Sunday through Tuesday at King Street Church. Moses will be with us for our morning services, and will be staying with the Page's during his time in Chambersburg.
- ✠ We will have a guest speaker during our service, Pastor Lester (Les) Smith (right) from Hillsdale UB Church in Hillsdale Michigan. Pastor Smith has a special ministry of presenting the Bible from the perspective of one of the Bible characters, and for us he will be the Apostle Peter, and probably sharing from memory tales from the New Testament. Pastor Smith has memorized over a long career many of the books of the Bible.
- ✠ Our own worship team, Raining Grace, after vacation, will be back in place, and we'll be delighted to welcome them home!



So, pray for an effective and fruitful conference, as we are the church who continues to stand on God's Word, the church that has not changed our confession of faith since it was first ratified in 1815!

SALEM PRAYER CORNER . . . Please be in prayer for

✠ Ministry Needs:

- Sandy Ibaugh, training for Stephen Ministry
- Salem Youth: Summer Mission Trip
- UB National Conference, 7/12-15
- Potential Salem relocation to North Pointe

✠ Hospital, or recovery

- Lori Hogue, aneurysm surgery 7/6
- Doris Guyer, recently released from hospital
- Jody Diehl, eye surgery recovery (praise!)
- Denae Brenize, dialysis complications
- Mossie Sites, spinal compression fracture
- Bruce Carbaugh, heart bypass recovery
- DeWayne Hogue, heart valve recovery
- Payton Bowling, recovery, brain tumor

✠ Grieving Families:

- Sites - Loss of Mossie's sister in law
- Wilmot - loss of Jeana's dad
- Young - loss of Sharon
- Keller - loss of Edna
- Stoltzfus - loss of Phil
- Frazer - loss of Kathy's sister
- Sellers - loss of Betty

✠ Suffering from pain, discomfort, illness, treatment

- Julianna Shubert, ongoing disorder
- Bob Paxton - compression fracture spine
- Brandon Kissinger, Chiari Malformation
- Moyenne Telcius (Haitian), cancer
- Ray Bricker, Parkinsons

LAST WORD: CARING

Caring. Another word for compassion.

This is a historic Christian value. And one we must pass on, if our world is to be habitable by the coming generations.

I think we can all see how our world is eroding in terms of values, in terms of kindness, and civility.

Someone wise once gave me these few words to live by: ***"If it is to be, it is up to me."***

Those could be words to live by for all of us, when it comes to caring, and compassion.

I would love to see our church become the most loving, caring church in the Cumberland Valley.

One where people say, *'if you want to belong to a church where you will be truly welcome, a church that will really care for you, go to Salem.'* Wouldn't that be wonderful?

If it is to be - it is up to each of us!

Lets' be blessed as we seek together to become the church that the Lord wants us to be!

Pastor Art

