

The Parish Visitor

August, 2014



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WHAT A GREAT PROBLEM TO HAVE!

by Rev. Mark

In the July Parish Visitor, I shared the vision that God had laid heavily on my heart during my surgical recovery. At the end of that article, I invited you to do two things over the rest of this summer:

1. pray about what God is calling us to and
2. buckle up and hang on- it's going to be a GREAT ride!

Well, we are racing ever closer to autumn and a new season in the church. Traditionally, Fall- beginning after Labor Day- is when the Church "gets back to business"- vacations are over, school has started and it's time to fall back into the "school year schedule".

But a unique and marvelous thing has happened this summer. Usually, church attendance drops over the summer. (I mean, you can't get BACK to church if you haven't LEFT church, right?!) But this summer, Sunday morning attendance has been amazing. Over the nine Sundays of June and July, 6 of them saw attendance over 200. We have had MARVELOUS worship services and MARVELOUS attendance this summer. It is SO exciting.

Another consideration is that traditionally, attendance rises in the fall. So if we are seeing 220 folks a week worshipping together on Sundays in July, what will we see in September, October and beyond, after attendance has grown and after the new Sunday evening service launches? (See accompanying article.) Again, it is SO exciting!

Attendance growth just for the sake of attendance growth is not a healthy thing. The emphasis shifts to nothing more than numbers and the true reason for the whole venture- to connect people to Jesus Christ- gets lost in the shuffle. But if attendance growth is tied DIRECTLY to the vision of connecting people to Jesus Christ, then it is a GREAT thing! If connecting 200 people/week to Jesus Christ is a good thing (and it is!), then connecting 300/week is 50% better!

The truth is that there are a LOT of congregations who would love to have these kinds of problems. We are blessed to be wrestling with issues of growth. When we are faithful in a few things, God gives us more. And He appears to be doing just that! WE have been faithful in that to which God has called us thus far. And so...He is calling us to more. I personally can't think of a better place to be. What about you? Are you ready to see what God has in store for The Alejo United Methodist Church?

SPECIAL DATES:

- August 3 Communion & Food Pantry Collection Sunday
- August 4 Finance Meeting 6PM
- August 4 Trustees Meeting 7PM
- August 15 Pizza & Games Night for Younger Adults Group 6PM
- August 17 Administrative Council Meeting 7:15PM
- August 18 UM Men's Meeting 6PM
- August 21 Naomi Wesleyan Circle @ T & C 11:30AM
- August 23 Mission Study Day @ Stronghurst UMC 9AM
- August 24 CIA Luncheon 11:30AM
- August 28 UMW Exec Meeting 4:15PM

WORSHIP TIMES:

Sundays 8AM &
10:15AM

Sunday School
9:15AM

CURRENT SERMON SERIES

by Rev. Mark

On Sunday, June 22, we began a new sermon series- my FIRST since returning! The series is called The Psizzlin' Psummer Psalm Psermon Pseries. Psalms are religious poems or songs, designed to be set to music. Some are hymns to be sung by a congregation. Some are private prayers. Some are lyrical devices for remembering major events in Israel's history. The Book contains 150 psalms, making it the longest book in the Bible, based on number of chapters. Every human emotion, every circumstance of daily life are captured in these 150 chapters.

This 11-week series will carry us through the rest of the summer...AND through the trials and tribulations, the highs and lows of life. The remaining weeks of the series look like this:

- **Sunday, August 3, 2014- Thank You!** (Psalm 100)
Shout for joy- the Lord is good! (1Chronicles 16:31-35, Hebrews 12:28)
 - **Sunday, August 10, 2014- Surely the Presence** (Psalm 121)
God is our source of help. (Jeremiah 31:10-12, Philippians 4:4-7)
 - **Sunday, August 17, 2014- Faith Like a Child** (Psalm 131)
We are called to be child-like, but not childish. (Hosea 11:1-4, Romans 8:12-17)
 - **Sunday, August 24, 2014- The Cave** (Psalm 142)
A Place to hide...or a hiding place? (Isaiah 2:19-21, 2Corinthians 4:1-3)
 - **Sunday, August 31, 2014- Better Than a Hallelujah!** (Psalm 150)
Praise God in every situation. (Isaiah 43:16-21, 1Peter 2:9-10)
- Join me every Sunday as we walk through the Book of Psalms...AND our lives!



FINANCIAL UPDATE

by Rev. Mark

Summer is an interesting time in the life of a church. Folks go on vacation and are gone from Sunday morning worship. And when we miss Sunday morning worship...we often miss giving to the church that week. So offerings drop in the summer...but the bills do NOT! But did you know that most banks offer a "bill pay" feature that makes it easy to set up your regular church giving? You simply go to your bank's website, set up online banking and then set up a regular "bill pay" to the church. It's how my family makes our regular tithe and it is SO easy! I never have to worry about whether I brought the check book or not! It happens automatically...exactly the way I set it up to work!

What are your favorite things about your church? Is it the music? The worship services? The Sunday School program? The Bible studies? The Youth and Children's ministries? The Nursery? The prayer focus? The missional focus? What would you most like to see from your church? Increased outreach? More parking? Increased facilities? More music in the services?

However you answered these questions, those answers all take two things to make them happen: 1. Committed people willing to roll up their sleeves and do God's work, and 2. committed financial giving. Giving to your church is so much more than simply keeping the lights on and the doors open- it's an investment in God's ministries. Will you help your church reach out to more people; carry out more and greater ministries? Your faithful tithing can go a long way toward that goal. Please pray about how God is calling you to support your church financially. Consistent, generous giving enables your church to continue to provide the wide variety of ministries currently offered, as well as continue to expand our mission field.

NEW WORSHIP SERVICE- WHAT'S "THE POINT"?

by Rev. Mark

When I left Aledo on Tuesday, April 16th to travel to St. Louis for surgery, I left with a plan in place. Key people were identified and put in place to make sure that the ministries of The Aledo United Methodist Church would continue in my absence. A part of that plan included closing down the Sunday evening worship service. I had planned on shutting it down for the summer with the idea that it would be "re-tooled" and re-introduced in the fall. But with my surgery being moved up, the "shut-down" date got moved up as well. But now, as we move closer to the end of the summer and Labor Day, we also move closer to the re-boot of the Sunday evening worship service.

On Sunday, September 7th at 6PM, **The Point** will debut. This new service is geared to be an alternative worship experience for folks IN our congregation who are gone for a weekend, work on Sunday morning or are simply looking for more opportunities to be involved in worship. It is also, however, aimed at folks within Mercer County who don't have a church home. We will regularly explore the question, "What's the point?" What's the point of faith, what's the point of a relationship with God, what's the point of life.

This new service will feature:

- a sermon that is DIFFERENT from Sunday morning- **group discussion will be included**
- weekly Communion
- **shared leadership between myself and others who attend**
- a "mission moment" as a weekly feature
- prayer time, include "thankful moments" and testimonies
- monthly sensory activities designed to involve more senses in faith development
- monthly "Take-Aways"- a rock, candle, pen, heart, hand, 3x5 card, etc. will be offered
- video clips

A postcard will be going out to everyone in the zip code later this month, letting them know about this and the other ministries of the church and inviting them to join us! What I invite YOU to do between now and then is this- spend August praying about the new service. Pray that it will help us connect more people to Jesus Christ. Also pray about YOUR involvement in the service. Is God calling you to be a part of the launch team? You could be involved in a) prayer support, b) worship design, c) logistics (parking, technology, set-up), d) child care, e) publicity/invitations and f) hospitality/discipleship of newcomers.

If you feel led to be a part of the launch team, just let me know. God is doing GREAT things- will you be a part of this newest addition?



A huge thank you to everyone for your donations toward the purchase of a new kitchen freezer!! Over \$750 was raised at the All-Church picnic on June 29th and through the generosity of the United Methodist Women, who picked up the remaining cost, a new 20 foot upright freezer was immediately purchased. It is located in the back basement room next to the Caring Hearts freezer. We are so fortunate to now have two large freezers for church food storage! Thank you again for your generous donations.

C.I.A. (CARING INDIVIDUAL ADULTS) LUNCHEON AUGUST 24TH

by Joanne Harris

Caring Hearts continues to flourish! This group is open to both mature men and women who live alone. This includes anyone who has lost their spouse, divorced or separated, or whose loved one is in the nursing home. The Caring Hearts ministry here at AUMC provides a CIA luncheon once each month. This month, the luncheon will be on Sunday, August 24th, immediately following the 10:15AM worship service. You don't have to bring anything except yourself. Feel free to invite a friend to share the meal and fellowship. I will look forward to seeing you on the 24th of August at 11:30AM!

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

As you are shopping for your children's "back-to-school" supplies for their classrooms, why not pick up a few extra items (at SUPER CHEAP PRICES!) to put in your Operation Christmas Child shoebox? The prices can't be beat! Collection of the boxes will start around the beginning of October! There will be more information in the near future.

Joan Reynolds & Scott Spencer



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND ALEDOWOOD GAME NIGHT!

by Rev. Mark

What: The next step in our new Younger Adults/Families Ministry

When: Friday, August 15th, 6PM to 8PM

Where: In the AUMC Dining Room

Specifics: In February, we hosted the first event in our fledgling Younger Adult/Family ministry. The definition of who is in this group is intentionally...vague! We had people in their 20's and people in their 50's! We had folks with kids and folks with no kids! We had married folks and unmarried folks! And we had...a GREAT time!

It is now time for event #2 for this group. This time, we will be offering dinner- homemade pizza (GOOD pizza!), salad and dessert- and FUN. The men will take on the women in a series of "team games" like Take a Hint, Cereal Killer, How Do You Do?, TV I.D., Timeline and I Love a Charade. We will have a MARVELOUS time AND...be home by 8:15PM! All we need is...YOU! You can sign up during Sunday morning worship. You can sign up in the church office. You can contact me through Facebook, email, text...whatever! Just make sure you sign up so we know you are coming! Childcare will be provided for children through 4th Grade and there is NO COST for the evening!

RELAY FOR LIFE



It was a wonderful **Relay for Life!** Many members of our Aledo UMC poured many hours of work and love into this event and it certainly paid off. Aledo UMC achieved "**silver status**" since we earned over \$3,500 in fund-raising. Of the 20 teams who participated, we are the #6 team with our donations. What a great accomplishment of which we should be very proud!

Thank you to all who saved coins in prescription bottles, wrote a check, donated food, helped cook and serve pork chops at either Mercer Market or at the actual event. Thanks to all who attended Relay and walked laps. Thanks to all who have prayed without ceasing for the many cancer survivors we have in our congregation. The list goes on and on. **Thank you, thank you, thank you.**

Plans are already being crafted for an incredible 2015 Relay for Life of Mercer County. We are proud to claim Aledo UMC as our team. To God be the glory! . (Donations are still being accepted through the end of August that will go toward our team.)

Pam Truman, Sue Hiscocks, and Mary Flint

New/Current Pastor's Bible Studies

Overcoming Challenges

WHAT: Rev. Mark and Joanne's NEW Bible Study

WHEN: Tuesdays @ 9AM or 2PM, running through the end of August

WHERE: In the Fellowship Café next to the sanctuary (9AM) and the Sunrise Coffee House (2PM)

WHY: The question is NOT, "Will I face challenges?" Instead, the question is, "How will I deal with the tough times WHEN they come?" No one travels far down the road without confronting the sobering reality that life can be hard. The book of Nehemiah is a case study in overcoming life's challenges. Wave after wave of pain pounded on the shores of Nehemiah's life, but he kept standing strong. A tsunami of relational, financial, and spiritual attacks came, but he withstood it all in the power of God. As we meditate on Nehemiah's story in this powerful Bill Hybels study, we will discover the hope and victory that come when we walk in God's wisdom through the challenges of life.



The Sermon on the Mount

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current MEN'S Bible Study

WHEN: Wednesdays @ 6:30AM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Café next to the sanctuary

WHY: United Methodist founder John Wesley's desire was to present "plain truth to plain people." Editor Clare Weakley has attempted to help him do just that by updating his original 18th century commentary for the modern reader. As you read *The Sermon on the Mount*, you will see that the Beatitudes are to be the attitude of believers. This study will show you how.

WHAT ELSE: It is NOT too late to join.

The Letters of John and Jude

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current Sunday Morning Bible Study

WHEN: Sundays @ 9:15AM

WHERE: In the Chapel next to the sanctuary

WHY: New Testament scholar William Barclay walks us through the letters of John and Jude. These books deal with dissenting teachings within the early Church.

WHAT ELSE: We would LOVE to have you join this class.



WEDNESDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP IS ALMOST HERE!

We are currently planning for the kick-off of Wednesday Night Fellowship! Beginning on Wednesday, September 3rd, Wednesday Night Fellowship will be offered EVERY Wednesday night! The evening begins with dinner at 5:15PM, with our BRAND NEW Children's Ministries for kids Pre-School through 6th

Grade (see accompanying article), a youth Bible study for grades 7th through 12th, Bell Choir and Chancel Choir rehearsals and a variety of classes for adults from 6:PM-7PM. The nursery will also be available. Pray about your commitment to Wednesday Night ministries. We would love to have you for dinner...and more!



ANNIVERSARIES

AUGUST

08/06/1999— Scott & Dianna Spencer
 08/07/1999— Steve & Tammie Trout
 08/12/2000— David & Kim Lloyd
 08/13/1966— Louis & Susan Sutton
 08/17/1984— Garry & Debra Toops
 08/21/1971— Rev & Mrs Herbert Thompson
 08/21/2007— Bernie & Amy Damm
 08/23— Dudley & Rachel Fowler
 08/26/1972— Steve & Rhonda Brown
 08/27/1952— Walt & Doris Schellenberg
 08/31/1969— Bill & Debby Breeden



UM Women

Golden Age Birthdays

08/10— Erma Dobbins
 08/24— Dorothy Anderson
 08/28— Audrey Anderson
 08/31— Betty Allan



THOSE WE REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS



Don Abel
 Denny Anderson
 Dorothy Anderson
 Juli Anderson
 Joe & Virginia Ash
 Joanne Beard
 Linda Biebaum
 Brenda Brandt
 Butch & Judy
 Lucy Ceurvorst
 Dr Chadwick
 Joshua Cosby
 Laura Diehl
 Chris Engstrom

Dennis Fancher
 Jenifer Franks
 Glenn family
 Catherine Halcomb
 Kelsey Huston
 Marie Harnett
 Rev Mark & family
 Leanne Helton
 Jim
 Joanne /Christy
 John/hospice
 Susie Kenney/decisions
 Brenda Leng
 Madelyn

Bryn McKay
 Mary McMeekan
 Ronda Moffitt
 Vicki Patterson
 Kelsey Pierson
 Tyler Pierson
 Kirk Reusch
 Toni Ross
 Janis Ruggles
 Ryan/tonsils
 Don Schroeder
 Gene Thompson
 Marilyn Wagler
 Irven Young

Mercer County Schools: Administration, Teachers, Students, Staff
 National and Local Governmental Leaders, Military, Security Officers
 AWANA, Bus Ministry, College Students, Shut Ins, the lost

THANK YOU

Thank You, Tom King, for all the time and effort you put into displaying so many American flags in celebration of the holidays. It was great seeing “Old Glory” flying around our city. Let us not forget to show honor and respect for all she stands for. Thanks again, Tom.



ALEDO UMW FOOD PANTRY OPPORTUNITY

At the last Executive Board meeting of the UMW, there was a unanimous vote to have a “Christmas in August” food drive to support the Churches of Mercer County Food Pantry. We know when the women of this church get behind a project, amazing things happen.

Summer donations have been down at the Food Pantry, and usage is up. 240 family units used the Pantry in May, and 220 used it in June. Families may go only once a month to pick up their food.

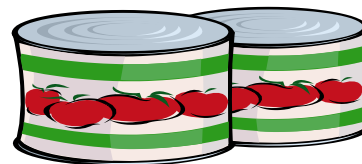
At the present time, the following items are most greatly needed: brownie mixes, pears, mandarin oranges, chicken noodle soup, cream of mushroom/chicken soups, chunky soups, chili beans, green beans, whole kernel and cream style corn, canned potatoes, pork & beans, diced tomatoes.

Each Sunday in the month of August donations will be accepted at church. A case of one item would be wonderful. An assortment of items would be super. Only a few cans of some items would be greatly appreciated, too. Financial donations are also accepted.

This is an opportunity for our Aledo UMC to truly step up to help those in need. Let’s all support this worthwhile project of “Christmas in August”.

Thank you in advance for your contributions.

Mary Flint



CHURCH WEBSITE



Have you looked at your church’s website? If not, go to **www.myaledoumc.com** and see what’s going on! Not only can you see the “basics” about the Aledo United Methodist Church, you can find the most current church calendar. In addition, the 2-minute “call to worship” videos that start our 8AM service every week are available. Also, the monthly newsletter AND the weekly bulletin (complete with the current version of the Prayer List) can be found on our website. Stop by and check it out!

ARE YOU A MEMBER?

Have you seen the influx of new members lately? Through the end of July, we have brought in 13 new members, along with 9 baptisms. To give you some perspective, for the entire calendar year of 2013, we brought in 14 new members and had 4 baptisms- a pretty good year. By comparison, more than half of the United Methodist churches in our Illinois Great Rivers Conference will not bring in one new member this year. Not one. Over 50%.

Is membership essential to being a part of this congregation? Absolutely not. You can’t serve on a committee if you’re not a member, but there are NO other restrictions. Other than the “committee thing”, you can fully participate in the life of The Aledo United Methodist Church- membership or not.

So why join the church? Membership is a public declaration- it’s you standing before God AND your church family and saying, “I love being here with these people and I want to deepen my connection with them by becoming a full member.”

How do you DO that, you ask? Pretty simple. Let Rev. Mark know- you can check the box on the Sunday morning attendance sheet, or email him, or call him, or text him, or Facebook him...you get the idea! From there, you will set up a time to meet (about 30 minutes) with him- to get to know him better and vice versa. Then you will set a date to join! Take the plunge...you will be so blessed!

The deadline for the
next Parish Visitor is
Thursday August 21st
at 8am.

Please have all articles
submitted by this date!



Holiday Bazaar

The 4th Annual “*Follow the Star*” Holiday Bazaar Organizational Meeting will be **August 18th at 6:00 PM.** We invite all who are interested in leading a booth to attend.



FOOD MINISTRY

The Caring Hearts Food Ministry is helping to address the need for food in our community. It is also a great place for one church member to share food and fellowship for another in any type of need. In the summer months, when we do not have the food donations from Wednesday Night Fellowship meals, the need for food is great. The Caring Hearts Food Team will be meeting more frequently during the summer to prepare food. Would you like to join this group or provide a monetary donation? We would love to add you to our team! Contact the church office or Ruth Dulaney.

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WORSHIP TECH OPPORTUNITIES

Do you like electronics? Then your church needs YOU! We need people to help operate the sound system and computer during Sunday morning worship services. What do you need in order to run these things? The list is LONG- a willingness to serve, and...that would be about it! The systems, designed specifically for churches, are quite simple to operate. (Don't let all the knobs and switches intimidate you!) The great part about this ministry is that it happens during worship, when you're in church anyway! Do you feel God calling you to step up and help? Talk to Rev. Mark or Ruth Dulaney.



ALEDO UMC BUS MINISTRY

We'd love to come pick you up and bring you to any of our services. Just make arrangements with **Greg Cobert** in advance by **calling (309) 737-5621** and we'll put you on our “Pick Up” list.



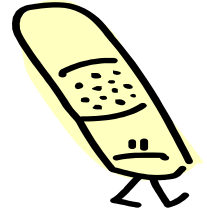
CHURCH SAFETY SEARCH

Participate in this fun scavenger hunt
as a family or as an individual. Each person will win a prize!
Take this page, answer the questions, and bring it to the church office
by August 18th to collect your prize and correct answers.

Name _____

Number of correct answers _____

1. Where is the AED (Automated External Defibrillator) located?
2. How does the First Aid flip chart by the AED state to treat choking?
3. Where is the fire extinguisher in the education wing?
4. How many “pumps” of the new soap dispensers should you use when washing your hands?
5. Can you complete the Lord’s Prayer while you are rubbing your hands vigorously together with soap to properly clean your hands before handling food?
6. Do you know where you can find a band-aid in the education wing?
7. How many fire extinguishers are in the building?
(Hint: Don’t forget to look near the boiler room and the front entrance)
8. If you accidentally cut your finger using one of the knives from the safety knife cabinet on the wall in the kitchen, where would you find a small first aid kit?
9. There are now two expanded first aid kits in the church. Where are they?
Check out what is included in these kits!
10. Suppose you are playing in the Activity room and your nose starts bleeding. Could you find something to stop the bleeding nearby?
(Hint: Look in the expanded first aid kit in the basement.)
11. Someone feels faint and you need to take their blood pressure. Where do you find the automatic digital blood pressure monitor?
12. Your friend is a diabetic and needs to monitor his/her blood glucose. Where will you find a glucose monitoring device with lancets and test strips?
13. You see that someone needs a larger bandage than a regular first aid kit has, where will you find first aid/burn cream and a variety of bandage options?
14. Which expanded first aid kit has a bottle of acetaminophen (Tylenol) for headaches?
15. Who do you call when an ambulance is needed?



NEW WEDNESDAY NIGHT CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

by Rev. Mark

After much discussion, consideration and prayer, a change is coming in the Wednesday Night Children's programming. And the leadership and I couldn't be more excited! A few years ago, Wanda Cobert stepped out in faith BIG TIME and launched a Wednesday Night program for children-AWANA. It has been a wonderful program that has reached lots and lots of kids along the way. But the truth is that all ministries have a season- a time in which they flourish and a time in which they are ready to be reimagined and/or retired. Wanda and I felt that the time for re-imagination had come. So over the past year...literally...we have prayed about it, seeking God's will. And a couple of weeks ago, we moved on what God was directing us toward.

On Wednesday, September 3rd at 6PM, our NEW Wednesday Night Children's Ministry, FUEL, will debut. The emphasis is built around "Hands On Bible". The kids will have fun while they learn more about the great stories of the Bible...AND how those stories impact their lives! We have also streamlined the time- the kids will meet from 6PM until 7PM every Wednesday evening to better coincide with the rest of the evening's programming.

Wanda and I are SO excited about the changes that are coming AND the positive impact those changes will have on our children! If you have children or grandchildren, please consider helping them be a part of this exciting new program, FUEL. If you have friends or neighbors who have kids, please invite them. Let them know that they are welcome to come for dinner at 5:15PM, stay for an adult Bible study while their kids are ministered to from 6PM to 7PM and be home, working on homework and getting everybody ready for bed, by 7:15PM!

THE NURSERY

Perhaps one of the best-kept secrets at AUMC is our Nursery Program. Professionally staffed and lovingly tended, our Nursery is a great place to take your children! The main focus of our nursery is simple...care. Our goal is to provide a loving environment where the youngest among us can feel comfortable and safe. At the Aledo United Methodist Church, we truly believe that the children of our congregation are NOT simply the future of the church- they are very much an active, important part of the PRESENT of the church! We strive to take good care of them while offering them a glimpse of...THE KINGDOM!



SPECIAL OBSERVANCES IN AUGUST

Did you know that August is Admit You're Happy Month? How about Catfish Month? Golf Month? Romance Awareness Month? Picnic Month? In addition, here are some of the special "days" in August: the 1st- Mustard Day, the 2nd- Ice Cream Sandwich Day, the 3rd- Watermelon Day, the 4th- Coast Guard Day, the 5th- Work Like a Dog Day, the 6th- Wiggle Your Toes Day, the 7th- Lighthouse Day, the 8th- Sneak Some Zucchini on Your Neighbor's Porch Day, the 9th- Book Lover's Day, the 10th- S'mores Day, the 11th- Son and Daughter Day, the 12th- Middle Child Day, the 13th- Left-Handers Day, the 14th- Creamsicle Day, the 15th- V-J Day, the 16th- Tell a Joke Day, the 17th- Thriftshop Day, the 18th- Bad Poetry Day, the 19th- Aviation Day, the 20th- Radio Day, 21st- Senior Citizen's Day, the 22nd- Be an Angel Day, the 23rd- Ride the Wind Day, the 24th- Vesuvius Day, the 25th- Kiss and Make Up Day, the 26th- Dog Day, the 27th- Just Because Day, the 28th- Race Your Mouse Day, the 29th- More Herbs Less Salt Day, the 30th- Toasted Marshmallow Day, and the 31st- Trail Mix Day.

Take time to celebrate the wonderful, weird and wacky in August!



FAIREST ONE OF ALL!

Queen: Magic Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?

Magic Mirror: Famed is thy beauty, Majesty. But hold, a lovely maid I see. Rags cannot hide her gentle grace. Alas, she is more fair than thee.

Queen: Alas for her! Reveal her name.

Magic Mirror: Lips red as the rose. Hair black as ebony. Skin white as snow.

Queen: Snow White!

Just a scene from Snow White, right? Or perhaps there is a deeper connection to your life than you have previously considered?

Yes, I know that there are times when we all feel Bashful or Happy or even Grumpy, but our culture is consumed with mirrors and we desire that they tell us that we are indeed the “fairest of them all.”

If this weren’t the truth, then why, pray tell me, are we a nation way beyond obsession with body image? Billions of bucks on iron abs, makeup, hair styling, fad diets and our joy reduced to a daily assessment of how we’re doing as we size each other up.

Face it, we are a culture that is a slave to the mirror, and anyone and everyone who is thinner, shapelier, more muscular, or “prettier” (whatever that means!) automatically becomes the object of our envy – our own personal “Snow White.”

No, we don’t hire a huntsman to make sure they are fallen and they can’t get up, but we do allow the mirror to haunt our thoughts and steal the contentment that God intends for His sons and daughters.

And that’s just it, isn’t it? Apparently becoming a follower of Jesus does not automatically cure us of body image issues – otherwise the church wouldn’t be as equally obsessed as our surrounding culture. (Newsflash: We Christians are just as obsessed – or perhaps even more!)

Yes, our body is the “temple of God,” but we have turned the temple into an idol, and we have reduced the idea of being “fearfully and wonderfully made” to “skinniness and ripped achieved.”

But God has a different plan for our lives. Jesus’ death and resurrection broke the chains of body image, but you have to be willing to let go of them. Every magazine you read and Kardashian you admire is just another link in the chain that you are re-forging around your soul. So let these words soak into your psyche for a while:

So we do not set our sights on the things we can see with our eyes. All of that is fleeting; it will eventually fade away. Instead, we focus on the things we cannot see, which live on and on (2 Cor. 4:18).

I believe the answer to our body image fixation has to do with our eyesight. We have been trained to “set our sights” on looking great and being the fairest of them all, but that is a trap from which there is no escape.

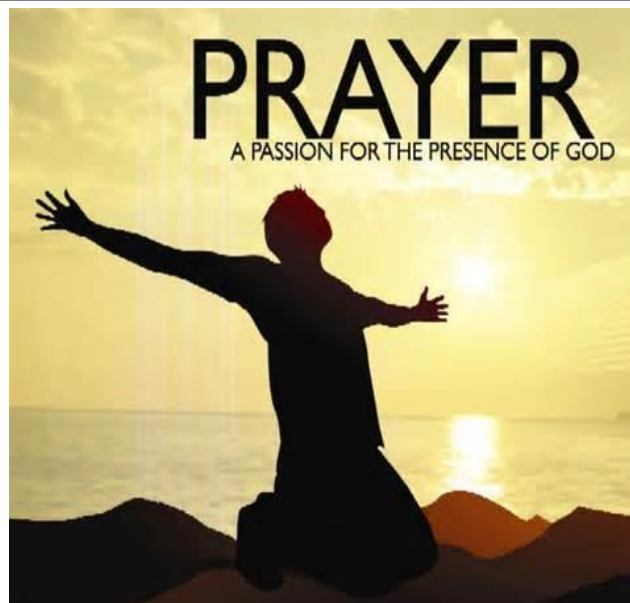
Instead, we should focus on the things that don’t show up in the mirror, like godliness and becoming more like Jesus in our actions and attitudes. We need to shift our priorities away from sculpting and more towards sanctifying.

And perhaps most importantly, we need to internalize the truth that our “imperfections” are a part of God’s design for getting our eyes off ourselves and on to the only Perfect One who gives our worth and value. The world is attracted to the Barbies and G.I. Joes, but that’s the problem! We want people to see Jesus in our weaknesses and flaws, but that will never happen as long as we allow ourselves to be mastered by the mirror on the wall.

(Continued on page 12)

COME CONNECT WITH US IN PRAYER

**PRAYER WALK
THROUGH THE
CHURCH EVERY
SUNDAY MORNING
AT 7AM.**

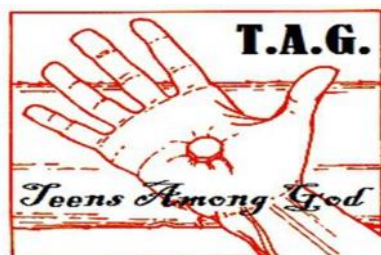


(continued from page 11)

My friends, may the God who created you recreate a spirit of acceptance in your heart. When you look in the mirror, may you see a handcrafted masterpiece, woven together by the loving fingers of your heavenly Father. If you are tempted to be weighed down with your perceived imperfections, remember that these are gifts, designed to let others see Jesus in you!

And when you see others, don't judge them by the world's standards. Everyone you encounter is an ever-living, never-dying soul in need of salvation. Stop ranking them as above or below you so God can use you for what is truly important: THE Cause of Christ!

Remember, when you see yourself and others through the eyes of Christ, the superficial image in the mirror is replaced by the truth of how God sees us, and we become like Jesus – truly the fairest of them all!



Melissa Farrell
Director of Youth & Children's Ministries



FINANCIAL MATTERS (WEEKLY NEED \$5,768)

Date	07/06	07/13	07/20	07/27
Attendance	192	220	212	216
Receipts	\$6,993.50	\$3,674.00	\$3,592.00	\$4,562.00

