

get connected

We connect people to Jesus and help God change their lives.



Thankful For Hope *by Pastor Nate Crandall*

Of all the things we've lost in 2020, perhaps the greatest loss is hope.

The Poet, Samuel Johnson, wrote in a letter in 1762 that *"Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords."* Hope, like nothing else, causes us to press on into the future because of the great expectations which accompany it. Because of hope we can endure hardship, but when hope is lost, we lose the will to go on.

Sometimes the loss of hope manifests itself in destructive behaviors. Sometimes it is more subtle and reveals its existence through lack of energy and motivation. Sometimes it causes us to grieve what might have been. Sometimes, however, it makes us look around to find new hopes and dreams, and this, believe it or not, is also the greatest gain of 2020. Another poet from long ago, Alexander Pope, wrote that *"Hope springs eternal."* What he was talking about was the capacity of human beings to continue to find ways to hope for a better future. As you and I wrestle with our own loss of hopes in 2020, there are

many good things to shift our hope to which we may not have had the capacity, before this train-wreck of a year, to see. The question is, in light of so many uncertainties, how certain are the hopes we hold on to? Is it possible to have hope that no pandemic or disaster can take away?

I believe it is possible. To be honest, I have struggled with the loss of so many events, activities and personal connections from this year. Yet, all of these losses have pushed me to refocus on what can never be taken away. My greatest hope comes from knowing Jesus. He has been with me through quarantine, in every frustration, and surrounding every strange circumstance of this year. He is the hope that will never be taken away.

This is what I am most thankful for. I am thankful for Jesus. This year has proved that I need him more than ever. He gives me hope. If you are need of hope, I know he can give it to you too. Are you ready to take a step in faith that will lead to hope? Reach out to me, and let's just see what the Lord will do!

Celebrate with us on Christmas Eve

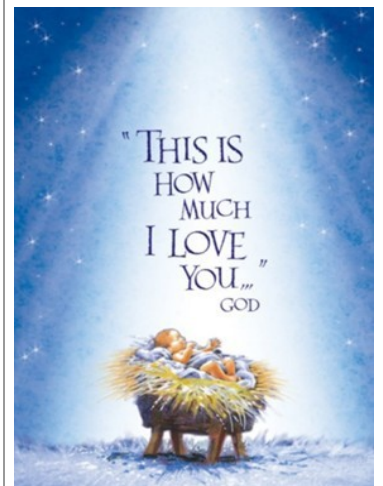
Thursday, December 24th at 4:30 p.m.

Join us for our candle light service in person or on our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/theconnectingchurch>.

An offering will be taken for Larry Schultz and his work with Koinonia Youth Ministries.

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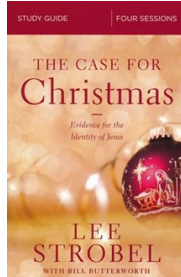
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The Case for Christmas *by Pastor Liz Green*

Grow Group
Saturdays at 9:00 a.m.
December 5-26

Who was in the manger that first Christmas morning? Some say he would become a great moral leader. Others, a social critic. Still others view Jesus as a profound philosopher, a rabbi, a feminist, a prophet, and more. Many are convinced he was the divine Son of God.



Who was he really? And how can you know for sure?

Consulting experts on the Bible, archaeology, and messi-

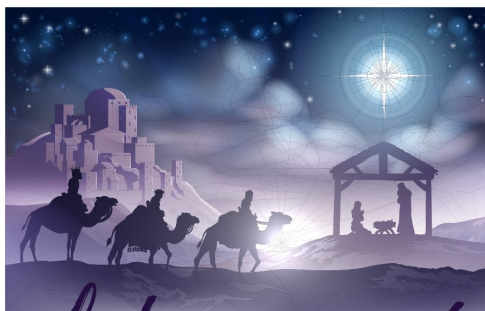
anic prophecy, award-winning legal journalist Lee Strobel searches out the true identity of the child in the manger. If Jesus really was God in the flesh, then there ought to be credible evidence, including:

- Eyewitness Evidence - Can the biographies of Jesus be trusted?
- Scientific Evidence - What does archaeology reveal?
- Profile Evidence - Did Jesus fulfill the attributes of God?
- Fingerprint Evidence - Did Jesus uniquely match the identity of the Messiah?

The Case for Christmas invites readers to consider why

Christmas matters in the first place. Somewhere beyond the traditions of the holiday lies the truth. **Join us beginning December 5, at 9 AM** for our 4-week video-based study facilitated by Pastor Liz on Zoom. Study guides are available through Christian Book Distributors or through Amazon, or sign up in the welcome center.

Although you will still want to have a study book, you can sign up for free resources in case you miss a week including the weekly videos at <https://www.biblegateway.com/landing/case-for-christmas-sign-up/>. But you won't want to miss our group discussions!



What GOD wants
CHRISTMAS
 BY AMY L. BRADFORD

For the month of Dec., we'll be reading the book *What God Wants for Christmas* by Amy L. Bradford. Over the 3 weeks our clubbers will unwrap 6 gift boxes which contain pieces of the nativity scene. We'll learn about a gift WE are given by God as we learn about this person's part in Jesus birth. And as we read and learn, we'll be asked the question,

"What God wants for Christmas? It's – to you – a surprise. In box number 7 it is disguised. But - no peeking! Be patient! For this you must wait. It's what you offer Him, and it's really great!"

On our final night, each clubber will receive a box to open and discover the answer to What God Wants for Christmas. Can you guess what it is?



December- What God Wants for Christmas

2	Club
9	Club
16	Club – <i>Birthday Party for Jesus</i>
23	No Club – Merry Christmas!
30	No Club – Merry Christmas!

Operation Christmas Child – Pandemic Style *by Linda Lyke*

With God leading us, we have completed another successful Operation Christmas Child Packing Party! Our party looked quite different this year with all of us wearing masks, loads of hand sanitizer, socially distanced tables and a one way loop throughout the lower level. It takes a crew to pull

this off - packers and volunteers - and you, church are a faithful one!! We packed 256 boxes last year and this year.... drum roll... **281!** An increase of 25 boxes!! Thank you to all who put work in before and during the event. Thanks for your faithfulness.

Thank you to OCC Committee for their intense planning of this event:

Ellie Greene, Jill Groelle, Linda Lyke, Lynnette Millard, Joel Osborn, Becky Snyder and Tara Rotzoll.



Testimony of a Shoebox – Operation Christmas Child

Pastor Amin, a ministry partner in Central Asia, was on his way to a shoebox distribution when he noticed two boys – brothers – selling in the street. On his way back from the distribution, he stopped to see the boys, bought some nuts from them and gave them each a shoebox gift and shared the gospel. One of the brothers, Adar, responded, said he believed and he gave the pastor his phone number. The next time Pastor Amin traveled to that area, he called the boy and the father answered. Pastor Amin introduced himself and asked how Adar was doing. There was a long pause, and the father started crying saying that

Adar was hit by a car while selling nuts and he died. Pastor Amir expressed his sorrow at this news, and the father asked him to come over. A couple of days later, Pastor Amin did visit and the family served him and seemed so thankful. They said, “Adar was different when he came home, he 'glowed like God.’”



The father asked the pastor, “So what did you say to him?” So Pastor Amin shared the gospel with the family and they prayed to receive Christ. As the pastor was leaving the grandfather was reading the Bible and couldn't put it down. On the next visit, the grandfather had read the entire Bible and the family had joined a local church.

Stocking Stuffers make great Operation Christmas Child gifts. Just before and right after Christmas, there are great deals on small items that fill up shoeboxes. Please buy these discounted gifts and place in the trunk on the back stairs



KWIK TRIP CARDS make Great Christmas Gifts

Proceeds from the purchase of Kwik Trip cards supports our Outreach Ministry, helping our long and short term missionaries, our local Milton East school connection, missions education, refugee support, among many other outreach efforts.



Plan ahead and purchase Kwik Trip cards for Christmas gifts or stocking stuffers by contacting our church office. Janet will be placing an order on December 8th for specific card amounts.



Outreach Page – Web Site

Check out our updated Outreach page on our church's web site:

<https://theconnecting.church/outreach/>

You'll be amazed at all our church does in the community and globally. From hosting a boy scout troop, to donating regularly to our local food pantry, to our church missionaries.

Prayer Focus – Jesus’ Worldwide Church

by Renee Sanford, Prayer Coordinator

Would you believe this: There are 2 billion Christians in 200 countries – nearly a third of the world’s population. Some have confused beliefs – about half are Roman Catholic and half various protestant denominations. Over 550 million identify as Evangelicals – those we believe hold most closely to Biblical truth. Christians are so widespread

that no single continent or region can claim to be the center of global Christianity.

A century ago, this was not the case.

Then, two-thirds of the world’s Christians lived in Europe. Today, only about a quarter of all Christians live in Europe. More than a third are in the Americas. One in four Christians lives in Africa. One of eight is in Asia. Christ followers speak over 5,000 different languages!!!!

Jesus created and empowers His church to bring the good news of the gospel to the world and nothing can thwart His will – and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). Later He told his disciples “This gospel of the kingdom **will be** proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end

will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Will be – not might be! Will be – without fail.

Throughout history, evil forces have been and are at work against the spread of the gospel. In 43 countries Christ followers face persecution; government opposition is obvious in China, North Korea and many Islamic states. Violence

breaks out in places like

Nigeria or Mozambique where being Christian can be a death sentence. And in western nations like ours, there is growing social and government pressure to

compromise Biblical truth in the name of inclusiveness.

Yet the task will not fail. Church fellowships will multiply and grow worldwide – especially among the 2 billion “unreached” people who do not have anyone able to share the truth about Jesus in their language or in a way they can understand. Many have never met a Christian.

So! There is work to do! And we are called to be a part of it. This month our prayer focus is encouragement and strength for God’s worldwide church – and for our fellowship’s commitment to the global church. None of us can live as Christ followers and carry out His will

without the daily, sustaining power of the Holy Spirit which Jesus provides.

LORD, **keep us spiritually healthy** – as individuals, as local church fellowships, and as the global church. Convict us of sin! Let us live lives of repentance and obedience. Let us forgive as we have been forgiven. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes only from you.

LORD, **grant us unity.** As far as possible let us be at peace with others. Keep us faithful in praying for each other – particularly our brothers and sisters facing poverty and persecution. Let our love for one another reveal Jesus to the world!

LORD, **keep us passionately in love with Jesus.** Let His name be honored and glorified among us. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to respond to the wonder of His sacrifice for us. Let us seek to know Him better each day. Give us opportunities to share what God is doing in our lives. Let us rejoice to be brothers and sisters in Christ.

LORD, **keep us from compromising Biblical truth.** Your word is truth. Jesus is the way, the truth, the life. Give us courage. Give us boldness and gentleness – let us not waver from the gospel Jesus taught

Continued on page 13

The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations

Give the Gospels a fresh look and notice how intentional Jesus was with individuals he encountered. In fact, he developed a reputation for spending time with outsiders. Preaching and proclamation were significant in his ministry, yet he spent the vast majority of his time on the road with twelve men who were slowly coming to understand who Jesus was. They were taught, but they also caught how Jesus made disciples.

They learned from him how to engage spiritual seekers and walk with them on the discipleship journey. So can Christians in the 21st century. So can churches. So can we!

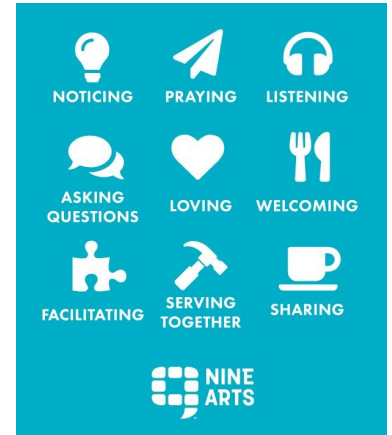
THE 9 ARTS OF SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

You can think of the nine arts in groups of three:

Getting Ready: *Noticing, Praying,* Listening*

Getting Started: *Asking Questions, Loving, Welcoming*

Keeping It Going: *Facilitating, Serving Together, Sharing*



*Featured Art: The Art of Prayer *By Melissa Lade*

What is the Art of Prayer? Maybe I'll start out with what prayer is not! Prayer is not God answering my daily multiple-choice quizzes! For example, God, should I (A). Stay in this job (B). Accept this other job offer (C). Look for another job or (D). none of the above! It's like we are saying, Creator of the universe, here are Your choices, pick one! This sounds ridiculous but we do it all the time! Prayer is actually just talking to God. But it's also listening! Like in the example above, we can and should ask God for His wisdom, but then we need to take time and listen for God to speak to us. God gives us 24/7 direct access to Himself. Prayer allows us to develop our relationship with God. It shows that we trust and depend on Him.

To apply this to our everyday lives, we should look to Jesus

as our example, because even He needed to pray! Jesus prayed daily and also when He faced trials, persecution, physical suffering, temptations and heartache. He prayed alone and with others. It is vital though that when we pray we believe God hears us and will answer our prayers in His wisdom. Just recently I prayed that God would give my family negative Covid test results, but right after I prayed I started to talk about what would happen if the results were positive. How foolish! What I should have done was prayed and then thanked God for listening and declared this truth in my mind and conversations.



An example of what this would look like: Just do it! Pray! But that can be easier said than done! There were so many times when Linda, Shanny and I would be leading a group and forget to pray. We actually decided to post notes on our computers and send text messages to each other to remind us to pray! Maybe that's something for us all to consider. Setting an alarm on our phone, signing up for a prayer app, getting a prayer partner, or scheduling prayer times during the day or week. Because we need prayer. The reality is, without prayer, our attempts at anything, especially obeying the command to make disciples of all nations, will be a disaster. We are blessed to have a God who wants to have a relationship with us and prayer is one of the ways we get to know God!

World on Mission *by Linda Lyke, Outreach Coordinator*

In "World on Mission" each month I share a bit about what we learned in the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* class – because God calls ALL of us to have a part in His mission. What is His mission?

"God is on mission to be loved, served and worshiped by people from all humanity." (Perspectives Study Guide - PSG, pg. 4)

This month, I feature an example from our 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversation class, where the Arts intersect with the Perspectives course, as both look at The Great Commission vs. The Great Commandment.

First, read an article that summarizes the discussion from our Perspectives course. Comparing the Two "Great's" in the Bible. You can find it at: <https://victorkchen.wordpress.com/tag/steve-hawthorne/>

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" -Matthew 22:37-39

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you al-

ways, even to the end of the age." -Matthew 28:18-20

Too often in the Church today, the "Great Commandment" (Matthew 22:37-39) is pitted against the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:18-20). Some question why they should venture cross-culturally overseas when there are people to love in their own backyard. Others emphasize our call to "go" to the nations seemingly at the cost of our ministry locally. Who is correct?

Steve Hawthorne in the Perspectives Reader (pg. 128-129) points out that both are of equal priority but are not equal in nature:

- The Great Commandment is ongoing
- The Great Commission is a task to be completed

Both are commanded but one will be completed at some point in history and the other will be ongoing throughout eternity. That means that we cannot approach each the same nor can we neglect one over the other.

However, both are similar in that both should be focused on God. The Great Commandment is loving God first and the Great Commission results in people following God as disciples. Pitting the two together can lead us to focus on human needs rather than God.

Hawthorne concludes by pointing out that both work togeth-

er. We cannot effectively make disciples without love for others and ultimately we desire to make disciples who love God and love others.

May both "Great's" continue to further the glory of our "Great" God.

Similarly, from our Fall Grow Group book, [Practicing the 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations Primer](#) (pg. 71):

Although the Great Commandment is not normally considered a passage relating to evangelism and the Great Commission, it is the starting point for sharing the good news about Jesus. In fact, loving God and loving others will galvanize our involvement in the Great Commission. If we strive to love others as God loves us, we can begin to build trusting friendships and earn the right to engage in spiritual conversations with people outside the church.

How true! When we show the love of Christ to those around us, we open doors to share the reason for the hope that we have.

Never cease to pray about your role in the Great Commission: Matt 28:19-20a Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

East Side Story – Outcome *by Jon Cruzan*

Our intentionally created special relationship with Milton East School continues to blossom and bless both sides of our neighborhood equation. A few weeks ago, we let all of you know about the changeable environment and accompanying significant stress that staff members at our schools are facing. We shared their physical and mental exhaustion and significant need for affirmation and encouragement.

We asked for help from you, our church family, to write notes of thanks and encouragement. As usual you stepped-up and delivered. About twenty volunteers, including several from our Collision Student Ministry, participated in this outpouring of love. Each of the 52 staff members received at least one note and many received more than one.

So, you may ask, “What did this accomplish?”. Well, for starters, Pastor Nate and I received an e-mail from Principal, Jen Cramer with these comments: *My staff members absolutely loved and appreciated your notes/cards. It was seriously something needed and appreciated. What a GREAT idea! Enjoy reading the positivity you have brought to people.*

I enjoyed opening my card and having confetti fly out... it made me smile! I also love the card attached inside called “Children Learn What They Live”. I am

going to keep it and read it when I need a pick me up!

Her note came at just the right time and truth be told, her kind words of affirmation and support brought tears to my eyes. Grateful for that kindness.

It is always wonderful to hear words of encouragement of any kind, but these were specific which made them even more meaningful.

It got my week off to a great start! It was definitely the highlight of my Monday to get me through the week.

My card is hanging right in front of my desk so I can read it each day. It’s exactly the reminder I need :)

I always enjoy reading thank you notes or comments from former students.

As educators, it is often the quietest of gestures that speak the loudest to our hearts. The handwritten notes with individualized encouragement are something we can turn to time and again to energize us during these times. Thank you for your thoughtfulness, your time, and your support.

They totally made my day especially with all the chaos in the world.

A big thank you goes out to Carol who sent me an incredibly caring and thoughtful card. It was just what I needed to hear that day and I have it up on my

desk when I need to read it again. Her kind gesture made a huge impact on my day. Please tell her thank you!

Everyone in the building is feeling stressed about various things right now. Having someone outside of the school setting recognize your efforts and show and appreciation for it can be really uplifting, especially when many of us are feeling inadequate in our jobs right now.

Such a nice pick me up! Made my day!

I was so surprised to receive such a kind note. It made me feel like all my effort is recognized and appreciated! Thank you for that!

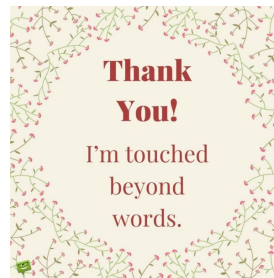
The notes were so thoughtfully written. It was nice to hear how much they appreciated all our hard work.

It was very thoughtful of someone I actually know, to write such a personal message and lift me up on one of the difficult days we face. It brought a smile to my face and I’m sincerely grateful to have such caring people in our community recognize what we go through on a daily basis.

The note was specific to me, not just teaching in general but what I teach even though the author does not know me.

It felt so good to be recognized by someone outside of the school walls.

It felt great to hear that a school activity we did years ago is still remembered. Awesome!



Continued on page 9

East Side Story, *continued*

My note was extra special to me because it came from a former teacher I know. I have always respected her greatly as a teacher and her family as a whole are wonderful people and outstanding educators. It really touched me to get such an uplifting note from her.

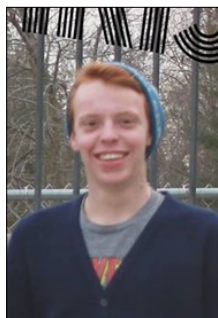
The notes made my day. Especially to get one from a former student!



So, to return to the question, "What did this accomplish?". Church family members – as you can see – So, So Much! We become more like Jesus. We serve one another in God's love and we share life together in the Spirit. Thank you volunteers – You nailed it! Way to be a good neighbor!

The Privilege of Sharing God *by Zac Muench*

Zac Muench is one of our church's missionaries. He's been working in Spain for nearly three years; before that we supported him in ministry in Puerto Rico, Peru and around the United States. We asked him to recap his call to missions and what he's been doing:



and rose again, but I didn't know how much of a deep intimate relationship I had with Him until much later.

"Following the rules" was something I did because I was afraid if I didn't, God would

stomp on me (or something like that). I did spend some time trying to know God, but the rule-following mentality made it difficult to open up. I believed that once you received Jesus you would somehow be immediately perfect and you would always feel love, joy, peace – you name it. I thought "If you believe, you're always supposed to feel the spiritual fruit." So, what could I do when I didn't? What does that imply? Am I saved even? These questions troubled me deeply. By the time I was 19, I was pushing God to the back burner, believing that "He was out to get me." After all, I genuinely tried my best.

Right around my 21st birthday, some friends started encouraging me with words they felt God wanted to tell me. "You are enough – because Jesus is enough. It's not up to you." for example. I never saw this side of God before. My brother suggested I do a six-month-long Bible school, so I decided I'd give God one last chance.

During one of the first weeks of the school, a friend prayed with me to recommit my life to God. I still wrestled with allowing myself to be seen just as I am, with being honest with God instead of trying to earn His love. Still my mind would repeat "Now that you've accepted Jesus, you're supposed to always feel joy, and know you're saved, and feel like you're saved."

God began speaking to me and bringing me gently and lovingly, deeper and deeper into a

Zac's Testimony

Skateboarding has been an interest of mine for almost as long as I can remember. Most free time was spent trying to grind little rails that my dad made us. My brother Nathaniel and I grew up going to church every Saturday – we never questioned it – it was just what you did. We had a desire for people to know Jesus, so we started a skate ministry during our middle school years.

I always knew God existed and believed that Jesus died

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The Privilege of Sharing God, *continued*

relationship with Him. Reassuring me and helping me understand the completeness of Christ's work.

After the school, I felt led to go on staff with Youth With A Mission in Barcelona, Spain. God continues to give me a deeper and deeper community; since being here He has been revealing His true heart for me.



Zac and fellow "Calling All Skaters" including his brother Nathaniel.

While staffing one of the six-month-long skateboarding Bible schools in 2018, I remember being 4 1/2 months through the school and being exhausted. Here I was, on staff, and I was worn to a frazzle. During my break, I started walking down a little road for a couple of miles until I came to a creek with a bridge. Sitting on the bridge, I poured my heart out to God with tears and shared my deepest fears, insecurities, disappointment, and frustrations. I didn't feel like His son. In fact, I felt like He abandoned me. But sitting there, enjoying staring at the trickling water, I felt Him say, "the same way you delight in that, I delight in you. I am pleased with you."

Walking away I was really encouraged. But doubts arose – "what if it's just in my head?" The next day a friend gave me

a note with an encouragement she felt like God put on her heart to share. At the very end of the note it said, "In spite of the disappointments and frustrations, God is pleased with you. He delights in you and He is mighty to save." Her words were the same ones I'd "heard" – but the crazy part is I'd never told anyone what God said to me.

God has shown me that He won't reject me for having certain feelings. Regardless of how good or corrupt they are, living a life pretending like they're not there is believing a lie. I always feared sharing with God when I wasn't feeling "saved" or like His son because I feared He would reject me. But over the past couple of years, and this year especially, He has revealed to me that it's okay to feel those things, He's already aware of them. His love never

fails. He has given me a passion to share this truth and joy with hurting people. God isn't as worried about what junk is in the basement, as much as He is that the light is turned on first to see it. Healing can only come when it is exposed.

This year has been one of the hardest years for me, as well as for

others in our ministry, but God revealed His loving character throughout it. He is my Father, He will never leave me, and He is faithful to redeem and restore the worst in me. And He gives me the privilege of sharing this with others.

What Zac is Doing on the Mission Field – and Why

Community is at the core of what I do. My desire is to love, disciple, and care for others through encouragement, hospitality/service, inclusion, and listening. I want people to know the love of the Father, the sacrifice of the Son and the power of the Spirit – there is restoration and safety in the Lord.

Skateboarders and artists are the people group I'm specifically focused on. Around the

The Privilege of Sharing God, *continued*

world, these subcultures have many who have not heard clearly the gospel of Christ. I am on staff at Youth With a Mission (YWAM) in Barcelona, Spain. Why Barcelona? It is a mecca for skateboarders – they come here from around the world. We reach out to the local skateboard community and to international skateboard “tourists”. We also hold an annual school to train others to share the gospel, with a particular emphasis on action sports. The training includes theology, prayer and practical experience ministering to skateboarders. I’ve grown in my language skills (all our work is in Spanish), as well as my administrative and discipling skills during my time in Barcelona. Much of my time lately has been in one-on-one mentoring and discipleship.

The Latest News from Barcelona (and Germany)

YWAM Barcelona recently took on 2 new staff: Philip (originally from Germany) and Tamar (from Cataluna). They’re 7 months pregnant so we’re about to have a family here! They have a huge heart for worship and intercession which is something our base has been lacking.

Philip led worship for us a few days ago and it was one of the most encouraging worship times I’ve experienced since before the quarantine. There were a few of us from YWAM,

the Calling All Skaters community, and a couple of new guys too. They are truly a blessing.

Friday nights are now Art Night at YWAM. We open up El Sótano, “the basement”, and invite local artists to come and join our family of creatives. There is an opportunity to create and to talk about spiritual questions.

Monday mornings we go out to the favorite local skate locale and pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit and the skaters who will be arriving. We have opportunities to share the gospel and pray with people. We’ve been able to provide short-term housing for stranded skaters – and we’ve had the joy of seeing people get saved!

Our Youth With A Mission base needs to move – the quarantine and lockdown situation has reduced our income and we’ve reassessed our needs. We’re praying for God to show us the perfect location.

And finally, I was able to go to Germany for two and half weeks for my brother Nathaniel’s wedding. While there I reconnected with the international skate community Nathaniel has been pouring into for the past 4 years. We’re all working together for the same goal, to make disciples of all nations.

How to Pray for Zac

Continued growth in his relationship with Jesus
Full funding of his ministry
A new location for the Barcelona YWAM base
More opportunities for mentoring and discipling new believers
Salvation among the skaters in Barcelona
Deeper community and relationships in the art community meeting on Fridays
An end to Covid restrictions so discipleship training school can be held next year

You can donate to Zac’s ministry through the church – just designate on your check or electronic donation.



Nathaniel and Naomi Muench

Relationships, Strong Connections and Mental Health in the Church

by Barb Green, Parish Nurse

Relational crises happen to everyone, even Christians. We need to learn that it is okay to make mistakes, to have family problems, to struggle with anxiety or to fall into addiction and to ask for help with these problems. This does not mean we are failing at life; it means we are human. A recent study conducted by Barna Group in conjunction with Boone Center for the Family revealed that among both Christians and non-Christians interviewed 50% admit to at least one problem that impacts their relationships. The wide range of issues included marital problems, unwanted singleness, parenting, sexual intimacy, addiction, anxiety/depression, pornography and loneliness. Any of these can cause an ebbing satisfaction with relationships and as a result a ripple effect that reaches to all corners of our lives. It is not unusual for a person to struggle with more than one of these issues. When that happens, there is a world of hurt to contend with.

The current pandemic has added to relational problems in a big way. Loneliness has been amplified. People who live alone may go days without human contact. Even those who live with others may feel alone due to the upheaval caused by the new ways we must work and carry out our daily activities. When families are home together trying to work or do school in ways they are not

used to, relationships can deteriorate quickly. This fact can increase anxiety and other mental health problems. As usual methods of entertainment are denied, people turn to social media, the internet and television to fill their time often getting a skewed view of the world and increasing anxieties and depression.

A significant finding of this study shows that people who address relationship concerns and mental health at church experience greater spiritual growth. Bearing one another's burdens, it seems, does lighten the load. Never has there been a more important time for the church to talk about relationships. People need a church family and the grace Jesus offers in this age of anxiety. The church can and must be a reliable place to turn for relational restoration.

How do we as a church face these issues and help people solve their problems with relationships? People who interact on a spiritual level, whether

through prayer, Bible study or some other activity, are more likely than those who don't to turn to each other during a personal crisis. There is some correlation between sharing spiritual interactions and having each other's backs. Many look to a family member or close friend for help. Practicing Christians are likely to turn to a pastor for relational support.

As a church we need to encourage our pastors to get the training they need to be able to counsel people effectively. We also need to insist that they refer people to professional counselors when their efforts to help have reached a roadblock. If there are professional mental health counselors

in the church they can be used in this ministry. Teaching openly and honestly from the pulpit can help people understand the Bible's teaching on problems they are encountering. Encouraging classes on relational and mental health issues so people have a platform to discuss them can be helpful.

In addition, it is vitally important that the pastor has support as he or she counsels others. As a church we can



Relationships and Mental Health in the Church, *cont.*

make sure that they have adequate time to solidify their own relationships with their family, friends and cohorts. Pastors need to wrestle with God about these problems, have time to process and have a trusted friend to talk things over with. This applies to youth leaders as well. Knowing how to build sol-

id relationships starts well before adulthood.

This study's findings strongly suggest that churches help people live better relational lives. It also shows that professional counseling and mental healthcare play a vital role in helping people heal. God is us-

ing these to restore broken people and relationships. That is good news! Let's employ all of the above when it comes to restoring relationships – and rejoice to see the gospel come alive in everyday life!

(information gleaned from Restoring Relationships- Barna Group)



Cross Conference:

A Young-Adult Missions Focused Conference
for 18-25 year-olds – Dec. 29 & 30.
<https://crossforthenations.org/>

Because of COVID-19, the Cross Conference will be online. Young adults can join Bethany and Micah Crandall and others at Camp Wakonda to view it livestream. Contact Bethany at bethanygraceupongrace@gmail.com or Micah at micahcran333@gmail.com for more information. If you don't want to join them at Camp, you can purchase a pass to livestream it on your own.

Prayer Focus, *continued*

and the moral principles revealed in scripture. Keep us from confusing our cultural traditions with Biblical truth.

LORD, **keep us committed to the great commission.** Let us work together across cultures and languages to share the gospel. Show each of us the role you would have us undertake – be it across the street or across the globe. Make us faithful in prayer and in sharing our resources. Give us hearts for the lost.

LORD, **let your worldwide church live for your glory!** Let each fellowship connect people to Jesus and help God change their lives. Let each one of us become more like Jesus. Let your people serve one another in God's love. Open our eyes to the life we share together in the Spirit. Bless us as members of your worldwide church.

In the precious name of Jesus, we pray.





December Birthdays & anniversaries

- 3 Carol Blomgren
- 6 Tiffany Geske
- 9 Robert & Sondra Muench
- 12 Randy Osborn
- 14 Brandon Crandall
- 19 Andrew Michel
- 20 Eva Harris
- 22 Denise Green
- 25 William Holbrook
- 25 Seth Greene
- 27 Tacy Camenga
- 28 Neil Aiken
- 30 LeRoy Hoff
- 30 Donna McCorrison
- 31 Winifred Hoffman
- 31 Joel & Doneta Osborn

Restored for a Purpose
 SDB Conference Theme 2020-2021
 Scripture Memory Verse
 "He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."
 Psalm 23:3

Group Meetings via zoom

Event	Day	Time	Host
Men's Study	Mon.	7:30 p.m.	Pastor Nate
Ladies Sit 'n Sip	Tues.	9:00 a.m.	Janet Butler
Men's Study	Weds.	6:30 a.m.	Pastor Nate (meeting at Sharla's)
Ladies Study	Weds.	9:30 a.m.	Renee Sanford
Ladies Study	Thurs.	9:30 a.m.	Pastor Liz

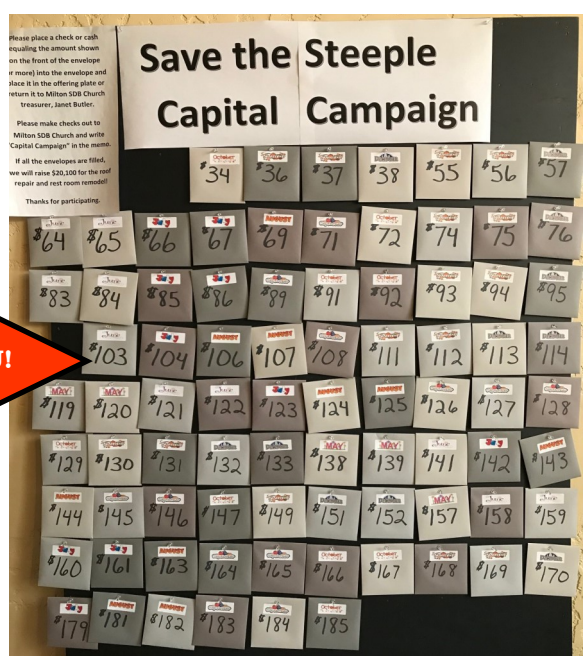
Contact the event host listed or the church office for information on how to connect.



Online Worship
 Our Sabbath morning worship service is available **live** on our YouTube channel. Go to <http://TheConnecting.Church/WorshipOnline> for the link. We are also posting links to the song lyrics and sermon notes on that same page. If you prefer, you can go directly to <https://www.youtube.com/theconnectingchurch>

Focus on Funds
 as of Oct. 31, 2020

General Fund Balance	\$17,208.06
Cash at Mem. Fund	\$67,099.18
Oct. Undesignated Income	\$14,032.42
Oct. Total Income	\$17,486.45
Oct. Expenses	\$15,770.89
Denomination Giving YTD	\$10,248.00



Save the Steeple envelopes waiting for YOU!

Capital Campaign Update
 As of Oct. 31, 2020

Starting Balance	\$ 2,505.00
Total Income	\$66,174.74
Total Expenses	\$60,655.42
Fund Balance	\$ 8,024.32

December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p style="text-align: center;">Sabbath Sunset Times</p> <p>Dec. 4 4:22 p.m. Dec. 5 4:21 p.m. Dec. 11 4:22 p.m. Dec. 12 4:22 p.m. Dec. 18 4:24 p.m. Dec. 19 4:24 p.m. Dec. 25 4:27 p.m. Dec. 26 4:28 p.m.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>9:00 Ladies Sit 'n Sip - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>6:30 Men's Bible Study - Sharla's & zoom 9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom 6:25 Awana 6:36 Collision - Camp Wakonda</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>9:00 Grow Group - zoom 10:30 Worship - Sanctuary and YouTube</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>9:00 Trustees - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>9:00 TOPS - Fellowship Hall 7:30 Men's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>9:00 Ladies Sit 'n Sip - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">9</p> <p>6:30 Men's Bible Study - Sharla's & zoom 9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom 6:25 Awana 6:36 Collision - Camp Wakonda</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">10</p> <p>9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">11</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">12</p> <p>9:00 Grow Group - zoom 10:30 Worship - Sanctuary and YouTube</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">13</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">14</p> <p>8:00 TOPS - Library 7:30 Men's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">15</p> <p>9:00 Ladies Sit 'n Sip - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">16</p> <p>6:30 Men's Bible Study - Sharla's & zoom 9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom 6:25 Awana 6:36 Collision - Camp Wakonda</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">17</p> <p>9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">18</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">19</p> <p>9:00 Grow Group - zoom 10:30 Worship/Musical Celebration - Sanctuary and YouTube</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">20</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">21</p> <p>8:00 TOPS - Library 7:30 Men's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">22</p> <p>9:00 Ladies Sit 'n Sip - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">23</p> <p>6:30 Men's Bible Study - Sharla's & zoom 9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">24</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>4:30 Christmas Eve Service - Sanctuary and YouTube</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">25</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>	<p style="text-align: center;">26</p> <p>9:00 Grow Group - zoom 10:30 Worship - Sanctuary and YouTube</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">27</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">28</p> <p>8:00 TOPS - Library 7:30 Men's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">29</p> <p>9:00 Ladies Sit 'n Sip - zoom Young Adult CROSS Conference - Live-stream Group at Camp Wakonda</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">30</p> <p>6:30 Men's Bible Study - Sharla's & zoom 9:30 Women's Bible Study - zoom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">31</p> <p>6:36 Collision New Year's Eve Party - Camp Wakonda</p>	<div style="text-align: center;"> </div>	



Milton SDB Church
720 E. Madison Ave.
Milton, WI 53563
Church Phone: 608-868-2741

Pastor Nate Crandall
Cell Phone: 608-322-8824
Email: pastornate@miltonsdb.org

Pastor Liz Green
Cell Phone: 608-289-3029
Email: pastorliz@miltonsdb.org

Administrator: Janet Butler
E-mail: churchoffice@miltonsdb.org

Director of Children's Ministry:
Angie Mullen

Prayer Coordinator:
Renee Sanford

Outreach Coordinator:
Linda Lyke

Parish Nurse:
Barb Green

Communications Coordinator:
Joel Osborn

A Thrill of
HOPE
The Heavy
World
REJOICES



December 2020