

First Family News

Our Second Century

August 2017

A Summer Reflection ...

I've been mulling over a personal question this summer; what church would Jesus belong? Would it be a mega church, a small country church, a Baptist church, an Episcopal church or any church?

Here's a funny thing about the religions of the world: They often don't resemble their founders.

Islam and Muhammad. Buddhism and Buddha. Christianity and Jesus.

The dots don't always connect.

Columnist Nicholas Kristof observes that "Muhammad raised the status of women in his time, yet today some Islamic clerics bar women from driving." Buddha would probably be horrified by the racial segregation that Buddhists in Myanmar impose on minority Muslims. And although Jesus was a radical who challenged the establishment, Christianity has been so successful that in many parts of the world it has actually *become* the establishment.

Religions don't always resemble their founders.

Former pastor Brian McLaren takes this even farther. In his book *The Great Spiritual Migration*, he writes that "our religions often stand for the very opposite of what their founders stood for."

Why is this? The founders of religions are usually bold and charismatic visionaries. They inspire people with their fresh insights and their moral imaginations. But over time, their teachings are preserved by religions that are run by risk-averse bureaucracies. Instead of being bold and visionary, religions become obsessed with capital and clout. That's why there was a popular video produced a few years ago called, "Why I Hate Religion, but Love Jesus."

Because Christianity has become disconnected from Jesus, many people are getting tired of church as usual. Before a recent worship service in Iowa, the pastor read aloud a note that had been handed to him a few moments earlier. "It says here that I should announce that there will be no B.S."

He tucked the piece of paper in his pocket and added, "I'm hoping they mean 'Bible Study.'"

People want a church that is true to Jesus, aligned with his ministry and mission. So, we have to ask ourselves, as McLaren does, "What would it mean for Christians to rediscover their faith?" What would it mean for us to rediscover Christianity as "a just and generous way of life, rooted in contemplation and expressed in compassion?"

For this to happen, McLaren says that we need to migrate, moving from one way of life to another. In particular, he challenges us to move from expressing our faith only as a system of beliefs "to expressing it as a loving way of life." This is a migration away from religious bureaucracy and back to the vision of our founder, Jesus Christ. It's a move away from pointing fingers in condemnation to opening our hands to alleviate human suffering. It's a migration from using our money "to keep the wheels turning" to spending time being disciples -- that is, living like the first Christians.

A just and generous way of life, rooted in contemplation and expressed in compassion. That's the kind of religion that Jesus founded. And I think it's the answer to the question: What church would Jesus belong to today?

A Word from Rev. Denise Bell

This year our cluster gatherings from August 27th through November will focus on our regional mission, vision, and core values. Last year from our clusters we discovered three deep passions of our ministry across the region: Local outreach, church vitality, and evangelism. Through prayer, conversation, and leadership development, the regional leadership crafted a mission, vision, and core values for you to help to shape. We have a soft draft that says: We serve to LIFT clergy, lay leaders, congregations to transform lives and communities. In other words, we love, inspire, focus on Jesus, and transform communities. Our vision is to be a community of faithful, vital, and diverse disciples transforming communities. In our core values, we commit to evangelism, healthy clergy and congregations, mission, local outreach, justice, and diversity. Come to a cluster and help discern together our emerging mission, vision, core values.

Be sure to check <http://www.gadisciples.org/> for all the latest news.

2017 Disciples Women's Retreat

September 22-24

Toccoa Georgia Baptist Conference Center

Building Relationships

Must Register by Aug 30 to reserve your space

Costs:

Includes \$40 retreat registration fee and materials, housing for 2 nights, and 6 meals:

1 adult in a Single room: \$258

2 adults in a Double room: \$208 per person

3 adults in a Triple room: \$188 per person

4 adults in a Quad room: \$168 per person

More information at <http://bit.ly/2017DWR>

Board Meeting

Sunday, August 13, 2017 – 6pm

August Featured Restaurant Fellowship

Tuesday, August 15 – Bonefish Grill – 1350 Scenic Hwy 124, Snellville, GA 30078 – 7:00pm

August Birthdays

1 John Lee
3 Perry Westbrook
5 Grace Aguwa
6 Kris Jensen
9 Nancy Groves
9 Nettie Patterson
11 David Chamberlain
12 Nancy Welty
19 Mildred Pinion
20 Sanford Thompson
21 Denise Holden
29 Marilyn Parks

August Anniversaries

2 Brendon & Sha Parks
21 Kris & Karen Jensen
28 David & Leona Chamberlain

Other News

Please sign up to help in worship through December. Schedules available in the gathering area.

Choir practice has resumed for the Fall on Sundays 5-6:00 p.m. Come join in!

The YMCA early learning program has resumed activities at LFCC on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

Summer Pot Luck

Come one! Come All! To our Summer Pot Luck! We are gathering in the lovely air conditioned fellowship hall for a delicious and comfortable summer meal. August 27th after the Worship Service. Bring your favorite, faithful dish and we will all have a Grand Old Time.

Serving at the Table

Elders: Elizabeth McElhanon & Rod Baker
Deacons: Josué F. Machado & Rafael Evatt-Machado
Communion Preparation: Mary Jo Alvord

Worship Helpers

August 13: Scripture Reading - Karen Jensen
August 20: Scripture Reading - Mabel Simmons
August 27: Scripture Reading - Marilyn Parks



First Christian Church (DOC)

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Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jay White
Music Director: Kim Peebles