

OCTOBER 2020 NEWSLETTER  
FIRST BRETHERN CHURCH OF NEW PARIS, IN.  
PASTOR JEFF ESTEP



**From the desk of Pastor Jeff Estep**

During the Great COVID Quarantine of 2020, when we were stuck at home for months, our family fell in love with a fun song by Matthew West called “Quarantine Life”. If you haven’t heard this song, I’d encourage you to listen to it- it’s pretty funny. I bring it up because one line in the chorus pretty much sums up most of 2020- “It ain’t all good but it’s all alright.” Yes, this year’s been crazy, frustrating, and in some ways, as my kids would say, “Meh.” But we’ve tried to make the best of it!

During shut down, we were able to record messages for people to share in at home, first through audio, then through video. We did a Zoom Bible Study for awhile, and for those that were able to participate, I think it was a good time of growth and fellowship. We tried to keep in contact with each other through phone calls, letters, etc.

In June, we were able to begin meeting again, and on the last Sunday of the month we held a Worship at the Park event, which was well-attended. Meanwhile, we continued to improve our video capabilities for those that weren’t ready to return to “live” services. Over the summer, we sponsored a Day Camp for Kids and sent several youth to a weeklong camp at the Brethren Retreat Center. And our Sunday morning service attendance began to creep up close to our “average” pre-COVID week.

In some ways, we are returning to a taste of “normalcy”, with Youth Group and Kids Club starting back up. The Bible classes from New Paris Elementary are meeting here again on a revised schedule, (no small miracle for which God gets the praise!) Cowboys for Christ has been hosting well-attended rides. And though we cannot host Bible studies, the Dining Room Devos I’ve begun recording provide some discipleship opportunities for people inside and outside of our church, and we are reposting sermons from years past for midweek encouragement. As a pastor, I have certainly had to learn to adjust my habits, and leave my comfort zone, during this past year, which is causing me to grow in some ways I would have never anticipated.

And now, it is officially fall! As October begins, I want to thank Pastor Megan Long and her husband Jon for all they have done in the youth ministry of our church. If you spend five minutes around the youth of our church, it is obvious that our youth feel welcomed, loved, and they genuinely enjoy being together. That atmosphere has been fostered by Megan and Jon, and the camaraderie within the group will certainly help our youth program remain strong as the Longs prepare for the new and challenging season of life called "parenthood". We will also be planning a special celebration of the Longs' ministry in the very near future.

I want the rest of our church to know that the Pastoral Board and the Official Board will be working to determine what sort of leadership is needed for our youth going forward. For the time being, Jamie and I hope to lead a team of volunteers, (yes you can help, thanks for asking!), which will plan weekly youth group meetings, as well as youth events and fundraisers. We already have a Corn Maze/Fall Party planned for Saturday, October 24th! More details will be shared as they come to light.

Normally each October we plan a Threefold Communion Service on a Sunday evening. Given the ongoing pandemic, we feel it is probably best to not have such a communion service at this time. However, sometime either in October or November we will plan on including a bread and juice Communion during our morning worship service. It may seem like a poor substitute for the intimacy of a service that includes a love feast and footwashing. But I would remind us that of the three "folds" in our "threefold" service, only the bread and the cup were commanded to be celebrated in a formal way. We can feast and do footwashing when we feel it is safe to do so.

Believe it or not, the Holidays are just around the corner! It remains to be seen how COVID will affect the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, though with the state of Indiana getting to Stage 5 of its recovery, hopefully by the end of November we can do many of the things we love. We noticed at the Pastor Appreciation Meal this last month that the Sunnyside Park Indoor Pavilion worked nicely for that meal. If need be, we may be able to use that venue for our annual Holiday Meal if we can't safely have it here at the church. That is typically the first Sunday in December, which this year would be the 6th. And I want to assure everyone that I am committed to hosting our annual Christmas Eve Service on December 24th, even if it has to look a bit different. (Maybe we could order Santa beards for everyone to wear as masks?)

Yes, we've had to make adjustments this year, but we've weathered it okay. I want to thank everyone again for their patience, understanding, and mutual love since the pandemic began. We have continued to love and support one another, even if the ways we do so have had to change. Let us pray that as we begin to look toward 2021, next year will be one of celebration, growth, and renewed vision for our church.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Jeff

## **Children's Ministry Article**

Kids Club is meeting again! We've had two meetings thus far. We are starting the year with fewer students than we have had in the past, but hopefully as the year progresses we will see some more faces. In order to better social distance, this year's Kids Club meetings are taking place in the Fellowship Hall. We sit in forward facing chairs for the lesson, games, and to watch our video, but use round tables for our craft time. It has been a lot of fun to get back into the swing of things! If you know of any kids who might enjoy coming to Kids Club, bring them along! We meet from 6:30-7:30 on Wednesdays.

As I mentioned in my earlier article, the Bible classes have also resumed. If you aren't familiar with this program, elementary school students from New Paris Elementary are bussed from the school to our church for lessons from the Bible during the school day, each Thursday. For awhile it looked like having the Bible classes would be logistically impossible. Problems like how to keep students socially distanced, how to find adequate transportation with new bus protocols, and whether we could find times during the school day to host the classes seemed daunting. But God went before us and helped the administration and the Bible class leadership find a way. The classes are meeting for all three Fairfield schools: Millersburg, Benton, and New Paris. This year looks different than previous years, as each classroom comes to Bible class every three weeks, rather than every two. And two weeks in, things are going well! There's an old Don Moen worship song that says, "God will make a way where there seems to be no way." We can declare that has certainly been true with the Bible classes. I want to thank our church for generously donating our building to be used each Thursday. The seeds of truth that are sown here will result in a harvest of salvation and righteousness!

In Christ,

Pastor Jeff and Jamie Estep

## Deacon's Thoughts

### **DID YOU KNOW THAT:**

- Psalm 118 is the middle chapter of the entire Bible ?
- Psalm 117, before Psalm 118 is the shortest chapter in the Bible?
- Psalm 119, after Psalm 118 is the longest chapter in the Bible?
- The Bible has 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and 594 chapters after Psalm 118 ?
- If you add up all the chapters except Psalm 118, you get a total of 1188 chapters.
- 1188 or Psalm 118 verse 8 is the middle verse of the entire Bible?
- Should the central verse not have an important message? "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man" Psalm 118: 8

Jimmy Gill , Chairman

## Butterfly Mornings (Encouraging thoughts)

Where has the summer gone? In March as COVID-19 began spreading across the US, we all thought this is going to be a really long year. Our "normal" was interrupted by a virus we did not understand nor control; yet here we are at the beginning of fall with Thanksgiving and Christmas just around the corner. Life is filled with the unexpected and this year seems especially surreal. However, time continues to pass with no regard for our physical, mental or spiritual well-being. It does not stop for happiness or sadness, death or life. It ticks away and brings another day of bad news that can overwhelm and depress even the "faithful".

The US has suffered 200,000 lives lost to COVID-19 and the world is rapidly heading toward the 1 million death mark. Predictions are grim with a US death toll estimate of 400,000 by January. Although the prospects of a safe vaccine are promising, full distribution may not occur until 2021 and efficacy depends on citizen participation. While experiencing the worst health crisis since the 1918 flu pandemic, the US is also facing unprecedented natural disasters.

The US is having another record setting year of wildfires in the western states. Temperatures are hotter; fires are bigger and more destructive, burning rural and suburban communities. 2020 has already shattered the all-time record with almost 4 million acres destroyed; and the fires are still burning. Wildfire smoke is contributing to the worst air quality in decades. The cost of controlling this year's fires is in the billions. The US is also in the middle of one of the most active hurricane seasons in recorded history with homes and businesses being destroyed as people try to recover while facing the fear of COVID. And still time continues to tick away as the presidential election draws near.

The political divide in our country has led to massive demonstrations across our nation's largest cities. Citizens have laid bare their fears and frustrations by choosing sides and refusing to consider the other point of view. To people around the world we look like a nation ready to implode. Will the passing of time prove America is indeed the United States? Or will we become one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all?

It's a lot! So---you are probably wondering where are the encouraging thoughts. Just when good words seemed impossible to find, Jesus said it for me: **Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

*Enough said! - Peggy Miller*

## **A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR BIBLE STUDY**

We are all familiar with the saying “When God closes a door he opens a window”. The door for Wednesday night Bible Study has been temporarily closed, but the window for Dining Room Devos is wide open. Pastor Jeff’s Dining Room Devos are short devotionals, perfect for lunchtime listening or any time during the day or evening that works for you.

Pastor Jeff is currently discussing 1 Peter. The devotionals contain a message relevant for our current times. How to live with hope and joy in a world that seems to be falling apart, how to focus and have self-control, how to see ourselves as newborn babies needing to grow up spiritually, and how trials can purify us are just a few of the topics discussed. Each devotional ends with a thought provoking challenge for meditation and application.

Ask a friend to be your partner so together you can grow spiritually as you discuss and study each lesson.

Don’t miss a blessing. Take a few minutes to join Pastor Jeff in Dining Room Devos. You’ll be glad you did.

### **Dining Room Devo Partners**

**Bonnie Reagan and Jan Sylvester**

### **Pastor Jeff’s Sermon Titles**

#### **“How Sweet It Is! Sermon Series”**

**10/4- Love- How Sweet It Is!**

**10/11- Joy- How Sweet It Is!**

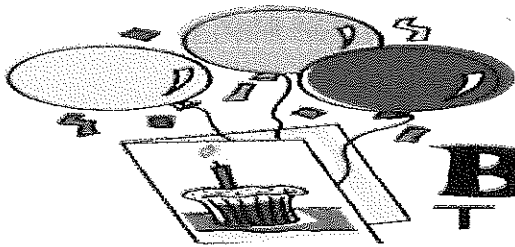
**10/18- Peace- How Sweet It Is!**

**10/25- Patience- How Sweet It Is!**

## TRUSTEES THOUGHTS

Fall is here it will be getting cooler. Bob Clayton our janitor has started back cleaning the Church. We hope his health issues are behind him. We need to give Doug and Peggy a big THANK-YOU for filling in for him this past summer. We also need to thank Brenda Weaver for removing some dead plants from the front of the Church and planting some new stuff. We had the Fellowship Hall carpet and the main aisles in the Sanctuary carpets cleaned. If you see any needs to the building let a trustee know.

**Chairman: Gregg Miller**



## BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

OCT. 7 Tom Van Diepenbos

OCT. 12 John Cline

OCT. 17 Jack Runyan Jr.

OCT. 22 Larry Parcell

*Anniversary  
Blessings*



OCT. 5 Jon and Megan Long

OCT. 24 Gregg and Vickie Miller

The Brethren Retreat Center is holding their semiannual Chicken/Ribs/Potato BBQ Fundraiser on Saturday, Oct. 3rd at the LaGrange Town Hall, 1201 North Townline Rd., in LaGrange. Chicken is \$7/half or \$30 for 3. Ribs are \$11 per half rack or \$21 per rack. Potatoes are \$3 per container, and drinks are \$1. This is a great opportunity to support the ministry of the BRC, and a tasty way to do it!

