



JANUARY 2021
FIRST CHURCH OF
THE BRETHREN
NEW PARIS, IN.
NEWSLETTER WITH
PASTOR JEFF ESTEP.

NEW YEAR PRAYER:

Thank You Lord for giving me
The brand new year ahead.
Help me live the way I should
As each new day I tread.
Give me gentle wisdom
That I might help a friend,
Give me strength and courage
So a shoulder I might lend.
The year ahead is empty,
Help me fill it with good things
Each new day filled with joy
And happiness it brings.
Amen.

The Daily Bible Verses

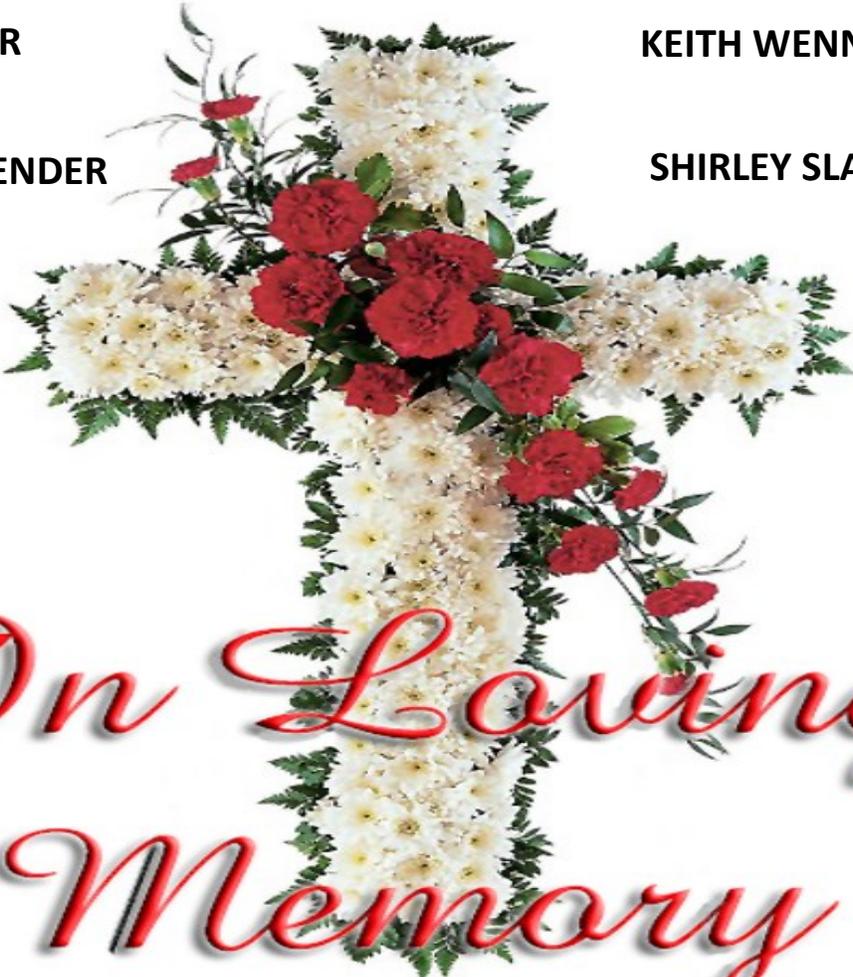
<http://thedailyverses.blogspot.com> - www.facebook.com/thedailybibleverses

PAT WEAVER

KEITH WENNER

DELORES BENDER

SHIRLEY SLABAUGH



*In Loving
Memory*

As we begin 2021, we want to take a moment to remember some very dear friends we lost in 2020. These dear saints have made their mark on our ministry, were faithful in service to the Lord, and have joined the great cloud of witnesses whose example cheers us on until we are joined together again, on the great day of Christ's return! May our memories of them give us comfort, and the promise of our eventual reunion give us joy as we begin another year of service to our Lord.

Pat Weaver

Delores Bender

Keith Wenner

Shirley Slabaugh

FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR JEFF ESTEP

One year ago in this newsletter I wrote about how there are different seasons to life, and different seasons of ministry. We lost several dear members of our church around the holidays last year, and I wanted to infuse hope for a good 2020. Of course, none of us at the time knew what 2020 would bring. But I wanted to share a few lines of my article from last January, as I feel they are appropriate as we begin 2021.

“But perhaps the new year is a great time to be reminded that God’s goodness is proven even in difficult circumstances, and that joy often comes more by choice than by chance. As the old church chant goes, “God is good, all the time”, and “All the time, ...” You know the rest. Jeremiah, in Lamentations, wrote about the tragedy that was Jerusalem’s fall. But tucked within the poem was an assurance of God’s mercy even in difficult times. In 3:22-23, he wrote lines that would eventually inspire one of the great hymns of the last few centuries: “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” “Great is your faithfulness.” Regardless of our circumstances, His grace and love for us remain.”

These words are just as true as we begin 2021 as they were when we began 2020. A year ago, some of us had likely never heard the word “pandemic”, none of us had heard the term “social distancing”, and masks were for Halloween. Prior to 2020, if we canceled church twice in a year, it meant it was a bad winter. As the new year begins, we survey a landscape that would have been unimaginable twelve months ago. But yet we have hope!

I wish I could say that the dawn of 2021 meant a return to “normal”. I write this article on the day the first COVID vaccinations were given in the U.S. Though this is welcome news, we are told it will take some time before enough Americans are vaccinated for us to return to familiar rhythms of life. That means we likely will need to continue “playing things by ear” the next few months. If there’s one thing 2020 has taught us, it is flexibility, and we may need to display some more of it this year. But whatever lies ahead in the coming months, I want you to know that we will continue to work to keep the unity of our Body, to experience worship together, to love one another deeply, and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our community. But more specifically, I want to share a few things I pray we will see as a church in the coming year. And I ask you would join me in praying for these things as well.

1. That we can embrace one another again. Personally, one of the most difficult aspects of this pandemic has been our inability to be as affectionate with one another as we like. Though we Brethren may not practice the “holy kiss” anymore (not complaining), hugging, handshaking, and arms around the shoulder is part of who we are. We take brotherly love seriously, and I pray that in the coming months we will be able to safely show affection again. In the mean time, let us continue to use our conversations, phone calls, texts, and encouragement cards to communicate our love for one another.

2. (Safe) times of fellowship. I pray that 2021 will see the return of the carry-in dinner! Those times of loving conversation over too many casseroles and desserts are important, and I hope that eventually we will be able to have them again. And I have a feeling that when we do, people may hang around later than we used to. Maybe we’ll even break out the board games! Though we may still be a few months away from this, I can see and taste it from a distance, and it’s delicious!

3. More of us, more of the time. Between COVID cases, quarantines, mandated shut downs, and many of us staying home to protect ourselves and our loved ones, it has been a long time since our church service has felt “full”. I pray for the chance to see more familiar faces, and hopefully, some new ones as well, not just at Sunday morning worship but at other church events as well.

4. New forms of effective outreach. Though I hope to return to familiar rhythms, this pandemic has changed our society for the long term, and it is probable that we will need to find new ways of reaching those outside the church. Over this next year, I want us to explore new avenues of outreach and discipleship, with the goal of seeing people enter the Kingdom of God. I want to see baptisms!

5. Finally, I pray that the lessons we learned in 2020 will continue to shape our ministry in the years ahead. The truth is, some good things did come about this year. We learned we can find new ways of delivering messages and worship services to our flock. We learned we can stay financially viable even when we can’t pass the offering plate. I learned to adopt new technologies to teach others, (and that it is possible for a preacher to keep a message under ten minutes. Who’d a thunk it?) Even if we are able to get back to familiar rhythms, I don’t believe God taught the Church about flexibility this year just to have us put the skill on the shelf in the years ahead. Our world will continue to change, and for the Church to succeed in its mission to reach the lost, we will need to continue to adapt to be effective. We need to continue to think creatively in the years ahead. And I believe we will, by God’s grace.

Whatever lies ahead in 2021, we will seek to love God more deeply, to love each other more genuinely, and to reach our community more effectively. This is His will, and our mission. We will do this together, and I'm honored to be with you on the adventure.

In Christ, Pastor Jeff

Pastor Jeff 's Sermon Titles- January

In January, we will begin a sermon series called "Letters to a Nervous Church: A Look at 1 & 2 Thessalonians". The church at Thessalonica was young, spiritually immature, and had some misunderstandings about the time surrounding Christ's return. We will look at Paul's words of encouragement and teaching.

January 3- Always and Continually

January 10- Imitation

January 17- How It Began

January 24- Approved By God

January 31- Not A Burden

Children's Ministry

By God's grace, we have been able to meet eleven times for Kids Club this fall! While that's fewer meetings than we have planned, for 2020, we'll take it! We've averaged about nine students per week, a smaller crowd than we'd like to see, but the kids who are coming are enjoying our time of teaching, games, and crafts. This year has been a lot of fun! Each month or so, our videos and lessons focus on a different theme. So far this year we have looked at the themes of Harmony and Contentment, and this Christmas Season we are focused on Joy!

The pandemic has slowed down our monthly family gatherings. Last year, we held an Ice Cream Sundae Night, went roller skating, and had a Photo Scavenger Hunt, but since March we haven't been able to hold these intentionally family-oriented events. However, I am trying to keep in touch with parents through weekly emails where I discuss the book, "Mama Bear Apologetics", which is written to help parents defend their children from false philosophies they are exposed to in the world. If you would like to read these emails, they are available as articles at www.newparisfirst.com/news.

After taking some time off for Christmas Break, Kids Club will resume again on Wednesday, January 13th. NOTE- Kids Club will begin meeting from 6:00-7:00 on Wednesdays, starting a half hour earlier than we did this fall. Parents, please make a note of this.

In Christ, Pastor Jeff

YOUTH MINISTRY

The youth ministry is ending 2020 on a positive note! On Sunday the 20th, the youth held two events back to back. The first was a Gift Wrapping Fundraiser. Several youth wrapped presents for at least six different families, and a couple hundred dollars was raised to help youth get to 2021 Engage Conference! We watched the movie “Elf” while we wrapped, ate snacks, and drank cocoa. Not a bad work day!

Later that afternoon we held our annual Christmas Party. Jon and Megan Long joined us for the party, at which we ate pizza, exchanged White Elephant Gifts, and played games. The most fun game involved trying to get prizes from a ball of saran wrap while wearing oven mitts. Fun and frustrating! It was a fun way to head into Christmas week!

On Wednesday evenings, we are in the middle of a 4 week video series called “Drive”, which features a short movie about a teenage boy looking for a father he comes to find out has died. As the story progresses, he will discover he’s not near as worthless or hopeless as he imagines, and that there is more to his father’s story than he thought.

We continue to search for a new Youth Director. Hopefully as the holidays end, God will bring the right candidate our way. If you know of anyone who might be a fit, please ask Pastor Jeff or someone on the Pastoral Board for a Job Description.

On to 2021!

Pastor Jeff & Jamie

1- Megan Long

7- Carla Wood

9- Bob Coleman

11- April McKeown

13- Sarah Morris

14- Hailey Mullins

20- Hannah Amstutz

21- Finn & Liam Reagan

24- Vicki Miller

30- Bill Mullins

31- Kari Miller



TRUSTEE'S THOUGHTS

We have replaced the light bulbs at the peck in the Sanctuary and redirected the light to have better lighting on the stage. We also replaced the bulb in the projector and the filter. Now we have a brighter picture on the screen. We have had a few minor repairs at the Church and the parsonage. We had a plugged gutter on the east side of the building and found a plastic water bottle and a chunk of wood in the gutter. How it got up that high is a good question. As always if you see and needs to the building let a trustee know.

Chairman: Gregg Miller



Butterfly Mornings

I will begin a new devotional journal beginning on January 1 which is based on a book I read titled Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby. The very first day in the journal is a valuable reflection for 2021; it seemed a good message to share with all of you as we look ahead to a year that will begin as it ended—a life disruption caused by a world-wide pandemic which will take more than 2 million lives by the end of 2021. That death count predictions are unimaginable and yet we are called to remain faithful.

Resolutions

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, so of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” (John 21:15)

Jesus has a wonderful way of restoring us when we fail Him! He does not humiliate us. He does not criticize us. He does not ask us to make a resolution to try harder. Rather, He takes us aside and asks us to reaffirm our love for Him.

Peter miserably failed his Lord when he fled with other disciples from the Garden of Gethsemane. Later, he publicly denied that he even knew Jesus. Peter must have wondered if he had been capable of being Jesus’ disciple when he was unfaithful to Jesus in His most crucial hour.

As you begin a new year, you may be painfully aware that you have failed your Lord in many ways. Perhaps you were not faithful. Perhaps you disobeyed His word to you. Perhaps you denied Him by the way you lived. Jesus will take you aside, as He did Peter. He will not berate you. He will not humiliate you. He will ask you to examine your love for Him. He asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” If your answer, like Peter’s, is “Yes Lord,” He will reaffirm His will for you. If you truly love Him, you will obey him (John 14:15). Jesus does not need your resolutions, your recommitments, or your promises to try harder this year. If your resolve to obey God last year did not help you to be faithful, it will not make you successful this year. Jesus asks for your love. If you truly love Him, your service for Him in the new year will be of the quality that He desires.

There is no greater comfort than to know that even when we fall short of doing what is right and good, our Lord and Savior gently reminds us that He never gives up on us. His love remains constant and forgiving.

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