

PASTOR'S PEN

(Pastor Randy did not write this month. This is an article he wrote several years ago, with some helpful in-put for the times in which we are living.)

HEARING FROM GOD

After a recent sermon, someone called me to ask if I believe God can speak through people who may have some flaws. First, I am grateful for such questions and the desire for more conversation. Secondly, I hope so because I am aware of my own flaws. I certainly was not trying to suggest in my sermon one needs to be blameless to teach or preach.

While I believe we need to heed to Jesus' warning to be aware of false prophets, I also believe God can speak to us through the words and actions of others in surprising ways. My favorite aunt, who did not claim a personal Christian faith and had a very limited understanding of the Bible, taught me much about love, grace, and acceptance. She was not only loving to me, but I saw her reaching out to others on a regular basis. At her funeral, I discovered that many people thought they were special to her. I learned from her that to love is to have the best interest of the other person. Aunt Sarah demonstrated a Christ-like love.

A second example comes from a neighbor, who I have never heard speak about faith, but taught me another meaningful lesson. We asked him to remove a tree that he planted on the edge of our joint property line. After showing him the damage the tree was doing to my property, he asked for some time to think about the situation. A few weeks later he explained to me his reasons for keeping the tree. However, he ended our conversation by saying that he wanted to be a good neighbor and so he would go ahead and cut it down. My neighbor sacrificed what he wanted, for the sake of being a good neighbor. Our relationship has deepened since this encounter. I learned from him that sometimes loving in relationship means we sacrifice our wishes.

God uses a wide variety of people to help us learn more about God's love and God's ways. I believe flawed people can speak into our lives. People with bad theology or questionable ethics can still be used by God. I believe God gives us the ability to discern whether or not things are supported by Jesus and the Bible

I sense that we are to live in the tension of being cautious in questioning the people who wish to speak into our lives, and yet be wide open to those people God may speak through to impact our lives for the Kingdom. Hence, I have tuned out many preachers, politicians, educators and economists while I have learned much from people with questionable ethics and lifestyles. We can trust God and one another for wisdom and discernment.

-Pastor Randy



Some Special Dates....

Upcoming BIRTHDAYS

Coleen Ryan	3/3
Russ Pride	3/9
Timothy Landes	3/10
Tiyanna Landes	3/16
Alyssa Ryan	3/16
Phillip Zeo Jr.	3/17
Karen Fennell	3/18
Grace Brenneman	3/28
Randy Heacock	3/30
Matthew Ryan	4/1
Louise Beyer	4/2

Upcoming ANNIVERSARIES

Jon & KrisAnne Swartley	3/13
Phillip & Hannah Zeo	3/22
Ronald & Robin Miller	3/26
Charles & Grace Snyder	4/3

FROM KAREN'S PLACE COFFEEHOUSE

19th Annual Blues-Rock Madness Month is here!

March 7- Obadiah

Obadiah is one of the premiere blues-rock bands in the area. Tom is known for his blistering guitar riffs and soulful vocals. Heavily committed to the Prison Ministry, we feel privileged they can find time to come to Karen's Place a few times each year.

March 14- BASIC Connection

BASIC Connection is a southern flavored Christian rock & blues band based out of Columbia, PA. With a strong commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, they offer original songs along with other covers ranging in intensity. Passion and authenticity in their relationship with Jesus, others and each other is what fuels them.

March 21- Dana Isles & Facedown

Dana Isles and Facedown have been ministering as a band for 10 years. Through various personnel and band name changes, the mission has remained the same...to glorify and worship God through music..

March 28- 4th Annual Clean Comedy Night (rescheduled)

April 4- Joe Miralles Trio

The Joe Miralles Trio skillfully crafts the Gospel message with outstanding musicianship and songwriting. Don't miss this great band as they return to Karen's Place!

SECOND SUNDAY SENSATION

SSS will welcome Christian Magician Sam Sandler on **April 5th**. Sam will share a message with us during worship, and then perform a magic show which will include his testimony and spiritual insights. There will be a meal following the magic show. More details will be coming! Be sure to invite friends and neighbors to this special Second Sunday Sensation event!



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

We begin again on Thursday, March 12, 1:30-3:00 pm at Louise Beyer's home in Hilltown. We will continue our study of the Book of Acts using the same book that guided our discussions in the fall. Contact Louise Beyer or KrisAnne with any questions.

FROM THE PRAYER CORNER

An immense thanks to this congregation for the opportunity to serve as prayer minister. It is an honor to walk alongside each other in our journey of following Jesus and to learn to pray together.

In my recent conversations with Steve, my husband, we have talked about this idea of waiting on God and trusting God. Waiting sometimes seems passive to us, especially if we have anxiety about a situation that we want to change. As an "overfunctioner," (ask me what that means if you don't know) I want to fix and do as much as possible, but often God says, "listen to me first so I can show you my way." And in the waiting and listening I have found that God gives me a peace to follow and surrender my desires to God.

And when I am able to do that, life seems less burdensome, less heavy, less stressful, because I know that ultimately I am in God's care, as are my loved ones and my friends. I have made the remark to Steve, "It almost seems too easy to trust God and wait." In our world, we somehow believe that if we "work" or is it "worry?" harder we will receive what we want.

I want to learn to trust God and wait for his guidance and wisdom both personally and as a congregation. Prayer helps me to do that. I invite your presence at our Tuesday am prayer group or the 2nd Weds eve, Listening Prayer to practice praying and waiting on God.

-Sandy Landes, Prayer Minister

CARE TEAM NOTES

Sandy had provided a video on stress by Graham Cooke to kick off a learning & discussion. I'd recommend this; if you're interested you can find it on Youtube ("Brilliant Thoughts with Graham Cooke: Episode 1"). In it, he provides some perspective on how stress is a choice that we make for ourselves. Think about the choices we make when we accept or create stress in a situation. Is there another way? We can ask "Lord, I want to see this situation in The Care Team had our monthly meeting on Monday evening, Feb 24. the way that YOU see it". That would certainly be a good way to recenter and take a fresh look. We also read to Philippians 4:4-9 in this context. Through this we learn that we can tap into the peace that Jesus has for us and wants us to experience. Can we focus on this and focus on taking responsibility for our own emotions, rather than the emotions of others directing us?

We then continued in reviewing the compassion fund proposals and discussion on the upcoming Financial Peace workshops. We are thankful for the volunteers that will help facilitate these workshops! A time of prayer for our church family and friends was also held. Please connect with any member of the Care Team if you would like to make us aware of any needs, seek prayer, or would like to discuss ideas/opportunities to equip our church members.

The next Care Team meeting is planned for Monday, March 23.

-Kendrick Garrido for the Care Team (Sandy Landes, Freida Myers, Robin Miller, Randy Heacock)

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

After a great potluck fellowship meal, the congregational meeting ran approximately two hours and was a useful time of conversation around where and how God is leading the church. These issues were framed around a review of 2019 including reports from Randy on behalf of MLT, Kendrick Garrido on behalf of the Care Team, Dave Chittick on behalf of the trustees, and Mary Lee Chittick provided the financial report. Following the review of 2019, presentation and discussion of plans and budget for 2020 were undertaken and focused on discussing the plans for fifth Sunday service, sponsorship support for a cabin at Spruce Lake, the current pastoral staffing team approach, and the 2020 spending plan.

As part of the discussion around the current pastoral staffing team approach, the staff and their spouses were asked to step out for a time of MLT to hear from the congregation. Both through that session and the broader feedback, some major themes were voiced. There was significant concern and discussion around the plan for fifth Sunday service and as part of this, a concern of disconnect between Leadership Team and the congregation. On the current approach to pastoral staffing, there was general openness to the current plan, but a request was raised to better articulate how this approach to staffing connects with our vision in becoming the congregation to which we feel called. There was general affirmation for both the plan to sponsor the cabin at Spruce Lake and for the 2020 staffing plan.

Overall, the meeting was a useful time of conversation and deliberation with one another. There was good participation and feedback from the many voices in attendance. The meeting concluded with affirmations on the fifth Sunday service plan, sponsoring the cabin at Spruce Lake, the team approach to pastoral staffing, and the 2020 staff plan. All affirmations except the fifth Sunday plan passed unanimously. Given the concerns raised around the fifth Sunday service plan, MLT will reflect, discern, and communicate with the congregation before scheduling another opportunity on May 31st. Minutes from the congregational meeting will be distributed to the congregation on Sunday, March 15, after MLT has a chance to approve them at their meeting on March 12.

-Mark Reiff, for MLT

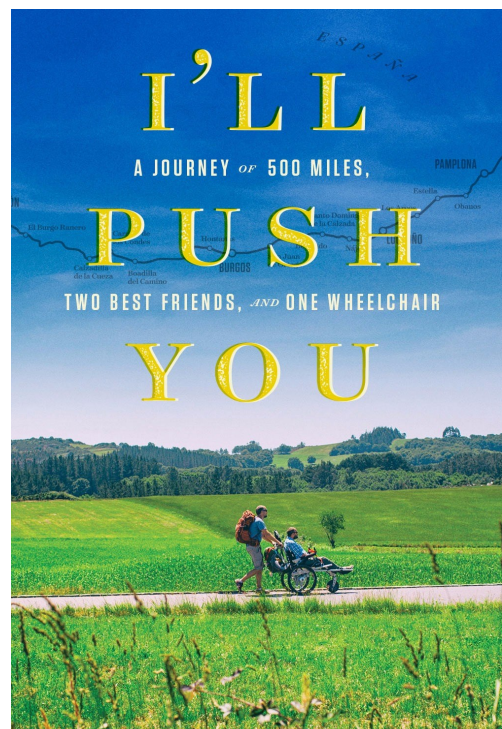
FROM THE LIBRARY

Book Review: I'll Push You by Patrick Gray & Justin Skeesuck

I'm always amazed at how God works in our lives. Freida Myers could not possibly have known about my life-long interest in epic adventures taking paths much less traveled when she asked me to review this book about two close friends who were born in the same hospital two days apart. They subsequently made a 500-mile pilgrimage across the mountains and rugged terrain of northern Spain in 2014 with Patrick pushing Justin the entire way in a wheelchair. This book wonderfully describes the challenges they faced, the risks they took, the characters they met, the faith they had, the problems they overcame, and the development of a strong, selfless friendship.

I'll Push You is written in a style that is easy to read and hard to put down. I found it almost like a bag of chips where I couldn't read just a couple of pages and was always eager to read yet another page.

I'll Push You made me think about my own epic journeys, including the time that my son Kraig and I drove a tiny 10' long 30-year old car 6400 miles from Missouri up to Alaska and back in 18 days in 1998, giving us many challenging opportunities to bond together and keep that tired little old car running ...



Book Review (continued)

I'll Push You is rich with many profound insights that Patrick and Justin gained through their close lifelong relationship, selflessly helping each other through whatever challenges that they had to face.

Here are just three of their many profound observations:

Patrick: "Church is not a building for worship or to learn theories about religious doctrine. It is an existence grounded in loving God and loving others and drawing them into the truth that God's love is more powerful than any darkness we can face."

Justin: "Patrick and I have often found ourselves outmatched by circumstances. But we've learned that if we live in fear and never try, if we never attempt something scary or daunting, we can't know what limits we possess. If we don't push ourselves, the only limits we face are the ones we place on ourselves, the ones we fabricate in our minds."

Patrick: "I have played it safe and let my fears take too much control. As a result, I have completely limited what God can do in my life. Not because He can't, but because I won't let Him."

I'm sincerely grateful to Freida for asking me to read and review I'll Push You. It is a fascinating tale about two extraordinary friends on a truly epic pilgrimage! Definitely a "must read". Mandatory!

- Karl Strauch

Deadline for submitting items to the April News & Views - **March 31, 2020**

PARTING THOUGHT:

In moments of happiness, Praise God

In moments of difficulty, Seek God

In moments of quiet, Worship God

In painful moments, Trust God

Every moment, Thank God

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