

August 2022

BETHEL MESSENGER



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From the Pastor

Paul's Journey

You never stop learning, do you? There are many of us who believe our faith continues to evolve throughout our life. That is something Rev. Nathan Athorp communicated to our Confirmation Students. What we believe and what we are sure is the only true belief in our 20's can be tried and tested by the living of our life. And that is not a bad thing. No, on the contrary it is a very good thing.

Mature Faith- that seems to be a term people like to use for a faith that has moved beyond what I call "Sunday School Faith." I use that term because it applies to my own life. After Confirmation many of the female Confirmation Students became assistants in the Sunday School classrooms. Some of us continued from there to teach Sunday School. I spent the worship time after the Children's Sermon in the classroom well into my 50's. Imagine the jolt to my beliefs and faith when I attended Lay Academy.

Well that takes me back to never stop learning. This summer we are reading through the letters Paul wrote to churches he had started. Letters of correction and letters of encouragement. Other summers we have focused on the Older Testament readings and this summer I have been reintroduced to Paul. In the past I have complained that Jesus came and abolished rules and Paul started piling rules back on. But is that what we have found?

Sometimes Paul's letters can be harsh, but the assigned readings this summer have shown a different side of Paul. The vulnerable Paul as he reacts to the criticism of other missionaries. He wrote to reaffirm his teaching

that as Christians we are not required to follow all the rules that the Jewish people use to order their life. He encourages the new church, praising their care for one another.

The book, *Paul The Man and the Myth* by Calvin Roetzel notes that during Paul's life his faith continued to evolve. It is believed that Paul was born in Tarsus, a city in southeastern modern-day Turkey. He was raised as a Jewish person and studied the Hebrew scriptures translated into Greek called the Septuagint. It is understandable that his theology would evolve, just as the early Christian church also was working through their understanding of Jesus Christ and his teachings.

This summer we read how Paul reaffirmed the teaching of Jesus to love our neighbors. For Paul neighbors included Gentiles. Tarsus was a port city, a safe harbor away from pirates and storms. At the time Paul grew up it was under Roman control but was allowed to self-govern and much of it's Greek roots were apparent in the language, philosophy, culture, and customs. It was an important trading partner for Egypt. His world was filled with people from throughout the known world. Experts say he was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy and thought.

The Letter to the Romans is considered the last letter that he wrote. By that time he had come to believe that we are justified by faith. What did he mean by that? He meant that our faith in Jesus the Christ removes the guilt and condemnation for our sins and returns us to right relationship with God. That was pretty radical thinking. His teaching also allowed women the liberty to cross rigid social boundaries. Paul imagined a time when the people could escape the brutal realities of this

life, where class and oppression did not hold power, and God's benevolent power ruled. I will put a sheet with a little more of Paul's story at the back of church. Grab one if you are interested!

Peace, Pastor Diane

Upcoming Events

- August 2-5** Vacation Bible School
 August 7th Worship with Vacation Bible School
 Youth Volleyball Tournament Noon at Immanuel UCC
August 9th Consistory Meeting 6:30
August 14th Kiel Parade
August 21st Dana Dunton Leads Worship
September 7th United Church Men and Women Meeting at Our Shepherd UCC Howards Grove 6:30
September 13th Consistory Meeting
September 28th Confirmation Event at Lakeland featuring Rev. Dr. Christopher Grundy
October 20th United Church Men and Women Scholarship Banquet Our Shepherd UCC Howards Grove

Scholarships

It has been 85 years since the United Church Men started providing scholarships to Mission House Students. Mission House is now Lakeland University and the United Church Men And Women are still raising funds for scholarships. There are three scholarships given each year. One to a Lakeland Student planning to go into Ministry. One scholarship is given to a Seminary Student. The newest category is the David Heckmann Memorial Scholarship going to a Seminary graduate that has school debt. Funds are raised by individual and church donations.

This year's Banquet is being held at Our Shepherd UCC in Howards Grove. Cost is \$18.00. The speaker will be Rev. Krystal Klemme.

See Pastor Diane if you are interested in attending.

(Because the food is being prepared by volunteers each ticket will cover the cost of the meal and also provide the surplus for scholarships next year.)

Immanuel UCC Drive Thru Food Pantry

A reminder that Immanuel UCC has a Drive-thru Food Pantry Thursdays and Saturdays. If you are in need of assistance with food, you just drive up and they will bring out food to your car. No questions asked.

There is a flyer on the bulletin board just outside the Sanctuary doors listing the non-perishable items the Mission Committee of Immanuel would appreciate receiving. They also have a table for donated garden vegetables.

School Supplies



Members of Bethel UCC will again be collecting school supplies for the Kiel, Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah and Howards Grove School Districts.

Please place items in a bin located in the narthex of church from July 31st – September 3rd.

If you would like to instead make a monetary donation, the Mission Team will purchase additional items.

Here is a list of school supplies that would be appreciated:

- *Crayola Broad Tip Markers
- *Zipper pencil pouches
- *EXPO Dry Erase Markers – fine or broad tip
- *pink pearl erasers
- *black Sharpie Markers -- fine tip
- *earbuds
- *Post It Notes
- *Quart OR Gallon Storage Bags (with slider, if possible)