The Connection

*We are called to share Jesus in creative and intentional ways, through: **Connecting** with God and His Church, **Growing** in Faith and Love, and **Serving** Our Community and World.*

May 2024 | **A Monthly Newsletter of Turner Christian Church** | **Volume 19; Issue 5**

Dear Church... from Pastor Matt

What is the mission of the church? The most common answer tends to be either "Making disciples" (from the Great Commission-Matthew 28:19 -20) or "Love God, love others" (from the Great Commandments in Matthew 22:37-40). These, of course, are very important passages of Scripture, and every Christian should follow them. At the same time, I am not convinced that these commands are the mission of the church. After all, it doesn't seem like you need to be in a church to obey either command. Jesus, and then the Apostles, made disciples as individual, traveling preachers. And surely a person without a congregation is still capable of loving God and loving other people, right? The mission of the church, however, must be something that can only be done in and through a congregation. So what is the mission of the church?

Our Sunday School class on the Church is reading through Ephesians, and we just came to an important and surprising passage about the church. Paul writes,

Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:8-11)

Ok, so follow me here. Paul says that God sent him to reveal to everyone the "administration of the mystery." What is the mystery? Long story short, Paul is referring to a story in Daniel 2, in which God reveals a "mystery" to Daniel about the future: some day God is going to :set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed" that will "crush all these kingdom and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever" (Dn. 2:44). One day God will establish a kingdom that will conquer all other kingdoms. In Ephesians 1 Paul connects the mystery with Jesus: the mystery is God's plan to "bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him." (v. 10). But how will God unite everything under Christ?

In Eph. 3 Paul says that God has revealed the mystery to him: "The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (v. 6). God "crushes the kingdoms" not by conquering them with armies, but by bringing their citizens into his kingdom through the salvation of Jesus! The Good News is that we don't have to be conquered by Jesus–anyone can submit to Jesus at any time!

Here's where the church comes in. Notice that God's plan is to unite everything under Christ. He wants to unite humanity together under Jesus, using love, forgiveness and comparison instead of swords and tomahawk missiles. But how could that possibly work? Why should we trust a crucified Jewish carpenter over Caesar?

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I've been thinking…"About Saying 'No'"

From Pastor Rachel

After I gave the meditations this past Sunday, I hurried down the hall to the Jr. Worship class I co-teach. I'm never in the hall after Jr. Worship classes have started, and so it was novelty for me; I walked past three classes on the way to my own, and from each one wafted the voices of engaged kids and adult speaking about Jesus.

What a beautiful (and far too short!) walk that was. If I hadn't been in a rush I would have joyfully lingered, listening to the activities and prayers and Bible stories unfold. And then I got to my own class, a wonderful group of elementary school kids that are inquisitive, funny, and serious about their faith.

I don't take any of this for granted. This environment is possible because of diligent parents, and faithful volunteers. This environment is possible because of our congregation's prayer warriors. And, this environment is possible because of the people that said "no" to serving in it.

Wait, hear me out.

Each person I spoke with that considered getting involved in incredible, and I would have been honored to have any of them serve on the Jr. Worship team. However, for many people, diligent and careful prayer led them to an answer of "no." Sometimes that answer made sense to them based on availability or current life situation. Other times the reason God was saying "no" wasn't necessarily clear. But they needed to be obedient to that "no."

In a church volunteer culture "no's" aren't always celebrated. I certainly have been guilty of not celebrating them plenty of times! But "no" is an answer from God. Sometimes we get a quick understanding of why that "no" was there—maybe a few weeks later an unexpected opportunity will come up, or a life change and that former "no" ensured that we were ready for the "yes" moment when it came.

But sometimes it never becomes clear, or not clear until years later. Saying "no" when we don't understand can be confusing. But when God says "no," it's an invitation to submit to His good and perfect will. And submitting to God's perfect will positively effects the church around you. When you say "no" (that is, a good "no", a God-prompted "no") you are creating space for perhaps unexpected people to say yes. You are leaving yourself open to the time-and-energy investment God is actually inviting you to. You are helping to ensure that the church moves in the direction that God is inviting us too.

As you contemplate the time-decisions before you this week, month and year, what is God inviting you to? When can you say a good and hearty, "yes!" and when can you say a faithful "no"?

May the way that you spend your time bless your walk with the Lord and the community of faith around you.

Little Lamb Christian Preschool

A Note from Our Director, Bethany Robinson

I am excited to share with you all the wonderful lessons and experiences we have been having in preschool as we dove into the fascinating world of life cycles this past month. It has been a truly magical and eye-opening journey for both the students and myself as we witness the wonders of God's creation firsthand.

One of the highlights of our learning has been observing the lifecycle of a butterfly. From a tiny larva to being days away to its transformation into a beautiful butterfly, we have marveled at the imagination and creativity of God in the intricate process of metamorphosis. The transformation has been a metaphor for growth and change in our own lives, reminding us of the beauty and wonder in every stage of life.

In addition to butterflies, we have also explored the life cycle of plants by planting a bean in a glass jar. Witnessing the bean sprout, germinate, and grow into a plant ready for planting has been a hands-on lesson in the cycle of life and growth. Just like the plants around us, we too go through different stages of growth and development to prepare us for the next chapter in life. As we learn about the cycles of animals and plants, we have also reflected on the lifecycle of humans. Each stage of life is unique, beautiful, and filled with opportunities for growth and learning. Our discussions have been inspired by our April bible verse, Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, reminding us that there is a time for everything under the heavens - a time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to uproot.

Through the transformation of larvae to butterflies, the growth of bean seeds into plants, and the development of our students, we have witnessed God's craftsmanship and design in every aspect of life. It is a reminder of the beauty and wonder that surrounds us every day. Each day is a new opportunity to see growth and change in the world around us.

New Member

Shirley Allen became a member of Turner Christian Church and was welcomed into the fellowship of TCC on April 14, 2024.

Thank You, Don!

After serving 8 years as Church Custodian, **Don Campbell** will be retiring at the end of May. Be sure to thank him for his service!

Baby Shower

Saturday, May 25th
at 3:00 pm

Erik & Sydnee Jakubowski
are expecting their first child!

The congregation is invited to celebrate and bless them and their baby. The shower will be held in the TCC Fellowship Hall.

What's Happening This Month

THURSDAY EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE

Every Thursday, 6:00—7:30 pm

Identical to the Sunday morning worship service; provides opportunities for worship to those unable to attend on Sundays.

SPRING SUNDAY CLASSES!

Classes meet at 9:00 am

A Christian's Guide to the Church (Ephesians),
led by Matt Holmes,

A Guide to Celtic Prayer,
led by Frank Loyd

New Testament for Everyone Bible Study,
led by Carol George.

Children's Classes and Nursery Care are Available
Teens are invited to join Pastor Matt's Class

LADIES MOVIE & PRAYER NIGHT

Friday, May 3rd at 6:30 pm

All ladies are invited to enjoy fellowship with one another watching a movie and praying together. We will be watching the movie, *"Grace Unplugged."*

Beautiful, extraordinarily talented and restless, Grace is so far undiscovered outside church. No longer satisfied with being dad's sidekick, she dreams of the day when she can carve her own path toward music immortality. Grace seems prepared to walk away from her Christian faith and music to achieve her long-suppressed fantasy of pop stardom. Will she reject her faith, or rediscover it?

After the movie, we will pray for our church and community. Bring a friend with you and a snack to share!

DAUGHTER DESSERT

Saturday, May 13th at 6:00 pm

All daughters, moms, sisters, aunts, grandmothers are invited to come and celebrate being Daughters of God and Sisters in Christ! Please RSVP by signing up in the foyer.

RELEARN RELATIONSHIP!

Sunday, May 19th • 8:00 – 10:00 am

Successful relationships are not just about being compatible--they're about communicating well in those moments when you're incompatible. Andrew Arthur, founding partner of Genesis Christian Mediations, will be here to teach us why communication can be so tricky and how we can listen well to lay the foundation for effective communication! Breakfast and childcare are provided. You can register on the website or the church app.

TCC SENIORS EVENTS IN MAY

Meals on Wheels Luncheon

Friday, May 3rd • 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

The Senior Ministry Team is planning a fieldtrip to Stayton to enjoy a meal at the Community Center provided by the "Meals On Wheels" program on May 3. The bus or van will leave at 11:00. The cost will be $3.00 at the door. Please sign up in the foyer.

Seniorfest @ Northwest Christian Network
Thursday, May 16th • 10:00 am—4:00 pm

Trip to Schreiner's Iris Farm
Thursday, May 23rd

It's our second annual fieldtrip to the Schreiner's Iris Gardens! A picnic lunch will be provided. There will be an admission charge. The bus will leave at 9:30. Please sign up in the foyer.

At a recent Shoebox volunteer conference, we learned about the Bara people in southern Madagascar. Since some of our recent Shoeboxes made their way to this country, we found this an interesting, uplifting, and encouraging update and I'd like to share some of it with you now.

Cattle rustlers by trade, the Bara people marked themselves by thievery, violence, and isolation. Instead of sending their children to school, the Bara adults gave them wooden rifles to play with — to train them at a young age to perpetuate the hostility that has raged for generations. They finally allowed a local pastor to step in and help, and with God preparing the way, he was able to build up several local private schools. As they were building the schools, Operation Christmas Child was able to send in 2500 Shoeboxes. After traveling six hours across treacherous terrain, the team arrived in a Bara village and presented the Gospel to the boys and girls while rifle-carrying fathers stood listening around the edges of the group. To their surprise at the end of the presentation, 75 percent of the crowd raised their hands indicating that they wanted to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior!

The children are now learning how to have healthy play and use soccer balls and marbles in place of their "toy" wooden rifles and violent practice of throwing rocks and heavy seeds at each other. The latter often left the children seriously injured, vowing revenge as their families pitted themselves against one another. The shouts of anger and pain are now replaced by joyous laughter. The school supplies in the Shoeboxes are being used in schools to learn how to read and write. Members of three communities asked for churches and those congregations are healthy and growing.

One of our main goals in the last few years of our Community Packing Party is to include a soccer ball, with a pump, in every Shoebox that is packed and marked for 5-9 and 10-14 year old boys. This gives the kids the chance to invite their friends to gather not just to play, but more importantly to share the Good News they've been learning through the Bible Study classes they are offered.

Therefore, our Item of the Month for May is a soccer ball. We are able to get some good OCC discounts from an online company, which allows us to purchase these at around $6 each. If you feel that this is something you'd like to help with, it's as simple as marking your financial gift for Shoeboxes. We'll do the rest for you. Thank you for your support of these Gospel Opportunities.

P.S. Our new storage and workspace, officially and affectionately called the Shoebox Work Shoppe, is in full swing these days as we prepare for August's Fourth Annual Community Packing Party in Salem. Each Tuesday, around noon, a few of us meet in the Work Shoppe to, well, work. If you are interested in stopping by to see what we're all about, we'd love to have you do so.

—Ann Stoker

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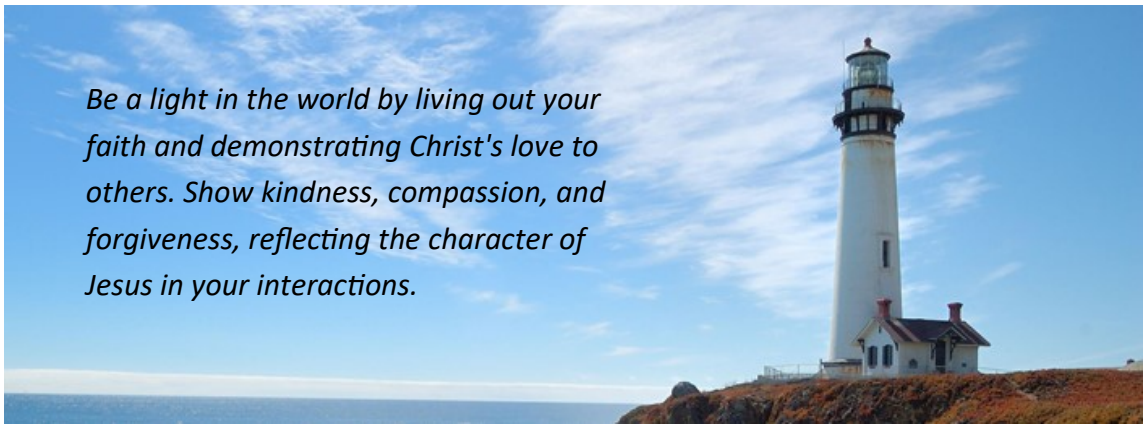
According to Paul, the proof that Jesus can unite the world is found in the church. Paul says, "His intent was that now, **through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms**." (v. 10) The mission of the church is to show the wisdom of God's plan (uniting everything under Christ) to the rest of the world. They are supposed to be able to look at us and see a better kind of unity, a better kind of society, than anything theory can find outside of Jesus.

We often talk about sharing God's love with others–through material support, prayer, and other acts of compassion–and that's good! As Christians we should be sharing God's love. As a church, however, we are supposed to be sharing God's unity–the blessings that come from submitting to the rule of Jesus together. We cannot do that as individuals, and we cannot do that outside a church. We can only do it through the life of the congregation, through the way we live together, love each other, forgive each other, and bear with each other.

So should we love God and love others? Yes, absolutely!–remembering also that Jesus gave us the special command to "love one another" (13:35). In fact, Jesus said that it was our love for each other–not our love for neighbors or even our love for God–that would define us as his disciples. Should we go into all the world and make disciples? Yes, absolutely—remembering also that making disciples means teaching them to "obey everything I have commanded you," and that most of Jesus' commands were about how to live as a community of love, forgiveness and compassion. No matter where you go in the New Testament, the mission of God's people always ends up the same: we are to be a Christ-shaped community, showing the world that unity under Christ is the only hope we really have.



Office Hours:
Monday—Thursday: 8:00am—2:00pm
Friday: 8:00am—11:00 am

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Sunday Schedule:
Worship Service at 10:30 am
Online Worship at 10:30 am