



ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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Volume 12, Issue 7

July 2019

From the Pastor's Desk

"For freedom Christ has set us free." Galatians 5:1

As we come into the month of July, how can we not think about celebrating July 4th, the beginning of our Independence and freedom as a nation as the Fathers of our Nation signed the Declaration of Independence from the English Empire. The Declaration declared that we would form a new government.



"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to

secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." In the pursuit of happiness and life, we are free to

gather together. We gather together to celebrate with parades, family gatherings, barbecues, swimming at the beach. We gather together in communities like



Scarville, neighbors visiting each other, sitting in the park listening to our neighbors singing some good songs that make us tap our foot along with the beat and sing along. There is an ice cream social. It is a community celebration of our nation and our freedoms as we are free to gather, free to celebrate.

Having grown up with the freedoms granted us by our Constitution and those who were willing to pay the price, often with their lives to guarantee our freedoms we often take them for granted and don't think about it so much. For instance, on Sunday mornings we leave our homes and travel to our church buildings and we worship our Lord. Some of us worship in the Lutheran tradition, some Pentecostal, some Baptist, some Roman Catholic, some Methodist. We are free to choose which denomination we wish to participate in and how we want to participate. We are free to give our offerings to support our congregation and missions around the world. We are free to gather together in the park for family reunions. We are free to choose our own vocations. So if we desire to become a lawyer, a doctor, a veterinarian, a farmer, a teacher, a computer tech, operate a business, work in a factory, join the military we are free to pursue our dreams. We have the freedom to dress, within reason, how we wish to dress. If we want to wear jeans or a suit, we can decide. If we desire to travel to see some National Parks or travel across the country to see family or friends, we are free to do so as long as we have saved the resources needed for our expenses. We have the freedom to choose our own leaders, from the President down to our local



County Supervisors. Yes, we are blessed with many freedoms as we live in the United States of America. Many reasons to give thanks; to give thanks to our military men and women who fight to protect our freedoms and our Lord who has blessed us with these freedoms.

In Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians, he writes about freedom. Paul wrote, "*For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*" Paul is not addressing political freedom when he wrote that we are to stand firm and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Paul is



talking about our spiritual reality. That is, we are captive to sin and we cannot set ourselves free from sin as we confess in our worship services. Paul is declaring that Jesus has set us free. Jesus has set us free from sin and death. There were some members of the Church, Jewish members who were teaching the Gentile members in Galatia that the Gentiles needed to follow the law to be a Christian. They needed the law to set them free. Paul argues that the law does not set us free, but it is a yoke of slavery. For if we could be set free from sin and guilt and death by following the law, then we would not need Jesus, our Risen Crucified Lord at all. Paul argues that our Father and Jesus perceived our state of being captive to sin, living in the brokenness of sin, suffering from our own sinful actions and the sinful actions of others. Paul argued that Jesus did not come to reveal a clearer way to keep the yoke of the law to earn our righteousness, to find a way to free ourselves, to find a way to make ourselves right with God. Jesus came entering into our brokenness, suffering the power of sin and death in his own person and defeated them both. Jesus defeated the power of sin. Jesus defeated the power of death.

Jesus sets you free. Jesus releases you from the guilt of your sin that creates distance and brokenness in your relationship with God and with one another. Jesus removes the yoke of sin and sets you free as he declares you forgiven. Jesus sets you free to be a child of the Heavenly Father; free to talk to your Father, free to enjoy a loving relationship and enjoy being in your Heavenly Father's presence. Jesus sets you free to love as you are loved. Jesus sets you free to love your family, friends and neighbors. Jesus sets you free to serve others when you find yourself in an opportunity to serve and love another. Jesus sets you free to forgive as you are forgiven, to set others free from their sin. Jesus sets you free to discover your gifts and talents in the uniqueness that is you to serve and to love one another out of love and joy. Jesus sets you free to live each day as a time to discover the many blessings of love God has bestowed upon you. For freedom Christ has set you free and if Jesus sets you free, you are free indeed.

Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



Go, Pack, Go!

The basketball and hockey seasons are over. I enjoy World Cup soccer. Baseball ... the season is like most every game ... too long. (This part of the season is like the 4th, and 5th innings, it is time to get some refreshments.) So lets get started with football. ☺



I am a fan of the Green Bay Packers. Notice I did not say I am a member of the Packers, I'm not...there is a difference. I don't have to go to spring practices (voluntary or mandatory). I don't have to work out with the team. I don't study game films or discuss plays with the coaches. On game day, I don't get on the field and help the team move the ball across the goal line. That is not my job. I'm a fan – a spectator. I buy my ticket and “green & gold” gear, and cheer for my team, whether is be in the stands or in front of the television.



Thankfully, church membership is not like football. There should be no spectators. The body of Christ wasn't designed to operate as an organization where the supporters come and give their money and then watch the hired players do all the work. We're all participants. Everyone has a role to play. Everyone is needed! That's how the body of Christ grows and fulfills its purpose.

“An *inactive church member* is an oxymoron.” The question we ask is not “Do I have a role in the church?” The true question is “What's my role in the church?” The concern is not are we all as involved as Mother Teresa... but **that we are all involved.**

With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him ...” (Ephesians 1:8-10) The gifts he gave were ... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children ... we

must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11-15)

Remember when you were a kid and couldn't wait to grow up? Maybe you longed for the day you'd turn 13 ... teenager at last. Or you dreamed of your 16th birthday...a driver's license. And then you waited for 18 ...ready to vote, or 21 ... for other privileges. Each stage of life gave us more privileges...and more responsibilities.



We should also strive for “spiritual maturity” (grow up) as believers in the body of Christ. God provides God's children with various gifts ... to be recognized and developed ... so we can help one another grow. Apostle Paul tells us our purpose is to use our gifts, to build up those in the church, so all can experience unity in faith and knowledge of Jesus.

Those dreaded words ... “grow up”... maturity...be responsible.” What I have observed over the years, is that some people do not seem to want to “grow up.” And most of the time is because they do not know what that means, or they have an unfavorable perception of what that means., or they struggle “finding themselves” thus do not know what they want to do “when they grow up.”

I have also observed that that is true spiritually as well. We want to be mature, but we struggle knowing what that means. The life of Christ is our target. Our goal is to know Christ more...to know the power of Jesus' resurrection...to share in the fellowship of Jesus' and his peoples' suffering.

We measure our spiritual maturity by gauging our actions and attitudes in comparison with the actions and attitudes of Christ. Jesus lived to please God. He put others above Himself. He patiently endured suffering. He loved the unlovable and forgave the underserving. That is spiritual growth and maturity. And God has equipped us, God's people, with gifts that empower us to help one another grow to be like Jesus.

What is your role in the church? That question is the key to getting on the field and helping your team – the body of Christ – strive for growth and maturity...to make a “holy” difference in our world.

Wanderings and Wonderings, Pastor Bill Peters

