



# ONE VOICE



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

Pastor Randy Baldwin & Pastor Bill Peters

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## *From the Pastor's Desk*

*"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*  
Galatians 5:1



I have come to love celebrating July fourth in Scarville. Our little town swells from seventy-five people to around three thousand people for a couple of hours. The day begins with the people driving into town, finding a place to park, opening the trunks to dig out the lawn chairs. The little ones are excited as they swing a plastic ice cream pail in their hands, hoping it will soon be filled with parade candy. As people find their favorite spot to observe the parade, neighbors begin to wave at neighbors. Hugs are given, along with smiles as people catch up with each other as they converse about the changes in their life. Before you know it, the sheriff is leading the color guard and when the legion marches by everyone stands, caps are removed, hands placed over hearts. Then it is time for the parade and candy, little ones rush forward to pick up the treasures of candy thrown towards them. While the parade is going on, the wind changes and you get a whiff of the grilled hamburgers the Fire Fighters are grilling. Once the parade has gone through once, it turns around and comes by the second time. The children wave just as enthusiastically as the first time. When the parade is over, it is time for some good American picnic food. Once the food is balanced on your lap, good country music provided by the Peterson family begins. The day wraps up with an ice cream social and two-thirty we are pretty much back to a community of seventy-five until it is time for the fireworks.

It is a slice of American life. The freedom to gather together to celebrate our nation's Independence. We have freedom of speech as neighbors discuss a variety of topics. We celebrate our kids and grandkids in the freedom to choose their vocation, the chance to pursue their dreams and goals. As we look north of the park, we can see Immanuel and if we look to the northwest, we may see Scarville Synod church and we have a sense of peace knowing we have the freedom to worship the Lord the way we choose. Every once in awhile, we have a soldier that has returned from his or her duty to celebrate back home. People walk up to the soldiers and thank them for their service and ask how are they doing. We remember the freedoms we are celebrating are not free, but have come at the price of the sacrifices brave men and women made to fight for our freedoms. We know our pleasant day with neighbors is a fruit of their sacrifices and so we treasure the freedoms that have been won for us.

Apostle Paul writes to the Galatians about the freedom Christ has won for us. Paul had been to the communities of Galatia, proclaiming the gospel of God's loved revealed through the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Paul established many congregations in Galatia and is now writing them. Some Christian Pharisees, who love

Jesus and the Law of Moses, have come to town and tried to convince the Galatians that they need to follow the Laws of Moses to be a follower of Jesus. Paul is upset. Paul argues that the Law was given to us as a guardian until the grace of Christ came. Paul argues that Abraham did not come to faith through the law, for the law would come generations later. But rather Abraham came to faith through grace. Then Paul lays out that if redemption came through the law, then grace and faith would not be needed. Paul points out that the law never brought us into a relationship with God. The Law bore witness of our sin and our captivity to sin and thus to death. Paul declared that Jesus came to set us free from our captivity to sin. *"For Freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*

Jesus has set you free. Jesus has set you free from the bondage of guilt. Jesus has set you free from a fruitless pursuit of trying to create a relationship with God through our attempts of trying, but failing constantly, to keep the law of God. Jesus has set us free from wondering if we are worthy of a relationship with God. Jesus has claimed you with his righteousness. Jesus has declared that you are God's beloved and he removes every sin that would try to separate you from God's love as he declares you forgiven. Jesus sets you free to pray to your Heavenly Father with the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has given you. Jesus has set you free to call God Father. Jesus has set you free to come into God's presence with your love and praise. Jesus has set you free to love the Father with your whole heart. Jesus has set you free to love your neighbor with His love. Jesus has set you free to simply love the neighbor you encounter near and far, without having to ask the question, would God want me to love this person? Jesus has set you free from low self-esteem, as Jesus declares you to be worth his suffering and dying and resurrection. Jesus sets you free to be the best you can be and to answer the call to serve him and your neighbor. Jesus sets you free from the fear of death. Jesus has defeated death and has given you the gift of eternal life. Jesus has declared that he holds you in his hands and no one, no power can ever take you out of his hands. Jesus sets you free from grief that cannot be consoled, for Jesus assures you that he walks alongside you and you will see your beloved again. Jesus sets you free from the fear of death, so you are free to love as you are loved, free to forgive as you are forgiven.

This July fourth, celebrate that you live in the land of the Free. Also celebrate Jesus has set you free to live in God's love for you. Jesus has set you free.

*Pastor Randy*



# WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



The sun is shining., with a little breeze. And the SON is shining... and the Spirit is blowing. The tables are set and food is prepped. Tape and markers and glue and projects are laid on the tables. The balls and noodles and chalk and water are waiting to



be put into motion. The stories are ready to come to life And the music – with words and actions and notes to be played ... is ready to explode upon the

walls of the building and the hearts of those gathering. And the stage is set – a waterfall sparkles, treasurer chest glitters with gold and jewels, the torches are lit. The adventure is ready to begin.

Monday morning ... 9:00 am is approaching fast ... the cars begin to arrive, then the vans ... and we begin to hear the noise ... chatter ... movement ... singing. It starts out a little reserved ... but the volume, the excitement, the joy begins to grow. "God knows you ... you are treasured. God Hears You ... You Are Treasured. GOD CHOOSES YOU ... YOU ARE TREASURED!" And when we get done praying, "All God's Children Say ... AMEN!"



One hundred and eleven kids, 50+ leaders/teachers/ helpers and more expectations than we can count. Some are not so sure what is going on ... others can't sit still in anticipation. This is what the "Joy of the Lord" looks like.



Grandpa carried his granddaughter in, finds her name tag, walks her to where her group is gathering, and cautiously leaves her standing there. The next morning, grandma brings her, she runs up the steps, grabs her name tag, and runs to her group with a smile stretching

from windows to windows all the time dancing and clapping to the music that is playing..

That was just the beginning! Four unconnected families told me at the Thursday evening program that they had "mad" kids going home from VBS on Thursday. Why? Because there was not going to be VBS on Friday ... and they couldn't understand why. (I take that as the compliment of the week.)

That is the JOY of the Lord! That is the hearts and minds. That is the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. For it has been a long and confounding year, but that makes you forget ... and celebrate ... and give thanks to God for being in our lives.

Tony Campolo tells the story... *I seem to be particularly dangerous when I get on elevators. Our society teaches us to turn and face the doors and stand there quietly. But in my younger days, I loved to turn around and face the others in the elevator with me and say something like, "you're probably wondering why I called this meeting."*

*Once when I was in the elevator of a New York skyscraper filled with very serious-faced businesspeople, I smiled and said, "Lighten up. We're going to be traveling together for quite a while. What do you say we sing?" Incredibly, they did! I don't know whether they were intimidated by me or just wanted to have some fun, businessmen with attache' cases in hand and businesswomen in their power suits joined me in singing, "You Are My Sunshine."*

*When I got off at the seventieth floor, one man got off and walked down the hall with me, wearing a big smile on his face. I asked him, "Are you going to the same meeting I'm going to?" "Nah," he said. "I just wanted to finish the song."*

*In Archibald MacLeish's great play J.B., Satan is asked what he misses most about heaven, and he answers, "The sound of the trumpets!"*

*Indeed, to be in the presence of God is to be part of a glorious celebration. Sometimes that is hard to grasp when I'm in the pulpit looking at the somber faces of those in the congregations. I hear them say, "We know the joy of the Lord." And I feel like saying "Would you please notify your faces?" (From "Visible Joy" Let Me Tell You a Story by Tony Campolo)*

During our week of VBS – the faces notified the world ... Know the joy of the Lord! And we did!

Wanderings and Wonderings,  
Pastor Bill Peters