

The Edge

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOREST HILLS CHURCH, MAY, 2017

From the *Pastor's Perspective*

Monthly Church Events For weekly events see the calendar

"My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people." - Ephesians 1:18

What is God's plan for our church? This is the question that we have been asking intentionally for a year now. (It's a question we should always be asking as a church, right?) We want to discern God's leading. We want to be the church that God has called us to be. We want to be at the center of God's will. We've been a busy, faithful, and God-centered congregation. We have tried hard to live into our mission to "be the visible light of Christ in our communities." We have also tried hard to reach new people for Jesus.

We do so many things well: we serve, we work hard, we are generous, we welcome people, we care for others. We show Christ's light in so many concrete ways. Yet a growing concern has been that we struggle to build lasting relationships with new people. For all that we have tried to reach out, we are not getting the measurable results we have been hoping for. We are getting frustrated that nothing we seem to be trying is working! We are doing good work, but we are shrinking—in numbers, in resources, in energy. This is not the future we want for our church!

Last fall we committed to apply for the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) grant and program offered by the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. We were selected! Since then, we have been praying together for us to discern God's leading. We've also compiled an in-depth self-study of our congregation and our community. (By the way, if anyone would like a copy of the self-study, the office can email or print one out for you).

This past weekend four HCI coaches met with people from the congregation in a variety of ways, and came on site to learn us better. They have worked through our self-study and draw upon their collective learning of how churches can be vital in today's context.

These coaches are presenting a proposal for our church to consider. They will list the five strengths and five challenges they see in our congregation. They will then provide five prescriptions, targeting five different vital areas, that they invite us to consider.

We hope that all the hard work and prayerful discernment by all of us will produce some fruitful direction. I'll be quite up front with you: I hope the prescriptions call for something radical. I don't want just some more ideas to try. We've been trying. I want something that will call us to transformation. Rev. Susan Nienaber, our District Superintendent, told us that vital churches have learned to surrender themselves totally to God ("Not my will, but

May 4	10 am Sarah Circle 12 pm National Day of Prayer 6 pm Confirmation Banquet
May 6	9 am United Methodist Men
May 7	11:30 am Confirmation Reception
May 11	1 pm United Methodist Women 2:30-4:30 pm Finance-FMSC 6 pm SPRT Meeting
May 13	5:30 pm Adult Fellowship
May 14	11:30 am Confirmation Reception
May 15	9:30 am HCI Town Hall Meeting
May 16	10 am Rebecca Circle
May 18	8:00 am Headstart Graduation 6:30 pm HCI Town Hall Meeting
May 19	7:30 pm Unexpected Company
May 20	6 am Community Care Set-up 8 am Community Care
May 21	11:30 am HCI Town Hall Meeting 6:30 pm Prayer and Praise
May 22	6:30 pm Trustees Meeting
May 28	11:30 Bluegrass Festival fundraising luncheon
May 29	MEMORIAL DAY—Church office closed
May 28	11:30 Bluegrass Festival Fund-raiser Luncheon

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Pastor's Perspective Cont...

yours be done, Heavenly Father!" - see Matt. 26:42). We have been following in Jesus' footsteps since Christmas, and this is one thing that we have learned over and over again: its to surrender and let God be in charge. Are we ready for this? I mean, not just verbal assent. Are we ready to lay EVERYTHING on the table; give it all to God? We want God to do amazing things. God will, but we have to let Him have complete control.

This Easter, we learned again how God brings resurrection out of death. When we die to self (and let our personal wants for our church die) God will bring about new life. It may not be in the way we expect, however! "Letting go and letting God" means letting our church become what God wants. Yet with God, we always find that what God does is far better and greater than we could have hoped for. Surrendering our church to God means having a hopeful anticipation for something better than it is now, or than what we could craft.

Ephesians 1:18 is a prayer that God's light would flood our hearts, and that we would grasp the hope that comes from what God chooses for us. God has glorious blessings in store for us as God's people at Forest Hills.

Let's prepare to receive what God is telling us through this HCI discernment process. Let's let go of how we do things now. Let's let go of how we do things now. Let's let go of the way we want things to be. Let's let go of being in control, being "in the know," and being content. Let's be open to the flooding of God's light in our hearts. Prepare to receive a glorious blessing!

Pastor David

Events and Info

Community Care

Saturday May 20th 8 am - 11 am

Adult Fellowship

Will be May 13th at 5:30 pm. Watch for the signup sheet in the lobby.

Romeo's and Juliet's

Will be May 17th at 11:30 a.m. More details to come; watch for updates on locations.

Bluegrass Festival Luncheon

Sunday May 28th 11:30am. We are having a fundraiser the last Sunday of each month following worship to help cover costs for the Bluegrass Festival in July. Be sure to stay and eat!

National Day of Prayer—May 4th

12-1 pm at the American Legion. There will be a time of worship, prayer, and special music by **Carolann Ministries**, and **Lake Free Musicians**. Refreshments and fellowship will follow.

Lifeline Sunday May 21st 6:30 pm

Sometimes God can feel distant and it seems like we are alone. If you are weary and disconnected, come and seek God's presence. Lifeline is a simple gathering of prayer and praise. Come and be filled!

A Call to Prayer

Forest Hills is a place of prayer! We want to move where the Lord is leading by asking, "God, what is Your call for us?" To do that, we need everyone seeking God together. To receive daily prayer prompts on your phone simply text your name and number to 612-200-4421.

Worship's Word

We are nearing the end of our long standing "Grounded" sermon series. We have considered what it means to say that God came to us. Jesus, as a man, was actually born, lived and died. Any historian can surmise that much. The Christian however, knows that HIS story goes on. His death was not the end. Like all the other events in Jesus' life, Easter is an historical fact. It is a reality wrought in the dust and dirt of this earth. It is an event that has changed everything.

He lives today, he moves today, he can be known today.

And Jesus' story involves you and me.

We are invited to participate in the plans God has for this world, to embark on a personal relationship with a living God who is near to us. We are blessed with abundant life here and now that carries over into eternity.

As we close out our "Grounded" series we look forward to the future. What does God have in store for us? What will heaven be like? What is our role in it all?

We are the church. We are the hope on earth. We are here to make disciples and to shine brightly, to get down on our knees before God and seek his will. To pray, "Come Lord Jesus!"

And so we initiate a new song to sing together:

*Like a bride waiting for her groom
We'll be a church ready for You
Every heart longing for our King, we sing;
Even so come, Lord Jesus come!*

Please understand, this is not a normal wedding for which we are preparing. There will be no family squabbles, no problems with the photographer, no issues with the reception hall. There will be no need for libations, no hokey pokey and no lost rings. Most of all, there will be no cold feet. In fact, *every* knee will bow and *every* tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10).

Join our voices as we praise his name together and anticipate the coming of our King!

Healthy Church Initiative (HCI)

This week the HCI consultants are presenting to the leadership team their proposal for us to consider about the future God is placing before our church. We hope and anticipate that it is a calling to be radical!

The proposals will be presented at 3 Town Hall Meetings: Monday, May 15th at 9:30 am, Thursday, May 18th at 6:30 pm, and Sunday, May 21st at 11:30 a.m. May God make his will for us known to us!

Kid's Korner

Spring has sprung and around here it has been the rainy season. I guess April showers really do bring May flowers! It always strikes me how brilliant and bright the grass appears after it receives some rain. We might consider the weather to be a bit gloomy, but there is more going on in the world than just our preference for sunshine. Rain seems to cause the earth to rejoice. It blooms and thrives in response. The beauty of the earth, the food we eat, the creatures that surround us are all sustained by precious water.

Kids seem to have a natural affinity to water. They love to be out while the rain is falling. There is a certain pleasure that comes from feeling the cold droplets on one's face. They love to splash in puddles. They love mud. My kids are always wanting to go swimming. With little regard to the depth of the water, they plunge right in! Their desire to play overpowers their fear and common sense.

All life depends upon water. And all eternal life depends upon Living Water. Jesus has come to offer himself to us, to sustain us and revive us. Do we long for him as a plant longs for water? Do we need his presence in a constant way? Some of us have developed a resistance to the continual need for water. This results in the cactus type: prickly, crusty and difficult to approach.

Some of us experience this Living Water as a welcomed cold drink, but some of us need more of a splash in the face. Sometimes Jesus seems to provide comfort and peace like a gently bubbling hot tub. Sometimes he is a raging river carrying us into the rapids. What is your experience of Jesus? How have you come in contact with the Living Water? Ask yourself, your family members and your children this same question. It is often hard to talk about Jesus, especially with our kids. It is hard to understand how he is present and alive and yet not here with us in the flesh. It is hard when it seems like we are praying to the air. God knows this is a challenge for us. The Bible acknowledges it. That's why we have the ineffable mysteries of God spoken into everyday things! Jesus is Living Water, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World. We can experience and participate with God in strange but concrete ways through baptism and communion. God is here with us on this earth. All creation reflects his glory!

Getting a hold of Jesus can be a frustrating endeavor. It can feel like we are trying to grasp water in our fist. The good news is that he has risen! He is with us in the here and now and he offers to us "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). If we could only be as the grass that exists with the all too keen knowledge of its utter dependency on the rain.

May the Lord plant us, our children and our grandchildren into the fertile soil of faith reliant on our unending source of Living Water, Jesus Christ.

Tax-aid success!

AARP Taxaide, a non-profit program of volunteers that prepares annual income taxes for free, has again used our church to meet clients to prepare their taxes. Our church is proud to partner with such a great group, doing so much good! This year was a record year, and they prepared 775 federal returns, and 1265 state returns! Thank you to all the volunteers who worked so hard to be a blessing!

We also received a very nice thank you card from the Forest Lake Senior Center, who have indicated that our gift will be "recycled" to enhance the lives of the seniors in our community!