

The Edge

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOREST HILLS CHURCH
FEBRUARY 2018

From Andrew's Perspective

Throughout this last sermon series, "At the Rail", we have had the opportunity each week to literally kneel before God in open honesty. On Sundays, we have come, as a church, to seek him...and to FIND him. We remember his promise from Jeremiah: "'I will be found by you.' declares the Lord." We have also gathered in small groups that we might sit with Jesus together. But what is the next step? Where does all this finding and sitting lead? How should an encounter with Christ affect us?

The answer to these questions comprises our upcoming series: "I Give Up". Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14th) marks the beginning of Lent. It's a season that is meant to prepare us for the grand miracle that is Easter! It has traditionally been a time of fasting. For some it means they will abstain from their favorite dessert, for some, they will put off their favorite TV show or log off of Facebook. However, a fast is temporary. Once Easter arrives, we add these things back into our lives.

"I Give Up" is a chance for us to take a look at those things in our lives that we ought to fast from forever. It is our next step. We believe that God loves us just the way we are. We discovered that at the rail. He is near to us. He can be found if we seek him. We also affirm that God loves us too much to leave us where we are. He calls us to transformation! Thankfully we are not left to our own devices to accomplish such a monumental task. We have been given no less than the power of the Holy Spirit! "I Give Up" offers us a chance to live into the changes that the Spirit is enacting in our lives. It is a high calling, it's not an easy task, but together we open ourselves up to being hammered, and molded and changed into the image of Christ on this earth.

Allowing God to transform our hearts and our lives involves a decision to surrender. We would all agree that God is not our enemy. We would consent that he is our loving Creator and Savior. And yet, so often we fight against the things he wants to do in us and through us. As we leave the rail, having met with God again, we walk away with our hands up waving our white flags. We surrender to Jesus our all and pray for the Holy Spirit to transform us from within. It's a dangerous prayer and a vulnerable situation. We love to be in control, it's true, but during this upcoming season of Lent, let us be in unison as we put our hands above our heads and pray together, "I Give Up".

Monthly Church Events

For weekly events see the calendar

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| February 1 | 12:00 pm Sarah Circle |
| February 3 | 9:00 am United Methodist Men |
| February 7 | 5:30 pm M&M (Pot luck) |
| February 8 | 6:30 pm AMT Meeting |
| February 10 | 5:45 pm Adult Fellowship (Cornerstone Restaurant) |
| February 14 | ASH Wednesday and Valentines Day 11:30 am Romeos and Juliets 5:30 pm Soup Bar/Worship Service |
| February 16 | 5:00 pm Unload Community Care Truck 5:00 pm Youth Night at the Church |
| February 17 | 6:00 am Community Care Set-up 8:00 am Community Care Leave for Dulac |
| February 18 | HYMN SING 6:30 pm Lifeline |
| February 19 | President's Day |
| February 21 | 5:30 pm M&M Pancakes (Served by the men) St. Andrew's Family Shelter Presentation following meal |

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LENTEN ACTIVITIES:

Feb. 14th: Ash Wednesday
Feb. 18th: ...Excuses
Feb. 25th: ...Addiction (Teen Challenge)
March 4th: ...Anxiety
March 11th: ...My Plans
March 18th: ...My Truth
March 25th: ...Comfort
March 30th: ...Good Friday/Prayer Vigil
April 1st: ...My Wisdom (Easter Sunday)

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|-------------|----------------------------------|
| February 25 | 10:00 am Teen Challenge |
| February 26 | 6:30 pm Small Group Host Session |
| February 28 | 5:30 pm M&M Nancy's Choice |

For the King,

Andrew

THE JUBILEE PAUSE

This month our church and ministry leaders are considering what other ministries and activities we can pause for our Jubilee year. The Action Ministry Team (AMT) has asked the various leaders of current ministries to share how they have been discerning how God has been calling them to pause. Some ministries/activities will pause. Some will not. Some will change how they operate, at least for a time.

Our church has committed to a more simplified Jubilee year of less activity and instead more intentional and soulful time spent with Jesus. Some pauses are already happening: Kid's Church, Awana, Confirmation, all but two administrative teams, most special events (like Trunk-or-Treat, Christmas Camp, Parents Night Out, etc.) and a number of other things (such as the Giving Tree, Sunday Bible Study, and the Wildfire Missions Trip).

We are now considering how to pause many of our outreach ministries. This is hard to consider, because Jesus calls us to serve others. For many of us, serving together is a crucial part of what church is all about! Some of us have "dear to us" church ministries that we cannot imagine not doing. As we discern this together, I want to keep a few key considerations in front of us:

1. This is a church-wide discernment. We must put what we are each hearing in context with what others are hearing around us, too. We may need to pause what we each personally do not want to pause for the sake of the whole.
2. We can't just keep on doing what we've been doing. We shared last year that our church really isn't seeing the results of our ministry that we hope for. We are not seeing growth (lives transformed) as we desire. Something needs to change.
3. We want to move from good to great. All that we are currently doing is good (or else we wouldn't be doing it!). But to move to doing great things, we need a time of reflection and evaluation. We need to stop doing what we are doing so we can do something new or do the things we will continue to do in a new way.
4. There are biblical foundations for pausing good ministry. They include Jubilee, Sabbath, fasting, and being still before God. Jesus went away from people and stopped "doing" many times, in order to focus His ministry rightly on His calling by the Father (i.e., Matthew 14:13, Luke 6:12, Mark 1:12, etc. In fact, Luke 5:15 says that Jesus did it often). Our church leadership heard the story of Mary and Martha as a story that God was speaking to us. We have heard the calling to sit with Jesus for a while and leave the work for a time. Even doers need to pause!
5. We are not deciding to sundown (permanently quit) ministries at this point. Right now it is about pausing. And it is important to realize the needs of the whole: even if some are not "tired," others are, and perhaps we need to pause for the health of the whole. Also, pausing may mean we find other ways that the ministry can happen, even without direct supervision and resourcing from our church.
6. We need to trust God! Our church has heard God's calling for a Jubilee year. Can we trust God boldly enough to pause many of our busy activities for a time? Can we commit to use this time to see God in a new way? We do not fail God when we pause. It is different (and necessary) time with God! Ultimately, church (and our personal faith in God) is not about what we do for God. It is about our connection to God. This needs to be our focus right now.

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7. We pause on purpose. It is to see better where God is calling us as a church. We hear God better when we pause for a time to listen and vision differently. We want to grasp what God wants to reveal. Is there a danger in missing something more a ministry could be if we cling to continuing it the way it is now? Are we too attached to current ministries and the way we do them now that we are unable to see them differently? If it is truly God's ministry and not ours, are we willing to trust that God will find a way to not let it die or fail if we pause? If God wants a ministry to continue in the future, then I truly believe it can survive a pause! If it can't, then perhaps we shouldn't be doing it now! For ministries that we do need to continue, we may need to find other ways of having them continue. But we cannot explore those ideas unless we are willing to let it go, first. Only then can we see how things might be done differently.

8. Personal considerations: If you don't necessarily feel God is calling us to pause ministries, then remember that the wider church leaders believe that they have heard God calling us to pause. Our discerning comes in the context of the whole. If you don't feel weary or tired, remember that others do, and perhaps others need permission to pause. If you are wanting to keep a ministry from pausing, ask yourself why? What else is going on inside you about this? Can you push yourself to trust God to pause? If you don't see the value of pausing, then can you consider its importance to others? You may believe that others can choose to not participate if they don't want to. Yet, in reality there is a feeling of obligation that continues. If you see value in the way the ministry is happening now, then also consider the value of what God could be calling the ministry to be in the future, that could be imagined during a time of pause. If you feel the urge to withdraw if a ministry is paused, then also ask if God is really calling you to do that (or is that a struggle with personal preferences, control, or keeping things familiar)?

Bottom line: Can you call yourself to be willing to let your church change in ways you don't necessarily like? I call us all to that. I call us all to be willing to let go, for God's sake! Then we can hear what God is saying to us better. God is in charge, not us!

I continue to pray for us all to put what we've heard from God with the whole and be willing to let the whole church discern rightly together. I commit to support whatever direction our leadership identifies. Together, I trust, God will direct us.

May God continue to call us to a bold future where only He is glorified!

Pastor David



This month may have been bitterly cold but that didn't stop the youth from having fun. We started the month off with tubing at Eko Bakken. This was such a fun event with multiple youth groups from around Forest Lake.

On January 7th, we started our new series on "Who am I? Finding my Identity in Christ." We ended the series with a handout reminding us of what the Bible says about us. Here are a few of the verses:

You are chosen, holy, and dearly loved in God's eyes. (Colossians 3:12)

You are God's handiwork. (Ephesians 2:10)

You are worth fighting for in God's eyes. (Exodus 14:14)

In February, we will start the month by continuing on with our year long study on "Praying Bigger Prayers."

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Small Group Update

New Small Groups a Great Success!

The new church-wide small groups launched this past month with great energy! Comments keep pouring in how helpful and encouraging the discussions has been.

Faith-forming small groups are the “third leg” of our Jubilee year “stool,” that includes 1. Worship (simple, soulful worship), 2. Fellowship (Inter-generational Wednesday fellowship), and 3. Nurture (church-wide small groups). It is in small groups that we are able to connect with God, one another, and how we live out our lives. In groups we apply our faith practically to our daily lives. In each session we are using a study style called lectio divina where we together listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through a Bible passage.

The current series runs until Ash Wednesday (also Valentine’s Day). Our goal was to have 80 people in our current series, and we are so excited that 86 people signed on! There is still time to join! Simply show up at any of the group sessions. They are Sundays as 8:45 and 11:15 a.m., Mondays at 10 a.m., Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. (all are at church).

Our next small group series will begin in April, after Easter. It will be about how reading the Bible can transform our daily lives. Get ready to sign up in late March!



DULAC, LA MISSIONS

25 YEAR TRIP!

FEB 17th—FEB 26th

Our team is heading off to Dulac, and Pastor David will be joining them this year! We are collecting school, hygiene, and cleaning kits to bring with us. Please bring any items to the church by **February 5th!** Items needed are listed on the back of your Church@home insert, or on the website.

Action Ministry Team (AMT) Update

As the facilitator of the Action Ministry Team, I want to update everyone in our congregation about the process we are working on.

Pausing and Decluttering

To help teams talk about “pausing” their activities for the year, a letter has been drafted that will be personally delivered to the leaders of each ministry in our church.

The letter essentially asks each team to share what they have been hearing God say about pausing their specific ministry during this Jubilee year. We strongly believe that in order to make room to “dream a new dream”, we must follow the HCI Recommendations Report and “pause” as many ministries as possible during this time. We must allow ourselves, individually and as a church, to quiet our minds and be still in order to listen to God. It may seem that we have been dragging our feet on getting going with the pausing, however we have wanted to do this right. Thank you for your patience.

With pausing ministries, we will also be decluttering our church building in order to use our space wisely. There will be a refreshing of our fellowship area, which the CMMT (Church Management Ministry Team) will take a lead on.

Three Workforce Groups are being formed to meet with Pastor David Werner and Andrew Bonsell about the following areas:

Simple, Soulful Sunday mornings

Wednesday Fellowship and Community Meal

All-church small groups-anyone that wants to participate in a small group is welcome. They meet at different times and days throughout the week. Contact Pastor David if you would like to join.

Pastor David and Andrew have been organizing many of the changes that you may have been seen the last few months, but they are running out of ideas. We never meant them to continue on their own, so each Workforce Group will be helping to brainstorm new ideas and work on implementation.

Dream a New Dream

The rest in the year ahead will help us dream a new dream and revision our focus.

The last few months our prayer team has been praying continually for our surrounding community and its needs. Prayers for our church have been sent forth so that we may open our hearts and minds to God’s plan for us. We meet monthly to pray as a team. Our Lifeline Gathering on the third Sunday of each month is also a time for singing our praises to God and praying. The texts sent out by Andrew are a way to remind all in our church to stop and pray. Contact the church office if you would like to receive these texts.

God is good, all the time!

Marilee Leonard

Lay Leader

The Numbers are In!

Good numbers!

At Forest Hills our focus is loving God and others, growing in Jesus Christ, and serving by the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. Much of our work and ministry is therefore difficult to measure in numerical ways. Even so, tracking certain measurables can give some indication of the health and effectiveness of the ministry we are doing. We celebrate as we look back over 2017 that we not only have testimony of God’s transforming grace in so many ways, we also share some numbers that indicate God’s faithful work among us.

Attendance in weekly Sunday worship: Average weekly worship attendance has been slowly declining at Forest Hills since 2003. In 2016 the average attendance was 103. In 2017 not only did attendance not continue to decline, but it even increased slightly to 105.

Membership: Although full membership is not something that people value as much as before in our culture, our church saw an increase (by one!) in full membership for the first time in fifteen years! (Our current membership is 190.)

Finances: In 2016, we had to carry over a deficit of more than \$4,000 into 2017. In 2017, however, we not only met all of our year's expenses, we completely paid back our deficit, and in addition carried over a \$5,000 balance into 2018!

Small Groups: Our goal was to launch new church-wide small groups beginning in January, with 80% of our worship attendance. That would mean 84 people in the new small groups. We not only have met that goal, but we have 86 who have signed on to the new small groups!

These positive numbers don't tell the whole story, and they are not huge. But we do celebrate that they may be indicating a positive and renewed energy as our church faces into the Jubilee Year. We pray that we would continue to be faithful to God's calling, and that we would continue to touch lives, one at a time, with the grace of God.

Love. Grow. Serve.

Pastor David

KID'S CORNER



As our church continues to navigate the changes that our Jubilee year has instigated, I wanted to take a moment to share with you a few of the ways that our kid's ministry as adapted in an attempt to provide a time of rest and refocus.

Sunday Mornings

Sundays are dedicated to the whole family. We want our services to include aspects that engage all people at different levels. We know that kids are not just an add-on to the church. They are important members and the Good News is for them too! Mixing together intergenerational features is hard work, but like a blockbuster Pixar movie, we want to try to provide a quality experience that everyone can latch on to.

Activity Bags

These are made available each week to help those kids who might be a bit more fidgety. They include small toys and activities so kids can still be present in the service. Encourage kids to check out the bags regularly. We will be adding items each week!

Church@Home

This is a resource for anyone, but families can use these activities and conversation starters at home during the week. Reinforce what was talked about on Sunday! Dig deeper! We want parents to be proactive in forming the faith of their kids at home. Church@Home can be found with each week's bulletin.

Small Groups

If you have kids, we encourage you to join a Wednesday night small group. Kids will have an opportunity to meet with the group. Then, they are invited to join me upstairs for a kid's lesson while the groups continue with their meetings. We have been focusing on the Scripture stories that have been discussed the previous Sunday. Kids are encouraged to enter into these stories by enacting simple scripts a taking on the role of a Bible character.

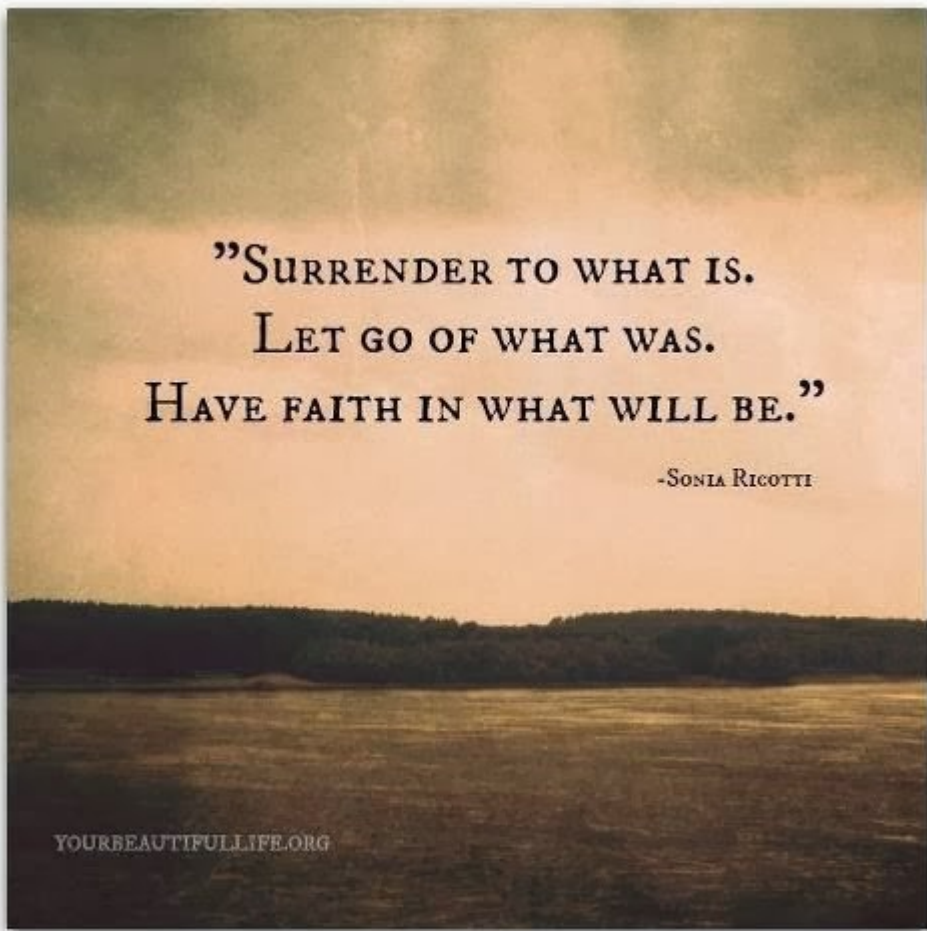
Wednesday Nights

During the small group off season, our Wednesday nights are focused on fun and fellowship! Whether we are hosting a game night, a group activity or some other intergeneration event, we want Wednesday nights to be a time when our church family has fun by spending time together.

Kid's ministry is not for the chosen few, it is a whole church effort! We honor God's mandate to provide our kids with unhindered access to Jesus!

For the King,

Andrew



"SURRENDER TO WHAT IS.
LET GO OF WHAT WAS.
HAVE FAITH IN WHAT WILL BE."

-SONIA RICOTTI

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Events and Info

Tax Aide

AARP will again be providing Tax Aide to residents of Forest Lake on February 6th. They will be here on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9-3pm until April 11th. Appointments can be made by calling 651-675-7126.

Lifeline Sunday February 18th at 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!

Adult Fellowship

February 10th at 5:45 pm. Watch for the sign-up sheet in the lobby.

Romeo's and Juliet's

February 14th at 11:30 a.m. More details to come; watch for updates on locations.

Community Care

Saturday February 17th 8 am - 11 am
Truck unloading Friday, January 19th at 5pm