

The Edge

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOREST HILLS CHURCH, JUNE 2017

From the *Pastor's Perspective*

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ...I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. ...Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first." - Rev. 2:1-4

The Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) assessment team has given their recommendations for what our church at Forest Hills needs most. The HCI journey is a time of both self-study and outside assessment to discern the future God has planned for our church. As a church, we have been in a season of prayer and self-study since last fall. In late April, a team of four coaches sent by the Annual Conference, came and conducted in-depth interviews and deep listening of many church leaders and members. They also poured over our self-study our church leaders took. After a prayerful discernment time, they have provided the "prescriptions" or recommendations they offer as our church's short-term future.

Quite shockingly, their main recommendation is to take a time of rest! They have found that our church is a very caring, helping, serving, generous, and *busy* church! We work so hard at "being the visible love of Jesus in our communities" (our mission statement). We do so many things well.

Yet, they also heard very clearly three crucial concerns: 1) On the whole we are *tired*; too busy, over extended, and don't have enough volunteers. We have too few people trying to do too much. 2) We are *frustrated* that we are not reaching new people as we want. Our worship attendance, children's ministries, and youth group continue to decline. We struggle to get people we touch with our ministries to make deeper, lasting connections with our community. We have continued to innovate and experiment with ways we reach out to others. Yet we only make few on-going connections with new folks. We feel like what we have been trying so hard to do isn't working. And 3) we have real and personal relationships with Jesus, but we don't feel like we have a growing passionate spirituality. We scored ourselves lowest, among eight indicators, in "passionate spirituality." We struggle to feel God's presence in our daily lives and we have a *spiritual hunger for more*.

This is why the HCI coaches feel we are being called into a season of rest. We are in need of a sabbath. Sabbath is a time to stop and reconnect with God. Much of what we are doing is because of our relationship with God, but it is starting to be a drain on our relationship with God.

So, the recommendation for Forest Hills is a year of Jubilee. Jubilee is an Old Testament rule that every 50 years, God's people are to stop work and business, free slaves and the land, and declare a year of reconnecting to God (Leviticus 25). It is a year of restoration.

Did you know that 2018 is Forest Hill's 50th Anniversary? It is time for a year of Jubilee! The recommendation is for a year of restoration. They recommend that starting this fall, as a church we "take a break" from our normal work and have a year of focusing on God and restoring our relationship with Jesus.

The recommendation is to focus on Sunday morning worship, Wednesday evening meal and fellowship, prayer, and small groups. It is a year of investing in our passionate spirituality. It means stop doing almost everything else. It is a time

Monthly Church Events For weekly events see the calendar

June 1	12 pm Sarah Circle 5 pm Lyn Sauer (Ruby's Pantry)
June 3	9 am United Methodist Men
June 4	11:30 am Israel Meal and Presentation
June 5	6:30 pm LLMT Meeting
June 8	Last day of school
June 10	5:30 pm Adult Fellowship
June 11	30 year Anniversary of Church Addition
June 12	16:30 pm Finance Team Meeting
June 14	9:00 am UMW Summer Outing Summer Stretch begins
June 15	6:30 pm MLT Meeting
June 17	6 am Community Care Set-up 8 am Community Care 7 pm YPA Children of Eden Performance
June 18	Father's Day 4 pm YPA Children of Eden Perf. 6:30 pm Lifeline
June 19	6:30 pm Trustees Meeting
June 20	10 am Rebecca Circle
June 22	7 pm YPA Children of Eden Perf.
June 23	7 pm YPA Children of Eden Perf.

Pastor's Perspective

June 24	3 pm YPA Children of Eden Perf. 7 pm YPA Children of Eden Perf.
June 25 – July 1	Red Rock Camp

to reconnect with Jesus, and to be open to whatever Jesus calls us to as a church. Out of this restored connection will come the vision for what our church is called to do and be. A year from now we will be able to lay out a road map for the programs and ministries of our church for its ongoing future.

In Revelation 2, Jesus speaks to the church in Ephesus. It seems to me that what Jesus says to that church is also what Jesus may be saying to us. We have good deeds. We work hard and we persevere. But Jesus was warning them that being very busy can also take our focus off of Him and on to the business. What we do *for* Jesus can start taking the place of Jesus. The key indicator of when this happens is when the work we do for Jesus makes us weary. When we work well for Jesus, we may be tired, but it is not draining. The HCI coaches are noticing that we show indications of weariness and draining. They call us to a time of pursuing our first love.

I think this evaluation is spot on. I, for one, am frustrated and growing weary. I want us to be growing in our own passionate spirituality and in reaching new people. Both seem sluggish right now.

The hope of this HCI prescription is to feed our souls. Out of that refreshed relationship will come a refreshed way of seeing who we are meant to be. We will become more contagious, and others will be attracted to the Jesus they see in us. It's not so much what we do, as it is who we are. The year of Jubilee is a time of restoring who we are! It is falling in love again with our first love.

The first two weeks of June we are hosting clusters of 12 people to discuss this proposal in depth. We will wrestle with what this may mean for us personally and as a church. We are called to "give it all to Jesus," and if that means laying aside something our church does that we love, we need to be willing to do that. Jesus is our first love, not anything we do for Jesus. Contact the church office, or sign up on the sheets in the lobby.

We will vote on this recommendation at a special Church Conference to be held after worship on Sunday, June 25th. It is a simple "up or down" vote on the whole recommendation packet. The packets are on the church website, or are available electronically or in print through the church office.

As we discern, I call us to unity. Please be in respectful discussions about these ideas. Commit to being open to change. Change can be strange and hard, and it can bring a well of emotions. Yet we commit to letting God lead, and treating each other well. Jesus prayed that His church would have unity (John 17:20-26).

Above all, I ask that we all remain in deep prayer of discernment. Our biggest question is, "Jesus, is this what you want for us?" And then, I call us to be truly open to whatever the Spirit may be saying. Jesus owns our church. It all belongs to Him. Our pledge is to do as his Spirit directs. He is our first love! -Pastor David

Events and Info

Community Care

Saturday June 17th 8 am - 11 am

Adult Fellowship

June 10th at 5:30 pm. Watch for the signup sheet in the lobby.

Love Offering and Annual Conference

Once a year United Methodists from across Minnesota gather to worship and plan the ministry we do together. This year Amanda Lucas is the delegate from our church. Rev. Dan Hair, Rebekah Werner and Pastor David will also be attending. The dates this year are June 20-22. It is also customary for the delegate to bring a Love Offering supporting the missions being highlighted that year. This year's Love Offering will be taken Sunday June 11 and 18.

Lifeline Sunday June 18th 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! Lifeline Sunday May 21st 6:30 pm

Romeo's and Juliet's

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

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

Any summer blockbuster that you might see in movie theaters will undoubtedly contain a chase scene of some sort. The bad guys are always trying to get away somehow. As viewers, we gaze upon the action, noting the impossibility of the stunts, but enjoying the spectacle nonetheless. We know that the police, or the hero, will never give up until the perpetrators are caught. They will face any obstacle, take on any chasm, and try again and again as many times as needed.

There are a few things I want to note about pursuit and see if they apply to our faith. What if, instead of talking about cops and robbers, we considered our own pursuit of God? What if we went after God like a sergeant trying to prove himself? What if we hunted him down with no second thought to the amount of destroyed public property?

This kind of pursuit is exciting!

It makes you feel alive! It is a thrill to abandon safety for the sake of attaining our goal. True pursuit is fast and furious. There is no time for second guessing or calm considerations. We need to be on the move!

This kind of pursuit is purposeful!

We do not apprehend the one we are pursuing by accident. In the heat of pursuit, we remain focused and dead set on our goal. Every sense we have and thought we think remains on the task at hand. In the midst of pursuit, we live with purpose.

This kind of pursuit is dangerous!

Chase scenes always involve explosions, destruction and general chaos. Pursuit cannot occur from the comfort of one's living room. Throwing caution to the wind, the pursuer takes on the unexpected. There is no knowing what the chase will entail or where it will lead. Safety must be left at home.

The good news is that we are not cops and God is not a criminal. God is not trying to deceive us or throw us into confusion. God is near to us, he desires to be with us! But like any good relationship, it cannot remain one-sided. We need to live in pursuit of God's presence, his holiness and his truth. If God seems aloof, it is usually due to own lack of pursuit.

Hebrews 12:1-3 exhorts us: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

We join together as a church in a new song called "Simple Pursuit:"



God take us back...
To an unswerving faith in the power of Your name,
A heart beating for Your Kingdom to reign
A church that is known for your presence again
God take us back..."

Kid's Korner



RED ROCK CAMP

Summertime is here! Kids get to exchange the daily grind with freedom, fun... and sometimes boredom. Families head off on trips and vacations as they seek to have fun together and make memories. Summer can be a wonderful time of relaxation but as we kick back and take it easy, we are prone to let important things slip between the cracks

I am speaking specifically about our life of faith. There is a certain orderliness to the school year. It is easier to keep a schedule, and along with that, to maintain time with God. The loose nature of summer lends itself to marginalizing our faith or putting God to the side in favor of other, more pressing issues. Even though our walk with God might be a bit more scattered, there is a solution at hand that combines our need to engage our faith and the fun of vacation: Red Rock Summer Camp!

Red Rock is located on Lake Koronis in Paynesville MN. It's a beautiful location with quality accommodations and camping options. As a church, Forest Hills attends family camp. We depart together after church on June 25 and spend the week with other church families in worship, in bible study, in prayer and in play. Red Rock is for every age, including grandparents! Each age group has the opportunity to attend activities and presentations designed specifically for them. Then we all come together for worship each evening.

Red Rock exists for five main reasons:

- Encounter God
- Experience Holiness
- Equip Generations
- Empower Leaders
- Engage Communities



All of these aspects together make for a full summer and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to take all that we learn and experience at camp home with us, to be put into practice and to transform our everyday lives. Don't push God to the side in the craziness of summer! Keep him front and center, keep your heart and mind tuned to his call. Sign up for camp! Talk to the church office to register or check out www.redrockcamp.org.

30th Anniversary of the Church Building Addition

On June 11, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of our church's building addition. This is the ground-level part of our building, including the nursery, offices, lobby, kitchen and fellowship hall. Bergie Bergerson and David Ash led the building campaign back in the 80s, and led the group with the vision and foresight of an accessible and usable space. We use our building a lot! Recently, the Design Team gave the lobby and sanctuary a face-lift! More is being planned in the Sanctuary this summer. The front wood design is coming down this month, and after the YPA show, the walls will be resurfaced. In the fall, a similar-but more permanent-wood block design will decorate the front wall, matching the wood design of the lobby. Further, the HCI proposal calls for an update of the fellowship hall and classrooms. We need to continue to update the building we use so much, so that ministry can continue for the next 30 years!