



## From the Pastor's Perspective

### Hearing God's Voice

*"My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me." - John 10:27*

We have been on our Jubilee Pause for a number of months now. Yet we "pause on purpose." It's to help us as a church refocus on God and be able to hear God's leading for our church's future. We now begin the hard work of intentionally listening to God. This summer we enter our Healthy Church Initiative's journey point of "dreaming a new dream." We want to hear God's dream for our church, and come fall, begin to implement God's plan for our church's future. What is God calling our church to become? That is what we are listening for!

Jesus finishes a number of the parables He told by saying, "If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear." There's a difference between having ears and hearing. We've had ears all along. But now we dedicate our focus to hearing what God is saying. It is time to listen, as a church, together.

We believe that God has given us the Holy Spirit to speak into our hearts, and that God is guiding us, helping us, speaking words of life into us, even if not by audible words. Hearing God is not a talent. It's a skill. It's something everyone can do. But it's developed over time; it requires practice. It comes from listening for God's voice, before, during, and after we act. Jesus talked about this when He said, "My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me." (John 10:27) We come to know God's voice when we listen.

So, I'm asking everyone in our church, to begin to listen—really listen!—for our Shepherd's voice. That means spending intentional time in discernment. Take a break from your rushed schedule. The Bible talks about how God's voice is usually like a whisper. God rarely screams to get our attention. The voice is there, for sure, but we just need to listen above the noise.

It means praying. Praying is not just talking to God. It's listening to God, too. Praying allows time of reflection and listening. It's pushing our own feelings and preferences and wants to the side and putting our focus on what God may be saying.

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### Monthly Church Events

For weekly events see the calendar

May 2	5:30 pm M&M (Pot luck)
May 3	NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER 6:30 pm Small Group Host Check-in
May 9	10:00 am Birchwood Worship 5:30 pm M&M (Pancakes)
May 10	6:30 pm AMT Meeting
May 13	Mother's Day
May 14	6:30 pm Small Group Work Team Meeting
May 16	5:30 pm M&M (Nancy's kitchen)
May 17	1:00 pm Headstart Graduation
May 20	PENTECOST Hymn Sing Graduation Sunday 11:15 am Last youth group 6:30 pm Lifeline
May 21	6:30 pm CMMT Meeting
May 23	M&M (Meal TBA)

## Pastor's Perspective Cont'd

That's why prayer takes time, and we need to repeat our prayers. Prayer requires patience. God usually (I have found), speaks quietly, slowly, forcing us to slow down and shift our focus. Devotions and reading the Bible are also a form of listening. God speaks to our Inner spirits and minds while reading God's Word.

May 27	New Sermon Series starts: "Turning 21"
May 28	MEMORIAL DAY CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

Later this summer the message series will be on prayer. We'll learn how to pray, and how to develop a robust prayer life, both individually and as a church together.

But we also need to be listening and discerning *together*. God gives His vision to the church, not just one person or another. There will be a consensus that slowly builds among our church as we discern and listen *together*. That means that in addition to listening to God, we must also listen to *each other*! We listen to what God is saying not just to our own hearts, but to those around us as well. We are called to be Forest Hills Church together. We must let God shape what we hear as we listen to God and to each other.

So, this summer, as we pause and dream, we are not "on break" or "on vacation." Instead, we are "on call." I call us to the hard work of listening to God. That means pausing. That means giving attention to listening. That means prayer and devotion times. That means listening to others who are a part of our church. It is hard work!

This is going to be an exciting summer! God has a plan for our church's future, and we are going to be hearing about that together. Let us dream a new dream for our church!

Those who have ears (that's us), let them hear!

Pastor David

## AMT Update

For our last meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup>, it was decided to forego any business and concentrate on the Bible, meditation and prayer. Getting "the pause" to actually happen has been our discussion at past meetings, despite 86% of our church voting to follow the recommendations of the HCI report, which was to "stop" all ministries during this time. So at this meeting, we decided to take our own rest, let go and let God speak to us through our favorite scriptures and devotions. The group agreed to allow me to share with the congregation what each person brought with them. We asked each person to come prepared with a favorite scripture or devotional and impart what it meant to them. After each shared experience the group meditated and prayed. The following are notes that I took during this time. Please know that the AMT team loves God and are fervently seeking to serve Him by stopping and listening for His Voice.

*1 Corinthians 15:58 New International Version (NIV)*

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

Christ won us the victory of new and everlasting life. Therefore, stand firm and be immovable. Even if we can't measure it, our labor is not in vain. We rest our future on the Easter we've been through.

*Matthew 6:21 New International Version (NIV) "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

You make the choice of where you put your treasure (talents)

*Revelation 2:1-5 The Passion Translation (TPT)*

*Christ's Letter to Ephesus*

*Write the following to the messenger of the congregation in Ephesus. For these are the words of the one who holds the seven stars firmly in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands:*

*I know all that you've done for me—you have worked hard and persevered. I know that you don't tolerate evil. You have tested those who claimed to be apostles and proved they are not, for they were imposters. I also know how you have bravely endured trials and persecutions because of my name, yet you have not become discouraged. But I have this against you: you have abandoned the passionate love you had for me at the beginning. Think about how far you have fallen! Repent and do the works of love you did at first. I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place of influence if you do not repent.*

Like Ephesus, we have lost our first love. We forget why we're doing church, not for ministry, but to make disciples.

*Psalm 46:10 (NIV) He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."*

Let us be still, quiet our busyness, take time to know who God is, so we are able to hear His voice, His plan for us.

*Philippians 4:13 (NIV) I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength*

Without Christ, we can do nothing according to His plan. With Him, His plan can be realized through us.

*1 Corinthians 13:4-8 New International Version (NIV)*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.*

This scripture is about what love isn't, as well as what love is.

*Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

With hope, everything is tolerable. This includes what we are as a church, what we find our hope in. True, infallible, not shaken by this world.

*Colossians 3:15 (NIV) "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."*

The peace that God gives us is to guide us. Look for God's peace. God is calling us to make decisions as one body.

*Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV) "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."*

He makes everything beautiful in its time. It would be great if God could map out our entire day, taking steps of faith. Instead of our lack of faith and spiritual agitation. Make sure we are in the will of God and going by God's timing.

Next month, the process of discerning will begin, led by Rev. Jim Haun, our HCI coach.

As we are one together, we don't all take that leap of faith at the same time. Help us get back to our first love, get grounded, get on that journey of faith. God is leading us.

The task of "pausing" is not just functional, it is about of journey of faith and our continual prayer journey.

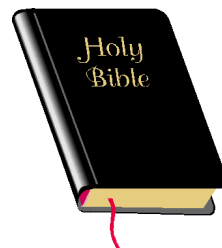
What does it mean to be a leader? Jesus's model is "Come follow me." Go out, be risky. Be Bold. It is frightening, but we believe and have hope that this is the journey we're supposed to be on.

Letting go, surrendering, moving, with a journey.

In Christ,

Marilee Leonard

# Worship's Word



There have been quite a few changes over the past few months when it comes to the leadership structure of our church. We have opted to simplify and streamline the way we divvy up leadership roles. But while these teams tackle the future visioning of the church, keep budgets in check and make decisions, we still need to operate on a week-to-week basis when it comes to ministry!

Recognizing this need, we have developed work groups who meet with staff to think up and talk through ideas for what our week -to-week ministry will look like. These teams involve at least one member of staff, two members from the Action Ministry Team (AMT) and two additional members at large who do not serve on another team. These work groups deal specifically with small groups, Sunday worship and Wednesday nights.

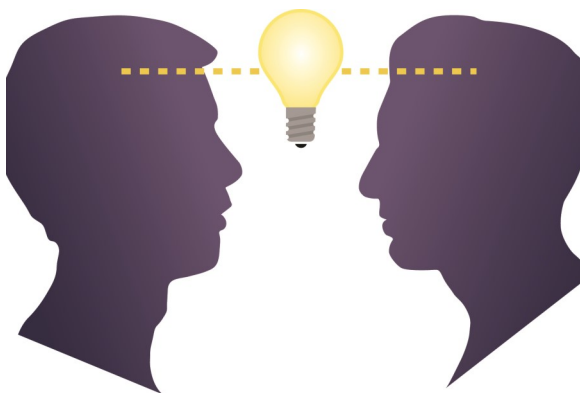
Our Sunday worship work group has been meeting after church to think through each upcoming sermon series. One of our goals has been to keep our services engaging to a wide variety of ages. The use of our white flags during this last series is an example of this team's work. Other areas addressed include the layout and decor of the stage, brainstorming about skits, videos and other creative ways to convey each week's message.

Similarly, our Wednesday group has been meeting regularly to think through creative ideas regarding our Wednesday M&M activities. Finding something to do that is fun and meaningful for all ages is a daunting task. This group focuses on making sure we can provide well for these important fellowship times.

When Pastor David and I put our heads together, once in a awhile we can come up with something. But if two heads are better than one, six are better yet! These work groups are crucial to the development of our ongoing ministries and we appreciate the thought and creativity of those who serve on these teams.

For the King,

Andrew





Forged, Forest Hills youth group, had extra time with the missionaries on April 22nd as they joined our meal and discussion time. The teens had the opportunity to hear about their work in South Africa and also their hopes for Canada.

We are starting our new series "Liked: Whose Approval are You Looking for" this week. We will be discussing how to live eternally in world focused on 15 minutes of fame. May 20th will be our last Sunday youth group. However, we will be meeting for some fun and fellowship throughout the summer.

For those teens planning to attend Red Rock Camp in June, make sure you get your registrations in soon!  
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## KID'S CORNER

Spring may have come late to our fair state of Minnesota, but for those in Forest Lake, summer is coming early! While most schools are in session until sometime in June, Forest Lake students are free on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

For families, summertime is a mix of long, lazy days as well as overstuffed busyness. Sometimes we manage to find a balance and sometimes we just try to make it through the events we have planned. Whether we find ourselves in the midst of relaxing or stressing, summer is always a time of transition. Kids are moving on to the next grade, home improvements are underway, and we have a bit more time to be open to new experiences.

Our church is also undergoing some transitions this summer. We are taking a break as well. Not from the duties of loving, or growing, or serving, but rather performing these duties in a different way. Often the church can be a culprit in the over-scheduling of families. We want to offer teaching and fellowship opportunities, but this desire can end up being counterproductive. If we are adding drag to a family's schedule and inhibiting their ability to rest in God, then we ought to pull back a bit and allow some breathing room.

In the end, the church can never be a child's main source of faith formation. It has been shown over and over again that the greatest influencer in a child's life is mom and dad. If parents are not actively living out their faith in their own lives, children are stuck between a message they hear at church and a different message they receive at home. Parents are crucial to the faith development of their children! This is a vital truth!

As we enter into a little down-time this summer, I want to share some ways you (parents and grandparents) can help develop faith in kids at home.

### Have family devotions!

There are an untold number of devotional books written for families to use together, but beyond that, simply having honest conversations about faith, God, struggles, and questions are life-shaping for kids. The key is to prioritize time together as a family.



### **Tell stories of what God has done!**

At bedtime the other night, my son had a terrible stomachache. As we tucked him in, we prayed over him and asked God to take away his pain. After that, he fell asleep with no trouble. God had healed him! The next night as we tucked him in, we asked him if he remembered how his tummy felt and what we did about it. He could recall, and he was able to conclude, "God healed me!" By bringing up the story again, my son was able to connect our prayers with God's healing. Our faith is built up by stories. As the palmist puts it: "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts." (Psalm 145:4).

### **Be Human!**

You do not have all the answers. That is okay! It is important for kids to know that mom and dad do not know all there is to know. It is good for kids to see that their parents are human and that they are imperfectly trying to follow God like everyone else.

### **Realize that you are in the spotlight.**

It may not be fair, but it is true. What you do and say, what you spend money on and what you prioritize are all noticed by your kids. They may just observe silently, but they are always paying attention! Our decisions inform our kids about what we believe!

### **Always be growing!**

When the kids stump you with a question, learn more about that subject. Talk to church leaders and they can point you to some helpful resources. The internet at large is a dubious source for good theology, but a little research can go a long way. Looking into these questions not only shows your kids that you are engaged and learning yourself, but it also promotes your own spiritual growth. Win/win!

### **Memorize Scripture (Together)!**

Each week in church we highlight a particular verse. Take these verses home. Tape them on the bathroom mirror, hang them on the refrigerator. Quiz each other throughout the week. Recite it in the morning and before bed. Before long the whole family will be hiding God's word in their hearts!

Take these ideas and make of them what you will. Ask God for insight into what would work best in your home. Christians are not born, they are formed and we have been charged with the responsibility to lead our kid's in the way they should go.

For the King,

Andrew

## **A Note from Megan and Parker Ask....**

Forest Hills UMC Congregation,

Thank you for the openness to having us share with you this past Sunday (April 22). We appreciate the opportunity and loved seeing so many familiar faces. We also value the willingness you all have to give towards our ministry. Please continue to pray for more continual monthly financial partners for our vision and ministry.

Serving Him,

Parker and Megan Ask

Our church family raised \$587.00 to help the Asks with their work.





Renovations at the St. Andrew's family shelter in Hugo continue to move along with the help of volunteers from a number of area churches. Renovation work is typically on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. If you would like to get involved with this project contact Debbie Larson at 651-762-9148 or [dlarson@saintandrews.org](mailto:dlarson@saintandrews.org).

The Community Resource Center at St. Andrew's is hoping to begin placing families in the shelter starting the first part of July. That is when we, as a church, will get the opportunity to put our hearts of hospitality to work as volunteers for the dinner and overnight shifts. For more information, contact Paulette Johnson. We will be seeking volunteers for 2 or 3 weeks of service throughout the upcoming school year. A sign-up sheet is located in the lobby.

**M&M ends May 23rd! See the May schedule below!**

**Summer Potlucks!** In order to continue our time of fellowship throughout the summer, we have decided to hold a pot luck on the first Sunday of the month after church! The first one will be on June 3rd!

#### M&M

**May 2nd—Pot Luck/Small groups and board games**

**May 9th—Pancakes/Small groups and board games**

**May 16th—Nancy's kitchen/Small groups and board games**

**May 23rd—TBA/Small groups and board games**

#### Small Groups

Small Groups will continue through May 23rd. We hope everyone is enjoying our study on 1 John, and invite you to bring a friend!

#### Lifeline Sunday May 20th at 6:30 pm

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5.

We take these words of Jesus seriously. We depend upon him. Our connection to the vine cannot be ignored. Lifeline is a way for us to come together to be with God. There will be songs to sing and prayers to pray, but you can simply come to enjoy the presence of God. All are encouraged to attend because we need Jesus! Our church needs Jesus! Hang on tight to the lifeline.

