

**FANNING THE FLAME OCTOBER & NOVEMBER HAPPENINGS**

*"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." - Rom 15:5-6 NIV*

Last month the congregation was given brief descriptions of books on prayer that the Team was reviewing for recommendation to be used by small groups. Each book is valuable in giving insights into prayer and seeking the Lord's Spirit to guide us.

The Team was challenged to read and discuss an article on the matter of "Prayer and the Training of Christian Leadership" by Dr. Russell Shedd. As the discussion showed, and the article pointed out, developing upcoming leaders in our church is not going to be an easy task for our present Session members. Please keep your church leaders in prayer! The challenges & the road before them require a great deal of prayerful understanding of the Lord's direction for our church and possibly a major paradigm shift, as Dr. Shedd points out in this excellent article on discipleship & God's way to prepare His men to lead the Church.

The Team members also listened to and discussed a message by Dr. Lynn Downing on "Personal Spiritual Formation." This challenging message reminded us that the Church exists for God's glory; it's all about Christ, not us. Recognizing that we are more deeply influenced by the cultural layers that permeate our lives than Scripture, the Church is called back to the reason for our existence: to glorify God and serve as a united body to further His kingdom.

Several "take-aways" became evident as we listened to this message. Here are some that are worth sharing with you:

The means of personal spiritual formation include actively pursuing the Means of Grace (Scripture, prayer, personal discipline in reading & obeying Scripture, along with the gift of the rest of the Body, the Church where the sacraments, fellowship, & church discipline take place. Do we consider that the Church, and Westminster in particular, is God's gift to us?

Going more deeply into the subject, the purpose of personal spiritual formation is personal intimacy with Christ as well as for functioning in His Body. There is a strong relationship between the Christian and the Church. Dr. Downing made some startling points along these lines based on his own experience. As may be true with many of us he says:

- \* I was never taught that my relationship with Christ was anything other than personal*
- \* I was never taught that my personal welfare was secondary to the welfare of the Church/Body*
- \* I was never taught that my true welfare in Christ is the result of my fitting into His Body under His headship.*
- \* I was never taught that it is actually arrogantly sinful to think that I can have a personal agenda apart from, or in competition with the Church under His headship.*
- \* I was never taught that if I do attempt to live in such an exclusive manner, I quench the Spirit in my own life, but also in the Church.*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Perhaps this failure in the average education of new Christians is a problem that lies at the root of many of the church's problems throughout her history. Where Christ and His relationship to His Body, the Church, is concerned, it's not a matter of "just Jesus & me." We are truly a part His Body and we each have a function to perform, for His glory & our spiritual good health.

As the title "Personal Spiritual Formation" indicates, the message that Dr. Downing presents gives us THE LIFE CYCLE OF REVITALIZATION CHURCHES: (visualize a wheel as you read the following)

**"A Healthy Pastor produces Healthy Leadership which produces Healthy Families which produce Healthy Churches which produce Growing Churches which produce Effective Churches, which produce Vital Churches which produce a Healthy Pastor which produces Healthy Leadership which produces Healthy Families which produce Healthy Churches..."** and on and on around the circle. The point is that as the cycle is unbroken, everyone flourishes to God's glory and our good.

This message and the other materials the Team has been working on can be made available to those who wish to pursue the matter further. Please check with Les or Bobbie Cover (443-0361) (lecsite@gmail.com) to make arrangements.

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In other activities, Carla Curtis is hard at work on the **Westminster History** and expects it to be completed by January. As Carla has gathered together & studied old Session minutes, anecdotes, etc., it's been a long and tricky process with lots of material to cover and some of it being contradictory. The threads of our last 51 years are beginning to come together, though. Why do we need a comprehensive Church History? It will give us as a congregation insights into the three Rs that are the foundation of Fanning the Flame: Remember (from whence you have come), **Repent** (of any sins that have kept God's blessing from the Church), and **Recover** (that first love for the Lord and the work begun in our Church family), from Rev. 2:5.

The Team members have each been working and reporting on developing personal **"prayer visions"** with each team member assessing where they've been and where the Lord would have them grow in their prayer lives. It's been a soul searching experience but spiritual growth is occurring in our midst! A blessing, to say the least. Each Team member has an Accountability Partner lest any lapse into old habits or get sidetracked by the cares of our days. The prayer life of not only the Team and the Church leaders but the support of the entire congregation is vital to this ministry. To quote Paul, "Brethren, pray for us!"

Many have expressed confusion about the **Armorbearer Sunday**. "So what was the big deal about that?" you may well ask. We confess that the ball was dropped that day due to several extenuating circumstances but we are looking forward to clarifying the intent & mission of that vital ministry soon. Further work is being done regarding the Aarmorbearer Ministry. Your Session will be bringing more information on that in the near future. In the meantime, please use the tri-fold brochure labeled, "Pray for Your Church Leaders" not just through that first week but on a continuing basis. If you need another copy, please ask (& you shall receive!).

Fred Schreiber coordinates the **Spiritual Gifts Discovery** project within the Team preparatory to expanding it with the entire congregation after the FTF Servant Team "guinea pigs" discover their gifts and begin to put them to good use within the body (read 1 Corinthians 12 for more information).

Kevin Blackstone and his **Crisis Planning** Task Force report progress on completing the Crisis Planning Manual which should be ready for the Session's approval very soon.

Matt McMillan and his Task Force have completed the first draft of the **Communications Policy Manual**. It has been submitted to the Session for approval & finalization.

These last two documents lay out policies and procedures to be followed by the Church and will prove to be very useful in either avoiding or dealing with problems which are sure to arise in the future.

Last but certainly not least, if you haven't already done so, be sure to mark your calendar for the Open Meeting with Coach Joe Weatherly the evening of Tuesday, December 13 complete with FREE PIZZA starting at 5:00 PM! This will be a great opportunity for you to get all your questions addressed and to get a better view of the big FTF picture. Come one, come all!

*"As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." - Col 3:12 NIV*