



# The Steeple

A Publication of St. Paul United Methodist Church  
of Rosewood Heights, Illinois

**MAY 2018**



**Will our children have faith?** This was a question asked by the Christian educator, John Westerhoff, in a book in the 70s. Writing in a time when most children had memorized John 3:16, knew the stories of The Good Samaritan and The Prodigal Son, and could recite the Golden Rule, Westerhoff envisioned a not too distant time when most children would grow up outside the church. George Barna, a Christian whose polling company does work for Fortune 500 companies, does polling on religious issues as well. He discovered that 100 million Americans have not attended any worship service (including weddings and funerals) within the last six months. To put this figure in context, if the unchurched population of the U.S. were a nation of its own, it would be the 12th largest nation on earth!

**Will our children have faith?** Yes, if we let them. Faith comes naturally to our children. Perhaps this is why Jesus instructs us to become like children if we hope to enter the kingdom of God. One of my friends started looking for a church home at the urging of their young daughter. The daughter had gone to church with a friend and wanted to go every Sunday—since her family didn't go to church. My friends were uncomfortable with the theology of that church and the church of their childhood, so they searched until they found a church home that offered the values they supported as a family. Every church I have served has youth who show up without their parents because the church offered the guidance, the values, and love that they needed within their lives. The church becomes the family that works for them.

Timothy is Paul's handpicked successor. Paul writes a letter from a prison cell to his prodigy. In the letter, Paul says in a nutshell: *"Timothy, I know you are very young. I know that some of the older saints may reject your leadership. I know the world will persecute you. But with God's help you can carry on this vital ministry. You can do it."* Later in the letter, Paul recognizes that there would not be a Timothy, if it had not been for the strong faith of Lois, his grandmother, and Eunice, his mother. He writes: **THAT PRECIOUS MEMORY TRIGGERS ANOTHER: YOUR HONEST FAITH—AND WHAT A RICH FAITH IT IS, HANDED DOWN FROM YOUR GRANDMOTHER LOIS TO YOUR MOTHER EUNICE, AND NOW TO YOU! AND THE SPECIAL GIFT OF MINISTRY YOU RECEIVED WHEN I LAID HANDS ON YOU AND PRAYED—KEEP THAT ABLAZE! GOD DOESN'T WANT US TO BE SHY WITH HIS GIFTS, BUT BOLD AND LOVING AND SENSIBLE. 2 Timothy 1:5-7 (The Message)**

Timothy's mother and grandmother were early Christian converts, possibly through Paul's own ministry in their home city of Lystra. Although his father was probably not a believer, these women had raised Timothy within the church. Now, Timothy was poised to assume leadership within this body of Christ that had loved, nurtured and encouraged him.

I love the quip that **90% of life is just showing up.** In the same vein, I believe that faith isn't knowing just the right words to pray or living the very best life or memorizing the most scripture. Faith is showing up Sunday after Sunday; thankful that you are saved by God's marvelous grace. As parents or grandparents, we should never discount the importance of bringing our children to St. Paul Sunday after Sunday—to hear the stories of the faith, to say the prayers of the faith, to sing the songs of the faith, and to hear the word of faith proclaimed. Our children listen and absorb more than we think they do.

**Will our children have faith?** Yes, if we have faith. Yes, if we live the faith before them. Our presence at St. Paul is important. It says to our children: *"Faith is important to me. In a week where my time is stretched and I am stressed, I make this time to reconnect with God. I need the spiritual refreshment that I find in God's presence."*

Here is what bothers me. For 100 million Americans, the link to faith is broken. It is likely that their children and their children's children will grow up outside the church. If they have faith, it will be a diminished kind of faith.

**PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUES ON PAGE 3**



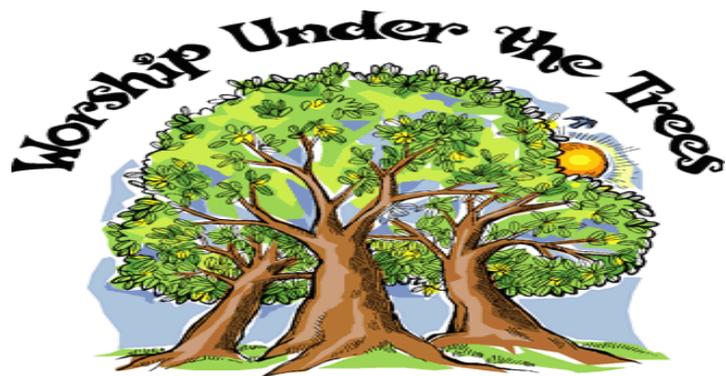
## OUR CHURCH FAMILY & THANK YOU!

- **Piper Martin** played the part of Mary Poppins in Roxana Jr. High School's production of *Mary Poppins Jr.* **Aiden Graham**, grandson of Vicki Graham played the part of Ben, one of the children for whom Mary Poppins is the nanny.
- **Marie Brown** played in the pit orchestra for Metro-East Lutheran High School's play, *Into the Woods*.
- We presented a Meghan Hickerson Memorial Christian Teen Leader Scholarship to **Angelle Henson** at Civic Memorial's Senior Awards Night. Angelle is a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Bethalto.
- Our deepest sympathy goes out to each family that has lost a loved one recently. This includes the family of **Dorothy Metzger**, cousin of Lois Mitchell & Ruth Bell; the family of **Jack David Bullock**, dear friend of Ruth Bell & Lois Mitchell; the family of **Brian Runge**, friend of Lois Mitchell & Ruth Bell; the family of **Patricia Wolff**, friend of Lois Mitchell & Ruth Bell; the family of **Teresa Mortland**, cousin of Connie Martin; the family of **Fred Irvin**, brother-in-law of Judy Moore; the family of **Ronald "Bud" Stull**, friend of the Pruetzels; the family of **Paul Britt**, friend of Ruth Bell & Lois Mitchell; and the family of **Robert "Bob" Velikis**, friend of Ruth Bell & Lois Mitchell. May you all know God's comfort and peace in the days ahead.
- The Board of Trustees says **THANK YOU to the 12 folks** who helped us with the Spring Church Work Day! It is important and necessary, and we appreciate all who gave up some of their Saturday time to help with the work!

**THANK YOU:** Thank you to our Church Family for the support during the loss of our son/nephew/brother, Eric Wood. We appreciate all the cards, visits and words of encouragement. Thank you to Pastor Daryl for his compassion and knowing the right words to say to ease our sorrow. Also, a big thank you to the Ladies of the Church for the wonderful dinner. *Joan Roberts, Jean Kainz, & families*

**THANK YOU:** Rohland had Outpatient surgery and it went very well. Thank you for your prayers and keep praying for that transplant! *Susie & Rohland Pruetzel*

**THANK YOU:** Thank you to the Women Of Worship for the fundraiser you held that raised **\$748.37** to go toward the Mission Possible Capital Campaign! You are all awesome! *St. Paul UMC Board of Trustees*



**ON SUNDAYS IN THE  
CHURCH AMPHITHEATER**

**at 8:15 a.m. JUNE 3rd-AUGUST 26th**

In case of rain, service is in the sanctuary.

The 10:30 a.m. service is in the sanctuary.



**PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUES FROM PAGE 1**

I share this story to underline the importance of faith in the life of our children. Fred Craddock is a retired professor of preaching at Candler Theological Seminary who grew up in Humboldt, TN. Time magazine cited him numerous times as one of the best preachers in the U.S.

He tells this true story of going back one summer to Gatlinburg, TN to take a short vacation with his wife. One night they found a quiet little restaurant where they looked forward to a private meal. Just the two of them. While they were waiting for their meal, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man, moving from table to table, visiting with the guests. Craddock whispered to his wife: *"I hope he doesn't come over here."* He didn't want the man intruding on their privacy. But the man did stop by their table.

*"Where you folks from?"* the man asked amiably.

*"Oklahoma,"* Craddock replied.

*"Splendid state, I hear, although I've never been there. What do you do for a living?"*

*"I teach homiletics at a seminary,"* Craddock curtly said.

*"Oh, so you teach preachers, do you? Well, I've got a story I want to tell you,"* the distinguished gentleman said. And with that, he pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with Craddock and his wife.

Inwardly, Craddock groaned: *"Oh no, here comes another preacher story. It seems everyone has one."*

The man began: *"I was born not far from here across the mountains. My mother wasn't married when I was born so I had a hard time. When I started school my classmates had a name for me, and it wasn't a very nice name. I used to go off by myself at recess and during lunchtime because the taunts of my playmates cut so deeply. What was worse was going downtown on Saturday afternoon and feeling every eye burning a hole through you. They were all wondering just who my real father was.*

*When I was about 12 years old a new preacher came to our church. I enjoyed listening to him. I would always go in late and slip out early. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast I got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. I could feel every eye in church on me. Just about the time I got to the door I felt a big hand on my shoulder. I looked up and the preacher was looking right at me."*

*The preacher said: "WHO ARE YOU, SON? WHOSE BOY ARE YOU?"*

*"I felt the old weight come on me. It was like a big black cloud. Even the preacher was putting me down. But he looked down at me, studying my face, and, then, he smiled a big smile of recognition." "WAIT A MINUTE,"* he said, *"I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. I SEE THE FAMILY RESEMBLANCE. YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD!"* With that he slapped me on the back and said: *"BOY, YOU'VE GOT A GREAT INHERITANCE. GO AND CLAIM IT."*

The old man looked across the table at Fred Craddock and said, *"THAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ANYONE EVER SAID TO ME."* With that he smiled, shook the hands of Craddock and his wife, and moved on to another table to greet old friends.

When the waitress stopped by to take their order, she asked Craddock and his wife if they knew the man because he had spent so much time with them. When they answered "No" and asked who he was, the waitress said: *"WHY THAT WAS BEN HOOPER, TWO TIME GOVERNOR OF TENNESSEE."* In his autobiography, *"The Unwanted Boy,"* Hooper told how he was unofficially adopted by members of his Baptist Church and how that made the difference in his life.

*Will our children have faith? Will they come to know and claim their true identity as children of God? They will if we, the church, surround them with God's love.* Pastor Daryl

**P.S.** You have two excellent opportunities to support the faith journeys of our children and youth this month. Our Youth will lead us in worship during the Awakening Service at 10:30 a.m. on May 6th. We will give thanks for the faith of our mothers that has nurtured our own faith on Mother's Day, May 13. Join us for our worship services at 8:15 & 10:30 a.m. We will be baptizing Evangeline "Evie" Rader at the Awakening Service.



## Sundays at St. Paul in **MAY** 8:15 & 10:30 A.M. Services

**“More Jesus Time” for Pre-school - 5th grade and Nursery is provided during the 10:30 a.m. service.**

Our 8:15 a.m. service is a traditional service with hymns. The Pastor leads worship clothed in a robe and stole. Communion is usually celebrated on the first Sunday of the month.



Our 10:30 a.m. service—*Awakening*—is based upon this verse from 2 Chronicles 16:9: “God’s eyes range from to and fro throughout the Earth looking to strengthen the person that would bend their heart toward Him.” The preaching focuses upon life lessons from the Bible. Music is played by a worship band.

Words to the songs are projected on the screen or available on the entryway table. The Worship Choir & Hand Bell Choir provide special music. Communion is celebrated at the end of every service. The intent of both worship services is to connect, reconnect and draw people into a closer connection with Jesus Christ.



**6: 6th Sunday of Easter. Communion celebrated at all services.**

**Youth Sunday at Awakening.** The Youth of St. Paul will help lead the Awakening Service today. While we consider our youth to be the church of tomorrow, the reality is that they are the church today.



Every one of us is a disciple of Jesus Christ and held to the same standard!



**13: 7th Sunday of Easter. Mother’s Day. Ascension**

**Sunday. Birthday Sunday.** Mothers present in our worship services will receive a special gift today. Abraham Lincoln said that all that he became he owed to a godly mother. Most of us would echo those same sentiments; giving thanks for our mothers’ influence in our lives.



THE GIDEONS INTERNATIONAL

**20: Day of Pentecost. Gideons Sunday.** During both

services, we will celebrate the mission work of The Gideons.

You will have an opportunity to give a gift aiding their worldwide distribution of Bibles.



**27: Trinity Sunday. Memorial Sunday.** During both services, we will re-

member those who connected with St. Paul who have gone on to be with the Lord. Doug Pascoe, our Parish Visitor, will be preaching on the love we should have for each other.



**2018 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL DATES!** The dates for the 2018 VBS are **June 11-15th!** Please write this down in your calendar as you plan your year. We will need workers and supplies and most of all the children so start praying now and asking God how He wants to use you in this ministry!

**NEEDED FOR VBS** – We need to borrow **artificial Christmas trees** for VBS!...any size, but undecorated Perhaps when you put away your winter things and get out Easter or spring decorations you could find your Christmas tree. **Please let Jamie Gwaltney know** that she may borrow yours and she will let you know when to bring it to the church (or maybe send someone to pick it up).

Call her at **692-0898!** Thank you!



## The Healing Power of Hope

Can feeling hopeful help heal us? Many experts believe it can and it does!

By Karolyn A. Gazella

Hope. It's a small word, but its meaning is far from small. Merriam-Webster defines hope as "the feeling of wanting something to happen and thinking that it could happen; a feeling that something good will happen or be true." When I conducted an informal and unscientific Facebook survey asking "What does hope mean to you?" I received answers such as "something to look forward to," "a dream of what could be," "wide-open spaces to create," "dreams," and "possibility."

Recently I interviewed Mark Pettus, MD, who is the author of *It's All in Your Head: Change Your Mind, Change Your Health*. We talked about how we can "train the brain to be addicted to health"—I love the way he phrases that. Through diet, lifestyle, and dietary supplements we can help influence the brain's biologic response.

Hope is a significant ingredient to true healing. I would argue that it is my hope that provides me with a significant advantage in my quest to prevent cancer. University of Chicago scholar Nancy Snow wrote in the Science of Virtues research project, "People who lack hope seem to lack zest for life." She goes on to say, "Hope in all of its complexity has been widely found to be beneficial to persons suffering from physical and mental illness..."

Jerry Groopman, MD, author of *The Anatomy of Hope*, writes that hope is different than merely thinking positively because hope requires an understanding and acknowledgement of the obstacles. He says there is "no room for delusion" if we are to be truly hopeful. "For my patients," Groopman writes, "hope, true hope, has proved as important as any medication I might prescribe or any procedure I might perform."

But what stimulates the hope that can sometimes lie dormant within us? Knowledge—knowing what has happened, what may happen, and that we have the ability to influence outcomes. Because you see, the most powerful medicines known to man are not in the doctor's office, the pharmacy, or the science lab. They are in your brain. Chemicals in the brain can help facilitate healing. We have access to these healing chemicals 24/7 and that should give us hope. Our beliefs and expectations—the foundation in which hope is built—can trigger the release of these healing chemicals.

Feeling hopeful can enhance mood, take away pain, and help us live life with vitality. Best of all, hope has no bad side effects.

**"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul,  
and sings the tunes without the words, and never stops at all." —Emily Dickinson**

There is a thin line between hope and denial, and that line is an unwavering commitment to truth and reality. Groopman writes: "False hope does not recognize the risks and dangers that true hope does. False hope can lead to intemperate choices and flawed decision making. True hope takes into account the real threats that exist and seeks to navigate the best path around them."

There is a profound difference between hoping and wishing, he continues. Wishing encourages passivity, whereas hope represents an active stance. **"Wishing is the fantasy that everything is going to turn out OK. Hoping is actually showing up for the hard work."**

### Jeremiah 29:11

**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.**

### Romans 12:12

**Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.**



# MAY BIRTHDAYS

“Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work!”

- 01-May Kennedy Scroggins
- 03-May Bowen Ayres
- 03-May Brian Eyster
- 03-May Sharon Fulks
- 04-May Zack Toner
- 05-May Sydney Martin
- 05-May Keri Whaley
- 06-May Mike Tappy
- 07-May Alex Barnes
- 07-May Ian Napp
- 07-May Jeff White
- 08-May Brayden Decker
- 08-May Bruce Hatten
- 08-May Trudy Lehnen
- 08-May Joy Virgin
- 09-May Jackie Beth Burt
- 10-May Brandon Bentley
- 10-May Katie Ford
- 10-May Bob Hinkle Sr.
- 10-May Jake Toner
- 11-May Minnie Tindall
- 12-May Aaron Bottorff
- 12-May Liam Cincoski
- 12-May Nelba Goodman
- 12-May Heather Hendricks
- 12-May Connie Hickerson
- 12-May Laura Mae White

- 13-May Troy Cameron
- 13-May Ethan Martin
- 13-May Aaron Rich
- 13-May Shelby Whaley
- 13-May Tana Yankovich
- 15-May Joshua Giddings
- 15-May Wyatt Parker
- 16-May Paul Bowman
- 16-May Adelyn Spurgeon
- 17-May Debbie Bacus
- 17-May Jeremy Nairn
- 17-May Bobbi Ortegren
- 17-May John Uzzell
- 19-May Kylie Winchester
- 20-May Barbara Baggett
- 21-May Ray Babcock Jr.
- 22-May Tyler Babcock
- 22-May Ridgely Hubbard
- 24-May Marjorie Hall
- 24-May Ryan Spurgeon
- 25-May Tiffany Nairn
- 26-May Kelly McPheters
- 26-May Brendan Palmer

- 27-May Betty Campbell
- 27-May Brandy Lusivic
- 27-May Lana Mortland
- 28-May DJ Lusivic Jr.
- 29-May Gina Brown
- 29-May Laurie Griffin
- 29-May Richard Huebner
- 30-May Steve Dawson
- 30-May Sarah Gebhardt
- 30-May Sam Griffin
- 31-May Jessica Braun



# MAY ANNIVERSARIES



- 01-May Mark & Sandy Scroggins
- 02-May Jim & Connie Hickerson
- 05-May Rick & Meghan Sparling III
- 12-May Chris & Kellie Greer
- 15-May Bob & Betsy Blacklock
- 17-May Brian & Trista Liedtke
- 19-May Troy & Kristin Cameron

- 21-May Tom & Karen Martin
- 22-May Jimmy & Brianne Bourne
- 25-May Bruce & Karen Hatten
- 26-May Keith & Mandy Armon
- 27-May Brennen & Samantha Hermens
- 27-May Steve & Jean Kainz

## Be Sure To Pick Up A copy of the Church Directory for 2018!

Please be sure to contact the church office if you have had a change of address, phone number, or email address since the last printing!

Thank you!



### APRIL Stewardship

Budget Offering:	through 4/30/2018	\$22409.00
Designated Giving:	through 4/30/2018	\$1625.70
	Capital Improvements	218.00
	Loose Change	82.20
	Flowers	132.00
	Hickerson Scholarship	60.00
	Reimbursement	50.00
	Charles McKnelly	550.00
	Brad Fester	100.00
	Memorials	225.00
	Funeral Dinners	200.00
	2018 Newsletter Postage	8.50
Church Mutual Refund		951.00
Easter Offering		927.00
Capital Campaign		2135.00
Total:		\$28047.70

**VBS requests that you save your small TP rolls when they are empty. We need 200 of them!**

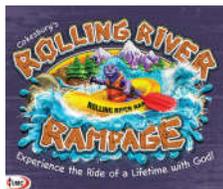
**Call the Church Office (259-5210) if you would like to be a Greeter for either Sunday service!**

#### Average Attendance for APRIL 2018

Early Service	43
Late Service	81
Sunday School	30
Visitors	5



**Capital Campaign money received as of 04-30-18: \$302,687.92**



## VBS 2018 June 11 - 15 9:30 a.m. - Noon

For VBS we have some of our leadership in place, but volunteers are always needed and welcomed! We will have classes for children age 3 (who are potty trained) through 6th grade. The stations are: Recreation, Crafts, Movie, Story, Snacks, Praise Songs, Science Lab, and Puppets & Play.

Class Leaders, Class Assistants, Station Leaders, Station Assistants & all extra helpers—Please come join us as a student or a volunteer. It's a fun and rewarding week of learning more about God!

If you are in 7th grade or older and are interested in helping with VBS, please talk to Jamie Gwaltney or call 692-0898. If you are 18 years old or older, please pick up a policy packet from the office with a background check form in it to fill out and drop off back to the church office, if you have not done so before.

**CHECK THE BULLETIN BOARD SOON FOR SUPPLIES THAT ARE NEEDED!** We pray this is another fun and inspiring year!

# DEADLINE FOR JUNE 2018 STEEPLE, Mon., MAY 21st!



### MONTHLY LOOSE CHANGE PROJECT

May's Loose Change Project goes to the

Liberian Mission of the Methodist Church. After 20 years of civil war the church is rebuilding. This will help support pastors in the churches who only earn \$1 per month in salary. May God bless and multiply your gifts!



## We Say Goodbye To Our Friend...



**SPENCER KEENE BACUS** -- On a Sunday morning after church last year, we observed Spencer, smiling, walking arm in arm with an elderly woman, bending low to chat to her - very patiently, carefully helping her get into her car. At the time, we assumed it was someone he knew from the Methodist Retirement Village where he had worked for a few years. Later at home, we asked him who the woman was that he had helped to her car. He said, "I have no idea. She just looked a little shaky and I asked if I could help her."

This simple, self-sacrificial act is a perfect example of how Spencer chose to live his life. Every day, he was reaching out to help or encourage someone without hesitation. We all learned how to be more loving, more giving, more servant-centered through our connection

to Spencer.

When Spencer was in junior high, his science teacher called us in for a teacher/parent conference to talk about his grades. We were pretty nervous but the teacher immediately said "You know what? So what if Spencer gets a low grade in my class." We were puzzled, but the teacher continued, "I would give up every one of my accomplishments and achievements to have the gift that Spencer has. He is literally a friend to everyone at this school. Even the mean kids who start out bullying him quickly become his staunch friends and protectors. Spencer loves so large, so unconditionally, so confidently, that everyone wants to be his best friend. Everyone loves Spencer because he gives himself and his love to them first."

When he was three days old, we were told by doctors at Children's Hospital in St. Louis that most children born with his rare skin disorder (Giant Congenital Nevus) don't live past five years old. He certainly kept living - happily, joyfully, robustly - day after day, year after year. In his youth, doctors told us that if any of his Nevus skin ever transformed to melanoma, it would "sweep through him like a brush fire and take him within a few weeks." His first challenge with melanoma occurred in 2013. It wasn't a brush fire. He lived. After three grueling surgeries to get ahead of the stage 3 cancer, he beat it and "took back" his body with daily, intense exercise and weight lifting, transforming his body and his zest for life. He began chronicling his challenges with cancer and his physical transformation on YouTube (you should go find some of his videos if you need a dose of inspiration).

In the summer of 2016, we learned that a nevus which had been benignly lurking on the lining of his brain had transformed to melanoma. We were told he had only a few months to live. But he kept living - happily, joyfully, robustly. And even though he was burdened by the outlook and by growing physical limitations, he continued to say, "Hey, I'm fine. So many people have bigger challenges than I do."

Even in his final conscious moments, he managed to hug and kiss his mom and reach up with both hands to pull his dad close and hug him and pat him on the back as if to say "I've got this. It's all good. Don't worry about me."

During the final months of his life, thousands of people from around the world flocked to a Facebook Page called "Pray for Spencer," and witnessed miracles, experienced God's continual presence throughout the challenging journey, gained strength and compassion from the gracious example set by Spencer, came to a closer, more meaningful relationship with the Lord, drew strength from each other, learned to love more passionately, and discovered through Spencer's example how to care unconditionally.

Spencer Keene Bacus, aged 24, an SIUE junior in the department of Applied Communication Studies; Fine Arts Fellow, honor thespian, accomplished actor and performer, versatile musician - pianist, woodwinds, guitar, vocalist; weightlifting and fitness enthusiast, beard aficionado, and best friend to everyone he met peacefully passed away on April 24, 2018 in the arms of his parents Mark & Debbie while surrounded by his brother Oliver and sisters Jolie and Noël, as well as close family and loved ones after a long, inspirational journey of living with cancer. Because he is a statistical phenomenon, having lived so much longer than scientists' data suggests, he has donated his full brain and spinal column to the world's leading scholar in Nevus research with the hope that more can be learned about this rare disorder.

He is preceded in death by his grandparents, Keith & Rose Ellen Bacus, and is survived by his brother Oliver Bacus; his sisters Noël Schiber and Jolie Alois; his mom & dad, Debbie & Mark Bacus; his brothers-in-law David Schiber and John Alois; his nieces Marlo and Rachel Schiber and Tara Alois, his nephew Evan Alois, his Grandparents Don & Evelyn Bunt; his special cousin and best friend Robin Bacus, and many wonderful aunts, uncles, and cousins.

In lieu of flowers, Spencer would love it if you would consider the United Methodist Village in Godfrey or St. Paul United Methodist Church in Rosewood Heights as memorial options.

**SPENCER BACUS CONTINUES ON PAGE 9**

**SPENCER BACUS CONTINUES FROM PAGE 8**

I have been preaching a sermon series based upon the song, *I Can Only Imagine*. The Sunday after Spencer died, the sermon focused upon *going home to heaven*. I read this passage from Revelation 21: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and earth had disappeared, and the sea was gone.”<sup>2</sup> Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband.<sup>3</sup> I heard a loud voice from the throne say, “God lives with humans! God will make his home with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God.”<sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won’t be any more death. There won’t be any grief, crying, or pain, because the first things have disappeared.”<sup>5</sup> The one sitting on the throne said, “I am making everything new.” He said, “Write this: ‘These words are faithful and true.’”<sup>6</sup> He said to me, “It has happened! I am the A and the Z, the beginning and the end. I will give a drink from the fountain filled with the water of life to anyone who is thirsty. It won’t cost anything.”<sup>7</sup> Everyone who wins the victory will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my children. (God’s Word)

In part, I said this during the sermon: *If you want to go to heaven, we don’t have a secret ritual that you need to learn. We don’t have a special key that unlocks the heaven’s door. What we have is Jesus who shows us the way. We are saved by grace through our faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the gateway into Heaven.*

Let me assure you that there is no sin so great that God cannot forgive it. There is no hurt so deep that God cannot heal. There is no relationship so broken that God cannot restore it.

If we turn to God—our God is able. God is able to save me and you. He is able to change our lives. He is able to fit us for heaven to dwell with Him there.

Let me go a step farther and make this radical claim: **GOD INTENDS FOR EVERYONE TO BE IN HEAVEN.** In John 14, Jesus indicates there is plenty of room for all of us in His Father’s home. Jesus goes to prepare a place there for all of us. And, one day He will return to take us there. God will never light up a **No Vacancy** sign outside heaven’s gate.

*God’s intention isn’t to fill up hell with sinners. God’s intention is to fill up heaven with saints!*

Bart Millard, lead singer of MercyMe, grew up in a household with an abusive father. After running away from home and his father, Bart returns to find that God has changed his father into a loving Christian man. As Bart spends more and more time with his father, he sees that the change in Arthur is for real. By the time Arthur dies, their relationship is good. In the journal, Bart says that his father became the Christian man he aspire to be.

Arthur, the father, dies and on the way home from the cemetery, Bart’s grandmother says to him: *I can only imagine what Bub is seeing now.* Bart is so struck by that phrase that soon he is writing it again and again on the pages of his journal. Needing one last song to complete their album, Bart is inspired by that phrase and his faith to write these words:

**I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE WHEN I WALK BY YOUR SIDE.  
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT MY EYES WILL SEE WHEN YOUR FACE IS BEFORE ME.  
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE...I CAN ONLY IMAGINE.  
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHEN THAT DAY COMES WHEN I FIND MYSELF STANDING IN THE SON.  
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHEN ALL I WILL DO IS FOREVER, FOREVER WORSHIP YOU.  
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE...I CAN ONLY IMAGINE.  
SURROUNDED BY YOUR GLORY, WHAT WILL MY HEART FEEL?  
WILL I DANCE FOR YOU JESUS OR IN AWE OF YOU BE STILL?  
WILL I STAND IN YOUR PRESENCE OR TO MY KNEES FALL?  
WILL I SING HALLELUJAH, WILL I BE ABLE TO SPEAK AT ALL?  
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE...I CAN ONLY IMAGINE.**

This side of heaven we cannot know. We may only trust that heaven is greater and grander than we may imagine. We can only imagine....and know that heaven is greater than our imagining.

We do know this. This world is not our home. Heaven is our home. When we go to heaven, we are going home. Only in heaven will we find the justice that is often absent from this earth. Only in heaven will we find freedom from the trials and tribulations of this earth. Only in heaven will we find the peace that eludes us in this life.

We must always live with the consciousness that we are made for something greater than life upon this earth. We are the citizens of heaven. In Philippians 3, Paul says this: **WE’RE CITIZENS OF HIGH HEAVEN! WE’RE WAITING THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAVIOR, THE MASTER, JESUS CHRIST, WHO WILL TRANSFORM OUR EARTHY BODIES INTO GLORIOUS BODIES LIKE HIS OWN. HE’LL MAKE US BEAUTIFUL AND WHOLE**  
**SPENCER BACUS CONTINUES ON PAGE 10**

**SPENCER BACUS CONTINUES FROM PAGE 9**

**WITH THE SAME POWERFUL SKILL BY WHICH HE IS PUTTING EVERYTHING AS IT SHOULD BE, UNDER AND AROUND HIM.”**

*Here is what I believe with all my heart. You and I were created as **citizens of high heaven**. We are called to live each day as the sons and daughters of light; secure in the knowledge that **heaven is our home**.*

*We are called to live each day with the glory of heaven shining in our faces, with the love of heaven reflected in our actions and with the joy of heaven filling our hearts.*

Paul promises in I Thessalonians 5: **“GOD DIDN’T SET US UP FOR AN ANGRY REJECTION BUT FOR SALVATION BY OUR MASTER, JESUS CHRIST. HE DIED FOR US, A DEATH THAT TRIGGERED LIFE. WHETHER WE’RE AWAKE WITH THE LIVING OR ASLEEP WITH THE DEAD, WE’RE ALIVE WITH HIM! Listen. WHETHER WE’RE AWAKE WITH THE LIVING OR ASLEEP WITH THE DEAD, WE’RE ALIVE WITH JESUS!”**

On Tuesday, Spencer Bacus went home to Jesus. Yes, he had a home among us upon this earth. A good, loving home. We all prayed with every fiber of our being for Spencer to be healed because we wanted him here with us a little longer. We wanted more time, more experiences with him. But this was not to be.

I say that Spencer went home because he went to be with a long time friend, not a stranger. He went to be with the God who created him in all his uniqueness and splendor. And he went, not for a short visit, but for eternity.

Today, we can only imagine what Spencer sees! There is a lot about heaven we don’t know, but this we do know: *Heaven is heaven because Jesus is there. You don’t go to heaven to find Jesus. You go to Jesus to find heaven. We who follow Jesus have experienced a slice of heaven upon this earth.*

*The joy, the kindness, the love, the vibrancy that characterized Spencer’s life on this earth was a slice of heaven. Now Spencer knows even more of heaven. We may only imagine!*

Please keep Debbie & Mark, Oliver, Noël, Jolie, and Spencer’s whole network of family and friends in your prayers. Pastor Daryl

**EASTER FLOWERS 2018**

**LARRY & IOLA BALLARD** in honor of our Family

**LARRY & IOLA BALLARD** in memory of Ed Ballard, Harry Funk, and Del Weaver

**BETTY BURNS** in memory of Robert & Geneva Stein

**JIM & ANITA DAWSON** in honor of our Family

**DOT ELLIOTT & FAMILY** in memory of Keith Elliott

**DARYL, DEBRA, & MEG FANSLER** in honor of Marge & Wayne Detmers

**DARYL, DEBRA, & MEG FANSLER** in memory of Fred & Pauline Fansler

**DARYL, DEBRA, & MEG FANSLER** in memory of Roy & Zelma Detmers

**JOAN FORD** in memory of her husband, Phill

**TRACY FRANKS** in memory of her Parents, Lute & Doloros Taulbee

**JIM & MAGGIE FUNKE** in memory of her Father, Bill Shoppell

**JIM & MAGGIE FUNKE** in honor of her Mother, Sally Lay

**VICKI GRAHAM** in memory of Pamela Sutterfield

**MARJORIE HALL** in memory of her Son, Dennis Hall

**JIM & JANE HERNDON** in memory of all our deceased loved ones

**JIM & JANE HERNDON** in honor of our Children & Grandchildren

**LEE JOHNSON** in memory of my Father, Frank Noble Rustin

**STEVE, JEAN, & STEPH KAINZ** in memory of Bill & Janet Pullen

**STEVE, JEAN, & STEPH KAINZ** in memory of Bob Kainz

**DOROTHY KASINGER** in memory of my Parents, Beulah & Victor Strohbeck

**DOROTHY KASINGER** in honor of my Children & Grandchildren

**JAMIE KEITH** in memory of my Daughter, Jacqueline R. Keith

**JAMIE KEITH** in memory of my Friend, Wende Winchester

**RANDY & MINDY McLAIN** in memory of our Parents, Bob & Annabelle McLain and Merle & Norma Davis

**RANDY & MINDY McLAIN** in honor of our Grandkids: McLain, Anna, Logan, Grace, Will, Liam, Kate, and Tori

**MIKE & LORI TAPPY** in honor of our Grandson, Jaxson Michael McBride

**JILL TAYLOR-SULLIVAN** in memory of her Dad, Dr. Norman Taylor

**JILL TAYLOR-SULLIVAN** in memory of her Mom, Carole Taylor

**BOB, BEV, & JOE AND FAMILIES** in memory of Helen Tschannen

**BOB, BEV, & JOE AND FAMILIES** in memory of Morris Tschannen

**CAROL WARNER** in memory of Husband, Dean and Daughter, Terri





## We Say Goodbye To Our Friend...



**Eric William Wood**, 33, passed away on Sunday, April 1, 2018, in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Eric was born in Alton, on June 2, 1984, the son of Joan L. (Pullen) Roberts & Curtis Roberts and the late Kelly R. Wood.

Eric was a very gifted young man. He was very talented in many aspects of his life and loved to live life to the fullest. Eric was always a people person and he never met a person that didn't eventually become his friend.

Eric was raised by many who loved him – Grandma & Grandpa Pullen, Aunt Jean & Uncle Steve Kainz – he was never alone growing up due to his being sick as a child, but that never stopped Eric; he always bounced back and overcame all obstacles to succeed in whatever he did.

Eric attended Lewis & Clark Elementary School where he graduated from the 8th grade as a Silver Medallion honoree. Eric went on to attend East Alton-Wood River High where he graduated with honors in 2003. He then went on to attend Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois and SIU-E.

Eric is survived by his Parents, Aunts and Uncles Jean & Steve Kainz, John & Patty Pullen, Cousins Stephanie Kainz, who was the sister he never had, Nicole and Natalie Pullen, Christopher, Melissa, Kaiden and Conner Pullen. Grandma Joyce & Grandpa Larry Nesler, Aunts and Uncles Ginny & Frank Gifford, Leann & Kelly Walsh, Cousins, Tyler and Bryant Walsh and Aunts and Uncles Ken & Donna Wood, Marsha & Max Goessman, as well as many other cousins and friends who loved him.

Eric was preceded in death by his biological father, Kelly R. Wood, Grandparents Janet & William Pullen, Dorothy Wood, Marshall & Scottie Wood.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to Isaac's Ray of Hope at Cardinal Glennon Hospital, 23817 Hollow Ave, Jerseyville, IL 62052, or Amare, 131 East Ferguson, Wood River, IL 62095.

<sup>3-6</sup> **How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.**

<sup>7-10</sup> **Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly* free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.**

<sup>11-12</sup> **It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.**

<sup>13-14</sup> **It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. This signet from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life. Ephesians 1 (God's Word)**

God isn't angry with Eric. God doesn't hate Eric. Eric's death isn't a punishment from God or decreed by God. No, God is as heartbroken as all of us gathered here this morning. God desired the best for Eric as He does for all his beloved children. Sometimes in this world, bad things happen to good people.

God is the author of all good things in our life. God is a blessing to us. Now, I know that we don't feel blessed this morning. We feel cheated. Death the destroyer has robbed us of this precious relationship we shared with Eric...whether we were family, friends, or fellow Christians. More than anything, we want more time with Eric; another chance to tell him how much we loved him and cherished his presence in our lives.

I know the one thing we all agree is that Eric was a blessing to all of us. Each of us here has been beneficiaries of his big heart, his generosity, his caring, and his compassion. Yes, we are a little bit angry that he could not kick his addiction and stay healthy...because we wanted this for Eric. Eric deserved the chance to live his life free from his demons. But most of all, we wanted this for ourselves...because we loved Eric and we wanted him in our lives for a long, long time.

**ERIC WOOD CONTINUED ON PAGE 16**



## We Say Goodbye To Our Friend...



**Verda Blanche MacDonald**, longtime resident of Rosewood Heights, passed away on April 27, 2018 at the age of 93.

She was preceded in death by Raymond, her beloved husband of more than fifty years, and by her sister Marie Bartels, and brothers Earl, Ralph, and Lloyd Whitworth. Verda is survived by her sons James (late Victoria) and John (Jan), four grandsons, Matthew (Alissa), Marcus (Alisson), David, and Kevin (Ashley), and by eight great-grandchildren.

Verda & Raymond were long time active members of St. Paul United Methodist Church in East Alton. They were summer residents of Hayward, WI for many years and, throughout their lives together, Verda & Raymond enjoyed pinochle, dancing, and the outdoors.

Verda showed up every Sunday at St. Paul. She showed up every Sunday that I preached at United Methodist Village. A long time member of St. Paul, Verda made it clear by her presence in worship that she was on the Lord's side.

These past few years have been filled with pain and suffering for Verda. Now Verda is free of all of this. She has claimed the crown of righteousness that awaits us all at the end of our race of faith upon this earth. Paul says in 2 Timothy 4: <sup>6</sup> *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.* <sup>7</sup> *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* <sup>8</sup> *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.* Verda shares in the victory of Christ over sin and death. Verda lives the eternal life offered to all in Jesus' name.

Please pray for Verda's sons, Jim and John, and for all her family. We all will miss her. Pastor Daryl

## We Say Goodbye To Our Friend...



**Stephen Drew Dunnagan**, 70, died at 4:45 p.m. on Sunday, April 1, 2018 at his residence. He was born November 22, 1947 in Alton the son of the late Drew W. & Margaret L. (Horstman) Dunnagan. He received degrees from Alton High School and UCLA, and was a self-employed insurance salesman for many years.

Surviving are one son Derek (Sarah) Dunnagan of Ankeny, IA and one daughter, Darci Dunnagan of Chicago, IL. He was preceded in death by his former wife, Mary (Maguire) Dunnagan. Memorials may be made to St. Paul United Methodist Church or Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> *I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.* <sup>4</sup> *He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.* <sup>5</sup> *He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve.* <sup>6</sup> *After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers<sup>[d]</sup> at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.* <sup>7</sup> *Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.* <sup>8</sup> *Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.* <sup>9</sup> *For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church.* <sup>10</sup> *But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace.* <sup>11</sup> *So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all preach the same message you have already believed. I Corinthians 15 (God's Word)*

Like the father in Fiddler on the Roof, Steve Dunnagan loved tradition. He loved the beauty of a traditional Methodist worship service. He loved classical music. He loved Christmas cantatas. He loved attending Christmas Eve worship services with his family. I know he would want me to repeat the traditional beliefs that form the bedrock of faith: Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day. When you read the accounts of Paul or Peter's preaching in the New Testament, these truths form the essence of their message. It is these truths the crowds find so persuasive that they turn from their pagan religions, are baptized and join the church. It is these truths that offer comfort and hope to us today.

Dr. Billy Graham once told Time magazine, **"If I were an enemy of Christianity, I would aim right at the Resurrection, because that is the heart of Christianity."** The Resurrection is the linchpin of our faith. Paul recognizes this because he states

**STEVE DUNNAGAN CONTINUES ON PAGE 17**



# Thank You!

**THANK YOU!** The Women of Worship would like to thank everyone who helped to make this year's Rummage Sale such a success. A **BIG THANK YOU** to the Scouts Venture Crew for the set-up, the generous donors, faithful daily workers, men who helped with carry outs, and men who supplied trucks and manpower to dispose of the extras. All of these volunteers made our Annual Rummage Sale another huge success. St. Paul people surely must have the cleanest closets, basements, and garages and the fastest and most efficient sorters in the area. Any worker needing a job reference may ask the Women of Worship – we will be glad to supply one. The leftover items were donated to Operation Blessing, Goodwill, and Oasis Crisis Center and unusable bedding was given to Rosewood Pet Hospital. A profit of approximately \$2,600 was made which will be used for our Charity/ Mission gifts at the end of the year. **THANK YOU** and God Bless **EVERYONE** who helped in any way with this annual project.

*-Women of Worship-*



Pastor Daryl will be on vacation May 17-31.

If you need pastoral assistance during this time, please call the Church Office (259-5210) or Dave Schiber (258-0831).

**The Back Pew – Jeff Larson**

## MOMMY, MOMMY WAKE UP!



**BREAKFAST IN BED FOR MOM..** Nothing says 'Happy Mothers Day' better than Cold Cereal and Hot Coffee served with love.

## NURSERY UPDATE 2018

It's that time again! It's time to update St. Paul's Nursery! Our new update will consist of finishing the flower mural that was started a few years ago, updating some of the existing hardware and toys, and adding a few new items that will accommodate children and babies of various ages. **Our nursery has a registry at Target if you would like to help!**

### Volunteers Needed:

**May 6th-** Come help @ 4 p.m. We will be sanding tiny wooden chairs so that they will be ready for a new fresh coat of paint.

**May 13th-** Come help @ 4 p.m. as we give everything in the nursery a wipe down/ bath.

**May 20th-** Nursery Open house after second service!

**Target Registry:** Just search for Joy Miller. You will see a registry for St. Paul's nursery.

<https://www.target.com/gift-registry/registry/3e27f28f04fb4c8faa3086238917b6f5>



**"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."**

**Romans 15:13**

St. Paul, we have much to be grateful for within the walls of our church, and outside in our community. This congregation has lovingly collected items throughout the year that give hope to others. Whether it was caps and mittens, or Easter baskets for children who would otherwise go without, we are a people who believe in a God that gives us hope. We prayed fervently for our friend, Spencer, filled with peace as we trust in God's greater plan. Time and time again, God has shown us how powerful our hope can be.

We are, once again, in a season of new hope. Pastor Daryl and Deb are moving on from their ministry at St. Paul with hopes to fulfill God's next big plan. We are so grateful for the guidance and wisdom Pastor Daryl has given us throughout his time here at St. Paul. We are beyond thankful for the children's ministry that Miss Deb has provided to the children of St. Paul throughout the years. It is our hope and prayer that they will transition easily into Pastor Daryl's retirement. We extend our deepest love and well wishes in their new journey.

With Pastor Daryl's retirement, we need to be in prayer that God fills our hearts with joy and peace as we welcome someone new to the pulpit. St. Paul has transformed over the last year, with each service falling into their own place and thriving in their own ways. We, as a church, have connected the generations, started new ministries, and continue to look for new ways to reach beyond our church. We are filled with hope, a hope that we can continue to spread the words of Christ to the people who are hurting and broken.

**Blessings of hope and peace, Lauren Cranmer - Awakening Worship Coordinator**



ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CAPITAL CAMPAIGN  
PRESERVING THE PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OF ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
AS A FOUNDATION OF FAITH AND MISSIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY

# **Mission Possible**

"THROUGH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE" MATTHEW 19:26

## **UNDERSTANDING & GIVING TO MISSION POSSIBLE**

**Mission Possible** is a campaign to provide funding above and beyond our normal operational costs to address much needed maintenance and renovation work at St. Paul. The **October 2015 Mission Possible Commitment Weekend** was the kickoff to our fund raising campaign. One can still participate. This is how to give your gift(s):

- If you are interested in a one-time gift, send the donation to the church or place it in the Sunday offering, **but please be sure to note Mission Possible (or CFC for Capital Fund Campaign) on your check memo line and offering envelope.**
- You can also give online through our website.
- You can give using your credit card when you provide that information to the church office..
- You can give by cash or check.
- You can also provide financial contributions via securities, real estate, personal properties, or an estate gift by contacting the church office or Jim Herndon.

Beginning **January 2016**, you were able to place the designated amount for "Mission Possible" gifts on the **Capital Campaign** line on your offering envelopes. Donations toward the expenses of our Church Operations (i.e. the General Budget) would go on the **Undesignated** line as always. What was Capital Improvements, funds meant for unexpected major expenses, is now labeled **Building & Grounds Improvements** on the 2016 -2018 envelopes. **If you have any questions, please call the Church Office.**



**CAMPING** Pick up *Unplug & Reconnect*—a publication offering a complete listing of our church camps. It is available on the table in the church entryway.



Camps for all ages are available at Little Grassy near Carbondale, East Bay near Bloomington, Beulah in Eldorado, and Epworth near Greenville. College students and adults might consider serving as counselors in our camps. Everything you need to know about being a camper or counselor is found in *Unplug & Reconnect*.



to help set up for the summer outdoor worship service! If you can help, please call Randy McLain at 580-5522 ASAP! Thank you!

### ERIC WOOD CONTINUES FROM PAGE 11

Reflect upon this truth for a moment: the gut wrenching pain we feel today is there because Eric was a great blessing to us. Whether we were family, coworkers, friends or church family, we loved Eric. Eric's life became intertwined with ours and we are better off for having known him. For having Eric being a part of our lives. Let us give thanks for this!

In his baptism, Jesus marked Eric as his own sweet child. Eric belonged to Jesus and nothing that Eric did erased or nullified that mark. Notice this passage: *Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.*

Scripture is clear that our relationship with God is not dependent upon our good behavior. If it were, then none of us would have a relationship with God. All of us have made terrible mistakes and been disobedient to God. This includes not only Eric but all of us.

Our relationship with God is grounded in the grace that flows from the cross. It depends not upon our actions but God's. Through Jesus' death upon the cross, we share in Jesus' abundant life upon this earth and receive eternal life in His kingdom. God has thought of everything, provided everything, secured everything we needed to have a relationship with Him. Like Eric all of us are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today our heart is breaking, but so is God's heart. God hears our cries, sees our tears and reaches out to comfort us. When we are so grief stricken so that all that comes out are groans, Paul says that God's Spirit comes along side our spirit to pray for us in our time of need. Trust that God will be there in these difficult days to give voice to your prayers. God will be your faithful companion and friend. God is a refuge in your time to trouble.

*How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ.*

We have reached the place where we may no longer care for Eric. We aren't abandoning him because we give him to God. God who takes his broken life and makes it whole. God who takes his struggles and gives him peace. God who takes his short life on this earth and gives him eternal life. God who is a blessing to Eric and all of us.

I end with this story:

Two strangers, a small boy and an older man, were fishing on the banks of the Mississippi. Since the fishing was poor, they started talking at first about fishing and then about a wide variety of topics. And by the time the sun began to sink in the west they had talked of many things.

At dusk, they spied a large river boat moving in the distance. When the boy saw the boat, he began to shout and to wave his arms that he might attract the attention of those on board. The older man watched the boy's efforts and said: "Son, you're foolish if you think that boat is going to stop for you. It's on its way to some unknown place and it surely won't stop for a small boy."

But suddenly the boat began to slow down and then it moved toward the river bank. To the man's amazement, the boat came close to the shore so that a gang plank could be lowered. The boy walked up the plank into the boat, pausing to say to the man; "I'm not foolish, mister. You see, my father is captain of this boat and we're going to a new home up the river."

Sometimes life is like that. There are times when the ship of death makes an unexpected stop along the river of life and to our surprise picks up a passenger. But I am confident of one thing: "My Father is captain of that boat and it is headed for a new home. Death is not the end of life; it is the beginning of a new adventure upon the river of life. The boat pushes upstream towards our Father's home."

We weren't ready for the ship of death to stop for Eric, but it did. May we be comforted by the knowledge that this ship's final destination is our Father's home. When Eric arrived at the dock, he was welcomed by family and friends who had died in the Lord. And, God was there to wrap his arms around him, saying: "Welcome home, son."

Eric's struggles upon this earth are over and he is at peace. Please keep Eric's family in your prayers. Pastor Daryl



**Youth Sunday and Red Nose Day** is the first Sunday, **May 6** with a hotdog/chip lunch in the park for the youth to follow. 6th-12th graders are invited to bring a T-shirt (or anything they can get messy) for a paintball party afterwards.

Lauren will be taking a few of the youth to **AIR camp at Little Grassy**. The dates run from **June 17-22**. Lauren will be a counselor that week and would like to invite all youth to check it out. Fundraising for camp will begin

during May. Please invite a youth to enjoy this time with us! (Grades 4th-12th)

**In Christ's Love and Kindness, Lauren Cranmer - Youth Leader**

**STEVE DUNNAGAN CONTINUES FROM PAGE 12**

that if the Resurrection is not true, then we are wasting our time here today: me preaching and you listening. Indeed, we are to be pitied for staking our life upon such a fairy tale. Paul has compiled a list of Resurrection appearances of Jesus, concluding with Jesus' appearance to him on the road to Damascus. This list may be Paul's way of saying: *"The Resurrection is for real because all these groups can testify that Jesus appeared to them."*

But I believe Paul is making a grander point. It is this: **Easter isn't a one-time event. Easter happens wherever the Risen Lord appears giving new life to His followers.** Look at this statement: <sup>10</sup> **But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace.** In other words, only the Risen Christ and His amazing grace could have changed me. Yes, I preach the Resurrection but, more importantly, I am a living embodiment of the Resurrection. How do you explain the transformation of Saul into Paul without the presence and the power of the Resurrection? You don't! You don't!

There is an Easter song with the title, *Every morning is Easter morning From Now On*. Martin Luther believed that every day as Christians we have the opportunity to make a fresh start in our relationship with God. We may have failed Jesus yesterday, but that is in the past. The Risen Lord comes to us in the morning and offers us the opportunity to be faithful to Him today. With Jesus' help we may succeed in being obedient today. We know the Resurrection is real because we see signs of it at work in our lives and the lives of others who profess to be Christians.

Paul says bluntly in verse 17-18: *"And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who died believing in Christ are lost!"* In a market in the Middle East, oftentimes you will see people walk up to a counter; they'll see some merchandise they like and they will put down on the table what they feel the merchandise is worth. If the price is acceptable to the seller, the seller will raise his hand. When God raised Jesus from the dead He was raising His hand saying to a lost world, "I accept the price that my Son, Jesus Christ, paid on the cross for your sins."

The empty tomb is God's receipt that Jesus has paid for our sins. Without it our faith is irrelevant and forgiveness is impossible. In other words, if Jesus is still physically dead, then we are still spiritually dead. Sin is still a chain that binds us. Sin is still a load that burdens us. Sin is still a hammer that breaks us. If we are still in our sins, then we are still separated from God. We have no hope of Resurrection in this life and in the coming kingdom.

We proclaim with Paul this good news: *Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.* The Resurrection is not unique to Jesus. Jesus is the first in a long line whom God will raise from the dead. One of the great pieces of classical music is the "Unfinished Symphony" by Franz Schubert, who died when he was 31 years old. That is a great illustration of human life and achievement. For no matter what our age is when we die, we all leave unfinished business behind. I imagine that Derek and Darci wish they had one more conversation with their dad, one more opportunity to express their love for each other.

I believe that God takes the incompleteness of our lives lived upon this earth and makes them whole in heaven. The Resurrection brings healing and enables us to fulfill our purpose as human beings. A purpose expressed in this hymn of Isaac Watts:

**I'LL PRAISE MY MAKER WHILE I'VE BREATH; AND WHEN MY VOICE IS LOST IN DEATH,  
PRAISE SHALL EMPLOY MY NOBLER POWERS.  
MY DAYS OF PRAISE SHALL NE'ER BE PAST, WHILE LIFE, AND THOUGHT,  
AND BEING LAST, OR IMMORTALITY ENDURES.**

I take comfort in knowing that while we may no longer hear Steve Dunnagan singing here on earth, his voice is not silenced by death. No, his voice has joined the multitude singing God's praises in heaven. His singing is witness to the presence and power of the Resurrection.

Please keep Steve's family in your prayers. Pastor Daryl