

Ripples

Stillwater Free Lutheran Church

“Sharing Jesus Christ with Our Neighbors”

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JANUARY
2024

From the Pastor's Desk

New Year, Fresh Start!

January is here. Time for New Year's resolutions, right?

Time for people to plan to start eating healthier, and pledging to work out more, and be less of a couch potato.

A time to make lifestyle changes, as well as spiritual changes – right?

This all seems like a grand idea, doesn't it? This is the perfect time – the start of a New Year, so only seems fitting to have the start of a new you – right?

The prophet Isaiah wrote (43:18-19): Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

I see four things in this text that God is saying to us:

First - Do not dwell in the past! Or Stop Looking Behind (v.18)

a) Don't expect past victories to sustain you (v.18a)

b) Don't allow past failures to paralyze you (v.18b)

Too often we focus on our rear-view mirror. Although there is a time and place to recollect past events to glean its wisdom, we don't stay there. Don't expect past victories to sustain us. (See Judges 6:13).

The past is a great place to learn from but it's a terrible place to live in. Some of us hang on to our baggage (unresolved issues, failures, and negativity) for too long. Learn from them and let them go! (See Psalm 32:5) If we live in the past, we will never embrace the future God has in store for us.

The question we must ask ourselves then is, "What is God saying to us today?" In 2 Corinthians 5:17, He gives us the answer, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." This is the heart of the

Gospel! Our past failures, brokenness and pain no longer define us, condemn us or rule over us. We are a completely new creation, and we have a new Spirit living in us!

Next, Isaiah tells us to Start Looking Ahead (v.19)

a) See God bring newness (v.19a)

b) Anticipate God do something great (v.19b)

As we look forward to the new things of God, we are told where we are to keep our focus: Paul tells us - *fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18*

And - 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. Romans 12:1-2

Look ahead this year by building on your Spiritual Disciplines: Sabbath, Prayer, Studying God's word, Fasting. This is how we grow closer to God.

And look ahead by using time in Prayer. How many times have you felt helpless, down and overwhelmed this past year? At times like this prayer is vital and when we don't know what to do, fix our eyes on God, because Jesus is the only answer.

People are tired and fed up and there are so many things that are wrong in the world, but Jesus is the hope of the world. Like in the parable, so many people built their house on the sand and it's now flat, but those who built their house on the rock still stand firm. Jesus sets us free of our past, gives us purpose in our present and a future hope of eternity.

Next, Isaiah asks - Do you not perceive it?

Isaiah is making sure the Israelites didn't miss what God was doing and sometimes, we're in danger of missing what God is doing too!

Sometimes we just wish things will go back to how they were. And that time is gone, but, Jesus is at work and we're not to miss what he's doing.

And finally, notice in v19 God doesn't say he'll take you out of the desert, he says he'll take you through it. God will make a way for you, his church and for his kingdom to come.

God is with you and will make a way through this time, but He also says He'll make 'streams in the wasteland' (v19), he will bring miracles.

God has a fresh start for us in 2024. Let's anticipate Him doing something great. When we do, He promises to remove all obstacles of coming to Him. (See Romans 8:31-39, a counterpart of Isaiah 43:18-19)

Whatever may be holding us back – wrong thinking, past mistakes, failed relationships – Jesus Christ has already died for them!

We are no longer under their control. Jesus is our way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. He will transform our desert into fields of blessings and our wasteland into gardens of abundance!

Let us therefore join God's great and new things in 2024 while we put Christ first in our *time*, our *finances*, and our *relationships*. Our primary resolution this year is to believe God for something new!

Happy New Year & God Bless!

Pastor Craig

Annual Meeting
January 21, 2024

- Review happenings in the church from 2023
- Proposed 2024 Budget

Pastor's Wives

One of the greatest blessings of being WMF president was rubbing shoulders with so many pastor's wives. They certainly come in all shapes and sizes. They have a unique calling. And I would be amiss to give my two cents as I have never walked in their shoes.

I would like to remind our readers of the treasure we have at Stillwater. I popped into the Scavo's the other day and just had to smile from ear to ear. There were Charlotte and Sumara on the couch with a pile of books enjoying some "girl time." And my pastor's wives were having a play date.

Genesis 2 gives the theoretical background – "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper for him."

We at Stillwater can relate to the practical here. Pastor Craig and Bryce have wonderful helpers. They love their spouses. They love their children. They love us, too – their church families. I am very grateful for God allowing us to have these precious women serve alongside their husbands for a number of years here. We need to keep them in our prayers. God is relational and Satan is a relationship destroyer.

Thank you, Sherri and Rachel. May God bless you both. Thank you for serving our Savior!

We appreciate your sacrifice.

Lavonne West

Stillwater Youth Groupies

The Youth are committed to serve the community through our strength in Jesus Christ.

Hello everyone and let me be the first youth pastor named Bryce Timmerman to welcome you to 2024. If you know another Bryce Timmerman, first of all I'm sorry, second of all ignore what I just said if he already wished you a happy new year. I suppose what this really means for some people is that it's resolution time and mine this year is to start remembering things more. I'm not talking simple stuff like my kid's names, Carly and Lacey is easy to remember, but on a deeper level, such as dates and times, or maybe getting my newsletter done on time (Karen Van Scoten is a saint). Though the end of that last sentiment was a bit exaggerated and was more of the joking matter, I really would like to achieve much better timeliness. What is the point of doing these resolutions, why do they always come up at the first of the year? I think the obvious answer is that it's a new year so it's time for a fresh start, we're magically a "new person" once the calendar starts over, but wouldn't it be helpful if we could be a new person more than once a year. When we write it on paper, it's kind of an "oh duh" moment that we are covered by the blood of Jesus and are redeemed constantly if we ask for it and live by His commands. However, when we ask for forgiveness and to be made new again by our Savior, what steps are we taking afterwards to improve upon that relationship? When the new year comes, we always ask, "How are we going to become a better person", but have you asked yourself recently, "How am I going to become a better Christian?" I like to think of the old Sunday School song, "read your Bible, pray everyday and you grow, grow, grow." The next part of that song is also just as important, "don't read your Bible, forget to pray, and you shrink, shrink, shrink." Though this song is not a direct Bible verse, think about your spiritual life, if you are not in the Word or finding ways to improve your walk, do you feel yourself shrinking? James 4 warns us about the dangers of fading away from the Lord and becoming friends with the world. James tells us that apart from God our joy will turn to gloom and our laughter to weeping, but gives us the recipe for hope in verse 8. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." As the chapter continues, he also reminds us about our time on this earth. In verses 14 and 15 he writes, "yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that'." As we come into this new year, remember that no matter how we do it, whether it be more devotions or a deeper prayer life or surrounding ourselves with accountability partners, if we draw closer to God, He will draw closer to us. We do not know if we have a tomorrow, we cannot control that, but we can control how we live our life while we're on this temporary earth, so lets change spiritually, because we can always grow, grow, grow.

Our youth group has been grow, grow, growing as of late also, hallelujah. A little bit horizontally from all the candy and parties we've had as of late, but also more new faces! In the month of December we only met twice due to school winter break which we also followed, but it sure was a fun two weeks! Seventeen youth were at each gathering with the 13th being our annual Christmas party, which could be a whole newsletter itself. The evening included students getting wrapped up like presents, and then getting dodgeballs thrown at them, it was really a sight to see. The youth also did a secret Santa and a white elephant gift exchange, and they really did a great job sharing presents with one another from treats and homemade gifts in the secret Santa exchange to poison ivy cream and creepy dolls in the white elephant exchange, all the essentials! This last month also included selling Christmas cookies and our Christmas program! This year, all the money raised for our Christmas cookie fundraiser was sent to our dear friend and brother in Christ, Matteo Brester, who is currently attending Teen Challenge of the Ozarks in Springfield, MO. Through the three weeks we did it, the 3rd-17th, we raised the most we ever have since I've been here doing this at nearly a thousand dollars, thank you Jesus and all those who donated and supported! The Christmas program was also a huge success, thank you to Ashley Dieterich for directing, and all those who helped her, it really was a fun, Christ-glorifying program. There was five youth who participated and they nailed it, hopefully come Oscar season when they're nominated, they're still able to come to youth group. Now that we are entering the new year, we also have the "activities gauntlet" that I think ages me five years every year, but at least it means I'm finally growing up! We will go back to youth group January 3rd, and then have our night ski in January, Valentine's dinner fundraiser in February, and our lock-in in March! Praise God for the ability to do all of this, both physically and financially (from the amazing support of our congregation). Confirmation will also kick back into gear in January after a little bit of time off for our Christmas program and Christmas and New Years. We still have four students doing a great job and learning lots hopefully!

This has always been the section where I ask for personal prayer and I could still definitely use some! I have been praying for continued strength and patience with an ever-increasing busy schedule, and also for Rachel and the girls as well as they are such an incredible support system! Please also let us know how we can pray for you, as we love this congregation so much and care about all of you! Praying we all grow closer to God in this new year and that we continue to share Jesus Christ with our neighbors!

God Bless,

Bryce Timmerman



Our Ladies/WMF Christmas party was a fun-filled evening. As usual, the food was a variety of deliciousness!

From there, each person had to name a Christmas song & the next person a song not already named & so on. Early on someone asked if there were going to be enough songs to go around the room. Yes—numerous times in fact! We named popular songs & hymns, as well as seldom or in some cases never heard before. One such song was Rachel's Christmas Sweater...she even sang the first line for us...Christmas sweater, red & green...." Alexis said there is a song called the Christmas sweater but isn't what she sang! Most will never look that one up! You've heard that one, right? Hmmm...Some people will do anything to win a prize! Since the game, many of us are hearing & thinking of oodles of songs that went unnamed.

We all enjoyed a few stories of Christmas memories, including shopping at the beloved B&B store in Kalispell. Our gift exchange started out very politely, but quickly morphed into a game of friendly stealing. We concluded by revealing our secret prayer sisters & presenting them with a Christmas gift to open. As usual, there were some big surprises, resulting in lots of laughs.

Thank you, Suzanne, for hosting another annual party.

Sincerely, Gayle Lantto, WMF Secretary



Ladies Potluck, Gift Exchange, and Secret Prayer Sister Reveal!



Brasswerks Ensemble Concert in the Activity Center



By most accounts, the Christmas concert on December 20 by the Brasswerks Ensemble was a tremendous success. It was the first such event held in our new activity center and was attended by 59 people, several from outside the congregation. A few people said we need to put this on the calendar and make it an annual event.



After-School Program

We had a wonderfully fun Christmas party for the kiddos who attended the last day before break which included Decorate the Christmas Tree, Fastest to pick up Snow, Candy Cane relays and of course a “snowball” fight (afterwards we played the fun game of Pick Up 400 Cotton balls!!). It was capped off with goodie bags provided by the church!!



As we come off Christmas and New Year break, we will continue our study on the armor of God! This month we will tackle Ephesians 6:13. Verse 12 was a bit tough for the kiddos. One of my little guys said, “It’s like Star Wars and the evil forces”!! I look forward to verse 13 where we are finally ready to start putting on the armor of God!!

As in past months I humbly ask you to continue to pray the word of God is planted and will grow in little hearts and also to please continue to cover us all in prayer for good health!!!

God’s Blessings ~ Ashley

Blessings ~ Ashley

Join Us for Our Midweek Programs

Wednesday evening, we offer a midweek program for ages Kinder - 105!

- 5:30p - 5:55p Dinner is served
- 6p - 7p* Kids Club!
 - K - 2nd grader will meet with Miss Mary
 - 3rd - 5th graders will meet with Miss Lenka
- 6p - 7:30p Adult Bible Study
- 6p - 7:30p Youth Group

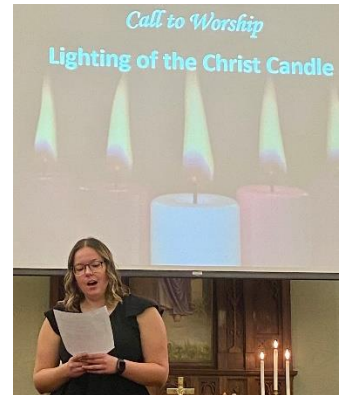
We were blessed in December



Caroling



Advent Candle Lighting



Worship

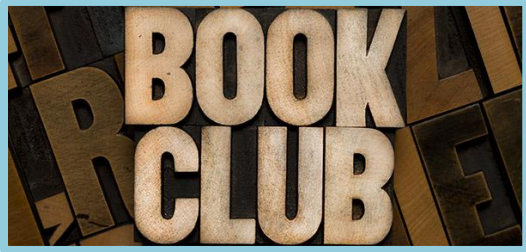


Children's Christmas Program



Stillwater Book Club

Our next book discussion on Jan. 5, at 10:30 a.m. will be “Down From the Mountain” by Courtney Allen. It’s a story “of a struggling Appalachian family working and living in a hand-to-mouth existence on hard and unforgiving land. This story is an intriguing journey of love and struggle



between the will to move their lives onward and the desire to become a family once again.” (Amazon overview)
It should make for an interesting discussion. Please join us!

I have extra copies of the schedule of books for the rest of the year if you would like a hard copy.

The schedule of books for the rest of the year is as follows:

Feb. 2	One More River to Cross by Jane Kirkpatrick
Mar. 1	The Heart’s Choice bk.1 of Chronicles of Kalispell , by Tracie Peterson
Apr. 5	The Prayer Box by Lisa Wingate
May 3	Leota’s Garden by Francine Rivers
June 7	I’ll Push You by Patrick Gray and Justin Skeesuck
July 12	Corelli’s Mandollin by Louis De Bernieres
Aug. 2	Nothing to Lose by J.A. Jance
Sept. 6	The Sound of Light by Sarah Sundin
Oct. 4	American Massacre by Sally Denton
Nov. 1	The Winter Garden by Kristin Hannah
Dec. 6	Radar Girls by Sara Ackerman

Happy reading, and God’s Blessings,
Meri Putzler

Stillwater Library News

God is so awesome! He continues to build our church library every month for us to read and grow in his word. Last month books were donated by Darryl and Rose Askvig, and will be out soon for your perusal on the nonfiction shelves just to the left of the doorway and on the shelves to the left of the desk. Thank you SO much for sharing these books with us! Happy reading!

Cries from the Cross by Erwin W. Lutzer The author “challenges each one of us to embrace the cross not just as our means of salvation, but as a way of living.” This book “is written with the conviction that the better we grasp what the cross meant to Christ, the better we will understand what the cross should mean to us.” (E.W. Lutzer)

Growing Up God’s Way by John A. Stormer “A guide for getting children ready for school and life from birth on.” (John A. Stormer)

Nelson’s Quick Reference Bible Concordance “A biblical concordance is an alphabetical index of the words found in one or more versions of the Bible.” It is based on the NKJ version, but is useful when the reader is comparing two or more versions (KJV, ASV, or RSV) “Accompanying each word are the most important Scripture references where it is found.” (Ronald Youngblood)

Shadow of the Almighty, by Elisabeth Elliot The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot as noted in diaries, letters, and notes he made during his faithful life. The words in the first epistle of John, “embody the radical of Jim Elliot’s life. Obedience leads to knowledge. Obedience is the expression of love to God. Obedience means that we live in God.” (Elisabeth Elliot)

The Holiness of God by R.C. Sproul “The Holiness of God is a look at the meaning of holiness and why people are both fascinated and terrified by a holy God. It is a profound, moving investigation of the character of God.. ..that defines all we are and do as Christians...It affects every aspect of our lives—economics, politics, athletics, romance,—everything with which we are involved.” (RC Sproul)

The Rescue by Dave Anderson Tells about the daring rescue of seven missionaries against impossible odds. (Dave Anderson)

Dressed to Kill by Rick Renner A Biblical Approach to Spiritual Warfare and Armor

The Jesus I Never Knew by Philip Yancey “Yancey offers a new and different perspective on the life of Christ and his work—his teaching, his miracles, his death and resurrection—and ultimately, who he was and why he came.

Six Hours One Friday by Max Lucado “If God did commandeer his own crucifixion, then those six hours are packed with triumph. For it was in those six hours that God gave us three anchor points sturdy enough to withstand any hurricane life may send us”....Again Lucado gives us an understanding of life’s tough issues, purpose, forgiveness, and rest. (Max Lucado)

Anxious for Nothing, by Max Lucado How to find calm in a chaotic world? “Max points us to the One who is stronger than our circumstances, bigger than our problems, and able to give us peace each day. (Dave Stone)

Happy, Happy, Happy by Phil Robertson with Mark Schlabach What matters to Phil Robertson? Faith, Family, and Ducks! This tells the story of Phil’s life and his faith. (Phil Robertson)

unPHILtered, The Way I See It by Phil Robertson with Mark Schlabach Here Phil gives you his outright opinions from faith to politics and social media. (Phil)

SI-COLOGY 101 by Si Robertson with Mark Schlabach A natural-born storyteller, Si says 95% of my stories are true. It’s up to you to decide.

*****We also have a variety of Bibles on the shelves, FREE to you for the *****taking. Come, take a look, and see what might fit your needs. Or do you *****know of someone who needs a Bible? The Bibles will be placed on the desk *****for you to choose from. Please help us find a home for them.

God’s Blessings!

Susan Shea and Meri Putzler

Tinctures Making Class Coming in January

Do you know what a tincture is?

- A tincture is a concentrated herbal extract made by macerating herbs in alcohol and water, but alternatively in glycerin or vinegar.

Are you interested in learning how to make your own?

- It is easy to do at home yourself!

Why use tinctures?

- Tinctures have been used for centuries as a method to preserve and administer the beneficial properties of various herbs and botanicals. This type of herbal preparation has a longer shelf life compared to some other herbal preparations, it is easy to measure dosage, and it provides a more potent preparation that is quickly absorbed onto the bloodstream. Tinctures are one of the most convenient herbal preparations aside from teas.



Judy Karboski will be teaching a tincture making class on Saturday, January 20th at 10:30am.

The signup sheet is on the table in the foyer.



Watch for details on the upcoming Youth Group's Valentine's Dinner and Auction, being held on Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 6p.

They will be looking for donated items to auction off, so start thinking of something that you could bring to support our youth!

A New Creation



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Our missionaries to Zambia returned from a two-week trip where they introduced oral training to a new group of leaders near the border with Malawi.

There were 15 students that attended the training and they covered much of the first term including the first set of oral exams. The follow-up for this group will be under the supervision of Ernest Chigawa from Malawi. He oversees the training in Kansungu, in northern Malawi, and now will add this group in Zambia to his oversight.

The pastor of the church testified that this training changed their lives. "The whole team is now able to teach and preach the real stories in the Bible." He said that they didn't even know some of these stories and now they could tell them from their heart. "From now on our teaching will be different because God has lifted us up through this program."

Two of the students were not able to read or write. When they took their oral exam on the 33 verses that cover the story of Noah, they both scored 100% on remembering the details of the story. They outperformed their literate classmates. Eric joined the class at the end of the first week. He was one of the leaders in his church but had been preaching without knowing the real meaning of the Word of God. After two days of oral training, he immediately started using it to teach his people. Lydia is planning to use this training as she goes out into the villages to share the Word of God. Betty was reluctant to come and study but after joining realized a significant change. She is now able to explain God's story to people.

During their training, the team led the manager of their guest house and her daughter to faith in Christ. On their way home, they led the hotel manager to faith in Christ.

On their way home, they led the hotel manager to faith in Christ. Orality Institute 3026 Virginia Ave. N. Crystal, MN 55427 kevino@oralityinstitute.org 952-412-1366

Prayers for January

"Whatever you ask in prayer with faith, you will receive." Matt 21:22

Church Ministries

Sharing Jesus Christ with our Neighbors
Church Leaders, Staff & Worship Team
After School Program
Stillwater Youth Group
Kids Club
Stillwater & National WMF
Intervarsity Christian Fellowship
The Gideons
CarePortal

General Prayers

Marriages and Families

- Brester family

Our Country and Leaders

Caregivers

Workers in the Harvest Field

Military and First Responders

- Mace Breamer
- David Bruyer (Askvig)
- Arron Burns
- James Gelormino
- Jonathan Gelormino
- Gage Triplett



Health Concerns

Darryl Askvig

John Hutchins (Christenson)

Lusha Alzner

Martin Sheperd (Lessor)

Bill Voerman (Burns)

Cara (McWhorter)

John Kruger

Steve & Debbie Beck (Van Scoten/Scavo)

Carol Hogan

Sylvan Herset

Justin Gronley (Joel & Cody Bartholomew's son)