

The Hallelujah

Here's the good news!

February 2021



*Mark your
calendar*

Jan. 31

I Choose Joy

New Sermon Series

8:00 a.m. Heritage Park

9:30 a.m. Online from The Well

11:00 a.m. Spirit Center

Feb. 17

Ash Wednesday

12:00 Noon

Drive Through

Imposition of Ashes

6:30 p.m.

Service in the Spirit Center

March 21

RamCorps

10:00 a.m.

Heritage Park

GIVING A DIFFERENT KING TOO MUCH AUTHORITY

My daily Bible reading plan has had me reading through the book of 2 Kings recently. It's easy to get lulled into the monotony of kings who don't do what God wants and Israel and Judah getting further and further away from God's desires, but the other morning as I read 2 Kings 16, I was drawn to the motive of how we get diverted from what God wants.

King Ahaz had reached out to Assyria to form an alliance to fight an enemy that was threatening Judah. As he went to visit the king in Damascus, he was struck by the splendor and grandeur of the altar in the Assyrian temple. The author of 2 Kings goes to great lengths to tell us what all Ahaz noticed and how it captured his attention. When Ahaz came home, he went back to God's temple, but all he could do was think of what the Assyrian king had.

Ahaz was going about his habit of offering sacrifices and doing the things God wanted, but ultimately, he began giving orders to change the temple to be more like Assyria's temple than God's. He rearranged the altar, moved some pieces around, and removed the sabbath canopies that God had instructed be present for worship. At the very end of 2 Kings 16, the writer tells us that "this was done because of the Assyrian king" (v. 18).

In the end, despite his attempts to do things that God wanted, Ahaz was more influenced by the king of Assyria than by God and God's desires. He saw what the Assyrian king had and began to copy his things instead of seeking the Lord or staying true to what God had instructed. His driving force became the Assyrian king.

My guess is the shift was subtle. I know it is for me. It is easy to trick myself. I may be working away focused on what God wants, but in a small subtle way, something else gets inside of me. It never is a conscious choice, but

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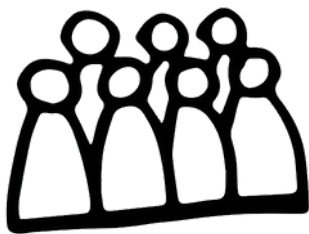
WORSHIP NOTES

Chris Kelley, Director of Worship

Don't you just *love* _____? There are so many things in life that we love. Our children, hobbies, sports teams, and the list could go on and on. Of the many things I love, at the top of my list is worship. I *love* worship! The gathering of people. The song selection. The message for the day.



Over the course of ministry, I have seen people sing their first song in church or play an instrument all for the very first time. It is so thrilling when the body of Christ comes together to bring GLORY to the Name of the Lord. As we find ourselves in what may be considered the very worst of the pandemic, it's my prayer that we look forward to not "if" but "when" we will all come together for worship. I have missed the collective sound of God's people singing and lifting their voices. I keep telling myself that it will happen and this pandemic will soon be over. However, until that time comes let us continue to pray about that glorious day when we all get together for worship. I am thankful for the moments that we are having in worship and looking forward to what is going to be an amazing day for all of us.



Meanwhile, we have spots available for you to join us for Choir Practice. We will meet February 1 and February 15 at 6:00 p.m. in the Spirit Center. Also, we invite everyone to join us on Ash Wednesday, February 17. We will have a drive-through Impostion of Ashes at noon and an Ash Wednesday service in the Spirit Center at 6:30 p.m.



A DIFFERENT KING

(cont. from page 1)

before I know it, something else begins to be the driver of my actions, thinking, and behaviors. I can keep trying to do what God wants, but like Ahaz, I want to tweak his desires, change them for my comfort or pleasure, and choose to do it my way. The list of what can fight for our attention and become the Assyrian king that is pulling us away from God is never ending. From utter selfishness to Christian nationalism, from fear of Covid to standing up for our political beliefs, from greed and self-reliance to our health, rarely do we make a conscious choice to abandon what God wants. Rather, like Ahaz, the Assyrian king gets in our mind, and bit by bit, we give it more thought and attention. Before we know it, something other than the Lord and his desires are driving us.

During February, we'll begin the yearly journey to Easter we call Lent. This season is a great time to evaluate how much attention we're giving the "Assyrian kings" of our day. How much influence are we allowing other things to have, and how have we tried to keep doing what God wants but given in to other influences instead. God is inviting you and me to turn back to him, to evaluate our hearts, and to surrender anew to him as the one, true King that is worthy of all our praise.

Nolan



In the midst of a noisy and non-stop world, a few minutes of pausing to connect to God can make all the difference. It doesn't take long, but a habit of re-engaging with God can lead to a more peaceful and content life. The Pause App is available for iPhones and Android devices and offers guided times of focus and prayer. The app is free and offers coaching and direction on how to use moments of pause and how to increase your connection and relationship with God. This month take on the habit of pause. Visit pauseapp.com to download for your device today.

OUR EMERGING FUTURE: REAL LIFE NEEDS

Sally Recovery Updates by Charlotte Plumb

Joe, a man in his 80's, was living in a condemned house that a huge oak tree had fallen on. During the day he stayed under a tent and visited with friends. At night, he stayed in the wet, moldy house. Joe has a hard time getting around due to the stroke he had a few years back. People noticed Joe's situation and we received calls, emails, Facebook posts, etc. about his living conditions. Not knowing the full situation, I went to his house with a flood bucket. We sat under his tent and talked for a while. I found out he was born in Northport, Alabama where he lived and worked for many years. Joe is a huge Alabama football fan. He told me that he had even met Nick Saban. During the days that followed, we took him meals, groceries, and provided transportation for he and his friends rides to when they had somewhere to go. When his landlord moved him to a temporary house, I helped him take all of his belongings from his tent to his new house. We gave him blankets, sheets, and pillows, and helped him with an electric bill. On Christmas Eve, I took him dinner and gave him an Alabama sweatshirt. He reminds me of my grandpa.

Jennifer found herself homeless while on vacation at the beach. She had been living in her car for months when she happened upon our church service at the park after Hurricane Sally. She was given some gas for her car and we paid for her to stay at a motel for several days while she tried to find a place to live. She later ended up sleeping in her car in our parking lot at night while working her job during the day. She took showers at church and Peggy Ratcliff washed her

(cont. on page 5)



REAL LIFE NEEDS

(cont. from page 4)

clothing. While all this was going on, Jennifer attended our park service, helped with Trunk or Treat event at our church, and attended a prayer walk. She is now living in a mobile home with her husband who found a job in construction. She told me that they had never had a Christmas tree. I gave her a tree and gathered up some decorations. Their tree was beautiful and the presents under it were provided by one of our Sunday school classes along with a turkey and fixings for Christmas dinner. They attended our Christmas Eve service together.

Susan and her family were minutes away from having their RV destroyed by Hurricane Sally when a neighbor came to check on them. The neighbor took them to safety. They couldn't leave on their own because they had no vehicle. After Sally, they lived in the woods nearby. A local church paid for them to stay at a local motel for a week until they could find a new place to live. They worked odd jobs earning money to pay for the hotel until they could find a place to live. Susan called our church for help. We helped with the hotel until they found an RV for sale. We paid the down payment and Mike Caufield and Lance Rankin moved the RV to the lot location of the destroyed RV. Peggy Ratcliff picked up Susan and all that she had left and took her to her "new" used RV. We helped her get her electricity turned back on. There were a few bumps after this, however they have ended up in a safe RV park. Bob Schroeder repaired broken windows and Bob and Lyle Wiist built a porch. Our church family has given them meals, groceries, gas for their generator, and lots of Christmas presents and Christmas dinner.

These are just a few of the people we have been able to help with real life needs. We will continue walking with them on their journey. At the end of February, we will be hosting Team Acts 20:35. This team has members across the country. They have chosen our area this year to spend a week helping our community recover from Hurricane Sally. You will be hearing more about them soon.

Note: Names in this article have been change to maintain confidentiality.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY



02/01 Sterling Hill
02/01 Rhonda Kobylski
02/01 Kate Norris
02/01 Corey Wiist
02/03 Sheryl Fitzjarrald
02/04 Phillip Coggins
02/06 Vicki Carpenter
02/06 Sara Clark
02/06 Charlee Davis
02/06 Beverly McNair
02/06 Deborah Phillips
02/07 Callie Wiist
02/08 Pat Siano

02/08 Joshua Mullins
02/09 Dianne Brantley
02/10 Peyton Cole
02/11 Kelly Johnson
02/11 Amber Weber
02/13 Debbie Wiist
02/14 Carol Cleverdon
02/15 Douglas Staub
02/16 Krystal Korhonen
02/16 Lori Hagle
02/18 Mary Ann Underwood
02/18 Maddy Messick
02/19 Jayson Stiffler

02/19 Allison Stout
02/20 Butch Cole
02/20 Pamela Gaudette
02/20 Jan Groscost
02/21 Caitlin Plumb
02/23 MaryBeth Stauffer
02/24 Heidy Bell
02/26 Sarah Branscomb
02/26 Sonya Halstead
02/26 Sherrie Brewer
02/28 Will Ward
02/28 Trae Ward
02/28 William Strohschein

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Condolences for Vikki Miller, her
very special aunt passed away.

Gail Parris
Tony Perry
T.J. Brooks
Jack Brasher
Barbara Beam

Emery Martini
James and Judy Jackson
Liz Kinsey
Amanda Grant
Vivian Dickerson
Sterling Hill

As some of you may know, I work full-time for the Foley Public Library. On the 2nd floor of the library we have a bulletin board that says "Happy New Year! Give Yourself Some Good Advice," and there is a marker attached for people to write comments on the board. Daily as I walk through and see this bulletin board I am encouraged by what people are writing: Don't look back, you aren't going that way.

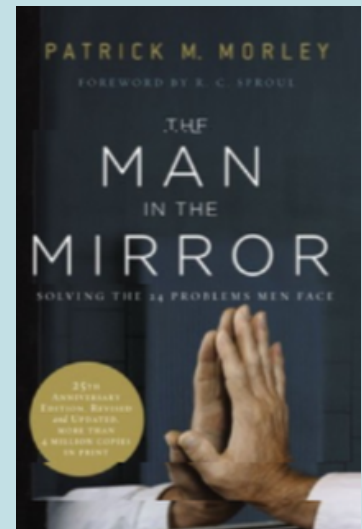
*Forgive yourself.
Celebrate the small things.
Keep looking up.
Always try to look through the lens of love.*

In seeing this bulletin board every day, I have personally observed that my mind has shifted to a more positive state....Rather than focusing on the pandemic and the negativity in the world, I am either constantly trying to think of positive phrases I can add to that bulletin board or eagerly searching for new phrases written by other people. I share this with you in hopes that maybe you will be encouraged and start thinking this way, too. Sure, 2020 wasn't the most desirable year, but "Happy New Year! Give Yourself Some good Advice!"

Looking forward to seeing you soon,
Kate Norris

MEN'S MINISTRY

The men's group has switched meeting time from Wednesday to Monday nights at 7:00. We meet by Zoom call. We have been going through Pat Morley's book *The Man In The Mirror*. This book has 24 chapters that address 24 problems that men face. We are a little over halfway through the book. We begin by finding out what's been happening with each of us, discussing football, or whatever is on anyone's mind. We watch a 30-35 minute video of Pat discussing the chapter and then we discuss the application to our lives. We often end praying for the needs expressed during the discussions. Although geared toward men, the problems are ones that all humans face including women. For example, we recently finished Chapter 13, *Decisions: How to Make the Right Choice*. Our takeaway is that we have big decisions to make through life in a fallen world. We try to rely on our own will and even exclude God, sometimes unknowingly and at times purposefully. But, the better way is to consult with God and allow the Holy Spirit to direct our decisions. If our decisions become derailed and do not go the direction WE think they should, we should step back and realize that God is frustrating our plans. He does it on his own terms and timeframe. Turkey hunters are asked by new hunters "How do you kill a turkey?" The answer is: with patience. The turkey knows EXACTLY where you are when you called and can come to you when he wants. He is on turkey time. This same principle applies to waiting on God's answer. He knows the answer and when the timing is right if it's His will. Even Jesus on the night before His Crucifixion asked for this cup to be taken from him but followed his request by submitting to God's will. I bet all who participate will answer conclusively that they have thrived with our weekly contact and our meetings have been instrumental in keeping us connected and assisted with maintaining our spiritual health. Satan is looking for a fertile playground and I speak for myself that these men I have surrounded myself with have created a desire in me to not miss a Monday night unless I have to. All men of all ages are welcome to come and share in the comradery. Contact Shane Ratcliff at 251-975-8337 to get a book or shaneratcliff@gmail.com to be added to get a Zoom link.



**"iron
sharpens
iron..."**

**proverbs
27:17**

HAVE YOU BEEN BREAKING ANY CHAINS LATELY?

John Simonson, Associate Pastor

There is no need to rehash the kind of year 2020 was. We all know it was tough and we have had to make adjustments to how we live because of it. I would, however, like to ask all of you a question: Were you able to break any chains last year? That may seem like an odd question but I also believe it is one of the most vital questions of our faith. If you look at Isaiah 58:6-9 (MSG) it says the following;

"This is the kind of fast day I (God) am after:

*To break the chains of injustice,
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
feed the oppressed,
cancel debts.*

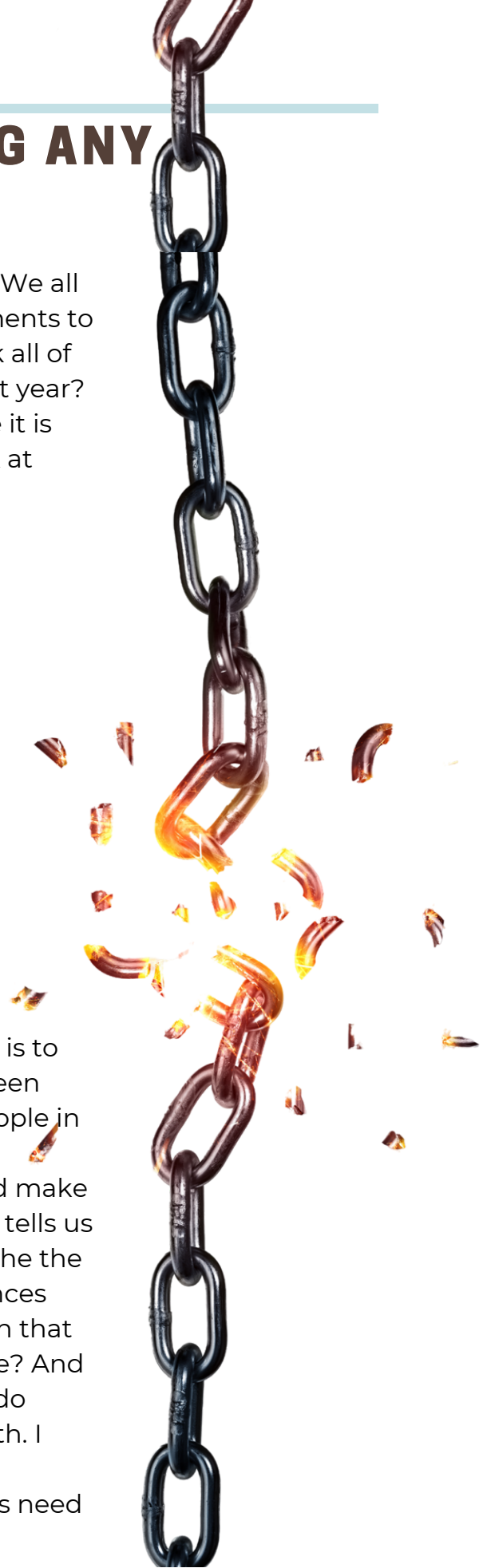
What I am interested in seeing you do is:

*Sharing your food with the hungry,
inviting the homeless into your homes,
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
being available to your own families.*

*Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.
Your righteousness will pave your way.
The God of glory will secure your passage.
Then when you pray, God will answer.
You will call out and I will say, "Here I am."*

One of the most important goals we have been given is to be chain breakers to the world around us. We have been called to make a difference in the lives of all of the people in our sphere. So often we think of the most important directive from God as the great commission to go and make disciples, but when you look at the text Jesus Himself tells us that we are to break chains, feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. As a matter of fact, the first time Jesus announces who he is in the Temple, He reads the Scroll of Isaiah that says just that. So what does that mean for you and me? And how are we supposed to even begin to know how to do that? These are all questions that all of us struggle with. I believe all of us have a sense of this placed in us as Christians. I also believe that most of us try to feed this need by participating in church, and telling ourselves that

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CHAINBREAKING

(cont. from front)

because we belong to a church that does things in our community we are doing just that. But I want to know what you specifically are doing to be a chain breaker in your sphere of influence. If you are like me it is easy to look around you and say nobody in my life needs any help, or maybe you look around and think since you are surrounded by other Christians there is no work to be done. I wonder how many of us are blind to the poor, hungry, naked, and hurting people that might pass in and out of each and every one of our spheres. How many of those people blend into the background because that is the way they have learned how to survive? How many people have learned to hide the hurt inside of them because they don't want others to think less of them?

What would happen if we started paying attention to every person that we cross paths with in our lives? Who would we begin to notice, and how would we respond to them? Would we shy away out of fear of danger, invading someone's privacy, or just out of fear of what God might ask of us? How many of us even know how to break chains? I truly believe the church has failed miserably at teaching followers the importance of breaking chains, and has not taught followers how to, or even that they can break chains. Jesus calls us to be Salt and Light in a world of blindness and darkness, yet most of us want nothing else but to produce enough taste and light for our own selves so that we can't see others around us in the dark. I wonder what kind of light the people that call Foley UMC their home could make if we all started breaking chains around us. What kind of difference we could make in our community. I wonder what it would be like if we started living by Isaiah 58. What kind of prayers will begin to be answered when God says, "Here I am!?"

I am betting that some of you who are reading this right now are thinking, "Pastor John is crazy." Some of you might not like hearing any of this. Others might be agreeing with me, but have no idea how and where to start. All of that is ok. The great thing about Jesus is that He meets all of us right where we are. The great thing about church is that we can all learn and grow together. If I can leave you with any feeling after reading all of this, I hope it would be that you are curious who God is calling you to be. What chains might God be challenging you to break. Most of all, I hope you pray and ask God to help you become a chain breaker. If you are wondering where to start, how to start, what to do next, I challenge you to call me, email me, or hunt me down and let's talk about it.

Pastor John
251-228-2063
jsimonson@foleyumc.org

COVID-19 UPDATE

Latest update from the Covid Response Team

The Covid Response Team of Foley United Methodist Church met on Sunday, January 10, 2021, to review the church's current response, review current Covid data and information, and adapt our policy as needed. The team celebrated the fact that even with Covid cases rapidly spreading in our community and the local ICU at above capacity, we know of no known transmission that has happened through the church facilities or at an in-person church activity. The team is grateful for the way our people have embraced and abided by our existing policy. One of our overarching desires through the pandemic has been to act in such a way that we would not become the origin of virus spread or be the reason that Foley needed to lockdown again. We want to love our neighbors and care for the community, particularly the most vulnerable around us. Thankfully, because our people are adhering to policy, we can cautiously continue with gathering for some in-person events. Here are some notable changes that came out of our meeting on Sunday:

- People attending events inside of Foley UMC facilities are expected to wear a mask covering nose and mouth at all times, use hand sanitizer upon entering the building, and maintain social distancing between members of different households.
- Beginning January 17, reservations will no longer be required to attend the 11:00 in-person worship service. All worshippers will be checked-in upon entry (to ensure proper contact information for contact tracing) and be expected to adhere to face masks, hand sanitizing, and social distancing protocol. Greeters will monitor attendance and the service will be closed when the room reaches 60 people in attendance.
- While the facilities will remain closed, we are now permitting use of the Spirit Center Great Hall and the Well on Wednesdays and Fridays. All use of either room must be reserved through the church office prior to the event. Events will be spaced at least two hours apart, and attendance in the Well may not exceed 20 people. Keeping accurate records of all who attend events and submitting them to the church office is required.
- The church is providing containers of wipes in the Spirit Center and in the Well. All groups meeting in the rooms on Wednesday or Friday are asked to clean and wipe all used surfaces before and after your scheduled meeting.
- There are a few exceptions to the above directive that have been approved by the Covid Response Team (e.g., choir and handbells meeting on Monday evening, hurricane recovery work at various times). Any events outside of the scheduled Monday and Wednesday times must be approved in advance by the Covid Response Team.

I CHOOSE JOY!

A Sermon Series in Philippians

When the Covid test comes back negative, you receive an unexpected call or gift, or you get a promotion at work, choosing joy doesn't seem so hard. But what about when you lose your job, the test comes back positive, or the insurance company doesn't follow through? Choosing joy in those moments seems much harder and, if we're honest, maybe kind of foolish, too. The truth, though, is that choosing joy is the way of Jesus.

Regardless of our circumstances, we are called to rejoice and to choose joy. It is easier said than done, and it is certainly easier in some circumstances than in others. Often, we may have to go through sadness, frustration, and anger before we get to joy, but we all wish we could choose joy first. We wish we could live in a way that really chooses joy no matter what we face.

Beginning January 31, we're going to work as a church on choosing joy. Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Together we'll work our way through the book of Philippians and seek to understand how we choose joy, and we'll work together to practice choosing joy.





Foley United Methodist Church

Reaching Up. Reaching In. Reaching Out.

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To receive text notifications about weather cancellations of outdoor services, text RAIN to 251-333-0515.

foleyumc.org