

Baptist Bugle

May 2020

First Baptist Church of Morris - Pastor Steve Larson

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Pastor's Ponderings –

Well, how ya doin'? After yesterday, I can imagine. Yesterday, April 23rd, the Governor of Illinois extended the "stay at home" order through the month of May. I think this second month of stay at home is already hitting people harder than the first month. And there's still a week left in April. I am doing my level best to keep my political views to myself. It's not easy. Suffice it to say, I do not agree with another 30 day extension of the order.

But, here we are! How do we deal with what's been handed down? And, and, walk with the Lord through it. That's really what we as Christians are called to do – honor Christ as we walk through this time of difficulty. So how do we do that? Let me ask you something. Are you just trying to survive this whole thing, you know, just get through it? Or, are you thriving, growing, and maturing in your faith? Are you letting God use this time in your life to work out His purposes in you?

We are called to endure and persevere as we fix our eyes on Jesus. I know that's not easy, and it seems especially difficult right now. But none the less, it is a very real part of our calling in Christ. James writes in Chapter 1:2-4, "Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing." Anybody find themselves lacking in anything in the last 5 weeks? I mean besides "paper products." This has been, and will continue to be a time of testing for all of us; the testing of our faith. Do you find yourself lacking in patience, or will power, or discipline? Are you struggling to persevere? Maybe you're having trouble holding on to hope, and your faith is waning. Do you find yourself battling anger, and being controlled by fear? To be sure, I think we've all had our moments since this whole thing started, where it hasn't been real pretty. And we haven't had the "great joy" that James talks about when experiencing various trials. But James talks about these times of testing, producing endurance. The idea there is that it's a process. It doesn't happen all at once. It is a faithful process, a work of God over a lifetime. So don't lose heart. Think of it like this, the testing of your faith throughout your life, develops perseverance over a lifetime. Times of testing, times of trial are meant to drive us to Jesus, and cause greater dependency on Almighty God. And that doesn't happen overnight, it is a developing process. Be encouraged; God is not finished with you, He is at work in you doing a developing work of making you more like Christ. And right now He is doing that work through a time of trial.

My goodness, the last thing we need right now is discouragement. Because discouragement and despair lead to disorder and disarray, and finally being undisciplined. If you've done things, said things, thought things that you're not very proud of during these past weeks, and who of us hasn't,

ask the Lord for forgiveness. He is quick to forgive, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. I think a lot of us have found some weaknesses or fears we didn't even know we had. But part of what God is doing in this time, is showing us how important it is to face our fears and confront those areas of weakness that He wants us to have victory over, for His glory.

It's fear or faith. Fear and faith cannot co-exist. Stay strong in the Lord. Replace fear with the word of God. "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power." Ephesians 6:10. It's either discipline or discouragement. Has this time caused you to be disciplined, or more discouraged? What have you learned about yourself over the past month and a half? Do you find yourself depending on God more, or depending on food more? Do you place more stock in the Bible, or the daily press briefings? Do you spend more time in the word of God, or more time on social media? Do you spend more time on your phone, or on your knees? Which brings you more comfort and peace; the 5:00 nightly news or an hour spend listening to and worshipping with Christian music? As the old hymn writer puts it, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love: take my heart, oh take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above." Paul reminds Timothy to, "Discipline himself for the purpose of Godliness." 1 Timothy 4:7. And nothing eats away at our discipline, like discouragement. The devil would love to get us discourage and down.

So many times, when we get down, it's about the forgetting. Forgetting that we are loved by God. Forgetting that we are forgiven. Forgetting that God's grace is sufficient. Forgetting that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Forgetting the promises of God. Forgetting that He will never leave us or forsake us. If the devil can get us to question and doubt the sufficiency of Christ during this time, He will have won a major victory. I'm asking you not to let that happen. In times like these, you have got to know your Bible. Remember; "The testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:3-4. We cannot afford to get down and become discouraged now.

You are what you think. Therefore, as Paul reminds the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "We take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Another version of the same verse says, "Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life." (NCV)

You are what you eat. Like it or not, what we eat and how we eat is a very real part of "disciplining ourselves for the purpose of Godliness." And I know a lot of people don't like to hear that, including me, believe me. It's been one of my biggest struggles and weaknesses. None the less, it's hard to serve the Lord the way He wants us to serve Him if we're sluggish and tired and foggy all the time because of how we eat. When you think about it, you know, that God has not called us to be controlled by and held captive by, food.

You are what you do. That's why Paul tells the Corinthians in I Corinthians 16:13-14, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love." Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

Let's face it, if we are going to be spiritually healthy in this time, in order to thrive and not take a nose dive, we need to guard what we put in our minds, what we put in our mouths, and what we do. Galatians 6:9 reminds us, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Listen to me, please, we can ill afford to get discouraged now, and thus sit on the side lines. The world needs God's people to be at their best, by God's grace and in His strength. If we're going to pull out of this thing, and I'm very serious about this, we need to be putting on our big boy and our big girl prayer pants. We're at a real crossroads right now, and it's serious. We need to be on our knees for this nation and for the world. This virus will run its course, but it's what is going on right now under the virus, if you will. I'm very concerned that under the heading of COVID-19, we are being stripped of our rights as a nation. I'm concerned that this has become much more about power and control than anything else. And I firmly believe that we as Americans have just set the most dangerous precedent for our liberty and freedom ever in the history of this nation. We better understand if we're going to pull out of this, and I believe we can, it's not going to be because the virus went away, and I believe it will, it's going to be because God's people got serious about going to prayer in order to seek the face of God for our Nation. And thus God answered and pulled us back from the brink. The media is not America's friend. And a certain percentage of the Politicians in Washington, DC, and across this great Nation do not want to see America move forward in freedom for all. No President can fix that. And a bygone virus isn't going to make that happen. Open your eyes folks; this horse is already out of the barn. In fact, it looks to me like he has jumped the fence! No, the only way this is going to turn around is if God's people, who are called according to His name, will humble themselves, and stop saying, "I can't wait till we can go back to normal," and PRAY and earnestly seek God's face and run after His heart, and turn from evil with all their heart. Praying and asking God for revival for this nation, then God will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal this land. It's time folks, it's time we got serious about sin in our lives. It's time we took sin seriously. We need to realize that through this virus, the news media and some politicians have gotten a taste for a level of power and control that they were never meant to possess. And they're not going to give it up easily. Awake O Church; rise up, push back, and get on your knees. That's what is going to bring us out of this.

Do you see why I say we can ill-afford to take a break, become discouraged, sit on the sidelines and lose hope? This is not a time for comfortable, casual, Christianity. I know these are strong words, but please hear the call of God on your life. He is still calling you, He loves you as much as He ever has. Don't listen to the lies of the enemy. The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. Jesus is risen from the grave, and I believe He has a real work of victory for our nation, if His people will truly seek His face. I pray that you hear this most Holy call upon your life. Being mad at the politicians and the media is not going to be enough. We must seek the Lord with all of our hearts, asking God to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. I love you dearly. Press on, holding firmly to Jesus. He alone is our hope and our salvation. He alone can see us through this time.

We look to Jesus,

Pastor Steve



OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY



Women of Prayer
Tuesdays at 2:00 pm



Men of Action
Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm
Are studying "*When to Walk Away*"
All men are invited to join us!



Women's Afternoon Bible Study
Wednesdays at 1:00 pm
Will begin studying a DVD series "*Perfect Ending - Why Your Eternal Future Matters Today*" by Dr. Robert Jeffress
All women are invited to come
Please contact Helen Brehm at 815-942-6625

Women's Evening Bible Study

Wednesdays at 6:30 pm
Have begun studying "*Better; Study of Hebrews*" by Jen Wilkin
All women are invited to come
Please contact Colette Kirby at 815-942-9527



Single Moms' Group
Every other Wednesday Evening at 5:30 pm
If you are a single mom or know of one who would enjoy meeting with others, please invite them to come with you!





NO Congregational Prayer
Sunday, May 3
4:30 pm

*(We will not meet until the
 "Shelter in Place" order is lifted)*

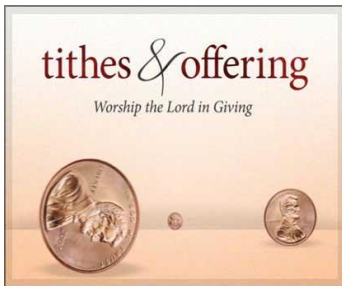
Boards to Meet on Tuesday, May 12
 3:00 pm – Board of Diaconates
 5:30 pm – Board of Christian Education
 5:30 pm – Board of Trustees
 Boards will continue to meet electronically until
 the "Shelter in Place" order is lifted

UNIFIED GIVING

<u>Month</u>	<u>Monthly Amt. Needed</u>	<u>Monthly Amt. Received</u>
April	\$25,720.00	\$17,328.00*

"The Monthly Amt. Received is from offertory that has been mailed in."
 Church Mortgage Balance as of April 30, 2020 \$69,956.27

Thank you for your generous and faithful giving!!!



This past year \$480.00 has been given to be applied to the 'principal only'! Anyone wishing to contribute toward lowering the principal should write 'apply to principal only' on their check. For accounting purposes, it would be appreciated if you would write a separate check if giving for 'principal only', rather than including it in your regular giving check. Thank You!

JEWEL-OSCO FRESH DONATION

(temporarily suspended)

Jewel-Osco continues to donate fresh food each Sunday morning.
 The donated fresh food is that which is dated and must be used.

We have a great need for volunteers to go to Jewel at 11am on Sunday mornings to pick up the food and bring it back to the church. If you are able to serve in this capacity once a month or so, please sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board near the library.

If you have any questions, please see Deb Ritke, our coordinator.

*"Teach me Your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path."
 Psalm 27:11*



JOIN US FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL!

(temporarily not meeting)

Sunday mornings

9:30 am – 10:30 am

Nursery – 3 years and under

Preschool – 2nd Grade – Teacher Lisa Vaksdal

3rd – 5th Grade – Teacher Kara Paulson

6th – 8th Grade – Teacher Diane Gagliardo

9th – 12th Grade – Teachers Mark and Gayle Conrod

Adults – Teachers Jeff and Claudette Swiggett

Sunday School Matters...

This month we would like to introduce you to Diane Gagliardo. She is married to Brian Gagliardo. They have 3 married sons; Marc, Michael and Jason, and 7 grandchildren. Diane is a retired cook from Coal City High School. Her interests and hobbies include: walking, bike riding, playing games with family and friends, and shopping. She also enjoys watching their grandchildren and attending their sporting events. Diane has been blessed by learning along with her Junior High students. She is enjoying getting to know each child and talking about their life experiences. Also, Diane talks with her students about how their faith makes a difference in theirs and the lives of others. Diane loves hearing them get excited by the Christian music they listen to and Christian events they are able to attend. She wants her students to remember her by knowing they always have a friend in Jesus and can trust Him. That they can develop a closer relationship with Him by reading and studying His word in the Bible, which is God's instruction manual.

Although we are in the "*shelter in place order*", we want to encourage parents in the daily Christian education of your children. Educating and ultimately leading your children to Christ is the most important thing you will ever have the honor and responsibility of doing. This month we would like for you to have your children learn 3 Bible verses. You can also work on reciting the books of the Bible. Doing Bible drills also helps kids and adults learn to navigate in locating specific verses easily. Set time aside as a family if possible and work on them together. This includes Mom and Dad and siblings. Become more familiar with daily Bible activity and prayer.

1. God's great love for us: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will never perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:16-17
2. Truth about sin: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23
3. The greatest gift of God: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

Some memorizing tips include:

- Repetition is important.** Say the verse frequently. Out loud. In different ways. Make it a game. Add music or hand motions to help them remember.

- Start small, memorize just a portion first**, and then keep going. Start with just one verse a week. Then move on to the next, still reviewing the previous one.
- Write it out.** Use note cards to keep in the car or wherever you are frequently. Hang verses on the fridge or in other places around the house.
- Help your kids find the verse in their Bible.** Let them highlight it or mark it in some way.
- Talk about what it really means.** Give real life examples in how that verse can help us today and why it's important in life.

During this different way of living it is all very hard to process. We may often forget that our children are experiencing anxiety and stress just as adults are. Take time and check their emotional health as we progress through this “new normal”. Have them think of the blessings that God has freely given them. A verse that might help is **“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”** Isaiah 41:10

We understand that E-Learning takes a lot of time and energy and there should be time for relaxation through movies, TV, music and games when the whole family can sit down together. With more viewership on Netflix and Amazon parents may need help in knowing the positive and negative content of what is being viewed. You can go to *Focus on the Family's* source at pluggedin.com to help you with making those decisions.

A big thank you to all of the teachers that are touching base and checking in on their students! Stay safe and

Kay Hemmersbach and Mary Motter
SS Superintendents

“Train a child up in the way he should go, and when he is older he will not part from it.”
 Proverbs 22:6

JESUS LOVES ME

Jesus loves me this I know
 for the Bible tells me so
 little ones to Him belong
 they are weak but He is strong!

Yes, Jesus loves me
 Yes, Jesus loves me
 Yes, Jesus loves me
 The Bible tells me so!



OUR YOUTH OUTREACH



Awana Club
First Baptist Church
Ages 4 yrs. to 8th grade

We are very excited to have started an Awana Club here **at First Baptist Church!**

Awana Club is held the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month at **6:00 – 7:15pm**

You may register by calling the church office @ 815-942-0812

Registration is required

Awana Club mtgs. this month...

May 3 – NO Awana

May 17 – NO Awana

Questions –
Call Cheryl Johnson or Kristi Larson



Youth Group
Ages 5th – 12th Grade

Sunday, May 10
No Meeting

Sunday, May 24
No Meeting

Sunday, May 31
No Meeting

Questions –
Call Leslie Meloun



Vacation Bible School

July 13-17 (tentative)

5:30 – 8:00 pm

Ages 4 yrs. thru 5th grade

More information will be forthcoming!!



LEGO FACTS

The term “LEGO” comes from the Danish phrase *leg godt*, which means “play well”. The company was originally named Billund Maskinsnedkeri. (A little less catchy) And the company that produces LEGOs maintains an underground vault in a secret location that holds every set ever made!

MAY MEMORY VERSE.....



“When I am afraid,
I will trust in You.”

Psalm 56:3

“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.”

Jeremiah 29:11



CONGRATULATIONS!

George & Ashley Nunemaker
on the birth of

Baby Ezekiel
on
April 21, 2020

Very happy Grandparents are
Mark & Lisa Vaksdal



“Before I formed you in the womb
I knew you,
before you were born
I set you apart.....”

Jeremiah 1:5a



“A sweet friendship refreshes the soul.” Proverbs 27:9

Birthdays

1 Chris Day, Ardele Willis
2 Bob Coleman, Faye Chisler, Debbie Kusters, Brista Johnson
6 Ken Stulgis, Laurie McComas
7 Ben Paulson
9 Julie Applegate
10 Kay Hemmersbach
11 Tim Wilkinson
13 Alberta Larson, Sue Hoaglund
14 Paul Carlson
15 Doug McCaleb, Adelyn VandenBos, Tiffany Day
16 Jacie Punke, Linda Shannon
18 Mary Motter
20 Dorothy Bricker
22 Amelia Hiney, Paul Warrick
23 Shirley Sater
25 Sandra Chismarick, Cindy West
26 Michael Meloun
27 Andrew Meloun
29 Bob Hill
31 Ryder Kein

Anniversaries

3 Mark and Lisa Vaksdal, Gary and Sarah Vershay
5 Abel and Megan Valdivia
6 Jay and Faye Chisler
24 Jim and Jennifer Goebel
25 Ken and Earlene Stulgis
29 Dave and Christi Punke



We don't have to wonder if we will have trials; we're told to expect them.

But the good news is we don't have to face those trials alone.

**God is watching out for us and wants to help us find strength
and a stronger faith.**

"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" Jeremiah 32:27

Often we think because our trial is big to us, that it will be too big for God almighty. But God is able to handle anything we go through, and He does that for every person who calls on Him.

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation." 1 Peter 4:12-13

When we are in a trial, it seems like it will never end. But God is a God of all time; He knows exactly how long our trials will endure and He will give us the strength we need to get through them.

"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6

Often when we're facing a trial, because we don't know what is in our future, we forget that God knows. He transcends time. He is the God of our present and He is in the future as well. It just makes sense that we would let Him guide us since He knows infinitely more about our lives than we do.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6

Often we spend countless time and all our energy trying to figure out what we should do when we have difficulties. We end up leaning on everything *but* God. But this verse assures us if we lean on Him, He will direct us. He will make our paths straight. What a reassurance that is! There is no path that God cannot make straight!

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

Trials have a way of wearing us down and before long, we don't think we can put one weary foot in front of another. The enemy of our soul whispers that we are alone and that we will never make it. God reassures us that He is with us. God will give us the strength we need; He will help us and will uphold us. And if God upholds us, we're going to be okay.

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." John 14:26-27

God has not left us alone in this world. To those of us who know Jesus as Savior, He has given us His Holy Spirit. And it is His Spirit who reminds us of what God says in His Word. The peace God gives us is a peace the world cannot even understand. It's a peace that will settle our hearts and give our minds rest.

"Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." Psalm 55:22

God is waiting for us to take whatever troubles us and to cast that onto Him. The problem is sometimes we do that and then we let worry come in, and we snatch out problems back from God. But if we really were able to cast it on Him, then we would know He is more than able to handle whatever we are facing. God understands that doubts will sometimes creep in. Even Thomas had doubts. Still, God encourages us to trust that He will sustain us. He will help steady us no matter how shaky the world gets.

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" Matthew 6:25-27

God often speaks about the sparrows around us. He tells us that we are worth more to Him than these little birds. He says this to make a point. If the God of the universe cares about the welfare of tiny, little birds, how much more does He care about us? The ones who were made in His own image. He tells us that we should not worry, just as those birds don't give a second thought to where they will eat. Instead they trust the Father's hand.

"Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him and let him see My salvation." Psalm 91:14-16

God is our rescuer. The One who will come when we call and who will take us to safety. We acknowledge that we know Him and He gives us His protection. We call on Him and He responds. And He just doesn't watch us in trouble, He delivers us out of it. And then He honors us and blesses us with long life. God shows us He is looking out for us, and all He asks is that we call on Him.

Lord, help us when we face trials in this life. Help us to call on You, knowing You always hear us. Help us to lean on You instead of leaning on our own understanding. Give us the strength we need, and remind us always that You are aware of what touches us. You see even one sparrow that falls and we are worth more than sparrows. Thank you Lord, for not leaving us comfortless. Thank You for Your great love. We pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.



Feed My Starving Children
Has been cancelled til further notice
due to the "Shelter in Place" order

Watch for the rescheduled date!

We will once again be volunteering at the
"Feed My Starving Children" facility in Aurora.
This is the 6th year we have gone, and it is
an amazing day of packing meals to
feed children around the world!

Any questions, contact Jen Goebel



GRADUATE RECOGNITION SUNDAY



We will be recognizing all of our 2020 Graduates
College, High School and Junior High
as soon as the
"Shelter in Place" order
has been lifted

Watch for the date!!!

Jesus teaches...the victorious assurance that God answers every true petition (although not always the way we wish He would). We need to trust in the promise of John 15:7 and in the complementary intercession of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:27).

We also need to remember that with God nothing is impossible. No task is too arduous, no problem too difficult, no burden too heavy for Him. Do not, however, put your will above His. Do not insist on your way. And don't expect an immediate answer to come in exactly the way, the place, and the manner that you are seeking. Rather, learn to pray as Jesus Himself prayed.

*"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

John 15:7

Memorial Sunday

May 24, 2020

If you would like to give a gift in memory of a loved one or friend,
you may cut out the Memorial Card here
and mail it to or drop off at the church.

When we are able to meet again as a congregation,
these memorial names will be included
“In Loving Memory of” in the bulletin.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH of MORRIS MEMORIAL CARD

Name _____

Address _____

In Memory of

Please direct this gift to:

_____ Building Fund

_____ Memorial Fund



I HAVE A SONG THAT JESUS GAVE ME

I have a song that Jesus gave me,
it was sent from heav'n above;
There never was a sweeter melody,
'tis a melody of love.

In my heart there rings a melody,
there rings a melody with heaven's harmony;
In my heart there rings a melody;
there rings a melody of love.

