

The Somerset Christian

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF First Christian Church



February 2021

First Christian Church

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SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:00AM

WORSHIP 10:00AM

The Shepherd's View

In 2 Samuel chapters 5 and 6 King David had a vision and made plans. He wanted Jerusalem to be his capital, but it was occupied by the Jebusites. He wanted to centralize worship and bring the Ark to Jerusalem and build a temple in that city for God. We can see in 2 Samuel 5:6-10 how he captured Jerusalem by climbing up the water shaft. We can see in 2 Samuel 6:12-19, after a set-back, how David brought the Ark to Jerusalem and set it up in a tent in the city. His dream of building a temple was not accomplished by him, but by his son Solomon. David had a vision for what the nation should do. Because God was with him, Israel enjoyed great victories combined with wonderful, united worship.

On January 12th I discussed a new vision with the elders for this coming year. This churches ***Mission Statement: Love God, Love Others, Make Disciples*** will never change. But it is healthy to have a fresh vision for the near future especially since we've been through such a great many changes. ***Our vision will be "Growing together into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ"***.

The vision for First Christian Church has three parts. 1) Put down roots. We are still in the pandemic and are restricted in what we can do and the outreaches we can have. It is a time for each church member to draw close to God in prayer like a seed hidden in the dark dirt. We want to encourage people to go deep in their individual walk with God putting down spiritual roots. Also, we want to encourage people to stay connected as best we can. Participate in whatever way you can, online, through Zoom, by phone, etc.

2) The second stage of the vision is looking forward to the time when the pandemic is over, and we are back to normal. (I hope this stage can come soon, within 3-6 months with the vaccines on the way.) I think of this time as a Seed Sprouting and Growing. At that time the vision is to rebuild a balanced, healthy church with six main parts: Worship, Education, Fellowship, Evangelism, Compassion Ministry and Prayer. We will do them all, not emphasize just one or two.

When the right time comes, we will have the small groups meet in a six-week series like before and study of these six topics. We will encourage people to come back to church and get involved. We will have special events to connect to non-Christians.

The new ***Core Values of FCC*** are:

1. **WORSHIP**: We will be a church that experiences God. Our focus must be not on "singing songs" but worshipping God. We want to emphasis intimacy with God in Sunday worship, at prayer meeting, and in our personal lives.

The Shepherd's View

2. **EDUCATION:** We will be a church that teaches the Bible for all ages. This is done in the service and in small groups and in Sunday school classes.
3. **FELLOWSHIP:** We will be a church that builds close friendships. We will encourage fellowship by having fun socials. We will encourage small groups where people share their personal needs. We will encourage people to get together on their own around common interests. The church will be busy with many different kinds of meetings such as sports, board games, hobbies, senior events, youth events, children's events, women's events, men's events, etc.
4. **EVANGELISM:** We will be a church that does evangelism. We don't want to grab people who are going to other churches. Real evangelism is going after the unchurched. Growing churches focus on reaching receptive people. Nongrowing churches focus on reenlisting inactive people or getting people back from other churches. The most receptive types of people: second time visitors to the church. Close friends and relatives of new converts. People going through a divorce. Those who feel their need for a recovery program. First-time parents. Terminally ill and their families. Couples with major marriage problems. Parents with problem children. Recently unemployed. New residents in the community. You win people by caring about them and meeting their needs.
5. **COMPASSION MINISTRY:** We will be a church that does compassion ministry such as giving out food, helping the poor, giving money to missions, going on mission trips. We already do this well.
6. **PRAYER:** Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." We will be known as a praying church. We will make prayer a vital part of the ministry. Every group will incorporate prayer and we'll have special focused prayer meetings. It would be my great joy to have a prayer meeting Monday through Friday every week like we did when I first arrived here, but the dream is to have it with fifty or more people attending.

3) The third vision stage does not have a date, but sometime after we are established back as a healthy balanced church, we should go after a time of blossoming. This vision is to pursue the presence of God. To go beyond being a "normal" church and experience God in a powerful, supernatural way. This is not possible by human planning, but it only comes if God sovereignly shows up. We can pray for it and seek him, but our vision is for revival to break out. This church was born in revival 191 years ago and we want to see it repeat. When a plant is fully grown, it bears fruit. We have a dream that First Christian Church will bear much fruit that comes through the full reign of God's Spirit.

Pastor Brent Williams

The Pastor's Page

Sometimes the church is compared to a hospital and it is true that we want to see people get healed. Sometimes a church is compared to a school and it is true that we want to teach people the scriptures. Sometimes a church is compared to a social club and it is true that we want people to become friends. Sometimes a church is compared to a military outpost and it is true that we want to do mission work. In this article I want to talk about the church like it is a military outpost. We have a mission and our commander and chief is Jesus Christ. Matthew 10:5,6 (NIV) These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." Jesus then goes on to give careful instructions to his disciples on what to do as they went out to various towns on a mission of preaching and healing. When it comes to doing mission work, there are four questions we should ask. 1. What is the problem? 2. Who are my people? 3. What is my part? 4. What is the plan? I like these four questions because the key word in each starts with the letter P. These questions fit what Jesus did and what we should do today as a church—as a military outpost. In Matthew 9:36 Jesus saw the problem: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." They needed to be connected to God and they needed healing for their physical problems. In Matthew chapter 10 Jesus sends his disciples out to meet those needs.

The next question is Who are my people? At first, it seems narrow minded and racist of Jesus to send his disciples only to the Jewish people. But Jesus knew that God gives us a focus group. We can't reach everyone in the world. (Later in Matt. 28:19 Jesus does send his disciples to all the world.) Usually, God will lay on your heart a particular group of people. Some people have a calling to youth ministry. Some are really good with children. By the way, I am so thankful to have joining our staff, Victor Correa, our new Children & Youth Director. He began his ministry with us on Dec. 16, 2020. He is from Manchester PA and is a graduate of Lancaster Bible College with a degree in Youth & Young Adult Ministry and Biblical Studies. He has over five years' experience in assisting with youth ministry and served as a counselor at Camp Conquest. Victor was also in the United States Army from 2012-2015. He was in combat in Afghanistan and traveled to Japan as well. Victor did an internship at Elizabethtown Grace Church where he led the youth ministry and coordinated mission trips, retreats and youth conferences. He is a blessing to our church, and if you have a love for ministry to children or youth, get a hold of him. Getting back to my point, God has us narrow our ministry to a certain group of people. My focus is on the people in First Christian Church. I will do good to my neighbor, but my priority is the people in this church. My daughter was given a love for orphan children in Cambodia. What is your leaning or passion? Who are your people that God has called you to minister to?

The third question is: What is my part? We each are given gifts or talents from God to use in the ministry. (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12:7-11) Ask yourself what God is calling you to do to help solve the problems. For the disciples in Matthew 10, they were sent to preach and to heal. Ask God to direct you in how to help. In a military outpost, each person has a different job. Some cook. Some clean. Some drive. Some have guard duty. We all need to do our part and do it to the best of our ability.

The fourth question is: What is the plan? Jesus lays out a detailed plan for the mission in Matthew 10. He tells the disciples what to do and what not to do. The military would not do well if they never made plans. To accomplish a military project, the leaders think through the details and lay out careful plans. Without plans your chances of success go way down.

The Pastor's Page

Plan your work and work your plan and your plan will work. I have also laid out a plan or vision that the elders have agreed to, and it is explained in the article of the Shepherd's View in this Newsletter. I hope it will inspire us to be a church of action, a church of mission, and a church with a purpose. A church is many things but one thing we should do is to be like a military outpost with a plan of action.

I'd like to end my message with the testimony of Deion Sanders, a well-known professional football player. His story will underline the vital importance of being involved in mission and outreach. Many people around us are like Deion—they need to know Jesus as their Savior. Deion Sanders writes the following: There I was, driving 70 miles an hour down the highway, just looking for a place to end it all. Finally, I yanked the wheel to one side and pulled my car off the road. It skidded to a stop in the loose gravel, sending up a cloud of dust. I hesitated for no more than a second or two, built up my nerve, and then put the accelerator to the floor and shot over the edge of the cliff. How had I come to such a low point in my life? Deion Sanders! I was Mr. Millionaire Athlete and all that. How could I have made it to the top of my game in both baseball and football, so much success, so much money and fame, with commercials and endorsements, with my face all over the media, and then drive off a cliff like that? What had happened to me?

I had just had the best season of my career. Everything I touched turned to gold. But inside, I was broken and totally defeated. I remember sitting at the field, with tears, saying to myself, "This is so meaningless. I'm so unhappy. We're winning every week and I'm playing great, but I'm not happy." I tried everything. Parties, women, buying expensive jewelry and gadgets, and nothing helped. There was no peace. I had everything the world has to offer, but no peace, no joy, just emptiness inside. All I could do was stay busy so the emptiness wouldn't haunt me. None of my success on the field could prepare me for the crisis in my life. I had reached the end of my rope. I realize now that God had to get me to the point where I would seek Him. On that fateful day in 1997, I swerved off the road and should have died. The car should have flipped over, but that didn't happen. When I went over the cliff, the car slid to the bottom of the hill. I walked away without a scratch.

Then God started to send people into my life to share the truth with me—friends, former teammates, pastors, my attorney. Late one night, I opened the Bible to a passage that said, "If you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9) The words hit me like a ton of bricks. I knew they were meant for me. At that moment I put my trust in Jesus and asked Him into my life.

When I found Christ, I found what I had been missing all those years. I have a new sense of peace and I have a passionate hunger for the things of God. In the past, I had everything that power, money, and fame could give me, but it just left me empty. I came to God just in the nick of time. And that has made all the difference.

P.S. from Brent: I have been told that Deion Sanders is now a pastor in the ministry. May God use each one of us to be that friend or co-worker that plays a part in bringing people to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Keep in mind that Jesus is your commanding officer, and he has a mission for you.

Children & Youth News

Something that I learned when I was in youth group is the fact that, we are sinners. There is no way around it, but to keep it true, Romans 3:23 says “for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory God.”

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the story of Samson and Delilah. Samson was chosen by God to help liberate Israel from the Philistines and his great strength came from his hair. His weakness was women, and this specific lady named Delilah was chosen by the Philistines to seduce him and to find out what made Samson so strong. Time and time again, Delilah would try to trap Samson to make him weak by cutting off his hair and every time she tried, Samson would break free from her attempts. Delilah finally had a chance to cut his hair and she succeeded, and when Samson found out that he didn't have the strength that God had given to him. This story is found in Judges chapter 16, but I want to point out verse 22 where Samson is in prison with all his hair cut off, and verse 22 says “However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.”

How many of us believe that we are here because of a “however”?

Whenever we are bound by our sin, we are just like Samson when his hair is cut off, we are weak, even though sometimes we may not even feel like it. When we are in bondage, we are held down and what started off as something that felt good or that was fun is now controlling and holding you down and ends up taking over our thinking and our lives. The great, late scholar and apologist Ravi Zacharias said, “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”

What starts off as something that we can control, ends up being something that will bound us from Jesus. It is a terrible cycle to be in, we may have stints of time that we do good but then we are back in that bondage that keeps us from growing in our faith in the Lord and His word. Samson said in verse 20, after Delilah shaved his hair off his head, “I'll shake myself free.” I want to tell you, you are no match for temptation, you are no match for the longing of earthly things, you are no match for the desire of a woman or a man because we are weak. I am not opposed to making the needed changes to flee from these sinful acts but if God is not in it then it only serves up momentary relief.

Here is the good news folks, Jesus is the answer to this broken and hurting humanity!

Children & Youth

Ephesians 2:4, “**But God...**” Right there! Notice how it doesn’t say, but Victor, but Amanda, but Brian, but Casey, but Steve. No, **but God** is the one who has forgiven us, who saved us, who has set us free, who loves us unconditionally. The simplest way to understand the Gospel is this my friends... we were selfish, we were prideful, we were arrogant, we were lazy, we didn’t want to listen to reason, BUT... and whatever is before the “but” doesn’t really matter because what comes after it changes everything, because it is God, Jesus, redemption, mercy, and grace. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we're dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved.” Ephesians 2:4-5.

“I think the reason we sometimes have the false sense that God is so far away is because that is where we have put him. We have kept him at a distance, and then when we are in need and call on him in prayer, we wonder where he is. He is exactly where we left him.” — Ravi Zacharias

Be blessed friends!

Victor Correa III

Thrive News

Upcoming Events:

- February 4th- Snow tubing @ Seven Springs. Bring \$10

Looking Forward:

- Creation Fest June 23-26, All are welcome. Cost \$125
- Momentum Youth Conference July 13-18 @ Indiana Wesleyan University. Cost TBA
- CIY Move Conference July 26-30 @ Salisbury University MD. Cost \$325. Due date TBA
- Fall Retreat Nov 5-7 @ Camp Conquest, Denver, PA

All cost for events will have a due date announced through email sent by Victor Correa with event details.

The Loop

BIBS FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES IN NEED

This fall, a friend of Anne and Pastor Brent's visited them from Guatemala, her name is Maureen Casey. Maureen is a director of a home for disabled children called Los Gozosos/Joy-Filled Homes International. Los Gozosos serves disabled orphans and children from families who cannot meet their very special needs. She expressed a need for adult bibs. The plan was to meet together and make these bibs. But due to the current circumstances, we decided that we can do this project individually. The bibs are very easy to make. For instruction, please view this YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dhGSxYHX10>

Supplies you will need:

- 1 medium bath towel (buy the thin ones), Scissors, Matching thread, 5/8 inch sew on snaps, a sewing machine

You can make four bibs for between \$12 - \$17. There will be a box near the information station that you can put your finished bibs in. If you cannot view the YouTube video, you can get directions on how to make the bibs at the information station. Tammy Minnick

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

- We are hosting a blood drive Wednesday, February 17th. Blood is needed and can save a life, especially if you already had COVID (antibodies in your blood are valuable). You can sign up for an appointment between 11:00am and 5:00pm at redcross.org. Search for the date (February 17th) and click on the FCC site and sign up to donate.
- We also need 3 volunteers each hour to help with checking people in. Text or email Brent if you want to help and what time you can cover. As Christians this is a way to show the love of Christ.
- Please check the Red Cross web site for restrictions on giving blood. If you take certain medicines, you can't give. If you have visited certain countries, you can't give. If you have had AIDS or Hepatitis A, you can't give. If you are in quarantine for COVID-19, you can't give.
- They test for low iron and general blood pressure. If you are healthy, please donate your blood; it is needed and could save a life.

SHEBREWS WOMEN'S DEVOTION TIME

- Join Judi Mickey at 7:15am on Zoom Monday's. ID:974 082 327. Password: 318358

MONTHLY LEADERSHIP MEETING

- Tuesday, February 9th at 6:00pm.

MONTHLY ELDERS PRAYER MEETING

- Tuesday, February 23rd at 6:00pm

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

- The February and March events have been cancelled.

2020 TAX STATEMENTS

- If you would like a copy of your giving, please email the church at fccsomerse@comcast.net, drop a note in the offering plate or call the office at 814-445-8112 to request a copy. Statements are available upon request ONLY.

THURSDAY SMALL GROUP ON ZOOM

- Join them on Zoom at 7:00pm. Meeting ID: 894 6967 4902. Password: study

VAN DRIVERS NEEDED

- Drivers are needed for the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday's of each month. A valid driver's license and background clearances are required. Pick up time is 8:30am each Sunday and you are responsible to take the van riders home after service. To volunteer call Brandon Lambert at 814-233-6226

SANCTUARY FLOWERS

- February 7th In memory of Jacob S. Picking.
In memory of Bernice Bitkowski.
- February 14th In memory of Charles Walker's birthday.
- February 21st In memory of Al Wilmoth.
- February 28th No flowers ordered.

GRUNDY MOUNTAIN MISSION LAUNDRY PROJECT

- Grundy Mountain Mission does 40 loads of laundry per day for their residents. This comes to 14,600 loads of laundry in one year. Last January, we started a project collecting money in the various Sunday School Classes to buy laundry detergent for Grundy's laundry. We have collected \$1162.90 for the year 2019. That is enough laundry detergent to do 9,660 loads of laundry! Thank you for your support. A special thank you goes to The Golden Achievers class, for their commitment, their class collected the most money! We continued this project in 2020, however, because of not being in church much in 2020, the donations to our laundry project dropped off considerably. We are going to try harder in 2021! Please try to support this worthy cause. Look for the Laundry Detergent containers in your Sunday School Class or at the information station. Or if you are at home and would like to make a donation to this cause send a check to the church with a note saying that the money is for the laundry project or make a donation via our website www.somersefirstchristian.org by clicking on the online giving link and donating to GMMS Laundry Project.

Called to Serve

SERVING AT THE TABLE

	Offering	Communion
2/7	Doug Huston	Volunteer Needed
2/14	Dave Ferris	Doug Huston
2/21	Reuben Watson	Dave Ferris
2/28	Matt Rouch	Reuben Watson

COMMUNION PREPARATION

2/7	Joan Graber
2/14	Ginger DeMarco
2/21	Jeff Hay
2/28	April Morocco

VAN MINISTRY

2/7	VOLUNTEER NEEDED
2/14	George Perras
2/21	VOLUNTEER NEEDED
2/28	VOLUNTEER NEEDED

PRAYER TEAM

2/7	Anne Williams
2/14	Anne Williams
2/21	Matt & Sarah Rouch
2/28	Anne Williams, Dane Cramer

MEDITATIONS

2/7	Allie Onstead
2/14	Jesse Landis
2/21	Christy Hay
2/28	Victor Correa

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDRENS TEAM (Age 4 – Grade 5)

Feb. Becky Knopsnider

CHURCH NURSERY

2/7	Lisa & George Perras
2/14	Lori Miller, Jana Williams
2/21	Jen Miller, Teresa Baker
2/28	Mark & Molly Meekins

WEE WORSHIP TEAM (Age 4 – Grade 5)

2/7	Christy Hay, Noah Gerhard
2/14	Sarah & Matt Rouch
2/21	Mary & Steve Gerhard
2/28	Ramona Sherbine, Lori Miller

JUNIOR CHURCH TEAM

2/7	Rick Marker, Tim Baker
2/14	Christy Hay, Erin Baker
2/21	Jesse & John Landis

Challenge

What people in your life are performing thankless jobs? Let's do our part in turning those thankless jobs to thank-filled jobs. Drop a note, text or card to someone who you think needs to be thanked or appreciated.