



Yucca Breeze

THE UNITED CHURCHES OF HOT SPRINGS

PASTOR'S PULPIT:

I love our church! As Christ's minister and your pastor, my main concern is always the biblical mandate to equip the saints for acts of service (Ephesians 4:1-16). I really take this seriously and enjoy working with all of you to help you reach your God-given, God-ordained potential as a true follower of Christ and child of the Living God. As such, I want us to start this New Year off with a three-part series of articles concerning what our church should strive to be and to become. In the next three issues of the Breeze, I'm going to share with you three characteristics of a Christ-honoring, biblically-astute and ever increasingly faithful church. Each of these lists of characteristics comes from a book that I read last year during my 2020 study leave. I do this with the sincere hope that each of you will simply consider three basic steps once you have read and perhaps reread the articles: ponder, pray, and then consider how each one of us can put these thoughts and ideas into practice. The first deals with "characteristics of a healthy church." Here they are!

Healthy Churches are where are where people feel safe to be themselves without rejection, criticism, or pressure to conform. People are free to share their thoughts, values and ideas, and welcome those from others as well. Differences are welcomed as a normal part of the human family. The congregation and its leaders in particular set boundaries around what is unacceptable and inappropriate behavior. Bullying is not tolerated and no one may shame, blame, or attack another.

Healthy Churches are transparent. Boards and committees are open to all and minutes are accessible. Finances are clear and transparent, and accessible to anyone. Decision and policy making procedures are clear and members are able to learn how decisions are made, who made them, and the rationale behind them. Members don't have secret meetings in the parking lot, at the coffee shop, or in their homes, but keep their concerns in the open.

Healthy Churches have open communication. If members have a problem or concern they go directly to the person involved, including the pastor(s). They speak for themselves and to for others. They also understand that having your say doesn't mean having your way.

Healthy Churches aren't afraid of conflict. Conflict means a body of people is alive and well. People respond to anxiety and change instead of reacting to it. A healthy church will have venues to share conflicts and policies and procedures everyone follows. Conflict is not bad, but dealing with conflict by trying to get others in your corner, painting those who disagree with you as the "bad guys," or pretending it isn't there is unhealthy. Large people talk about ideas, small people talk about others.

Healthy Churches are places where forgiveness is freely given and received. We all are one at the foot of the cross—sinners in need of God’s grace and redemption. We shouldn’t be surprised when we sin or someone sins against us, but we should be able to model how a community of faith struggles to keep its accounts short and play fair.

Healthy Churches recognize that in God’s wisdom we are an emotional system. Just as our bodies comprise many different but interdependent parts, so do our churches. We try to keep emotional stability and when tension is introduced into the system (the pastor makes changes in the worship service or the Trustees make a decision not everyone agrees with) the system then pushes back to try to find equilibrium. Sometimes we just have to live with tension for a while and see where the Spirit leads us.

Healthy Churches focus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. They are not “problem saturated.” They don’t try to be something they’re not.

Healthy Churches make stewardship an ongoing process. Members understand that supporting the church is not just “paying their fair share,” but an important piece of their spiritual growth. Generous and enthusiastic giving describes their attitude toward giving. Plans are in place for a sustainable future.

Healthy Churches focus on mission, rather than on getting along, the past, survival, the minister, or some other concern. The mission of loving God, sharing Christ, and ministering to people drives every decision.

Healthy Churches act flexibly and creatively, adapting to new challenges instead of rigidly relying on precedent, Robert’s Rules, or bylaws, realizing that every problem does not have a quick fix. New truths require new practices and that takes discernment!

Healthy Churches practice hospitality by welcoming the stranger, the newcomer, and the outsider instead of showing favoritism for the few of the likeminded. People empower others rather than dominate or cure them. People develop caring relationships and share their lives instead of each living for oneself.

So there you go. This is not an exhaustive list of what a healthy church actually looks like. But there are enough good ideas and suggestions that if we all make an effort to just follow this list, our church family will be the envy of the community and a true place where folks can not only find Christ but also see Him in action. PONDER — PRAY — PUT INTO ACTION. Good formula. The best practices for the best people!

Next month we will consider the characteristics of a “Faithful Church.” Until then, may His grace be upon you and may His Presence ever be with you.

Blessings, Pastor David



Our heartfelt thank you is extended to everyone in our church family who blessed us this Christmas with cards and gifts and edible goodies. You are so precious to us and we praise God for the opportunity to serve Him with you in this place.

May our Sweet Abba Father bless you and keep you, each one, in this New Year ahead.

With our love, Pastor David & Bernice

Sweetheart Babies



WHO CAN RESIST A BABY?!

Since Valentine's Day falls on Sunday this year, we want to make it a fun time for everyone! **During the month of January, bring in YOUR baby picture** (dating from birth to age 3-4). The pictures will be mounted and displayed on a board in the Bethany Room.

A contest will be held the first week in February — with the top three people who are able to identify the most babies being awarded a fun prize. Winners will be announced on Valentine's Day (Sunday, February 14th). So be a “sweetheart” and join us in the fun. (When you bring your photo, put it in an envelope with your identification on the inside! Jeanne Wyatt will be collecting the photos. You can also drop your photos off at the church during the week during regular business hours. If you are not able to get out, you can also mail your photo to the church, just be sure send your name with the picture.)

Disciple to Disciple (D2D) INFORMATIONAL & ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

**January 17th, 2021
Fireside Room, 11:15 am – Noon**



Course Description:

Disciple to Disciple is a 33-week course (3 x 11 weekly classes) spread throughout a year, that has always been on my heart as more than a few Christians feel they:

1. have not had the opportunity to really develop the primary and solid Christian habits that can be life changing and fruitful for the Kingdom of God;
2. don't really know how to share with someone about how Jesus Christ became real to them;
3. don't know what to say when talking to someone about Christ and the offer of salvation;
4. are feeling guilty because of all the above! and
5. have always wanted to grow deeper in their own faith but haven't found the means, material or mentor(s) that could guide them through the process.

More detailed information will be provided at this meeting, or you can go to the church Website and click on the "D2D" button on the bottom of the Home page.

~ *Pastor David*

May you shine the light of Christ in the New Year

JANUARY Birthdays:

- 1 Marley White Face
- 4 Paul Swenson
- 22 Jerry Wyatt
- 22 Arika Brink
- 24 Pat Coffield
- 27 Katlynn White Face
- 31 Jan Spiers



JANUARY Anniversaries:

26 David & Bernice Cook



If your name is not included on the Birthdays and Anniversaries list and you would like it to be added, please contact the church office by email: uc@gwtc.net or call 745-5640.

THIS AND THAT

Words of Thanks:

“Thank you to my wonderful Church Family and friends for all the well wishes, warm thoughts and beautiful cards when I was in both hospitals. I am home now and praising God every day.”

~ *Nevetta Sieg*

“I would like to thank all my Church Family for your cards, phone calls, care packages and the carnation rose bowl (my favorite flower). Have a blessed and safe New Year everyone.

~ *Love, Lydia Emery*

“I would like to thank my Church Family for all the cards, phone calls, and inquiries about my recent heart surgeries. I am feeling much better and recovering well.”

~ *God Bless all of you, Jean Meadows*

“Thank you for my retirement gifts of the wall plaque and crystal dove. They will have a place “of honor” in our home. I have appreciated all the support and love throughout the years from our Church Family in His Name.

~ *Pat Collogan*

And also ... thank you to everyone who brought in the beautiful Church poinsettias for the Church sanctuary.

A Word of Greeting

Patricia Holwell was in the hospital for 10 days with Covid. She is home now and doing well and sends greetings to everyone at The United Churches.

Hot Springs Ministerial Association Food Pantry Report:

The Food Pantry submitted the following report through the month of November:

Client Visits: 1267

Total Helped: 3648

Food Spend 2020: \$40,929.57

Food Spend 2019: \$34,783.08



January Mission Emphasis



WHAT IS THE JOSHUA FUND?

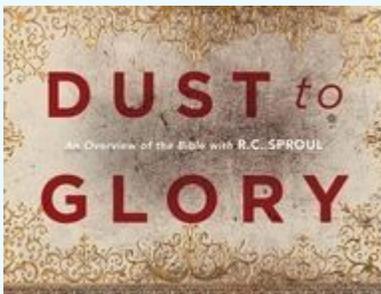
Founded by best-selling author Joel C. Rosenberg and his wife Lynn in 2006, the Joshua Fund (TJF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to “blessing Israel and her neighbors in the name of Jesus, according to Genesis 12:1-3.”

“Now the LORD said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” (Genesis 12:1-3)

“Our unique ‘both/and’ approach to ministry is focused on sharing God’s love with Jews, Arabs and Palestinians living in Israel, the West Bank and neighboring nations (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria & Iraq.) Building relationships, coming alongside pastors and ministry leaders on the ground and working primarily through the local church, The Joshua Fund seeks to: Care for the Needy; Equip and Encourage the Body of Believers; Preach the Gospel; Educate and Mobilize the Global Church to learn to Pray, Give and Go.”

Watch for more information *or* visit The Joshua Fund Website at: <https://www.joshuafund.com>.

New Sunday Morning Bible Study!



On Sunday, January 24, 2021 I am going to begin a yearlong scriptural look at some of the key components that disciples have, and do wrestle with, as they read the pages of God’s Word to us, His people. We will be using the Sunday School hour (8:30-9:30 AM) to view and discuss R.C. Sproul’s “Dust to Glory” DVD teaching. Dr. Sproul often noted that this 57-lesson study was the most important series he ever developed! Here is the intro:

“Whether you have been reading the Bible for years or are barely familiar with its contents, this overview series by R.C. Sproul will help you see the overarching development of God’s plan of salvation from the dust of Eden to the Glory of the resurrected life in the new heaven and earth. Focusing on the central characters themes, and events in scripture, Dr. Sproul shows how an understanding of these topics can make your reading of the Bible come alive. If you’ve ever wondered how the Old and New Testaments work together as a whole, then this study will certainly help you get a better overall understanding. So much so that I’m calling this class the ‘Sensibles’ simply because it’s geared to sensible people attempting to make sense of the Bible.”

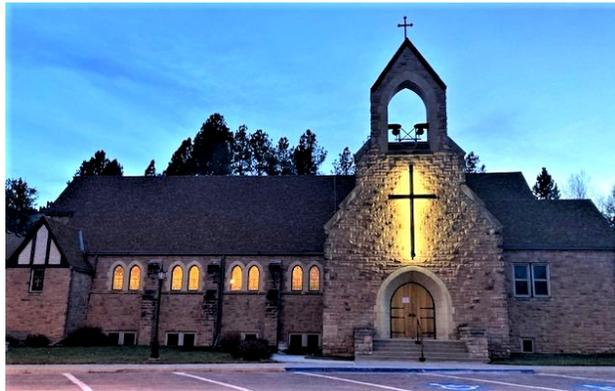
The format is DVD-based with each of the 23 minute teaching videos being followed by an extended time for us as a group to do some real digging and talk though some of the questions that we all have or will have. As such, there will be an accompanying workbook that we can utilize for review, note taking, and to guide our initial questions.

~ Pastor David

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