

# *The Visitor*

*First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 900 S. Ennis, Bryan, TX*

May 15, 2018

## **Congratulations!**



We are pleased to share the good news. **Karl Aufderheide** was honored last week as the first recipient of the Dr. Karl J. Aufderheide Excellence in Teaching Award. Way to go Karl!

## **Save the Date**

Save the date of Sunday, May 27! We will celebrate Jesse's 10 year anniversary with First Christian and also his 25<sup>th</sup> year of ordination. More details to follow.

# Minister's Moment

Friends and Disciples:

Opportunities come, and opportunities go. So what things should we grab hold of and which should we pass up? More to the point, how are we to decide? As a community of Christ, we must begin with self-understanding. We are not a business, and we are not a secular not-for-profit organization. We are disciples of Jesus Christ. Making new disciples, sharing the good news in both word and deed with those outside the Church, and building up our congregation so that the faith of all who come to us might be nurtured-- these are the tasks that should be the focus of our energy and resources.

In addition to pursuing tasks that fit our identity, timing is another factor in the decision-making process. As a congregational pastor I have always tried to operate with an eye turned toward God's timing instead of our own. Rather than embrace whatever comes along, we must try to get a sense of where God's Spirit is leading us. Instead of setting out to do something rather than nothing, waiting for the movement of God's Spirit is a valid approach.

This Sunday afternoon, our Board will hold its May meeting. On the agenda as a new business item from the Faith Sharing and Service Ministry Team is a motion to work with the Sam Houston Area Council of Scouts BSA to establish a Cub Scout Pack. Back in February I was approached by, and subsequently met, with a scouting representative about this possibility. The organization is making an intentional push to start new units in churches and other faith-based organizations. The possibility was intriguing since the Faith Sharing ministry has been focusing specifically on church growth since the beginning of this calendar year. While a number of efforts are in various stages, reaching young families is a real challenge for smaller churches like ours. It is not possible to successfully compete head to head with large churches. We believe that creating points of connection with young families is a good alternative strategy.

After some discussion this spring, part of the ministry team met with two Scout representatives in April. They indicated that our best option was to begin with cub scouts. As preparation, we would be led through a 12-week training course and become a chartering organization. Then, with assistance from the Scouting organization, we would hold a recruiting effort at a local elementary school (most likely Henderson Elementary.) To be ready for the start of the new school year we would need to begin the training at the beginning of June. We would almost certainly not be overrun with kids. Instead, we were told to expect about 10 to 12 children. In addition to the training and a minimal fee for the charter, we would need to supply three people to work with the new unit, a treasurer, a Cub Master, and a representative to the area scout council. Scouting parents typically fill the other positions.

After discussion at its May meeting the Faith Sharing Ministry Team has recommended this to the board for its approval. While this decision requires only Board approval, the ministry team felt that the congregation should have the opportunity to learn more as the decision is made. As our timeline is tight, we are extending a general invitation. The whole congregation is invited to attend our May Board Meeting after worship on May 20. To facilitate that the meeting will be held in the Fellowship Hall. See You There!

Yours in Christ,

Jesse

## Next Sunday's Message

Title: A Little Child Shall Lead Them"  
Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 13:1, Matthew 18:1-17  
Theme: Pentecost and Children

This Sunday is Pentecost and it has been a while since Richard was able to fill our pulpit. Don't miss this opportunity!

# Last Sunday's Sermon

Title: "Powered by the Spirit"

Scriptures: Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:1-11

[Click Here to Listen to the Sermon](#)

It's been a very long time since I was a seminary student. Needless to say, my views have changed considerably over the past quarter century, but I remember at least a few things clearly. For instance, I remember a question that asked during my final semester of seminary. What is your favorite scripture? I didn't hesitate for a moment. Joshua 24, verse 15: "...choose... this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

The choice (MY CHOICE) seemed oh so important back then. I felt God's particular and personal call to pastoral ministry. But I had a good job, a home, roots in a community, three children, obligations, and financial security seemed within reach. Still, God had called me. Of that I was certain. So, we uprooted the family and moved to Eden Theological Seminary. Three years later with ordination swiftly approaching and the prospect of a call to my first pastorate just around the corner, I was still certain about the choice. My choice still seemed, at least back then, to be the key ingredient for the life of faith. So, when the question came I didn't miss a beat. "Choose this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we serve the Lord." If it were only that simple.

After 25 years of pastoral ministry I know better. Oh, I am still certain about my choice to embrace God's particular and personal call. And I remain convinced that our choices do matter, but they are not the only factor in the life of faith. After all this time, I have a deep appreciation for what the Apostle Paul was trying to say in Romans 7: "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.... What a wretched man I am! (Ro. 7:18,19,24) A striking confession from one of the towering figures in the New Testament Church. Though Paul valued the choice to follow Jesus Christ perhaps as much as anyone who has ever lived, he also understood human limitations. So, he turned to, relied on, and rejoiced in the power of God. And this was not the only place where the limits of human strength factor into his writings.

Near the end of his long correspondence with the Church in Corinth, a notoriously tortured relationship marked by difficulties, frustrations, and misunderstandings, Paul emphasized our need for the power of God by bringing up his own health. No one knows the specifics, but he referred to it as a thorn in his flesh: "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" (Understand that last phrase as "in your weakness" or "when you recognize you're weak.") The first part of that statement revolves around faith. We must believe that God's grace truly is sufficient to provide for our needs whatever they are. We must believe that God has both the power and the desire to help us. By implication, this requires self-awareness, and more to the point awareness of our limitations. We must believe that God can and will help us, and we must be equally convinced that we need what God offers. Twenty-five years of pastoral ministry has taught me this: we are never closer to the power and presence of God than in those moments when we truly understand just how completely, utterly, and desperately we need what God offers. Both of Paul's texts come as pastoral advice and not part of a theological dissertation.

Both of today's readings come from the hand of Luke, and both relate to the same event – the ascension of Jesus into heaven. Always remember this when reading the Bible, repetition is a sign of importance. And though Luke does not simply cut and paste, but chose to write parallel passages, that rule of thumb applies here. Luke used this single event as the connecting point between the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Add literary analysis to the mix and the importance is emphasized. Luke makes the ascension the conclusion to his first volume and the opening statement of his second. Something of great significance is happening.

Like Paul, Luke's focus was the power of God. In his gospel, those who walked with Jesus were directly connected to the power of God through Jesus. Through miraculous healings, in undeniable signs of power, and by the authority revealed in his teachings, the community of disciples were surrounded by the power of God. And though the resurrection offers to us a great and joyful promise, the physical departure of Jesus from the world created a theological crisis. Without a direct connection to the power of God, what would happen to the community of faith? Could it survive, let alone thrive with only their choice as supported by limited strength, willpower and understanding?

There is no doubt that both Paul and Luke would give the same answer. The community of faith, the Followers of the Way of Jesus Christ, the Church in this world would not thrive, and perhaps not even survive, without some connection to the power of God. Don't believe, even for a moment, that we are sufficient unto ourselves. On Ascension Sunday we are to remember that lesson. Jesus Christ, God incarnate, God's power contained in a vessel of flesh and blood left this world. But almost as quickly as it departed, the power of God given to us through the Holy Spirit appeared to power the Church. My choices are important, but they can take me only so far. The power of God, known to us in the person of Jesus Christ, and the power of God offered to us through the Holy Spirit can move us and the Church past the limits imposed by human nature, and carry us to where we cannot take ourselves. We can't do it all on our own; we need God! AMEN

## Serving Sunday, May 20

### Elders:

Ben Tedrick  
Ann Thompson

### Deacons:

Mary Anne Culpepper  
Betty Kostelka  
Cheri Graalum  
Hunter Graalum

### Lay Leader:

Rae McNulty

### Communion:

Mary Richards

### Choir Director:

Karl Aufderheide

### Pianist

Karen Smith

## Prayer Concerns

While we believe everyone needs prayer, those named on our list have specific and ongoing needs,

Evelyn Lively  
Mary Anna Franke  
Liz McGee  
R. J. Bozeman  
Gerry Hart  
Jim Carter  
Kevin Rodgers  
David Hahn  
Diane Andrews (friend of Cheryl Aufderheide)  
Christopher Cravey (Jeanette Phariss's nephew)  
Bill Green (brother of Larry Green)  
MaryLynn Janetopoulos (mother of a colleague of Karl Aufderheide)

Ellie Erin Albrecht  
Julie Atterbury  
D'andre Fleeks  
Brad Slocum (brother of Stacy Atterbury)  
Roger & Emily Nichols  
Mark Stadelman  
Megan Myers  
Jim Conway (cousin of Bob Richards)  
family of Art Wright  
Leatha Jeffrey (Calvin Jeffrey's mother)  
Laney Rainey

### Shut-Ins

Henry & Rosemary O'Neal  
Nancy Wright

Eleanor Kindt  
Marge Shepperd

Gene Holt  
Mary Anna Franke

# FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH B/CS

MAY 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<i>1</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>2</i> Choir 7:30 PM Elders Meeting 6:00 PM	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>5</i>
<i>6</i> Disciples Men Hosting Breakfast 9:30 AM Morning Worship 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM CYF/Youth 3: PM	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>9</i> Choir 7:30 PM Disciples Women 9:30am	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>12</i>
<i>13</i> Morning Worship 10:45 AM Mother's Day Sunday School 9:30 AM CYF/Youth 3: PM	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>16</i> Choir 7:30 PM	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>19</i> Armed Forces Day
<i>20</i> General Board Mtg (after Worship) Morning Worship 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM CYF/Youth 3: PM	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>23</i> Choir 7:30 PM	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>26</i>
<i>27</i> Morning Worship 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM CYF/Youth 3: PM	<i>28</i> Memorial Day (Observed)	<i>29</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>30</i> Choir 7:30 PM	<i>31</i>		