

The Visitor

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

September 19, 2017

Old Friends Are Coming – October 1



Mark your calendar! Allan and Joan Eubank are back from Thailand and will visit us on Sunday, October 1. In addition to preaching in worship, Allan will bring a slideshow presentation for everyone during our Sunday school hour. October 1 is World Communion Sunday. It would be hard to set up a better celebration of God's embrace of all people than having an opportunity to learn more about the Eubanks' ministry in Thailand. Plan to be here, and bring a friend!

Last Sunday's Message

Title: "We Are the Lord's"
Scriptures: Exodus 14:13-31; Romans 14:1-12

Listen to the Sermon



I love the pickup line in today's reading from Exodus 14: *"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance [that God] will bring..."* (Vs. 13) The sea crossing is the climactic scene in a cosmic battle of wills between God, ruler of heaven and earth, and Pharaoh, arguably the most powerful man in the world. That struggle fills eleven chapters. In them, the Lord threw ten plagues at Egypt before Pharaoh finally weakened. Only after the death of Egypt's first born did Pharaoh release his tightfisted grip on those Hebrew slaves. But Pharaoh's capitulation was a sham, which sets up the story's true climax. With his runaway slaves trapped by the sea, Pharaoh's best chariot's and finest officers bore down on them. The runaways were on the verge of panic when Moses delivered that key line: *"Do not be afraid... The Lord will fight for you..."* (Vs. 14)

What do you see when you imagine Hebrew slaves crossing the sea? For better or worse our mental images are shaped more by the movies than by scripture. For most of us that means Cecil B. DeMille's epic film: *"The Ten Commandments."* Charlton Heston is the perfect image of a powerful leader, and Yule Brenner's arrogant smirk puts an indelible stamp on Pharaoh. I think God could have taken lessons in cinematography from DeMille because the miraculous sea crossing engineered by God probably didn't look as visually spectacular as the film shot by the famous director.

Contemporary biblical scholars give us permission to adjust the staging of this miracle. Turn to Exodus 15. Verse 4 tells us that Pharaoh's chariots and finest officers were *"sunk in the Red Sea (drowned in the NIV)."* But there is a variant in the text. Both the NRSV and the NIV contain the same footnote. Egypt's heavy cavalry sank in a "sea of reeds." Reeds are only found in shallow water. Restaging the miracle goes from there, but that debate lays down a false trail. The question of how it happened is unimportant because it leads us away from the theological point of the story: *"Do not be afraid... The Lord will fight for you..."* (Vs. 14) That vital truth stands at the center, not only in Exodus, but in all of Hebrew Scripture! God claimed Israel as his own people by fighting for them. That is the faith Israel confesses to this very day. When God rolls up divine sleeves, gets down and dirty in the mud, and fights for you; then you have been bought and paid for. That is the message of Exodus! Do you believe that the Lord of heaven and earth will fight for you?

If you know what to look for you can find the very same promise repeated in the New Testament. 1 Peter 2:9 offers this: *"...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people..."* How did that come to be? Just look up the column two verses. It happened when Jesus became *"the stone that the builders rejected."* (2:7) The Apostle Paul takes up the very same thread. Twice in 1 Corinthians Paul uses the phrase *"you were brought at a price."* It appears in chapter 6 as part of a discussion of moral behavior: *"Do you not know... that you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body."* (6:19-20) Then in chapter 7 Paul returns to the phrase while discussing slaves: *"...whoever was called by the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought at a price; so do not become slaves of human masters."* (7:22-23) Though he does not use the same phrase in Romans 14, Paul makes his meaning clear in a discussion of disagreements between believers: *"We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the living and the dead."* (14:7-9)

God's incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth mirrors the Exodus sea crossing. While there are no chariots, God did roll up his sleeves and come down to earth for everyone to see. In the person of Jesus Christ, God got his hands dirty while rooting around in the mud of our

human existence. And at Calvary, God fought a bloody battle to free us from slavery to sin and to grant us an eternal place with him. Do you believe, *really believed*, that the Lord of heaven and earth will fight for you? I do because he has already done it. *“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you [too] will see the deliverance [that our Lord offers.]”* (Ex. 14:13, adapted.)

Next Week’s Message

Title: “Read the Contract”

Scriptures: Matthew 20:1-16; Philippians 1:21-30

Starting Point: The kingdom rules of Jesus Christ are frequently at odds with our expectations, which are based on human convention and human desires. While the life of discipleship can be difficult at times, it offers treasure far better and more lasting than anything we might acquire by following our own course.

Minister’s Moment

Friends and Disciples:

It is Monday morning, and after more than an hour of work, the computer froze up and my file vanished. It may not seem fair, but that is how things sometimes go. Most of us learned as children that life is not always fair. A great many have (and were born with) advantages that we do not have. Likewise, a great many people would love to have what we have (and sometimes take for granted).

With the Mision Elim start up congregation (an outreach to immigrants from Guatemala and El Salvador) coming to our building in a few weeks, I have been thinking about a mission trip my father took to that region more than 20 years ago. They visited a small village of Protestant Christians out in a remote patch of jungle. By the time that Dad’s group arrived the region had seen years of violence. Though the situation had improved, sporadic gunfire could still be heard while they were there.

If general violence throughout the region was not enough, that small group of Protestant Christians had the added burden of being specifically targeted. Relations between Catholics and Protestants there were not the same as we know here. Protestants there represent a small minority and are frowned on (at best) by the Catholic majority. Add to that the group’s ethnic identity as an indigenous group. Not surprisingly, they were viewed with suspicion and treated harshly by the government.

As a rule, despised minorities are seldom given an easy path to prosperity. That was absolutely the case with that small village. As my Father so colorfully put it after the trip: *“They had absolutely nothing, not even that proverbial pot to pee in.”* What always comes next in my Father’s reflections on the trip must be included. *“Despite that, they are the happiest and most generous people you will ever meet.”* Their joyful faith left my Father’s mission group wondering who had helped who?

Those prosperous North American Christians went there to help a disadvantaged indigenous group and left with the suspicion that the real ministry had run in an unexpected direction. All of that made the loss of my file on Monday morning seem a trifling matter. What could you lose (or live without) and still give thanks God for God’s goodness and steadfast love?

Yours in Christ,

Jesse

House Church

House Church begins Monday night, October 2. Please let Karen Smith know if you are planning on attending.

Restructure in the SW Region

Christian Church in the Southwest Restructure FAQs Goals/Purpose/Ministry Outcomes
Why is Regional restructure happening now? In August 2016, it became clear to the Regional Council that one of the Areas in the CCSW had become insolvent and governance structures were becoming inactive. The Regional Council took responsibility to protect remaining assets of that Area and administer Area affairs for at least one year, as requested by the Area leadership. In October 2016, the members of the Regional Assembly voted to trust the Regional Council to take whatever actions we deemed necessary to allow Regional ministry to reorganize structurally and financially.

Since then, the Restructure Dialogue Group has met three times. The Restructure Dialogue Group is comprised of Area Moderators (or their representative), a TCMF representative, a Southwest Hispanic Convention representative, and the Regional Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer.

- At the March 10-11 meeting, the Dialogue Group discussed positives and challenges occurring in the Region and the Areas; reviewed comparative financial statements; and came to a consensus that some other structural arrangement had the potential to improve ministry within the limitations of our financial resources. The group deliberated over various structure options.
- At the April 28-29 meeting, the group reviewed a congregational map of the Region that illustrated some of the geographic challenges, including why simply re-drawing Area lines was unlikely to solve financial viability issues or provide necessary resources for ministry and local connections. We asked questions about the remaining structural options (Single or Multi-Region): Would it be financially feasible? Could it provide the ministry needed? What are the obstacles to implementation? We used hypothetical organizational charts and budgets to evaluate the models at hand. The unanimous conclusion was that placing all administrative and staffing responsibilities at the Regional level and employing Community Regional Ministers located across the entire Region best met the three criteria. Areas would continue to provide valuable volunteer-led ministry.
- May 5-6, the Regional Council met, discussed, and approved the conceptual framework proposed by the Restructure Dialogue Group and also empowered that group to meet again to work out more details. In June, the Dialogue Group met again and discussed feedback we had received. That feedback required us to answer the question “What plans and processes will we make and follow in order to ensure that restructure will positively impact ministry across the Region and throughout our congregations?”

Visit the CCSW Restructure page (<http://ccsw.org/restructure/>) to read all of the updates we've sent out along the way, which will provide an even fuller picture of the steps we've taken since the 2016 Regional Assembly. The Dialogue Group recognizes that there are still many details that need to be considered and planned for with the help of others throughout the Region.

Blessing Boxes

The Church Food Pantry has established a Blessing Box for the homeless in their downtown area. They cannot stock the box with food from the Food Bank because of USDA regulations. So here is a list of what they would like the churches to donate: Food in pop top cans such as soups with meat in them which do not need water added, ravioli, spaghetti, Vienna sausages, fruits, veggies, tuna, etc. Also, granola bars, peanut butter crackers, small bags of nuts, and small bottles of water or juice.

We will set up a donation box at the church and see that the food gets to the Pantry.

Serving Sunday, September 24

Elders:

Bob Richards
Ben Tedrick

Deacons:

Cheryl Aufderheide
Jane Colbert
Vicki Green
Steven Myers

Lay Leader:

Sharon Jeffrey

Communion:

Ben Tedrick

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

Michael Maloney

Liz McGee

Leta Capps

Eleanor Kindt

Vicki Couvillin

Kevin Rodgers

David Hahn

Brad Slocum (brother of Stacy Atterbury)

Rae McNulty

Gene Holt

Henry & Rosemary O'Neal

family of Mary Beth Joyce

Mary Anne Franke

Nick Teoli

Jo Naumann (Jessica Meng's grandmother)

Diane Andrews (friend of Cheryl Aufderheide)

Buddy Wilson (friend of Larry & Vicki Green)

Jason Moats

Julie Atterbury

Phyllis Waldron

Charles Davis

Roger & Emily Nichols

W.C. Cravey (Jeanette Phariss's brother)

Marge Shepperd

Jerry & Connie Forman

William Tedrick

Art & Nancy Wright

Richard & Annette Stadelmann

Mark Stadelman

Leatha Jeffrey (Calvin Jeffrey's mother)

Clay Thompson

Sherilyn Gilmore

Pam Kopf (friend of Vicki Green)

victims of Hurricane Harvey

Gerry Hart

Shut-Ins

Henry & Rosemary O'Neal

Nancy & Art Wright

Eleanor Kindt

Marge Shepperd

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH B/CS

SEPTEMBER 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 OFFICE CLOSED	2
3 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Disciples Men's Breakfast 8:30AM</div> Morning Worship 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM Youth Group 3:00 PM	4 <i>Labor Day</i>	5	6 Choir 7:30 pm <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-top: 5px;">Elders Mtg 6:00</div>	7	8 OFFICE CLOSED	9
10 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Birthday Lunch after Church</div> Morning Worship 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM Youth Group 3:00 PM	11	12	13 Choir 7:30 pm <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-top: 5px;">Disciples Women 9:30</div>	14	15 OFFICE CLOSED	16
17 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">General Board Mtg (after Worship)</div> Morning Worship 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM Youth Group 3:00 PM	18 SFA Young Life 4:45 PM	19	20 Choir 7:30 pm	21	22 OFFICE CLOSED	23
24 Morning Worship 10:45 AM Sunday School 9:30 AM Youth Group 3:00 PM	25 SFA Young Life 4:45 PM	26	27 Choir 7:30 pm	28	29 OFFICE CLOSED	30