

The Shepherds' Staff
Support for the Journey



*The newsletter of Good Shepherd Community Church
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The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:11

40th Anniversary Issue

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40 Years as a Local Church

Sunday, Sept. 14, 2014, marks the 40th year that God has enabled our church to gather for worship, fellowship, and service. We thank the Lord for his grace that has enabled us to meet together to express our devotion to Christ Jesus and our love for the church, his body on earth. We trust the following items will be interesting and edifying to you.

History of Good Shepherd Church

On September 15, 1974, Nick and Frances Britton, along with Wile and Mae Dell Miles, started what was then known as "The Family Church" in Nick and Frances' living room at 4404 Rusk Street, about a mile and a half northwest

of our present meeting house. Nick had attended Dallas Theological Seminary and had also served in a gospel ministry in the West Indies. Being a lover of books, his living room was lined with wall-to-wall books. Nick was a good piano player, so he not only preached, but played the piano also.

After a couple of years the church moved to a wooden building close to Ross Avenue that belonged to a Hispanic Pentecostal Church. When the church was unsuccessful in trying to buy that building, it secured a bank loan and was able to begin buying the building at our present location.

Nick returned to his home state of Maryland after six years and another

DTS student, Tim Easley, who had been disciplined in the church's ministry under Nick, assumed the pastorate. Tim served as pastor for 13 years, except for a couple of leaves of several month's duration when he was ministering in India. During those times Willie Miles and Ed cheek took turns leading the church. The church's name was changed to "Faith Community Church."

During the last few years of his ministry, Tim had Pete Bitner and Joey Jeffers, two DTS students, serve with him as fellow elders. Tim left Dallas in 1994 to return to his native state of North Carolina to begin a ministry to help support gospel work in India. Pete became the church's lead pastor since Joey was still in school. Joey moved back to North Carolina and then Pete left to go to language training school in Quebec in preparation for ministry in French-speaking West Africa. Subsequently he and his wife Carolyn went to Togo and have been serving there ever since.

In 1995 Jeff Gregory, having attended the church since fall, 1992, became lead pastor. Over the next several years Paul Friberg, Daniel Gillette, Jim Woychuk, Chris Craig, and John Allie served as assistant pastors/elders. In 2005 Mark Bahr, after serving several years with a missionary organization in Oklahoma, returned to the church to become associate pastor alongside Jeff. Several years ago, we again changed the name of the church to "Good Shepherd Community Church," with the theme scripture of John 10:11, *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*. This verse captures in a nutshell our belief that Jesus came specifically to rescue a particular group of people whom he had set his love upon before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

Since 1995, brother Wayne Conrad has faithfully and diligently served as the

church's "chief liturgist," constructing our worship services which continue to enrich our worship of God. He also ably preaches whenever called upon.

Many faithful members have joined in the ministry of the church over the years – without them the church could not have continued to exist.

Who We Are as a Local Church

We are an evangelical, baptistic, transcultural, transdenominational Bible believing congregation. We worship the sovereign God who is calling people from all walks of life to serve Jesus Christ together in the fellowship of the local assembly.

The Purpose of Our Church...

...is to demonstrate the infinite value of the living God.

The Mission of our Church:

The mission of Good Shepherd Community Church is to make and become authentic worshipers of the living God through Jesus Christ.

Church Motto



*Making and Becoming Authentic
Worshippers*

Fellow servants of Christ Whom We Help Support

(Most of these folks have been a part of the local church ministry in the past:)

India
James and Komuni Dhale

Eric and Rohini Sackman
Daniel and Laura Gillette
Abraham and Laura Joseph
Jason and Jemima Deutsch
Africa
Pete and Carolyn Bitner
Jean Baumbach
Cambodia bound
Don and Margaret Lowe
United States
Tim Easley
Jim Woychuk (Scripture Memory)
Joseph Blanchard
Vivian Busby
David Sitton (To Every Tribe Ministries)
Others
Jonathan and Althea Byler
Sky and Michelle Taing

Spiritual Growth – How Am I Doing?
by Pastor Jeff Gregory

Have you ever wondered how mature you are as a Christian? Are you one of those whom Paul says still needs milk, or are you one who is able to eat and digest “meat” (1 Cor. 3:1-3)? Perhaps you have been a Christian for a number of years, but have wondered if you are at the level of spiritual maturity a person would be expected to be at, having been a Christian as long as you have. Are you a strong, mature, stout oak tree (Psalm 1), or are you more like a young sapling, more vulnerable to the various storms of life. Or maybe, like most of us, you are somewhere in between.

Every Christian needs to grow and mature in Christ. The more we grow, the more we will reflect our Savior, and the more glory we can bring him. The Lord tells us through the apostle Peter: *Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (1 Pet. 3:18). So we really do not have an option.

To be pleasing to God we must seek to grow in Christ, to mature in him.

So, so how do we mature spiritually? Is there anything we can do to work with or cooperate with the Holy Spirit in order to grow more as Christians? How do we “grow up” in Christ? Here are several suggestions:

1) Stay in the Word

It is impossible to grow without exposure to the Word of God. The Word is the instrument that the Spirit uses to conform us into Christ’s image. It is easy to inadvertently neglect the Word in the business of modern life. Sometimes it takes creativity to get ourselves into the Word. We can install Bibles on our smart phones, as well as download sermons or Christian music. We can listen to the Word in our cars on CD’s. We can read Christian literature - books and magazines – that will get us into the Word. There are many ways we can get ourselves exposed to the Word if we will think creatively.

2) Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading

Obedience to God is crucial for the Christian. It’s not that we perfectly obey him all the time, but that needs to be the sincere intention of our lives: to honor and obey him.

Without a doubt the Holy Spirit inhabits the Christian and leads, convicts, and encourages him. Sometimes we may feel impressed by the Spirit to do something, or maybe *not* do something or say something. If we’ve been walking with the Lord for a while, we tend to develop a discernment or sensitivity to the Spirit’s leading. When we sense his leading, we should follow him and obey him. Whatever he leads us to do, of course, will be in conformity with his Word.

The Spirit himself lives within the Christian and there is an ongoing, dynamic relationship between the believer and the Lord, who is the Spirit. We must follow him where he leads us. To disobey the Spirit’s guidance is

spiritually dangerous. We need to obey that still, quiet inner voice of the Spirit – this is one way we follow Christ, we please him and thus obey him.

3) Stay connected to the local church

Just like it is impossible to grow without exposure to the Word, it is also impossible to grow without vital connection to a local assembly of believers. It is the teaching ministry of the church which is the primary means by which we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ into spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:11-16). To be separated from the local church is to cut ourselves off from the body of Christ and to live in isolation from the very influences and input that we desperately need to grow as Christians. Can a hand survive by itself if it is separated from the body? Likewise a believer who keeps himself away from the worshipping people of God would have a difficult time surviving spiritually in the world. To separate oneself from the church displays a self-sufficient arrogance, a lack of love for the people of God, a lack of interest in bringing glory to Christ through public worship, and a lack of desire to express adoration and thanksgiving to the One who merits all our thanks and praise. *I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.* Psalm 116:18.

4) Realize that the sovereign God produces maturity as we cooperate with him

Philippians 2:12-13 reveals this truth: *...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* We can rest in the fact that God is at work within us. There is no doubt about this. God's Word reveals this and we who have been walking with Christ have experienced this. God is sovereign and is graciously working in our lives to conform us more to Christ.

Although this is true, there is another side to this coin. We must work with God the Holy Spirit. We must exercise all the effort we can to follow Christ, to please him, to obey and fulfill his Word. We work for God's kingdom with all our might, yet we realize that it is God at work in us, moving us to honor him in the affairs of our lives. So we participate with the Holy Spirit; we offer ourselves as "living sacrifices" on the altar of God's service (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5).

5) Knowing Christ is the key

The apostle Paul has a good word for us here: *I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings...* Phil. 3:10.

When Paul wrote these words he was a mature believer. But he was still striving to know Christ better. It did not matter if suffering became the avenue by which he drew closer to Christ. Paul's number one priority was to get to know his Lord personally in a greater way than he had ever known him before. This should be our goal also. The better we know him, the more we will reflect his glory in our own lives. Spending time with Christ in prayer, meditating on him, reading about him in the Word and in books, worshipping him in song, and participating in corporate worship are all ways of drawing closer to Christ.

It is good to consider our own level of spiritual maturity. Where do you rank on a scale of one to ten? Are you satisfied with your own level of spiritual maturity? But more important, is Christ satisfied with you? Let us so live as to please him, our gracious Lord, and look to him to bring us along the path of Christian maturity, to grow us as stouter trees in his kingdom, as we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling - pursuing, by his grace, the prize of the

upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.
(Phil. 3:14)

Upcoming FIRE Conference

October 13-15 our church, along with Providence Church in Plano, are sponsoring the first Southwest Regional FIRE (Fellowship of Independent Evangelicals) Conference. The theme will be "*Glorify Your Son.*" We have six preachers, including our own Mark Bahr, who will take turns preaching consecutively from John, chapter 17.

"Let Us Consider How to Stir One Another Up to Love and Good Works..."

by Pastor Mark Bahr

Even though the title of this article is called "Let us consider how to stir up one another" from Hebrews 10:24, this article is going to be about the importance of our gathering together for "prayer, fellowship, the teaching of the apostles and the breaking of the bread". You may ask, how is it that you've titled as you have and you're making this about church gatherings. Well, let's take a look at the text—in a couple of different translations.

In the Greek, the NIV and the ESV, there are a series of "let us" statements from Hebrews 10:19 to 10:24: let us draw near (v. 22), let us hold fast (v. 23) and let us consider (v. 24). Now, the NIV adds a fifth "let us" is v. 25: "let us not neglect". That neglect is the assembling of ourselves together. Now, the ESV translates this text: "not neglecting" and makes it a continuation of the "let us consider" of v. 24. One of them makes an exclusive statement (a separate exhortation/command) and the other makes a tie to a previous command. Now, after reading the Greek text, I'd have to say that I side with the ESV on this verse. Let's look at the translation as a whole in v. 24 and 25: "Let us

consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."

We see one command there: "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." And there is one way that the command is explained or modified: "not neglecting to meet together, but rather encouraging." It appears that the author of Hebrews had an understanding that the primary way we would stir up one another is in the context of the meeting together. In that day, the meeting together had to do with public or corporate worship gatherings. Some would neglect out of fear of persecution (see the context of the passage) while others were faithfully meeting together.

Therefore, all that to say, it is impossible to be able to really stir up on another to good works and love if we don't place a priority on gathering together with God's assembled people. To say that "church meetings are a nice enhancement to my personal Christianity" is to say that this is not important. This verse is essentially saying that we can have no healthy personal Christianity apart from gathering together with God's people. If you want to grow as a Christian, don't treat corporate worship as a nice addition. Rather, treat it as essential to your growth in good works. Christianity is a "one another" activity and not something we do independently of one another.

Fellow Gospel Workers in India

Eric and Rohini Sackman are from India and are working for India Bible Education Enterprises, started by his grandfather, Martand Rajnoor, back in 1952, in the state of Maharashtra.

Eric is the son of Dick and Yamu Sackman who have been in India for over 60 years serving the Lord.

Eric grew up in India most of his life and there he met Rohini, his wife to be. Rohini is Indian and is from the state of Maharashtra. They have been married for over 30 years and have two sons, Richie and Robbie.

Eric and Rohini have been serving the Lord for 25 years in the area of Rahuri, Maharashtra, in west central India. The ministry work of India Bible Education Enterprises is involved in church planting, evangelism, and a boarding facility which has children from all religious backgrounds and from poor and destitute families.

They have over 30 churches in their mission and conduct Bible courses and church planting workshops all over the district they live in.

The ministry's evangelistic outreach is done through music and is an effective way in spreading the Gospel.

Pray for Eric and Rohini Sackman in their work that God will grant them strength and wisdom as they face many challenges, and take them forward with His purposes to be accomplished in India.

New Church Website

Thanks to brother Marco Perez the church has a new website. Go to <http://gscdd.weebly.com>

From our Articles of Faith

Article 1: The Scripture

We believe that the Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the inspired ("God-breathed") Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority on all matters upon which it speaks, requiring unreserved submission in all areas of life.¹ We believe that all Scripture centers around the LORD Jesus Christ, the Living Word,² and its message is energized by the Holy Spirit so that it is active in people's lives.³

News Snapshots of a few of our people:

We miss Thomas, Tina, and Hannah Mitchell who recently moved to California, but are grateful the Lord joined them to our body for two years.

Ruth Orozco had a safe and enjoyable trip to Mexico.

Allison and Amy Perez began new schools this year.

Wayne Conrad began teaching fulltime at El Centro Community College this fall.

Pastor Mark got a new Ford Focus car.

Leonard Lyon's sister Dorothy passed away a few months ago.

Carmen Ayala visited Puerto Rico this summer.

¹ 2 Timothy 3:15-17

² Hebrews 1:1-2

³ 2 Peter 1:19-21