

November 2019

Our JOYFUL Noise

The Monthly Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Britton SD
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The Bucks' Blog:

This is the sermon I was privileged to give at the Friday, October

25th, South Dakota Presbytery Meeting in Brookings, SD.

It was warmly received and I wanted to share it with you:

Text: Hebrews 3:1 (msg)-

“So, my dear Christian friends... companions in following this call to the heights,

***take a good hard look at Jesus.
He's the centerpiece
of everything we believe...***”

Well, it's happened again.

The Pew Research Center on October 17th published their latest Religion & Public Life report. You know... an

update on the one in 2009 and the one in May 12, 2015, titled America's Changing Religious Landscape... “Christians Decline Sharply As Share of Population.” The recent updated report of the 17th of this month titled... “In U.S., Decline Of Christianity Continues At Rapid Pace.” In research that covered from 12,000 to 25,000 people, 65% of Americans describe themselves as Christians... down from 77% in 2009. In contrast, 26% of Americans describe themselves as having no interest in any religion... up from 17% in 2009. Protestants are now only 43% of U.S. pop. Catholics 20%. The Pew behemoth report details the awful news that North America has decided that we're just not that interesting anymore.

Oh, if you're someone still mentally living in the 1950s, the church might offer something, but the statistics show that what we're handing out just

isn't all that interesting... and then... to top it off... our own beloved PC-USA continues it's years long slide from the heady days of that Friday, June 10, 1983, when the PC-USA was created... 36 years ago. To my chagrin, I overheard one pastor say at a PCUSA evangelism conference in St. Petersburg, Fl...upon hearing of the continuing slide in members... "That's okay, I'll be retired before it gets really bad." Another pastor from over east said, "I figure I'll stick with my congregation for 5-7 more years, then retire and get a stated supply post in Florida or Arizona." What in the name of all that's holy is going on?? What's happening to the church?... To us?

It begs the question that Francis Schaeffer asked long ago... "How then should we live?" or What is the answer to our condition?

I'm glad you asked...

Surveys show that in a gathering like this, by the time you get to your car in the parking lot, you will have forgotten 75% of everything you've heard today. Within an hour of leaving the parking lot, you will have forgotten 95% of everything you've heard today. You will only remember, maybe, 5% of all you hear today. Therefore, it seems the most important thing I can say must be summed up in the 5% that you will remember. Not to worry. When the time comes...

I'll tell you what is the 5%.

I submit to you that the answer to our condition is a return to the "center" of what we are about... not PCUSA... the church. We have moved our center and have lost our focus.

Friends, we must, again, take a good hard look at Jesus... he's the center of everything we believe. Eugene Peterson said, "It seems odd to have to say so, but too much religion is a bad thing. We can't get too much of God, can't get too much faith and obedience, can't get too much love and worship. But religion... the well-intentioned efforts we make to "get it all together" for God... can very well get in the way of what God is doing for us.

The main and central action is...

everywhere and always...

what God has done, is doing, and will do for us.

Jesus is the revelation of that action.

Our main and central task is to live in responsive obedience to God's action revealed in Jesus. Our part in the action is the act of faith. But more often than not, we become impatiently self-important along the way and decide to improve matters with our two cents worth. We add on, we supplement, we embellish. But instead of improving on the purity and simplicity of Jesus, we dilute the purity, clutter the simplicity.

We become fussily religious, or anxiously religious. **We get in the way.** “Too religious” Christians, are “Jesus-and” Christians... Jesus-and-politics, or Jesus-and-education, or Jesus-and-equality, or Jesus-and-social justice, or even Jesus-and-Buddha. We must delete the hyphens, the add-ons. Then the focus becomes clear and sharp again:

God’s action in Jesus. And we are free once more for the act of faith, the one human action in which we don’t get *in* way, but *on* the Way.” Friends, we’ve drifted from our main focus. We haven’t taken the time, in our busyness, to stay truly focused on what’s really important.

In 1986, a movie was released entitled, “The Name of The Rose” starring Sean Connery as a 14th century Franciscan monk sent to a monastery in the mountains of northern Italy to solve mysterious deaths. While there, a conference/debate of great import to the church was to be held. Specially selected and invited Cardinals from across Europe traveled for weeks, some for months, in order to attend this great debate. Finally, with great pomp and circumstance, they were assembled; and the moderator of this auspicious debate solemnly announced the topic to be debated. The topic they had travelled such great distance to debate.

The topic was... *did Christ, or did he not, own the clothes that he wore?* A complete loss of focus...

Today, in many respects, it seems little has changed.

Friends, our center, our focus, is Jesus, the Christ. Jesus. Period. Full Stop.

On Saturday, October 31, 1517, a Catholic monk sent his 95 theses to the Archbishop of Mainz and also nailed them to the door of the church in Wittenburg... next Thursday... 502 years later... we will celebrate the Reformation. In 2008, a feisty woman from west Tennessee named Phyllis Tickle wrote a book titled, “The Great Emergence.” She said, “every 500 years, the church cleans out its attic and has a giant rummage sale.”

Her study of the history of the church convinced her that every 500 years, the tectonic plates of the church shift; and something dramatic takes place.

God does something new.

And she along with many others, who we consider knowledgeable and well informed, tell us that we are in the midst of the shifting of the tectonic plates of the church.

God is doing something new.

Responding to the blockbuster Pew Report of 2015, she said,

“Christianity isn’t going to die!”

“Christianity is reconfiguring.”

“It’s almost going through another adolescence. And it’s going to come out a better, more mature adult.

There's no question about that.”
And the Word of God rings in my ears,
“I will build my church, and the gates
of hell will not prevail against it.”
As a participant in a think tank in
Seattle, a few years ago, on the future
of the church, one of the facilitators
was Alan Roxburgh, an internationally
recognized speaker/leader on congregational transformation. He said,
“Don't look to your denomination to
“fix” your congregation. It must be, it
has to be, congregation up, not
headquarters down. Then he asked,
“What does it mean to be God's people
in our communities?”
And suddenly, all 50+ people in the
room got very quiet. And Alan said,
“Friends, God is messing with the
church. And hidden in the messing is
the Spirit of God gestating a new
thing, and it coming from the bottom
up... from the congregations up to the
national headquarters. Congregations
must learn to walk their story, their
journey, together.” Later, in a private
conversation, he said, Donald, God is
saying... “I'm leading you into
something new, not a fix of the old.
Pastors and congregations are worn
out with national headquarters fixes.
Every 5–10 years a new “fix” comes
along. Power church, emerging
church, multi-site church,
contemporary showbiz church where
all the lights and bands and smoke
machines accompany songs around the
theme “Jesus is my boyfriend,”

house church, new monastic church,
commune church, missional church,
and on and on and on.
And we're worn out.”
Living Jesus in your world, in my
world, is living the embodiment of the
mission of Jesus in the world, by
incarnating the gospel.
It is imperative that Christians be like
Jesus, by living freely within the
culture as those who are as faithful to
the Father and his gospel,
as Jesus was in his own time and
place.
It is living the transformational Way...
the Way of Jesus.
Now... here's **the 5%... You can't be
the noun, without doing the verb.**
Profound, isn't it??
Actually, it's common sense once you,
again, make Jesus the center of
everything you believe.
But the question is... do you really
want Jesus to be the center of
everything??
We've all seen the cartoon, haven't
we? The preacher asks, “How many
want change?” and all the hands go
up. Then the preacher asks, “How
many want **to** change?” and no hands
go up.
Friends, you... me... us... we are
leaders. We cannot, we must not, ask
our congregations to make
commitments we are not willing to
make. We must lead them.
How badly do you want real
transformation in your congregation??

If the wind of the Holy Spirit blew
across your congregation,
would you be ready, even welcoming??
Oh, I can hear it...

Preacher, you're not from here.
You don't understand South Dakota.
We're different... just settle down...
you'll be all right.

Friends, Jesus is not different and
he's calling our names.

The Spirit of God wants to do a new
thing in each of us. We have to
decide... are we going to be Fishers of
men and women; or are we going to be
Keepers of an Aquarium??

They were just college kids, 2 here,
3 there, unbeknownst to one another,
praying for God to move on their
campus. It was a Christian college
that required chapel attendance at
10:00 every morning... it was only 50
minutes long... just like a class.

It seemed to be a normal Tuesday
chapel, filled with 1,500 students,
on that chilly February 3rd, 1970.
But they soon found a difference.
God by the Holy Spirit showed up for
that chapel service and fell upon the
entire student body. The president of
the college, Asbury College, was away
in Alberta, Canada, on a speaking
trip. Someone ran to get the Vice-
President who had been detained in a
meeting. He hurried into the chapel
and reported later that as he walked
in, he was overwhelmed with an inner
voice that said, "You are treading on
holy ground."

He said the Spirit of God was palpable
in the room. Students and professors
alike were pouring their hearts out to
God in confession and repentance and
asking forgiveness of one another.

Sins were being confessed and lives
were being made clean and whole.
It continued all day and into the night
and into the next morning.

No one left the building. The Vice
President phoned the President and
said "you better get back here right
away. God is moving here."

The President came as soon as he
could arrange... and by now the move
of God had extended past three 24 hr.
periods... classes had long before been
canceled. He walked in concerned that
it was an emotional, out of hand,
situation. Instead he found orderly
students waiting their turn to speak,
to confess, to give praise, to ask
forgiveness.

The move of God spread across the
street to the small Asbury Seminary
and was just as powerful... by the
summer, teams had gone across the
United States and into South America.
Over 130 college campuses
experienced a move of God from the
Asbury teams.

In Anderson, Indiana, a Church of God
congregation had to move to a
basketball arena, and it remained
packed with 2,500 people
daily for 50 days straight as God
moved on the community.

Wheaton College experienced the same.

Friends, God is still in the transformational, reviving business. We as leaders must, we must, fall in love with Jesus again... not with the Bible, but with the Jesus of the Bible, not with the Book of Order, not with the Book of Confessions, not with our pet projects; but with Jesus. When is the last time you told Jesus that you loved him?? I mean just flat out said, "Jesus, I love you, I truly love you." He's been telling you over and over how much he loves you...when's the last time he heard you say it back to him? Are we spending time with him like we would with someone we really loved? Are we talking with him like we talk with someone we really love? Do you really, really want the Holy Spirit to do something transformational in your life and your congregation??

Friends, Jesus always worked with small numbers. That's why I love my small country rural congregation so much. Jesus is right at home there. Oh, make no mistake, we've got some re-centering and re-focusing to do. Dwight L. Moody once said, "The world has yet to see what God will do through someone who is totally sold out and committed to Jesus."

Are you ready? Is it you?

What are you willing to do to have the Spirit of God move in your congregation??

Isaiah was taken into heaven and saw the Lord high and lifted up. He saw and heard the praises and the "holy, holy, holy." He said, "I am definitely in the wrong place. I am dead meat. I have unclean lips just like my people. And a Seraph flew and touched his lips with a coal from the alter and said, "Now you are clean."

And the Lord said, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And Isaiah, knowing he was now clean, said, "I'm here. I'm available. Send me."

Friends, God wants to do a new thing in the PCUSA, and I believe with all my heart and every fibre of my being that God is looking for a Presbytery that wants to bring the Holy Ghost fire to the PCUSA. Why not our South Dakota presbytery?? Why not us?? Why not us?? We could be God's instrument to do a new thing in the entire PCUSA!!

We've been touched with coals from the alter. And God is still asking, "Who will go for us?" Are you willing to say, "I'm here. I'm available. I'll go." Amen.

--Pastor Buck and Mindi





PW Hope Circle will meet on Wednesday, November 6th, at 2:00 p.m. All women of the church are always invited to attend. This month the ladies will be studying 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8.

PWC Women's Group Mission Giving

- \$100 – Bibles to the Troops
- \$250 – Christian Literature
- \$175 – Kids Against Hunger
- \$175 – Friends for Haiti
- \$500 – had previously been sent to Nebraska flood victims.



Group # 3 is the serving group this month. This group consists of:

Bev Seibel, leader (448.2155, cell: 470.0142), Mavis Jones, Peggy Pearson and Kay Friebe.



Ladies' Sewing Group will begin their Thursday sewing days in November, at 9:00 a.m. The following days are scheduled:

- Thursday, November 7th
- Thursday, November 14th
- The PWC Coordinating Mtg will be held on this day, also.
- Thursday, November 21st.



Session Notes:

The Session members met on Tuesday, October 15th, and discussed the following:

- Funding for Presbytery church camps, but no action was taken.
- Kids in Sunday school and possible Christmas program date.
- Live streaming of the church worship service is to begin December 1st.
- Communion is scheduled for November 3rd.
- Work is continuing on the church website.
- A draft copy of the wedding policy was handed out for review.

Next meeting of the Session will be Tuesday, November 19th, at 7:00 PM

Chip Gaines Challenges Fans to 'Make Kindness Loud'

The reality TV star is using his platform for good by kickstarting a kindness movement.

When he's not renovating homes or overseeing several businesses, [Chip Gaines](#) is spreading kindness and encouraging others to make a difference. In an essay titled "We Believe in Human Kindness," posted on his and wife Joanna's Magnolia blog, the former "Fixer Upper" star shared his thoughts on [kindness](#), the importance of sharing it with everyone and encouraging fans to do the same.

"I believe that we are made in likeness, and because of that, our hearts are naturally drawn toward one another," he wrote. "But the thing about kindness is, it's a choice. It's something that we should give freely with the hopeful expectation that it might one day be given freely to us."

Gaines goes on to explain that kindness should be spread through all interactions, both big and small. Whether it's given to a neighbor, a coworker, or [a stranger on the street](#), he believes it should be shared without the expectation of receiving something in return. Gaines continues to write about his effort to encourage kindness at Magnolia with the "Magnolia Manifesto," a mission statement that serves as a cornerstone of the company: "We believe in human kindness, knowing we are made better when we work together."

Gaines ended his blog post by challenging his fans to complete an act of kindness of their own. He and his team have made four downloadable flyers, which include tabs of simple acts of kindness written on each one. The flyers, made for both kids and adults, can be hung in private or public spaces to remind people who encounter them to do something kind.

by **Daisy Urgiles** - Posted on Sep 3, 2019, Guideposts



Ladies, please remember to get your "Bakeless Bake Sale" gifts given to Leah Luitjens or Jane Tyler. Or lay them on the Secretary's desk.

DON'T FORGET TO SET YOUR CLOCKS BACK ON SATURDAY NIGHT, NOVEMBER 2ND!!!
FOR THE NOVEMBER 3RD TIME CHANGE!!!!



Stewardship Sunday with Potluck

Sunday, November 17th will be our annual Stewardship Sunday and on that day, we will hold a potluck dinner in the fellowship hall following worship service. As always, we will have lots of goodies!



First Presbyterian Church

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