

## A Sabbath Rest



Many of you asked Cindy and me about our recent trip to Alaska to visit my son and his family. I can tell you that we had a very enjoyable visit and spent some much-needed time with grandchildren and viewing the beautiful creation surrounding us. Even though we were away for rest, the demands of being a pastor loomed large on me and I allotted a small portion of time each day to call the families of the deceased as seemed necessary. I am so pleased that our church family was more than able to carry on without me, and I want to thank each of you for the many parts you played in helping grieving families while I was away.

This has brought to the forefront of my thinking how we as Christians can keep a biblical Sabbath rest as God has commanded us. I have to confess that for a long time, I have had “days off,” but I have not practiced very good Sabbath keeping. Usually, my days off are filled with different “have-to” errands – maintenance chores, mowing the lawn, etc. I recognize that these things need to be done, but so many times they aren’t an “ox in the ditch” kind of chore. I also chafe at the idea that school activities and sporting events should displace worship time.

Let me share a few things I have learned that can help us all reflect on keeping a day dedicated to considering God and others:

- Observing the Sabbath is a spiritual discipline. It does not just happen automatically. It takes intentionality just like any other spiritual discipline.
- It takes preparation. If I want to take a break from doing chores, I need to finish them by my Sabbath. It means no more procrastination regarding my work, which means I have to prioritize what I do during the six days.
- I must be careful not to be legalistic about it either. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath.” I have to keep in mind the heart of God behind the Sabbath and see it as a gift and grace from God. There are days I cannot keep 24 hours of Sabbath, and that is ok for now.

- The church runs fine without me, and our family is fine even if the lawn doesn't get mowed on the weekend. In other words, I have learned the world runs just fine without me running around, trying to do all my "have-to" errands. It takes away a sense of self-importance and control and it reminds me that God is the one who initiates the work and He's always at work.
- God accepts me for who I am, not for what I do. He enjoys being with me and invites me to enjoy just being with Him. He is slowly teaching me not to put my self-worth on how much I have accomplished or how many boxes I checked on my check list.

If you do not keep the Sabbath, I invite you to join me in this journey of Sabbath-keeping. Let us not check texts or emails for a day. Let us just "be" with God and with each other. Let us fellowship and worship in church. Let us go outside and put ourselves in His creation that He has called "good." Let us rest, have fun, and enjoy the good and beautiful gifts God gives us and be thankful.

### **From the Pastor's Desk**

We continue in this unprecedented time of caution due to the pandemic which is quite concerning to everyone. I know that our attendance has reflected the caution felt by so many who, quite correctly, want to shield themselves from accidental infection. It is one thing to blindly walk by faith while at the same time ignoring sound medical advice and precaution. We thank God for the vaccines which have been developed **and I urge everyone to receive your vaccination** out of concern for your well being, if not that of others around you. Because so many of our members have already received both of their vaccinations, we are continuing to meet for live worship, but remain cautious and advise everyone to wear a mask. A mask will probably not keep you from catching a virus, but they are proven protection against those who might unknowingly have the virus sharing it with others.

I understand that much political debate has entered into what should be a non-political decision about a virus we cannot see, but the very same thing happens in the spiritual world too. I am reminded of how many people think that the idea of receiving Christ to protect themselves from the penalty of sin (which seems invisible to us too), is just unnecessary nonsense. Both the virus and God's wrath are subjects that we should all think soberly about.

You will notice that we have begun adding the self-addressed and stamped envelopes with each new Messenger. The simple fact is that human nature is a great predictor of giving. When people attend church they think to give, but when they aren't at church they often forget to give to its ministries. We simply noted that a little reminder will help keep our income at a manageable level. If you are already a steady and reliable giver of tithes and offerings, I commend you. You may simply save up the giving envelopes and return them to us at your next visit with us at worship and we will reuse them.

### **Disaster Relief Giving**

If you have wondered what the United Methodist Church's response is to the recent hurricane in Louisiana or the resettlement of the Afghan refugees, a way has been set up through our general church's relief agency UMCOR. You can make a gift to either of these causes as a tax-deductible gift through the local church. They are separate giving and UMCOR does not lump the money given together. If you would like to send aid, you can make your check out to Dardanelle FUMC, but put your giving request in the memo line. We will give your gift to the proper UMCOR Advance giving number. Thank you!

## **An Invitation to Sing**

One of the hallmarks of worship at Dardanelle First is our music and choir. Along with our beautiful organ and grand piano we add the voices of our choir to our praise each Sunday. We are always looking for those who would add their voices to the choir. This requires a small commitment of time on Wednesday evenings to practice together.

Additionally, we want to invite those of you who may play instruments to add your contribution to our worship. Currently M. L. Childs and Sandy Wood are practicing to add their voices and music for some specials for our videos. I would venture to say that if a couple more instruments would join them, that we could enjoy some beautiful music together. Perhaps you know someone that would like to join them that need an invitation. My invitation to you is to join us in singing praises to our God.

## **Sanctuary Work Continues**



This old photo of our church is from the 1950's. Remarkably, the old building still looks good 102 years after its last refurbishing (1919). Our Trustees recognized that one of this building's greatest challenges going into the future will be to keep water penetration out of this structure. The last work needed to complete it will be to water-seal the brick exterior of the church which is very permeable due to the brick and mortar originally used. Thankfully, the funds raised last Christmas for renovation work will cover the cost of the sealing.

We take pride in what has been entrusted to us, and if we are faithful, future generations will continue to give thanks for the warmth and beauty of our beloved Sanctuary.