

# Lamplighter

## *focus*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | DISCIPLES OF CHRIST  
AUGUST 2017– VOLUME 2



## On Track with Pastor Jack

By now, we all have heard the phrase “congregational transformation” many times. For some, this concept describes what happens when a congregation assembles the “right” programs and ministries that have been voted in or prescribed by a church guru as a recipe for numerical growth. Now there is nothing wrong with congregational aspirations for numerical growth. In fact, when one surveys the North American religious landscape, one will notice that scores of congregations have lost a significant amount of “members” and others have even closed. When these realities are factored in, numerical growth is not a questionable hope; it is a sincere one.

However, when I think of the well-worn phrase “congregational transformation,” I think of a process of change, one through which God reminds a congregation of its divine purpose, and works to transform it from a collection of individual “members” into a team of Christ’s disciples that spreads his revolutionary love, his sustainable hope, and his vision of justice to people near and far.

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## Church Events

- **August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30—  
9:30 a.m. Taize Prayer**
- **August 4, 11, 18, 25— 11  
a.m. Bible Study**
- **August 26 10:00 a.m.  
Elder’s meeting today!**
- **August 27—10:00 a.m. at  
Litzenberg Woods—Church  
cookout and a Back to  
School Festival—get ready  
to mark your calendars!!**
- **RENEWED MIND Volunteer  
opportunity**

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The Apostle Paul, whom I lovingly refer to as the “Artist Formerly Known as Saul,” is the poster child for divine transformation. Remember his Damascus Road experience, when Christ changed his heart from one of political violence to prophetic vision through Christ? (Acts 9:10-19) Paul would later challenge Roman Christians to avoid conforming to the world and instead be “transformed by the renewing of their minds” in Romans 12:2.

The question for North American congregations is this: Are we a social club that mirrors the trends and values of society or are we part of the body of Christ with a divine agenda? By all estimates, including those of this writer, the social club view of church has contributed to its decline. I believe that the one true hope for congregations to enjoy theological credibility and Reign (Kingdom) of God social impact rests with their willingness to live as part of the body of Christ and pursue his vision of love dismounting fear, hope dismembering despair, and peace dismantling violence.

Pursuing Christ’s vision involves more than a majority win vote in a church meeting. Instead it calls for congregants like all of us to submit ourselves to God through prayer and the purposeful study of scripture, in an effort to permit God to transform us from being church members into Christ’s disciples. It involves us listening to God with other congregational disciples in order for the church body itself to visibly move toward living the sentiments of submission as inspired by an epic hymn, “Have thine own way, Lord. Have thine own way. Thou art the potter, (we) are the clay.”

When Christ’s vision becomes our vision, church will become less of a place we go, and more of a divinely inspired body through which Christ forms our identity, informs our decisions, and fuels our actions. Of course, this mean we will experience transformation!

## Renewed Mind Volunteer opportunity

**First Christian Church is underway with a new volunteer mission of opportunity and we need YOUR help!**

**Volunteers will take** *(we can use more volunteers at 10 to haul the cooler, please lend a hand and help)* **a cooler of water and approximately 15-20 healthy snacks to the Renewed Mind main office each Wednesday/Friday morning around 10 am.**

**Snacks may be of your choosing for the day you volunteer. Trying to keep them somewhat healthy. We have used small variety bags of chips, fruit cups, granola bars, cookies, bars, etc.**

**OR**

**YOU MAY SIMPLY PROVIDE YOUR DELIVERY SERVICES ONLY.**

**Please help us share God’s Word through giving of our time and gifts to those who are finding their faith. See sign up sheets as you enter!**



# Event Reminders

Dear Brother in Faith and Vision,  
Every once and awhile, an opportunity comes that gives a person a chance to break new ground and to make history. I am quite pleased to announce to you that such an opportunity is now before us! It is my pleasure to invite you to break new ground and make history by participating in the 2017 Inaugural retreat of a sweeping new ministry to and with Christian men of all churches, called Ecumentors!

This new ministry Ecumentors, has been designed to be an instrument through which Christian men deepen their relationships with God and share their faith with other brothers. Our model, as followers of Jesus Christ, is to witness and be examples of servant leadership through using our God-given gifts and talents. We will discern ways in which our actions deliver care, guidance and support through spiritual mentoring to all ages of men and their communities.

I request the honor of your registration and presence during the first gathering of Ecumentors. **September 29 through October 1 at the Conference Center of Bethany Beach, DE.** A registration form is available if you are interested in attending. Fifty (50) men is our capacity to attend.

Can't make the event, but want to make a financial gift of support? May God Bless Your Discernment and Commitment to Men's Ministry.

Ecumentors, INC. P.O. Box 6513, Ashland, VA 23005

ecumentors@gmail.com

See Pastor Jack for more information/registration form/financial gift of support.

Thank you!

# Word of Devotion

## Savior

Matthew Laney

*"For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." - Luke 2:11*

This "savior" stuff doesn't come naturally to our contemporary, self-reliant, "can-do" culture. We're all for healing the world but less inclined to admit we also need a healer. We can identify racism, sexism and xenophobia in our culture and be slow to admit the need to exorcise those demons from ourselves.

Meanwhile, we know dentists cannot put fillings in their own teeth, a hairstylist cannot adequately do his own hair and a surgeon cannot operate on herself. We cannot baptize ourselves or serve ourselves communion, but we still struggle to admit we can only be restored by surrendering to a Presence larger and wiser than ourselves.

I understand the reluctance. Part of me would rather believe I can improve myself through my own efforts: a spiritual tweak here, a moral upgrade there, instead of admitting I need a total overhaul of heart and mind.

Here's why: If I am healed by my own efforts, there would be limits to what God could ask of me. But if I am healed by the grace of God in Christ, then I belong to Christ and I owe God everything.

That's scary until we realize there is nothing more liberating than giving everything to God and nothing more terrifying than being left to our own devices. Giving up control is frightening until we acknowledge we have never been in control for a day in our lives. Life begins when we turn to our Savior, one day, one moment, at a time.

## Prayer

Help me Savior God and just for you today, let me surrender everything to you.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Laney is a United Church of Christ minister and the author of breakout *The Pride Wars* fantasy series published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for young readers ages 8-12. The first book, *The Spinner Prince*, will be available in April, 2018, just in time to purchase a copy or two for 20 of your closest friends and family members for Easter.

# Birthday's and Anniversary's



## **August Birthday's**

8/3 Pat Riker  
8/10 Karol Smith  
8/10 Steven Strayer  
8/12 David England  
8/15 Beth Reynolds  
8/17 Marilyn Hobbs  
8/24 Tim Wolfe

## **August Anniversary's**

8/15 Allen & Pat Sharninghouse  
8/19 Lenny & Marilyn Hobbs



## **The Findlay Flood of July 2017**

By now we have read or heard the news stories indicating that the flood of July 13-14, 2017 was the fifth worst in the history of the city. While no one from First Christian Church reported flood loss or damage, it is clear that many of our fellow residents experienced flood-related destruction of property and disruption of life.

Our denomination has a ministry known as Week of Compassion. The Week of Compassion ministry works to meet the needs of individuals and families impacted by natural disasters and acts of war/violence. This ministry is funded by Disciples of Christ congregations like First Christian Church.

If you have relatives or neighbors who experienced flood-related loss or damages, they may be eligible for a financial grant from Week of Compassion. To find out more, please send an email note to Pastor Jack at [JSullivan@fccfindlay.org](mailto:JSullivan@fccfindlay.org) or call him in the church office, 419.422.5615 or via cell, 216.905.5119.

Let us continue to pray for and with our neighbors who lost property to the flood waters of July 13-14. Their recovery is our recovery.

## Prayers/Concerns

- ◆ For those with cancer and undergoing Cancer Treatment: \*Ray Neall, \*Fred Kretzinger
- ◆ For those with various health issues and concerns: \*Nancy Peters, \* Nancy LaRoche, \*Jack Cowart (brother-in-law of Charlotte Ballard), \*Donna Foreman, \*Barbara England, \*Kasey Stewart, \*Kathleen Schaeffer, \*Janet Powell, \*Karol Smith, \*Mary Thompson,
- ◆ Prayers for the families upon the recent death of loved ones, Pastor Jack, Gene Weist, Brent Yunker (Classmate of Patty Koehler).
- ◆ Prayers for peace and just solutions to conflicts, natural disasters, polarizing, police/citizen relationships, terrorism around the world, refugees fleeing and trying to find new host/home countries, and healing of political fractures in our country
- ◆ For our new presidential administration
- ◆ For those seeking employment.
- ◆ For those who are having trouble making ends meet
- ◆ For those who are in physical or emotional pain
- ◆ For our First Christian Church homebound members

**Sharing brings Joy**  
**To Us. To Others. To God**

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**DATED MATERIAL - PLEASE DELIVER**

**Sunday Schedule**  
**9:30 AM Sunday School**  
**10:30 a.m. Worship Service**  
**Followed by Fellowship-Coffee**

*First Christian Church is joyfully affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) US and Canada. [www.disciples.org](http://www.disciples.org). We welcome all people whatever their gender, identification, race, culture, ethnic background, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, family configuration, or difference in ability into full participation in the life, leadership, and employment of First Christian Church.*

