

PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain." – 1 Corinthians 15:58



Summers in New Jersey meant trips “down the shore,” our ungrammatical reference to the miles of ocean beaches that are one of the most popular areas of my home state. We always looked forward to walking along the shoreline, hunting for seashells, bodysurfing in the waves, and getting a tan without the pain of sunburn. Another popular activity at the Jersey Shore was building sandcastles. Some of these creations were quite simple, merely a series of pails of sand overturned to create towers. Others could be quite elaborate; some shore communities had annual contests where artists created awe-inspiring structures that would often make the evening news. But no matter how simple or how elaborate these sandcastles may have been, they shared one common element: they were very temporary, inevitably washed away in the rising tides. As much as I enjoyed building my simple sandcastles and watching the more elaborate ones being built, it always seemed to me that it was a waste of time and energy, since it would soon be gone. It was labour that always felt like it was in vain.

On the first Monday in September, we observe Labour Day, a day in which we honour the labours of workings in all professions and trades who work to improve the lives of our communities and nation. The weekend is also observed as the unofficial end of summer since schools usually open the week after Labour Day. The arrival of Labour Day always brought mixed emotion for me; while I was sad that summer was over, I also looked forward to seeing my friends at school, the beginning of football and marching band season, and the beautiful fall weather that I so enjoyed. In the church, Labour Day meant that the program year was beginning, that we would soon celebrate Rally Sunday along with the beginning of Sunday School and resumption of many programs that had taken a break for the summer.

We will once again observe Labour Day this month as we give thanks for all works whose labours

benefit our lives; but this Labour Day once again leads into a month of uncertainty in this ongoing time of pandemic. While we have returned to worship, many of the programs that would have launched this month are still on hold, as is the resumption of Sunday school. Reports of a fourth wave of infections fill us with uncertainty and frustrations; the hopes that came with the availability of vaccines have not come to fruition. We continue to work as God's people in response to God's call to us as the Church, but we may be wondering if all our labours are in vain, with no more certainty or permanence than those sandcastles at the Jersey Shore.

As I looked back upon my childhood summers and ahead to another season of uncertainty, Paul's words in his first letter to the Corinthians came to mind, where he encourages his readers to *"be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain."* (1 Corinthians 15:58). Believers stand firm and immovable by *"excelling in the work of the Lord,"* and they can passionately and unreservedly throw themselves into that work because of the good news of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and what this tells us about our life and work in the world: namely, that their labour in the Lord is not in vain, it is not empty.

Paul's call to be "steadfast" is elaborated by three statements that describe how and what Christians are to do to be steadfast:

1. They are to be "immovable" (*ametakineto*), able to stand against whatever winds or experiences buffet them because of their confidence that *"the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6).
2. They stand fast by *"abounding always in the work of the Lord,"* knowing that it is our Lord Jesus Christ who calls his apostolic church to continue the work of being witnesses *"in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8).
3. Because the Lord has called them into this mission field and has promised to empower them with the gift of the Holy Spirit, they live in the sure and certain knowledge that *"your labour is not in vain,"* knowing that the Word of God *"shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:11).

As believers' faith is one and they are therefore united in it, so their work, their labour is one because God's singular love is expressed in their varied tasks. They live in confidence that they are engaged in God's work, and therefore their labour is never in vain because God's Will shall be done *"on earth as it is in heaven."*

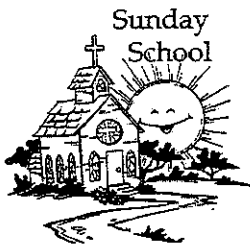
1. "Engagement, struggle, labour, doing 'the work of the Lord' are not an option that believers might choose; they are an obligation. Faith does not have works simply as an option that may or may not be exercised. Faith requires that works be done. Faith is

incomplete – one might say that it is not truly faith – until it expresses itself in deeds.” –
J. Paul Sampley.

This Labour Day ushers in another September when we find ourselves struggling to be faithful to God’s call for us to be labourers in God’s vineyard at a time when it is difficult to see how we can accomplish God’s Will during what seems to be a never-ending pandemic. But it is precisely in such times of uncertainty that we turn to the certainty of God’s Word and the assurance that God is with us always, that God will always bless our labours, and that the work God calls us to engage in will not result in the fate of those sandcastles at the Jersey Shore. God will accomplish through us what God will for all people, and therefore the labour in which we engage as God’s people is never in vain!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

SUNDAY SCHOOL



We are hoping that all Sunday School families could please fill out the attached survey so that we are better able to plan for the return of Sunday School, when it is safe to do so. If for some reason you are unable to complete the survey, you can also email your name, your child(ren)’s name(s), current grade(s), and whether or not they would be participating in Sunday School to Paula at pauley_mcnaughton@hotmail.com.

Click here for the survey: <https://forms.gle/bS3dCdiEaSmrnXLEA>

Thank you for your continued support.

Paula McNaughton
Sunday School Coordinator



FINANCE COMMITTEE

There is a Finance Committee Meeting taking place in the Fellowship Hall on **Tuesday, September 14 at 7:00 pm.**



ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

There is An Endowment Meeting scheduled in the Fellowship Hall on **Thursday, September 9 at 7:00 pm.**

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR TREASURER



As I write this Message to our members as a follow-up to my letter in early July which included your Offering Statement from January 1 to June 30, 2021, we have once again resumed In-Person Worship Services. For those who feel safe to return to worship, following all the protocols, it is once again good to have this opportunity to worship our Lord. Also, the recent installation of our air conditioning system in the sanctuary has been most welcome by the members attending In-Person Worship taking into consideration the warmer temperatures we have been subjected to this summer. Of course, as has been done in the past, we will continue with the on-line services via the Church website, namely the sermon by Pastor Jeff including prayers and announcements, for those members who are still not ready to return to In-Person Worship Services at this time.

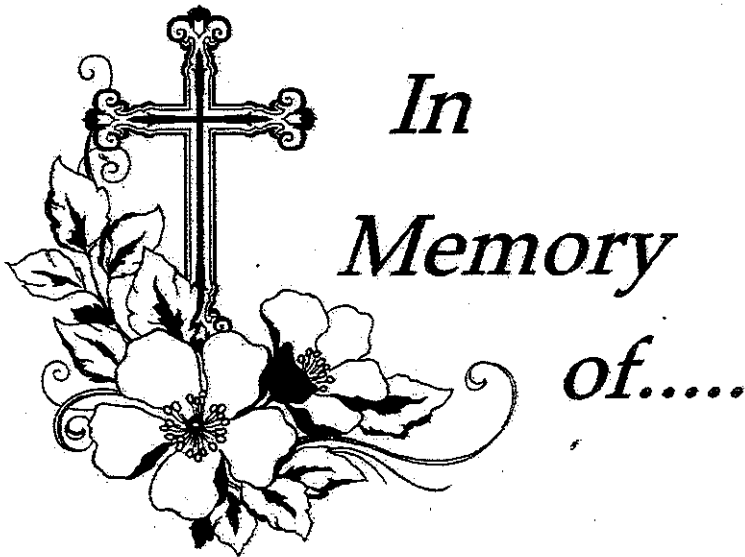
As you already know, my responsibility as your Treasurer is to keep you informed as to what has been happening financially, since my letter in early July. As I indicated in my previous letter to our members, the offerings during the months of April, May and June dropped dramatically. To the members who have responded to our financial needs over the summer months, we are most grateful and convey our "thank you." However, the deficit in the Current Fund continues to be higher than last year at this same time, so we continue to ask that you prayerfully consider our request once again of helping to assist with our financial situation and respond as you are able. The Wage Subsidies still do continue to help our bottom line for this fiscal year, but we also know

that this program in all probability may be discontinued within the next few months. For your information, a Finance Committee Meeting is scheduled for early September. Therefore, the next "Message from your Treasurer" will contain more specific details as to the current financial status of our church.

It is our hope that this message continues to find you and your family and friends safe and healthy.

Gerald Cook, Treasurer

On behalf of the Congregational Council and Finance Committee



Gerhardt Wiedmann
June 29, 2021

Doreen Rose
July 18, 2021

Ardath Michaeli
July 28, 2021

WHAT IS THE POINT OF WORSHIP?



When you go to church on a Sunday morning, the typical service will usually begin with praise and worship. Depending on the type of church you go to, the worship experience can be quite different. Some churches are very loud and boisterous in their worship, which can even lead to shouting and dancing. Other churches can be more reserved, leading to a worship experience that feels more reflective and reverent.

To be honest, I enjoy both styles and the truth is the heart you bring to worship is more important than the style anyway. Regardless, people tend to have a particular preference, which I am sure you do too, and there is nothing wrong with that.

I would like you to think about something for a moment. Have you ever stopped to wonder what the purpose of worship is and why do we begin the service doing it? As crazy as it sounds, there are some people who don't see the need for worship in the service. They believe it is not that important because they just want to get to the preaching of the word. After all, this is what they came for. Why do we have to delay the preaching to sing some songs?

Sadly, I have been to churches where the pastors or leaders in the church for some reason don't engage in the worship when the service is going on. I wish this weren't the case, but it is, which brings me back to the question of what the purpose of worship is, and why it is an important part of the service? I am going to share with you four reasons that highlight the purpose of worship in church, and I hope once you understand this, you would never want to miss worship again.

1. Worship Invites the Presence of God

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:3, KJV).

One of the things that worship does is it helps to usher in or welcome the presence of God. In this verse in Psalm 22, the literal translation is that God sits on the praises of his people. Many times in church you will hear people pray "Lord have your way and do what you want to do in this service." Well, worship is what sets the stage for that to occur.

There is something that happens when the people of God begin to worship. When you engage in worship, you are telling God that you are desiring to draw near to him. When this happens, not only does God find pleasure in that, but he has promised to draw near to you.

"Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:8).

We are also reminded in Hebrews that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. When you begin to worship, you get God's attention and you set the stage for him to show up. If you really want God's presence to show up or you desire to be in God's presence, worship is the doorway to make that happen.

2. Worship Settles Your Heart

Have you ever walked into church worried or thinking about all the things that are happening in your life outside of church? Maybe you are thinking about what you will cook for dinner. Maybe the kids have gotten on your nerves. Maybe there is an intense family or job situation that has you deeply concerned. For some people, just getting up and getting everyone dressed and out of the house can be a monumental task. By the time they walk into church they are exhausted, and they need a moment to settle.

One of the things worship can do is to settle your heart and your spirit. After all, you came to church to connect with God and worship can give you the opportunity to tune everything else out and put you in a position so that you can connect with God. Without worship, you could sit through a service and never enter in because you never had the opportunity to settle your heart. When this happens, instead of finding that moment to get away and get refreshed, you often leave church the same way you came in.

If you have ever gone to a fine dining establishment, then you know that at some point during the meal, they may bring you out a little bit of sherbet. When they do this, they are not skipping the main course to get to the dessert – what they are simply doing is offering what is called a palate cleanser. What this is designed to do is cleanse your palate from anything that you have previously eaten, so that you can enjoy the next course and taste all the flavors in the food.

This is what worship does.

When you have come in from the outside world, sometimes you are not able to enjoy what God has for you because you have too many things interfering with the taste of it. When you worship, you can release all those things and position yourself so that you can taste and enjoy what God has to offer you.

3. Worship Can Be the Place God Meets You

I believe every time you go to church there is something God wants to say to you. However, that something does not always come through the preaching of the word. Sometimes it comes through the message in the songs.

There have been plenty of times in my life where the song that was sung was exactly what I needed to hear in that moment. When you miss worship, you might be missing the reason God had you there in the first place. What worship also does is that it aligns your heart with God's heart. When

you are worshipping God, he becomes the focus, and when you are focused on him then your heart can become aligned with his heart. Missing worship can cause you to miss this opportunity.

4. Worship Puts You in Position to Receive the Word of God

The last thing that worship does is it can break up the fallow ground of your heart, so you are ready to receive the word of God. When farmers plant seeds, they don't just go out and drop the seed. They must work the ground first and till the soil so that when the seed goes into the ground it is going into good soil. This gives the seed the best possible chance of taking root and growing. The same is true of worship. Worship prepares your heart so that it is ready to receive and respond to the word of God that is preached. Without worship, it is possible you can miss what God wants to say and do in your life because you are not ready to receive it. Simply put, your heart is still too hard for the word to have any real impact.

Worship will make you more aware of who God is, but in doing so it makes you more aware of who you are. This can lead to repentance, this can build faith, this can increase joy. All of this is God tilling the soil of your heart so that you are ready to receive the word of God. It is often during the worship that God will position your heart so he can speak to you about things in your life. If you are too distracted or your heart is not ready then you may not be able to hear what God wants you to hear.

I hope I have encouraged and motivated you to want to engage in worship, By the way, this is not just good for the Sunday service, this is also true of your personal time with the Lord. I would encourage you before you pray and before you read your Bible, make time for worship so you can position yourself to hear from God. Finally, when the next service at church comes, don't miss the worship because if you do, you might miss everything God wants to do in your life that day.

Author,
Clarence L. Haynes Jr.

WHAT DOES SEPTEMBER MEAN



September

As we enter September it means that fall is fast approaching and our children return to school whether it be near or far. Based on this, I hope that you enjoy the article and prayers below.

10 Back to School Prayers for Your Children

We are on the cusp of the start of a new school year! This year will likely be filled with extra challenges as we all continue to navigate COVID and the effects it's had on our world. Covering our children with prayer is one of the most important ways we can support them as they venture back to school or begin their school year at home. God provides abundantly for his children. We can cast our cares about what our children may be feeling or facing on the Lord. He is faithful to hear us and to help carry our burdens.

The stressors and responsibility of teaching and raising the next generation are heavy ones. Our "normal" has so dramatically transformed since COVID became a part of our lives. Many of us feel overwhelmed and unsure about how to navigate the many new routines and extra precautions we all have to take to keep our homes and communities safe. Jesus invites those of us who are weary and burdened to draw closer to him (Matthew 11:28-30). As we feel the pressure of navigating a new, less conventional school year, be reminded that God is with you in this crazy season! He has not abandoned us and invites us to lean more heavily on him as we walk through the school year.

Here are some verses and prayers we can use to jump-start our prayer life as we seek God's presence to be with us as we walk through the school season.

1. A Prayer for Protection

*"The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."*

Psalm 121: 7-8

Lord, I ask as my children head back to school that you would keep them from all harm. Watch over their lives. Watch over their coming and going. Graciously be with and protect my children this school year. Amen.

2. A Prayer for Diligence

"The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor."

Proverbs 12:24

I pray that my children will approach this school year with diligence. Give them the strength they need to work hard at their studies and every task given to them over the course of the year. Grant them not only knowledge through their efforts but also help them to grow in their wisdom. Amen.

3. A Prayer for Kindness

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Ephesians 4:32

Jesus, would you give my child, my child's teachers, peers, and others they interact with the ability to treat others with kindness. Fill their school and classroom with tenderness. Give each person in their community the ability to forgive easily. Amen.

4. A Prayer for Joy

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Romans 15:13

Lord, I pray that you would fill my children with your joy as they begin a new year of learning! Help them to find joy in their studies and interaction with their teachers and peers at school. May they be filled with wonder as they learn more about this world you have created. Throughout this year, help them to know you better through their studies. Amen.

5. A Prayer for Strength

"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

Deuteronomy 31:6

God, I ask that you would help my child to be strong and courageous as they tackle a new school year! Take from them any dread, anxiety, or grief that may want to steal their joy as they embark on a new school year. Remind them daily that you are with them! You will never leave them and give them the strength they need to walk through each day. Amen.

6. A Prayer for Friendship

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Father, I ask that you would bring friends into my child's life that would build them up. Bring others that would encourage them in their faith walk. Help them to be wise in the friendships that they choose to invest their time and energy into. Amen.

7. A Prayer for Balance

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

Ecclesiastes 3:1

God, help my child to find balance as they begin a new routine over the course of the school year. Help them to wisely choose how to spend their time. Make room in their life for schoolwork, rest, friends, fun, and the other activities that they choose to pursue. Amen.

8. A Prayer for Wisdom

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

James 1:5

Lord, I pray that my child would not only be filled with new knowledge but they also would gain your wisdom. Give them a heart that desires to know you and to follow your ways. Work every experience they have for their good. Graciously show them your way. Protect them from the ideas in this world that would seek to confuse and entrap us. Amen.

9. A Prayer for Love

"How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings."

Psalms 36:7

God, would you show my child how much you love them this year! Speak into their heart the value that they have as your precious creation. May they grow to be secure in their identity as a child of God. When they need it, cover them in the shadow of your wing. Amen.

10. A Prayer for Fun

"A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed."

Proverbs 15:13

Jesus, I ask that my child's school year would be filled with sweet memories that they will cherish for their lifetime. Infuse their days with fun that will keep them filled with joy as they grow and learn. Give them a cheerful face that is contagious as they walk through this school year. Amen.

God, give our children and us the ability to extend to everyone we interact with a special dose of grace and understanding in this year for all the extra stresses and fears that may make this year harder to navigate. Help us to speak slowly and to be quick to listen (James 1:19).

God's Word says the prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective (James 5:16). That means that anyone who has accepted Jesus as their Saviour has the ability to petition him in prayer. The best part is that he says that God hears us and will act on our behalf. God's actions aren't always what we expect, but we can count on the fact that He is always faithful to be present with us when we call out to him for help.

By Amanda Idleman,
Contributing Writer For "Crosswalk"

SEPTEMBER VOLUNTEERS



Listed below are those who are scheduled to serve in September as a reminder and as a thank you for serving.

Please Note: There are no Communion Assistants or Greeters at the present time due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Date	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
Sept 5	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	Liz Bomasuit	Darrell Renecker	Liz Bomasuit
Sept 12	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	Dr. Jo Knackstedt	Brian Coe	Audrey Miller
Sept 19	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	Marilyn Wells	David Doherty	Audrey Miller
Sept 26	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	NONE DUE TO COVID-19	Mary-Lou Drown	Steve Lamont	Dan Neumeister