

By Kevin Wright

There's a lot of turmoil going on right now in our world. Russia rattles its saber, ISIS keeps killing people in the name of religion, Iran has a nuclear infrastructure... and closer to home, homosexual marriage is now the law of the land, and racial tension is in high gear in the United States. Lots of turmoil... and so little peace and grace when dealing with it all...

Last month, several of us got together and talked a little bit about it—not a lot, but a little. But that's how healthy, open communication starts—with just opening the door and realizing that it's safe to step inside of a conversation where not everyone may agree with one another. Even the people who agree with one another may not agree completely.

Case in point: in our conversation, one white sister genuinely and selflessly apologized to the people of color in the room for their treatment at the hands of her American sub-culture. No, she hadn't consciously been racist herself, but she could still express grief and regret (like Godly leaders such as Ezra or Josiah) that her own people had sinned—that her own demographic had mistreated her fellow human beings so badly for so long. It was a profound moment.

And yet, another white brother shared honestly and vulnerably that he could not in good conscience apologize for what he himself had not done. He'd spent his life and his family's life standing against racism in all of its forms, and he believed that we have to get past seeing one another as different races, and instead look at the hearts instead of at the skin. To apologize as one whole race to another whole race just perpetuates judging one another by skin color, *en masse*, as a race. And it was a profound moment.

The truth is, I can see both of their points—in part, because I know both of their hearts. Yes, their conclusions (and thus, their actions) were at odds, but their purposes were exactly the same. Both my brother and my sister were genuinely trying—are trying—to move toward healing and peace, even at the cost of their own personal pride and comfort. And that should always be a profound moment, no matter whether or not you or I agree with a specific conclusion within that attempt.

Ultimately, my brother is right, that we need to embrace the Godly, Biblical perspective about our brothers and sisters. In Christ, "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Colossians 3:11), and we could rightly include "no black or white or yellow or red" in there as well. To judge one another by skin color or nationality or height or quality of beards would be—should be—utterly ridiculous to even contemplate.

And absolutely, my sister is right, that to reach that Biblical, Godly perspective, we have to build new bridges to one another, to take the place of the old ones that we've burned over the years. We need to personally acknowledge our shortcomings, and where we've personally—or as a culture—failed one another (even within the Body of Christ), and come together with a regret that leads to forgiveness, which leads to healing, which leads to true, God-honoring community.

But, of course, that needs to be tempered with my brother's thinking—that it's inherently detrimental to the attempt to overcome racism if that is simply one race *en masse* speaking to another race *en masse*. In short, it's healthy to have these two perspectives in loving, gracious tension with one another. We all, as individuals, need to spend every day actively connecting to and loving all of those around us—not with a single, mass-media act of dramatic political correctness, but with a sincere, ongoing, grace-filled love toward all of our brothers and sisters—and toward all those whom we wish would become our brothers and sisters, by God's grace.

So let's keep talking—not 'round and 'round in circles, and not in sound-bytes, and not in platitudes, and not just about current, hot-button issues. Let's all of us genuinely converse with everyone, with honesty and grief and joy and compassion, treating every individual on God's green Earth as the individual whom they are—sculpted by God, and in desperate need of His love.

Covenant Connections August 2015

Vacation Bible School went very well this year! We glorify God, that 4 kids came up to pray asking Jesus into their hearts.

Sara Stewart and I could not do this ministry alone and we want to thank all those that helped out.

Please forgive me if I overlook anyone.

Cody Doremus, Joe Warren, Decurione Fletcher, Alex Wright, Dakota Jeffries, Kate MacDougal, Monica Cookson, Alyia Washington, Sarah Warren, Michael Wietharn, Anna Weitharn, Alaysia Pettersson, Dougald MacDougal, James Schellenberg, Stephen Christianson, Kim Wainwright, Arielle Warren, Julia Schellenberg, Juanita Alvarez, Aprille Eyre, Dawna Warren, Emily Barry, Jenny Weitharn, Kim Doremus, Jackie Summers, Kristi Christianson, Cliff Johnson, Sara Uhler, Emily Barry, Amy Kellerstrass, Jane Harden, Mark Andrews, David Fletcher, Josh McBride, Jonathan Gohring, Linda Irwin, Bud Magnuson, Marty Baugher, Fred Bergia, Betty Wenzel, Ben Hardin.

Thank You Everyone!

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August 2015

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

						1
2 The Lord's Supper	3	4 Worship Practice 7:30	5 Intersection & Congregational prayer 6:30	6 Final Ladies Bible Study 1:00	7 Sojourners 6:30	8
9 Teen Challenge Potluck	10	11 Worship Practice 7:30	12 Intersection & Congregational prayer 6:30	13	14	15
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Gregory Update

This message has been a long time in coming. Many of you have stuck with us in praying for the sale of our apartment from last fall. We are so thankful to have some news to report:

A young couple with two children has made an offer on our place. Their offer is about where we expected to land in order to sell in the depressed Italian real-estate market. They have to sell their own place in the coming months for us to close the deal, but we and our realtor are optimistic that they will be able to do this, we pray by this fall. The sale price is less than the purchase price of 10 years ago (!), but thanks to the generosity of a partner couple in our work who invested funds in helping us to buy the place, our initial investment is being preserved (!!!).

We were able to agree separately on selling our portion of the roof-top terrace to our difficult upstairs neighbors. We hope and pray that this will help create an incentive for them to live peacefully with the new owners downstairs. This terrace gives the upstairs neighbors an outdoors space of their own for the first time, as theirs was the only apartment in the three apartment building without an exclusive space. Maybe they will learn to chill! The new owners of our apartment couldn't have afforded it unless the terrace was sold separately.

The bottom line is that we feel very cared for and provided for throughout this whole messy situation, both by you, our precious friends, and by our best friend, Jesus. We will keep you posted on closing the deal. Having this behind us will be an enormous weight off our shoulders. Thanks for continuing to pray for this all to be resolved by November 1. In my last message about "waiting" I asked you to pray with us for a buyer by July 1. On July 1 we received word from our realtor that someone had made a written offer.

Thanks to everyone. Remembering once again from Romans 8:

"God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

Love and peace,
Kyle and Kim Gregory

Teen Challenge

TEEN CHALLENGE COMING SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

Teen Challenge is an international Christian faith based discipleship program with over a 45 year history of providing assistance, support and challenging people to make the right choices by turning away from their destructive lifestyles. Teen Challenge in Peoria is a non-profit Christian-oriented discipleship program for men who are 18 years or older, whose lives are being destroyed by life-controlling problems such as drugs, alcohol, gang activity, wrongful behavior, or other negative life styles.

On Sunday, August 9th, Teen Challenge will be coming to our church to minister to us for the entire service. Through testimonies, songs, and prayer, we will have the opportunity to learn about this powerful ministry. After the worship service, there will be a all-church potluck in the church fellowship hall. Please come and get to know some of these men personally and learn how the Lord has delivered them from a life of addiction! Please bring a salad (vegetable or fruit), hot vegetable, and/or dessert to serve 12-15 people. (There is a sign up sheet in the narthex for this.) Ham and scalloped potatoes will be provided.

To help the Teen Challenge with a practical need, we are asking if you are able, to bring toilet paper and/or any of the following toiletry items: disposable razors & shaving cream, stick deodorant, soap, shampoo, tooth brush, toothpaste, and non-alcoholic mouthwash. Please bring any of these items on Sunday, August 2nd or the 9th and put them in the box labeled for Teen Challenge. The box will be in the foyer. Also after the worship service, an opportunity will be provided to make a financial contribution to Teen Challenge.

Children's Ministry

As we gear up for our fall Sunday School, I am excited about the teachers who are returning for this school year. We begin on September 13, 9:00 AM, with Sunday School for all ages. The toddlers will meet in the nursery, with Ben and Jane Hardin and Kim Doremus as teachers. PreK-kindergarten meets with Amy Kellerstrass and Peggy Peryam across from the nursery. Mark Andrews will teach grades 1-3 upstairs next to the elevator, and Bill Wenzel and Scott Christianson will share teaching duties for grades 4-6. Nena Gullette will sub for Mark when needed. The teachers hope more of you feel led to step in and teach, even to visit a classroom you might be interested in, or share a lesson teaching with someone else. Mark's class especially needs a co-teacher, and someone could volunteer to be there for one Sunday a month or 2 weeks in a row.

Children's Church will be joining with JMETs to fill shoe boxes for children. In August and September, the children will be introduced to the concept with information, a video, and discussion. We will gather the items needed in September and assemble boxes in October. Please be on the lookout for sox, school supplies, small toys, books, hygiene items and the like for your children to bring in September.

Thank you for your prayers and support for the teaching staff! Peggy Peryam

Servers

A-V

2 Loni/Steve
9 Dave/Kelvin
16 Loni/Steve
23 Loni/Steve
30 Dave/Kelvin

Nursery

2 Nikki/Dawna
9 Jenny/volunteer
16 Anna/volunteer
23 Wendy/Marge
30 Ben/volunteer

Hospitality

2 Peryam
9 Warren
16 Wenzel
23 Budzynski
30 Christianson

Prayer

2 Linda/Donna
9 Randy/Linda
16 Cliff/Terri
23 Bill/Dawna
30 Linda/Dawna

Offering Counters

2 Jan/Randy
9 Jan/Richard
16 Jan/Ken
23 Jan/Ross
30 Jan/Bill

Children's Church
Peggy/Volunteer

INTERSECTION NEWS

By Sara Stewart

August 2015

Church Family, the summer is coming to a close and the youth did a great job helping out with VBS in July. We couldn't have a successful VBS without them and they were awesome! They cleaned the church daily, interacted with the kids as crew leaders and assistance. They decorated and tore down, taught the music and tons of other jobs. Make sure you thank them for all their hard work!

The kids have also been the school supply counters for all the school supplies we have been collecting for Harrison School. There are many ways that our teens support the church at large.

So, please keep the kids in your prayers as they are starting school soon and interacting with those around them as God's ambassadors.

FCC FAMILY NEWS

*Happy Birthday to those who were born in August:
Graham League, Mike Thomas, Orpha Erickson,
Ross Wietharn, Jenny Wietharn, Asher Doremus,
Cody Doremus, and Caleb Christianson*

FCC Recipe of the Month

Easy Fruit Cobbler

1 cup all-purpose flour

3/4 cup white sugar

1/4 cup butter

2 teaspoons baking powder

3/4 cup milk

3 cups sliced fresh peaches

Directions

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Melt butter in a 9 x 9 inch baking dish.

Blend together flour, baking powder, sugar, and milk.

Pour batter in baking dish over the butter. Sprinkle fruit on top of the batter, do not stir. Bake for 1 hour or until golden brown.