

The Spark



Confessions of a Preacher Man

Do you ever wonder if the preacher sins? Some folks (those that live in a Pollyanna paradise) say, "Good heavens, not the preacher! Why, he's a holy man!" Others a little more cynical say, "Yeah, of course the preacher sins! In fact, he probably sins worse than anyone at church!" If you build your worldview on the principles of the Bible you will soberly recognize that everyone is contaminated with a clear propensity towards selfishness, pride, and unholy impulsivities. Yes, even the preacher.

As you may have heard me mention, carpentry is a hobby of mine. A number of years ago I devoted several hours toward my hobby as I embarked on the construction of a shed. I needed a place where my kids could park their bicycles and where I could store junk that's just too valuable to throw away. If I do say so myself, it turned out pretty well (there's the pride). As I worked away, my task-oriented nature frequently took over and it didn't matter that I was married or that I was a father. All that mattered was that I was in the middle of a project of cosmic importance. Kids? What kids? Wife? What wife? Nothing else mattered because I was on a mission of my own making and I would be stopped by nothing (there's the selfishness).

At one point of the process, I found myself sufficiently frustrated that building materials were not obeying my wishes. It seemed no matter how many times I cut a board it was still too short. After one mismeasure,

miscut, and pinched finger too many, I heard my hallowed lips utter an explicative thoroughly unfit for any Christian (there's the unholy impulsivity).

As one would hope, I immediately confessed and repented of my sin and proceeded with a renewed perspective on how I had become too impatient and how ultimately unimportant my task really was. I blushed at thinking I would behave in such a carnal manner. After all, I'm a preacher man. We're not supposed to do such things.

They say confession is good for the soul but not too many of us are rushing out to strengthen our souls. It's not easy to admit failure and most of us spend a lot of breath defending our innocence rather than admitting our shortcomings. Fact is, we spend far more energy trying to manage our image than admitting the simple theological fact that we're all really screwed up and that we'll stay that way until we get seriously involved with Jesus.

I heard one preacher suggest that if everyone would write their three worst sins on an index card and go to church wearing that card pinned to their lapel, spiritual revival would break out in the congregation. I agree. We would all quickly realize that everyone needs grace and forgiveness and that, at our cores, none of us is much better than the next person. What do you think? Doable? Ok, you go first.

Pastor Jamey Nichols

**March
2021**

**FIRST
UNION
CHURCH**

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A Matter of Prayer

We are very serious about praying for our friends and families at First Union Church. If you have a prayer request there are several ways to let us know: Use the *Spark* or church emails on the back page of this issue, or let the pastor know, or use the church prayer chain. Or ask for prayer during the church service congregational prayer time. And don't forget to drop a card to any of these folks.

Please continue to pray for:

Ben Gulder's wife, Julie, diagnosed with a complex migraine while pregnant. She's better, but continued prayer for her and baby is welcomed.

Jim Mertaugh Family; on his passing on 2-2-21

Marilyn Bickham: health issues and a move into assisted living near her granddaughter, Lisa

Loren Dingman: for continued improvement in health and moving back into Thornapple Manor from the hospital

Paula Kaye: Sue Rye's niece, who is battling a tough bone cancer. She is having chemotherapy treatments

Lois Tassier: Lymphoma with chemotherapy

Norman Brood: still fighting many issues from his car/truck accident.

Tom Moore: Health issues

Jeanne Hays: homebound

Barb Murray: homebound

Kathie Frontjes: surgery recovery (but getting better every day because she's out fishing in FL)

All our **friends** at **Cedar Cove** and all our friends homebound during Covid.

Please pray...

For our elders: that God's Spirit would guide them as they look after the care and healing of our congregation.

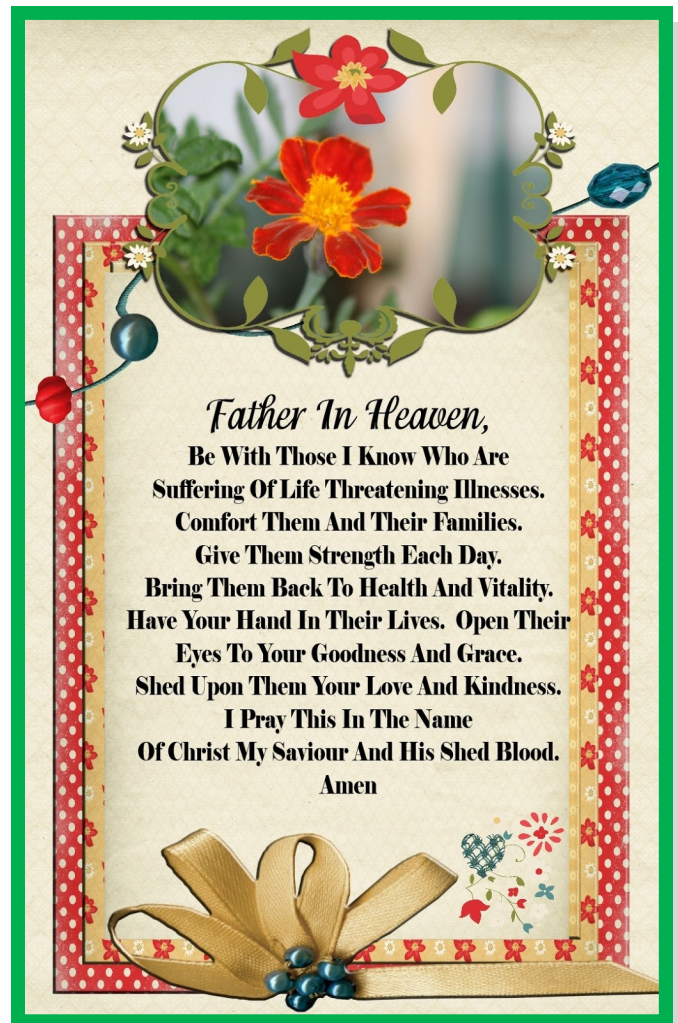
For the deacons: that they would not be weary in doing The good work they've answered the call to undertake.

For the PSC: that they be led by the Scriptures as they finalize their preparations to begin sifting potential candidates.

For the children and teens: that their love for God would grow more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

For our Bible study groups: that God's Spirit would guide them into all truth as they seek to understand His Word.

For the congregation at large: that those who are suffering physically or spiritually might find renewed strength.



How About You?

“Food for Thought”

With the help of modern technology, each Michigan farmer is able to produce enough food to feed himself and how many additional people?

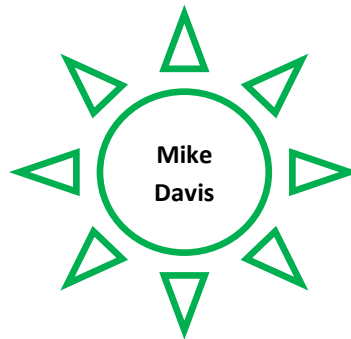
Of all the pairs of eagles now nesting in Michigan, two-thirds of them are in what part of the state? The answer to the first question is seventy-eight. The answer to the second question is the Upper Peninsula.

How about this one, what Michigan county has the most religious congregations in the state? That would be Kent County! 55 percent of the population go to church. About 114,000 are Catholic and 56,000 are Protestant and some 43,000 are Christian Reformed.

I studied the Mackinaw Fact Book, looking to see if a study had been done on the number of people who attend church in Mackinac

County. I could not find any data in their facts. We know that in 1985 Michigan farmers produced 541,200,000 pounds of dry beans, but the data on church attendance is minimal.

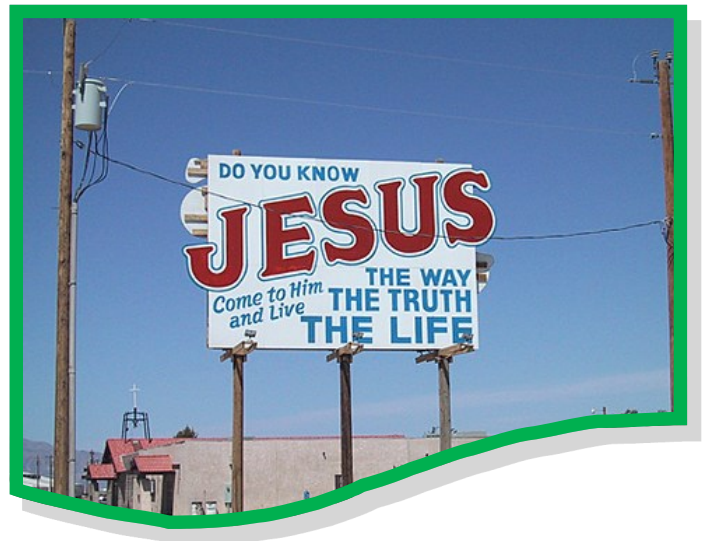
How About You?... Are you among the numbers Christ can count on to be at church on Sunday morning? We are working hard to follow COVID -19 guidelines at First Union. The important thing is, regardless of the facts, does God have a 100% of you everyday?



Just Off the Highway...

Greetings from Florida. **June and I** made the trip down in mid-February leaving the Les Cheneaux Islands at 4 degrees and arriving in mid-Florida at 85 degrees. Our 'in-house weather adviser' told us to hold off on our travel, for one day, to allow an ice storm to take it's toll on Kentucky and Tennessee. The roads were basically clear but the trees in those two states were covered in crystal ice. It looked like a fantasy forest and the rock cliffs were beautiful with various ice formations. Something else that seemed prevalent to us, was the inordinate amount of billboards for Christ. Signs that said: *Do you know where you are going... Heaven or Hell?* Another had a picture of Jesus with a caption of *"I am coming back!"* Several others promoted pro-life messages as well. It was fascinating to see the amount of time and money that was spent to get a casual word out to travelers about the Christian Faith. I think I would be safe to say we saw more than 50 of these full size, colorful, well presented billboards. It was good to see that

we are not the only ones who put God first in our life and those people are doing something about it! On the next sign we see, we will copy down the dot com address so we can support their efforts. Let me know if you want to join us.



The Recipe Box



Hi Everyone! My mom always used to say to me...remember you're 1/4 Irish! So if you are Irish too....**Erin Go Braugh!** (*Ireland Forever!*)

If you're tired of the same old Green Bean Casserole we all have on our holidays, maybe you'd like to try a home-made version.

Green Bean Casserole

Crispy Onion Topping

2 white onions, thinly sliced
1/4 cup all purpose flour
2 T panko bread crumbs
1 t salt

Green Bean Casserole

1/2 pd. Bacon, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 T flour
1 cup chicken broth
1 cup half and half
1/2 t pepper
1/4 t ground nutmeg
2 pounds frozen green beans, thawed (or fresh)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Lightly grease a baking sheet, (I'd use parchment). In a large bowl, toss onions with the flour, panko and salt. Spread in even layer on baking pan. Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes, tossing every 10 minutes.

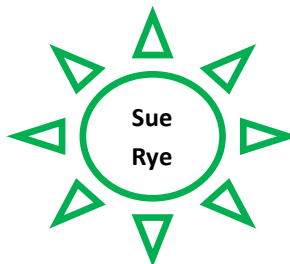
2. Meanwhile cook bacon in a skillet over medium heat until crispy. Do not drain the grease. Add in garlic and saute 30 seconds. Stir in flour to completely dissolve. Pour in chicken broth, half and half, pepper and nutmeg. Bring to a boil, then simmer until thickened, about 3 minutes.
3. Defrost your green beans in the microwave, or steam if using fresh beans. Place beans in lightly greased 9x13 pan. Pour bacon mixture over the green beans and toss to coat. Bake in the 450 degree oven for 15 minutes.
4. Remove from the oven and sprinkle the cooked, crisp onions on top. Return to the oven for 5 minutes before serving.

****My tweak would be...use fresh beans****

Nancy Glupker's Friendship Cake

1 cup greetings
1/2 cup smiles
1 large handshake (when Covid is over)
2/3 cup love
1 t sympathy
2 cups hospitality

Cream greetings and smiles thoroughly. Add handshake separately. Slowly stir in love. Sift sympathy and hospitality and fold in carefully. Bake in a warm heart. Serve often.



To Your Health...

How is your heart?

We hear often how important it is to be active, not just sit and watch tv or read, but do you know how important activity really is to your health?

There are health risks for heart disease of which we have no control over, including our age, gender, previous heart attack or stroke, heredity and race. However, there are risk factors for heart disease we can control including maintaining your blood pressure in the normal range, avoiding smoking, keeping a healthy weight, treating diabetes, knowing your cholesterol level and being active.

Being active will benefit your heart and your family as it will help keep your heart healthy and strong. Besides being a benefit to your heart health, being active will help to give you more energy, and less stress. Sleeping sounder, having increased muscle strength and preventing bone loss are other benefits.

Activity does not mean you have to join a gym, just find something you enjoy doing whether it is walking or swimming regularly. Increasing your step count to 10,000 steps per day can be of value. The steps can occur over the course of the day. A walk in the morning and evening, added to the steps you normally take will make a difference.

Small changes to try might be taking the stairs instead of an elevator, walking while talking on the phone. You will benefit from both a good talk with a friend and while increasing your step count.

Maintaining a healthy weight is also good for your heart. The more weight you carry increases strain on your heart and may increase your blood pressure. Exercise can help with weight loss but you may need to consider your diet. It is easy to grab a quick snack when watching tv or visiting with friends. Snack foods are tasty but they contain high levels of cholesterol, sugars, salt and other ingredients that will be difficult to burn off.

There are things to think about when you are tempted by snacks. Consider a yogurt instead

of a bowl of ice cream, have one cookie instead of 3 or 4, drink plenty of water to help you feel full.

The changes that you make to benefit your heart will also be a benefit to your family as you will be able to join them in the family events over the years.

Men, even though the referenced website is for women, you may want to read it too, so you will be able to help the women in your life as they make changes to keep themselves healthy. Maybe there is something you can work on together for your heart health.

Source: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/about-heart-disease-in-women/facts> .

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

Proverbs 4:23

Betty Mitchell BSN



GODWINK: An event or personal experience often identified as coincidence so astonishing that it is seen as a sign of divine intervention especially when perceived as the answer to a prayer. **Godwinks** are always a sign of hope.

(...and when you do experience a Godwink moment, you will know it!)

**From Chapter 2 of *Who Speaks for God*
by Chuck Colson**

Our government is unable to solve all our nation's problems. And throwing money at something is a cheap way of caring even if we had enough.

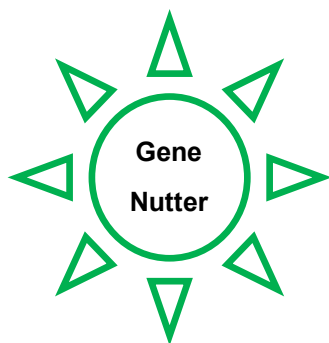
So after examining the budget, the President in the 80's called on religious and business leaders together to fill in the vacuum.

However, steady erosion of our personal sense of participation has been happening, and we've gotten a sense that the system is at fault, and are blaming it as well. It's easier than looking into the crying eyes of a hungry person. But if we could only have a reformation of our role in society.

Almost at the same time, Mother Theresa came to town, and the press interviewing her asked, "Why don't you start a program?"

She explained, "I just want to help people!" Then she and the sisters of Charity just went out into a neighborhood and started to care and share. They seemed to understand what the apostle Paul said about the "fellowship of suffering."

Mother Theresa was plain enough. "Do something for somebody else!"—something that takes sacrifice—for the sick, unwanted, crippled, heartbroken, aged or alone. The President and the Nun from Calcutta are giving us the same message. There is a need!



Below is the bench **Dick Carr** made, gave and dedicated in memory of his granddaughter

Tricia (St. Onge) Smith



**Yvonne
McDonald**

Had a
Birthday
at the
Cove

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