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I found a letter on my desk last week. The sister who wrote it was not happy with me. I had said in church the Sunday before that due to the pandemic I wasn't encouraging anyone to come to church. I admitted it was a strange thing for a preacher to say, but she insisted it was a wrong thing for a church leader to say. And she was right.

She suggested that some were simply getting out of the habit of coming, or just found watching the service on TV more convenient. I told her I said what I said because I didn't want to guilt anyone into coming who shouldn't come. If she's right, it's time for me to pull out the guilt card!

Obviously if you are at increased risk, and are avoiding being around others because of health concerns, you should take advantage of the opportunity to worship online for the time being. I certainly would not want to encourage anyone to go against their better judgment and do something that would needlessly endanger their health, or the health of someone under their care. And I realize that by not providing a nursery it's difficult to worship while trying to corral little ones. But if there is really no good reason for you not being here, you need to be here. And we have done everything we can to make it as safe as possible for you be here.

Every other pew is taped off, and social distancing is encouraged. Doors to the auditorium are left open to facilitate air flow, and to allow people to slip in and out without coming in direct contact with anyone if that is their desire. Those who want to socialize a bit are encouraged to do so in the parking lot. And we do encourage the use of masks. In fact, some, like my grumbling grandkids, have been ordered to do so.

To end on light-hearted note, I have to tell you how someone who happens to share my first name responded when I asked why he had started coming back. He said he had run out of soup crackers for communion.

Rest assured communion will be waiting for you in your pew when you come this Sunday. God Bless, Rick

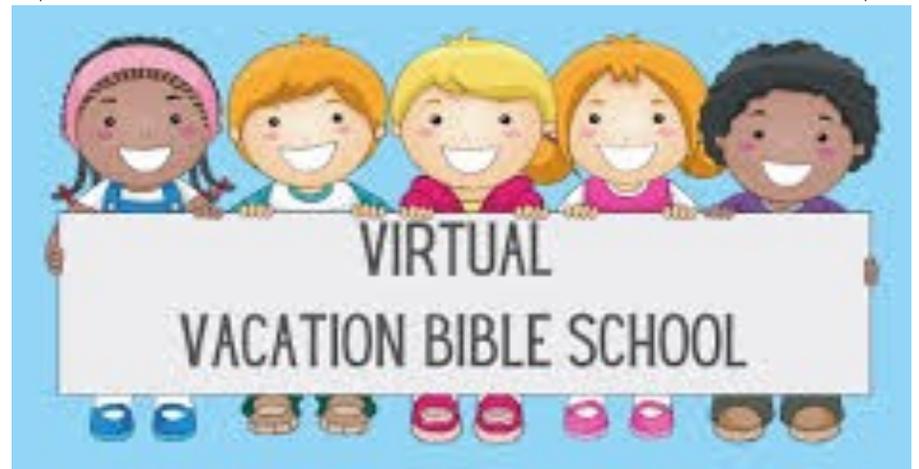


THE CHATHAM MESSENGER

VOLUME 48

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V-VBS bags will be available this Sunday for all kids Pre-k through 5th grade. The bags will include a compilation of favorite songs, lessons that will coincide with online videos, and a craft for each day, July 13-16.

**** Snacks not included**
But you know they will want one!!!**

CHATHAM CHRISTIAN CHURCH
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Sunday Worship Service 9:15 AM
Bible School 10:45 AM

STATISTICS

Worship Offering	6/14	74
		\$9,931.19
Worship Offering	6/21	81
		\$3,073.06
Worship Offering	6/28	68
		\$3,454.06
Worship Offering	7/5	64
		\$9,070.64

UNTIL THINGS CHANGE THIS WILL BE OUR PRACTICE ON SUNDAY MORNING

ONLY THE WORSHIP SERVICE
WILL BE OFFERED

CHILDREN ARE TO REMAIN WITH PARENTS
AT ALL TIMES

THERE WILL BE NO NURSERY

ALL ARE WELCOME
BUT NO ONE AT HIGH RISK
SHOULD COME

THE USE OF MASKS IS
ENCOURAGED

ALL DOORS WILL BE LEFT OPEN
FOR AIR CIRCULATION AND
ENTERING AND EXITING

VISITING SHOULD BE LIMITED
TO THE PARKING LOT

THE SERVICE WILL BE
LIVE-STREAMED AT 9:15

THE RECORDED SERVICE WILL BE
AVAILABLE AFTER THE LIVE SERVICE



A big thank you to Tim Brown, and his team at Vital Restoration, for cleaning our church carpeting. Tim is the son of Rod and Carolyn, and Ren's dad.

CHRIST HAS SET US FREE

Communion Meditation
by Casey Blakley

Yesterday we celebrated the 244th year since the text of the Declaration of Independence was approved by the Continental Congress. This document, as you all know, formally declared independence from Great Britain and established a new nation we now know as the United States of America, our home.

Freedom is an idea that permeates the human story all throughout history. In fact, some of the most compelling stories in our past center around this concept. Whether it be the freedom of the Hebrew people from Ancient Egypt, the freedom purchased on the battlefield of the Revolutionary War, or the freedom of the African American slaves during the Civil War, the idea of freedom is undeniably powerful and moving. It pulls us in. It attracts us. We love the idea of the underdog rising and breaking free of the chains that once bound them.

Once, a long time ago, this was not the case. The concepts of slavery or bondage were not originally part of the human story. You must go back quite far, and in fact it is an extremely brief part of the human story, but the human story began in total freedom. So much so that the concept of freedom would have had no meaning because there was nothing with which to contrast it. In the Bible, we read that man was created in complete perfection, and as such enjoyed a peace and harmony we couldn't even comprehend in the world of Facebook and Twitter. Of course, that lasted all of 2 chapters.

Today we look back on history and can easily view it under the lens of mankind's struggle to regain the freedom that was lost. We've used war and politics and love and diplomacy all to bring about freedom for one group or another. You might even look around and think we've done a decent job of restoring some of that freedom that we lost. The Jews thought along similar lines in Jesus day.

(Continued on next page)

(Meditation continued)

John 8:31-33 reads, "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?'"

Now, I do not intend to make light of the freedom we celebrated yesterday. I have always been grateful for growing up in this nation, and the freedoms that has brought me. But I've often wondered if our attitude toward our freedom resembles that of the Jews in these verses.

Reading on, Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

These verses show us that any freedom we think we have is merely a façade when compared to the freedom Christ brings in his resurrection. He lays it out there for all to hear: "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin." Ephesians uses a bit grimmer language when it says: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins."

While it only took 2 chapters to get to the bad news, the remaining 1187 chapters of the Bible reveal God's plan to restore mankind to the freedom it once knew. And we get to take part in that plan here today around this table. We get to commune with the very Author of that wonderful plan, as we share with Him how grateful we are that He didn't leave us in slavery. We get to confess the areas of our life where we still allow ourselves to be taken captive, and we get to revel in the fact that Christ broke the chains of death over 2000 years ago on the cross.

As we gather around the table today, I leave you with these words from Paul. "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."



I'm happy to offer a little something next week for our kids! We are going to try a week (four days) of virtual or on-line VBS lessons for the kids. It wasn't a formal curriculum and obviously will not be what everyone is used to, but it will give us all the opportunity to learn a little together and spend time with our children talking about our Lord. Each child will need a VBS bag available this Sunday at church. Both an introductory video and a craft video will be posted for each day of the week to help you along with your parent packet. Also, we downloaded 10 favorite songs from the previous 5 years of VBS to play throughout the week! Here are the topics for the individual days:

Monday: God Is With Us All The Time!
From a child's perspective, I am sure this has been a very unsettling time in many ways. This lesson will reinforce the fact that God has never left us and in fact has some very special words for the children of the world. Today's craft is a cool necklace!

Tuesday: Jesus Brings Great Joy!
So many emotions felt on a daily basis. Children will focus on the joy Christ brings to our lives by looking at the resurrection and reaction of the women as they approached the tomb. Today, you will make a noisy clapper to make a joyful noise. Sorry parents!

Wednesday: God Makes Things Grow.
Everyone is a year older from last year, as we grow physically, we should grow spiritually as well. Today, we are making a plant to remind us of the importance to grow in the Lord!

Thursday: The Master Becomes The Servant.
As we reflect on Jesus, His willingness to serve others should be our attitude as well. Today, we will decorate a pair of binoculars so we can look for service opportunities all around us.