

THE WITNESS

The quarterly newsletter of Westwood Christian Church



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At a Glance

This quarter we have so much to celebrate, and so much to look forward to! In this quarter's *The Witness*, you can learn about our community outreach opportunities from August through October, and look ahead to Christmas--I know, I can't believe it either. I've got an article in this month's issue about why we "do" church the way we do, and as always we provide you with a financial snapshot so you can be aware of how we are doing financially.

At the end of *The Witness* you can find 2 books I read this quarter (what can I say I had a baby and read less theology), and my thoughts on them before a calendar for the next 3 months.

Community Outreach: For Dane

For the third year in a row, For Dane was a success. I was so pleased with the number of Westwood folks who served. This year, we partnered with Midvale Community Lutheran Church to serve Midvale Elementary School. We had people at the school doing yard work and beautification efforts and people at Midvale Lutheran writing notes of encouragement to the staff.

One of my favorite moments while serving at For Dane was when someone said to me “look at all the young people.” It was a great opportunity for me to emphasize that many young people want to be part of something bigger than themselves, and community service is something that many young people want their churches to be doing more of. However, make no mistake: the beauty of For Dane is that we had people of every age, men and women, even believers and non-believers, working together to Bear Witness to God’s love.



**PAM AND VIKKI HELPED
AT MIDVALE LUTHERAN**



THE MIDVALE ELEMENTARY CREW!

Community Outreach: Trunk or Treat

I wanted to hold a fall event for families this year, but when we got pregnant expecting in September, I knew it would be hard to plan something on our own. Luckily, through work with Collaboration Project and Caleb going to Good Shepherd Lutheran for Pre-School, I had a good in road to asking Good Shepherd if we could partner with them for their Trunk or Treat. It was awesome to see some of the families in our church’s community, share some joy in a safe place for trick or treating, and to build more connection with another great church!



Thank you so much to the Laufenbergs and Pam MacNicoll for joining us at Trunk or Treat! I hope to see more of you next year!

Christmas Plans

It's hard to believe, but it's time to start thinking about Christmas! As always, we hope to share the "Good News of great joy which is for all people" (Lk 2:10) with those who have heard it for decades as well as for those who have never encountered God's love before.

We need help spreading the word! I am having door hangers printed and we will meet up on December 2 to canvas Midvale Heights with invitations to join us to celebrate Advent and Christmas. I hope you will join us to help spread the word and I hope you will take some door hangers back to your neighborhood and invite your friends and neighbors to "come and see!"

Once again we have targeted one of our Missions partners to be the recipient of a special Christmas offering. Throughout the month of December we will collect money to help Rock River Christian Camp. More information about what exactly they need will come in the weeks to come.

Christmas Eve is a Sunday this year and as such, we have decided to hold our Christmas Eve service on Sunday morning. There will be no evening service this year, and we hope you will join us for service and then enjoy the afternoon and evening with family and friends. There will not be Sunday School on the 24th.

This year, we're titling our sermon series "From Advent to Christmas" as we journey together to Christmas. Advent is a time of waiting, preparation, and anticipation. Very counter-cultural.

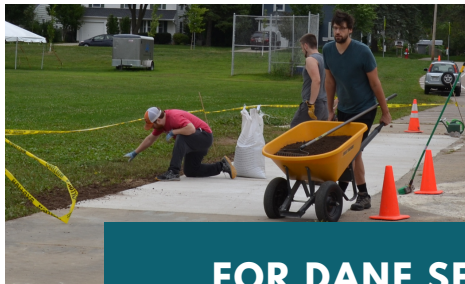


Every year, "Christmas" begins earlier and earlier. I was in Home Depot on October 30, and they already had the Christmas yard inflatable and outdoor decorations set up. The impulse to rush from one holiday to another without rest will leave us ragged, unfocused, and unable to receive the gift God has for us in waiting. I pray that both the season of wait and the season of celebrate are special for you this year.

Financial Snapshot

In an effort to be even more transparent with the financial situation of the church, I have begun posting last week's giving in every bulletin, along with our attendance. We are so grateful for everyone who supports us and we want you to be aware of where we're at. At the end of the third quarter (September), giving was less than the budget by \$3,884 and we were negative \$3,881 year to date. However, cash flow was positive \$17,760. This is mainly attributed to interest gained from our investments through Christian Financial Resources and Church Development Fund and other income received from church rentals and charitable distributions. Expenses are less than budget by \$45,596 YTD most of which is the Family Minister budget amount of \$40,500.

Our reserve funds are still incredibly healthy at over \$250,000 and we are still hopeful that those funds will allow us to hire a Family Minister in the near future without financial stress on our annual budget.



FOR DANE SERVICE AT MIDVALE ELEMENTARY

Why Do We Do It This Way? (Part II)

Last month I began to answer the question “why do we do it this way?” by looking at the Church calendar and the value I think it brings to a church. I alluded to something called the Revised Common Lectionary which assigns 4 (or more) Scripture passages to a given weekend. The focus of this article is to describe what the RCL is, and why I made the decision follow the RCL.

“Lectionary” comes from the Latin word *lect* which means “chosen,” and refers to a list of appointed readings for a specific day, season, or service. The use of Lectionaries in Jewish and Christian circles is quite ancient. One possible instance of this is in Luke when “the scroll from the Prophet Isaiah is handed to Jesus.” (4:17) It is unclear if this is random, if Jesus asked for it, or if this is an example of the use of a sort of Lectionary that we know was used in the time of Jesus in some synagogues.

The Revised Common Lectionary was designed to broadly appeal to Christians of every denomination, by considering the diverse lectionaries that preceded it from different denominations. The RCL is arranged in a 3 year cycle with each week including an Old Testament reading, a Psalm (which is often related in theme to the OT reading), a New Testament writing (most often Epistles), and then a Gospel. The 3 year cycle corresponds to the Gospels, where Year A is the year of Matthew, Year B is the year of Mark and John, and Year C is the year of Luke. The RCL is just a list of Scriptures for each week.

Why Do We Do It This Way? (Part II, cont'd)

There are a few benefits to using the Revised Common Lectionary. Even though we claim to be a “people of the book” (i.e., the Bible), I feel there is often very little of it used in services. The sermon is preached and the Scripture is read and there may be others read, but they are rarely connected to one another. The RCL gives us lots of Scripture we can read, and the Scripture is connected to the other readings, to the season of the Calendar, and to the life of the Church. Further, when a lectionary is followed, it will occasionally lead a preacher to cover a text that they may otherwise not. What do you do when the Psalm of the day is Psalm 137? You talk about the hard stuff.

Our movement was begun as a movement towards unity. One of the things I like about the Lectionary is that even though I may not preach or even understand a text the same way, the idea that the Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, and other non-denominational churches are all reading the same texts as we are is a way that we can work towards unity as we experience similar things and it can make cooperation easier.

The fact that so many different churches use the RCL also means that there are a number of helpful resources on preaching, applying, and using the texts for the life of the church. From podcasts, to books, to Sunday School curriculum, by following a plan for the whole church, we are able to do more discipleship and Scripture reading together. As a parent and pastor, I love that our children learn about one of the texts we read in “big church.” This does much—if done well—to help our families grow together.

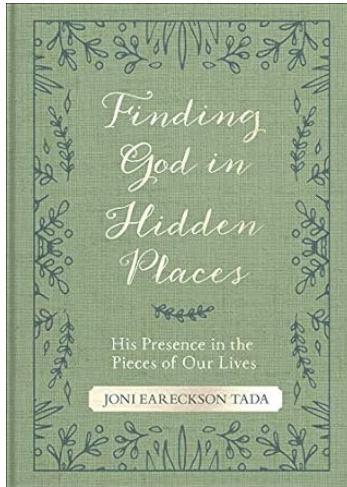
The Revised Common Lectionary, just like the Church Calendar, is a tool to help us become like Jesus. It’s a tool I find useful, but it’s a tool nonetheless. We may not use it next year, or even next month, but right now it’s a tool I find valuable and I don’t know one better.

**NO ONE COULD PICK
A THEME SO WE WERE
“AT THE MOVIES”**



**LETTER WRITING AND
MULCH RAKING**

Book Ends



Finding God in Hidden Places: His Presence in the Pieces of Our Lives by Joni Eareckson Tada

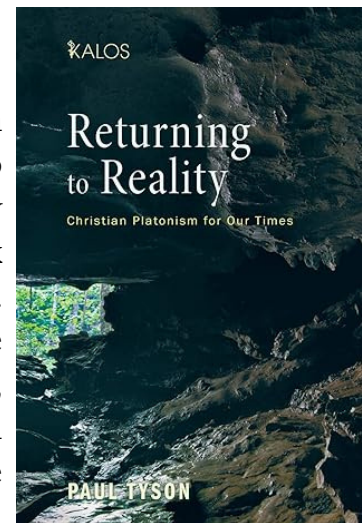
I picked up this book because I wanted to read Joni's thoughts on how to find God in the midst of hard places in our lives. If you don't know Joni's story, she was injured at 17 in a diving accident and has been a paraplegic for the last 57 years. Over those years she has started a ministry, Joni and Friends, which is focused on providing care, advocacy, and ministry to people affected by disability. Joni's story is so incredible because even though she cannot walk, and her life is hard, she believes deeply in the never changing grace of God.

I highly recommend this book as it's very accessible and easy to read, but it is also incredibly challenging. In one of her reflections, she talks about how she once wished that God would heal her. But God never did. She closes her reflection with this prayer, "Thank You for giving me the chance to tell others that sometimes 'no' is the better answer. Sometimes healing happens on the inside." (80)

Joni provides the uncommon and unpopular opinion that sometimes the best thing for us is to have our lives fall apart because those moments and the resulting years teach us to rely on God, remove distractions and open us to the inward healing of God's grace. People like Joni can say that, and we should listen.

Returning to Reality: Christian Platonism for Our Times by Paul Tyson

I have to confess, I started this book in early 2022. It took a long time to read. I have it because a friend of mine wanted to read it with me years ago and while we never did that, I knew there was value here--even if it only forced me to think differently. Tyson is a professor of Theology at the Univ. Nottingham. Here, he argues that one of the biggest losses the church has experienced is the loss of Plato's view of truth, reality, and philosophy as a result of the Medieval and Renaissance world that led to the Enlightenment, and what we call "Modern" science and philosophy.



This may seem like an odd, pedantic, or even silly thing to say, but I do think there is something to his point. The world of Scripture, indeed the world of Jesus, was one in which all things were understood in cosmic and Divine terms. That is, the Church was founded in a world where what we see here has, as its origin, such that we can understand reality by our understanding of the Divine. Modernity has flipped the antecedent such that we understand the Divine by what we see here. While I think that Tyson is a great challenge for the modern preacher and teacher, this book was very hard to get through and its audience is niche.

Next Quarter Calendar

Please note: some events may change

NOVEMBER

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Steven and Jessica Mooberry Anniversary	10	11 7:30a Men's Breakfast 9:30a Mug 'n' Muffin
12	13	14	15	16 Todd Morra Birthday ICOM 2023 - OKC	17 Ann Sippy Birthday ICOM 2023 - OKC	18 ICOM 2023 - OKC
19 Sue Ratcliff Birthday	20 Ecumenical Worship Service	21 Amaya Hagens Birthday	22	23 Thanksgiving	24	25
26 2024 Budget Presentation Christmas Decorating	27 Mike Younglove Birthday	28	29	30 Eric Quarm Birthday	1	2

DECEMBER

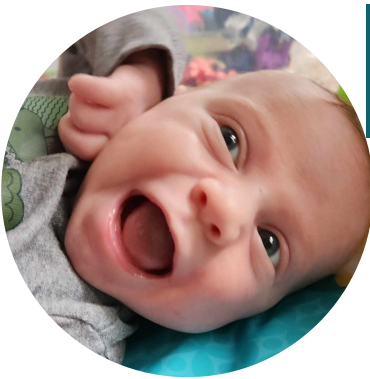
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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3 Congregational Meeting	4	5	6	7	8	9 7:30a Men's Breakfast 9:30a Mug 'n' Muffin
10 Small Group Leader Training Meeting	11	12 Robert Odoi Birthday	13	14	15	16
17	18 Dennis and Kathi Seman Anniversary	19	20	21 Jeremiah and Brianna Lee Anniversary	22	23
24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Office Closed	26 Office Closed	27 John and Carolyn Cash Martin and Arlyn Shields Anniversary	28	29	30
31 New Years Eve	1	2	3	4	5	6

JANUARY

/ 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	1 Tom Sippy Birthday	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13 Junia Tomlinson Birthday
14	15 Tom Sippy Birthday	16 Janet Anderson Birthday	17	18	19	20
21 Nathanael Tomlinson Lue Sturdevant Birthday	22	23	24 Roy Ratcliff Birthday Robert and Grace Odoi Anniversary	25	26	27 Rob Ehlers Birthday
28	29	30	31 Ginger Rodgers Birthday	1	2	3



**GRATUITOUS SMILEY
BABY PICTURE**

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