

In this Issue:

Articles

- Handling the Sword?
- Practice Hospitality
- Changing Hearts in Memphis
- What's in a Name?
- Library Update

Messages

Events

News

- Births
- Baptisms
- New Members
- What's Up with the 2020 Task Force?
- What's Up with Our Leadership Covenant?
- What's Up with Staffing Plans?
- Young Adult & College Mission Trip to Jamaica

ARTICLES

Handling the Sword?

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

I remember as a kid grabbing a stick and sword fighting with my brother. It was great fun until your stick broke and all you had left was the handle. Generally, that was the end of the fight until you found another stick. I do remember getting whacked on the hand, which quickly ended the battle.

I am totally good with a sword fight if I am the one holding the sword. When I



read Paul's second letter to Timothy...

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

It feels good to think of oneself holding the sword of the Spirit and correcting others. However, before we do any sword fighting, Jesus comes to us with that sword. He cuts deep wounds into our hearts as we see after Peter preached in Acts 2.

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of

you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” (Acts 2:37-38 NIV)

When we hear God’s Word and welcome it, we are cut to the heart, convicted and utterly humbled. **Our response should be twofold: repentance and baptism.** These are closely connected. The first involves changing our mind, acknowledging our sin, and committing ourselves to do what is right. The latter involves acknowledging our death in sin and our resurrection in Christ. This step is not merely a one time event, but a daily, if not continual, response to God’s sword.

This is a big part of why non-believers reject God and why some believers reject the Church. **Too often we come with the Sword, but have not let God use it on us.** Before we pick up the sword to correct others, we must let God correct us.

So before we attempt to correct “those liberals” or “those partiers,” we must get rid of the plank in our own eye (Matthew 7:3-5) and cut out our eye if it causes us to sin (Matthew 5:29).

So let me encourage you to dig into God’s Word and let it speak to your heart. **Two great places to start are on RightNow Media. Check them out below.** To sign up just go to the resource page on our [website](#).

“[Survey of the Bible](#)” by Bruce Wilkinson

“[The Divine Mentor](#)” by Wayne Cordeiro

Practice Hospitality By Pastor Doug Shotsky

Romans 12:13(The Living Bible) - When God’s children are in need, you be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests

home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.

1 Peter 4:9–10 NIV - Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

Practicing hospitality, like any other gift, is a gift from our Lord. Many of us know that person who has the house that everyone wants to go to. They’re always inviting people over and they seem to have never met a stranger. When you’re at their house you feel at home, you enjoy the food, the company, and time goes quickly because you’re caught up in the enjoyment of the present instead of mulling over what’s next. Their house is usually pristine, but if you spill something they’re the first to come and assure you that it’s no big deal. I’ve had several friends like this over the years, and I usually can’t wait to have another invitation to their home, because I usually feel so full of joy and life when I leave that it’s something I feel like I could always use more of.

But if I’ve learned one thing in Alto it’s that hospitality goes so much further beyond the boundaries of someone who has the “gift” of hospitality. Hospitality is so much broader than most of us think, and the beauty of this is that we can all do it! The key, just like with so many other things in life, is intentionality.

As the scripture talks about above, we should, “get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.” So first of all, if any of you are traveling down Interstate 75 to go south over the next couple of

years, the Shotskys will live 10-15 minutes off of that route outside of Lexington, Kentucky, so I'm taking this opportunity to invite you to stay with us, or at the very least to stop and share a meal! We'll have an extra bedroom, and the Shotsky Hotel will be open for business at a reasonable rate of FREE! (We may ask that you speak to us when we're together, or that could be a little weird!)

These are things that so many of us have gotten out of the habit of doing. Not knowing anyone when we came here last August, I knew that it would be my responsibility to connect with people, because as a pastor I believe that my responsibility is to shepherd the flock, and in order to do this effectively I had to get to know the flock, and in order to get to know the flock I had to take the initiative to be with the sheep. This certainly is a challenge, but I'm usually up for a good challenge, and here's what I've learned about hospitality, that I hope can be helpful for you!

- Invite people to get together and set a date! I can't count the number of times that I've simply said, "let's get together", but more than that followed up to actually set a time. With all the modes of communication (a call, a text, an email, facebook messenger, etc.) it's easy to follow up by communicating some actual dates and times that will work. A good rule of thumb is to give someone at least 2-3 options of times you'll be free, and if they don't work for them, ask them for at least 2 options of times that could work for them.

- If you don't know someone's name, take the time to find out. It's ok to ask them several times (lay down your pride), to ask someone else, or to look in the church directory (We even have a smartphone app with the entire directory on it that you can take with you everywhere!). It's worth the effort to take the time to find out people's names; people appreciate being known. I once had a man offer me a job when I was a waiter, because I remembered his name the second time he came in the restaurant.
- Invite people to your home. Don't wait for others to reach out to you, you have to be the initiative taker on this one! Not everyone is used to having people in their homes, or for that matter really wants other people in their home. I've found that by inviting others to my home that it breaks down a barrier and doesn't put the pressure on them to have to host. Many of the times that I have invited folks to our home, they have turned the tables and invited us to their home instead. In our world today, many of our homes have become an escape from the world where we spend time with our families, so opening up our homes to others communicates a message to others that they are like family. If you don't have a home or prefer a neutral meeting ground, it is perfectly ok to go out to eat, get coffee together, or take a walk at a park.
- Share a meal together. There are many examples in the Bible of Jesus and his disciples sharing a meal together or with others. There's something special about

sharing a meal together. Someone is giving of their resources and taking their time to prepare food, so they can enjoy a time of fellowship with you.

- When you spend time with people you actually remember their names and get to know them. So often in church we shake hands and introduce ourselves, only to do this several more times with the same people and we still don't remember their names! It can be impersonal and eventually becomes embarrassing when we've seen someone so many times, but for the life of us we can't remember their name.
- Share your story with others, and ask them about their lives. We all want to be known and understood. When you spend time with others ask them about their lives. Be prepared with questions about their childhood, their interests, their families, their work, and any other areas that could help you get to know them better. Take time to listen so that you show you have a genuine interest in what people are sharing with you, and make sure you reciprocate by sharing some about your life as well. Be mindful not to overshare in the beginning! Most of us have experienced a person who shares too much too soon, and it can be pretty awkward.
- Accepting an invitation is hospitality too! If someone approaches you and wants to get together or invites you to an event, turning them down or not showing up communicates a message that you don't want to be with them, or that they're not important enough to have your time. I understand that we can't

make every event, but at least communicate why you cannot make a time, and if possible set up another time to get together that does work for you. That allows you to keep healthy boundaries, and lets others know that you value their relationship. Who wants to throw a party, or invite people to hangout and have no one show up?

I'm sure this is not an exhaustive discourse on hospitality, but a simple list of things that I hope many of you will find helpful, so you can develop a deeper relationship with others in the Body of Christ. My challenge for you this week is to reach out beyond your normal comfort zone and practice hospitality!

Changing Hearts in Memphis

By Jessa Ter Beest

"Hey Jessa, I was up late last night unpacking, but I just wanted to thank you so much for letting me tag along this week.



Meeting the kids in Memphis was the most rewarding experience I've ever had. I was waiting for a time this week to tell you this story but we were both busy a lot of the time so I'll just tell you now. For a few weeks I was having doubts that Jesus could really love me and I prayed and said, "If you're really out there please give me a sign. And during worship when the speaker was saying that Jesus really does love me and no matter what I do I'll always be

His child, I heard a voice in my head say “that’s your sign” and that’s when I asked Jesus to use me to help others find Jesus.”

One student asked during the week, “What if I doubt God?” How many of us have asked this question before and gotten the answer to “not doubt God”? If we’re honest, I think all of us have questioned how we know Jesus is the right and only way. I was so proud of this student for being willing to ask the question out loud and search for answers rather than stuffing down the doubts in fear of rejection. This allowed the student and I to have an amazing conversation about where we had seen God working in our time in Memphis and how we see Him work in our own lives. The student shared with me that during our prayer and devotional time earlier in the day, they had experienced prayer like never before - that they could see and feel God standing right next to them in that room. Wow! Such an awesome moment!

Other students talked about getting out of their comfort zones and trusting that God would keep us safe during Bible Club everyday. There was a huge difference between the words of fear and uncertainty that came out of their mouths as we drove into Memphis, to the hugs and love that were given out at the end of the week when we had built relationships with the kids in that same community. Only Jesus can do that. He replaces fear with love and compassion and He changes hearts.

What's In a Name?

By Roxy Schouten

Out of curiosity many people have looked up what their name means. Your name may have

been chosen as a family name or what was popular at the time. If we were to change our name to what our character is now or has been through life what would it be? In Scripture we have instances where names were changed such as Saul to Paul, Abram and Sara to Abraham and Sarah or when the Prophet Daniel was given a new name after exile into the captive nation. In Revelation 3:12 Jesus says we will be given a new name. Therefore, we can see a hint that a name is more than a “handle” and for us Golden Lifers we have had that “handle” or nickname for a long time.

Interestingly, names written in the Bible sometimes carry a message. Names in genealogies can be tedious to read when we struggle with pronunciations. However, some people find each one of them a blessing as they remember that each name is someone that God has touched in a special way, was a link in the coming of “the seed of the woman” or conversely those whose lives and deeds were far from stellar.

Genesis 5 is one of those blessings in naming of Adam down through Noah. Each of those listed have names that carry a meaning. Some may be names whose meaning is what we would not want to tag our children to such as “sorrow” or “the despairing” but in totality they carry the Gospel message prior to the flood and all the way back to creation. These are the lineage line listed and what those names mean:

Adam – “Man”

Seth – “Appointed”

Enosh – “Mortal”

Cainan (or Kenan) – “Sorrow”

Mahalalel – “The Blessed God”

Jared – “Shall Come Down”

Enoch – “Teaching”
Methuselah – “His Death Shall Bring”
Lamech – “The Despairing”
Noah – “Comfort/Rest”

Put those in sentence form and you come up with this message from God: “Man (has) Appointed Mortal Sorrow. (But) “The Blessed God Shall Come Down Teaching. His Death Shall Bring The Despairing Comfort/Rest.”

This is just one more proof that the Bible that we hold in our hands or lays unused on a shelf is God Breathed and has Truth and treasures just waiting for us to discover. Also, one more proof that Scripture is an integrated message that is hinted at or revealed from Genesis through Revelation. The message of God’s redemptive plan was not a sudden change of God’s mind or plan. From the beginning this has always been God’s plan and revelation. The message above is John 3:16.

That brings us to the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is so sad and reprehensible that this is used in cussing or that “Jesus” has been fashioned into someone to their own liking and thus an idol of their own making. Some have made Jesus into someone who is all “love” and not also a Judge or someone who winks at sin.

When we get our new name bestowed upon by Jesus Christ it will be a “handle” that we will carry for eternity. Choose wisely!

Library Update

By Jean Stelsel

This is a list of books that are currently missing from the church library. None of them were checked out, they are just gone from the shelves. We are asking for your help in tracking them down! Please return them if you have them as they cost \$10-\$12 each to replace missing books. There is never a late fee or reprimand for not returning items promptly, but other people may be waiting to read them, especially if it’s a book in a series. Thanks for your cooperation!!

“Sins Of the Father” by James Bell Scott
“Crystal Lies” by Melody Carlson
“A Promise For Miriam” by Vanette Chapman
“Dark Justice” by Brandilyn Collins
“Grace” by Richard Paul Evans
“Halfway to Heaven” by Nancy Johanson
“Summer Dreams” by Jones, Lehman, Peterson & Yepp
“When Joy Came to Stay” by Karen Kingsbury
“Ocean’s Apart” by Karen Kingsbury
“Snow Ghost” by Al Lacy
“No Dark Valley” by Jamie Langston
“In All Deep Places” by Susan Meissner
“The Hawk That Dare Not Hunt By Day” by Scott O’Dell
“Lady Of Stonewyk” by Judith Pella
“Passage Into Light” by Judith Pella
“Never A Dull Moment” by Eugenia Price
“Stranger In Savannah” by Eugenia Price
“Martha” by Diane Willis Taylor
Series
“A Miracle In a Dry Season”
“Until the Harvest”
“A Tapestry Of Secrets” by Sarah Loudin Thomas

MESSAGES

Thank you for all of the love, prayers, cards, and support during my recent bouts with different health issues.

Mary Marquardt & Family

Thank you to all those that sent get well cards and anniversary cards and wished us both a happy anniversary.

Jerry & Dorothy Mills

Dear Ties to Home -

Thank you so much for the goodie box. It was a nice gesture that I was able to come home to. It really shows that this community is my home and that people care even when I am away. Thanks again!

Meghan Flier

EVENTS



July 15-19 at 9-11:30am



July 21 at 3:30pm at The Rock



July 28 at 10am on the church hill. Join us as we say farewell to the Shotsky's.

NEWS

Births

6/21/19 - Beckett Floyd and Grayson Richard, sons of Chris & Julia Meinke

Baptism

6/23/19 - Gavin Lloyd, son of Jared & Ashley Stelsel

New Members by Transfer

James & Stephanie Levey and daughters Elsie & Isabelle

What's up with our 2020 Task Force?

Our 2020 Task Force reconvened after a bit of a break. Hopefully you recall the letter which the consistory affirmed back in March to be sent to the RCA's Vision 2020 Task Force. That was sent and also given to churches in our Wisconsin Classis.

Our task force reviewed reports from the RCA's General Synod (GS) meeting and talked with Pastor Jon Garbison of Bethany Reformed Church in Sheboygan. He was a delegate at GS and gave some different perspective on issues that were addressed. Jon and the other delegates are looking at scheduling a classis informational meeting where they would all share.

We then began looking at creating a contingency plan. Several individuals accepted responsibilities in that process. We are happy to talk with you if you have specific questions. For now, please join us in praying for discernment and peace.

What's up with our Leadership Covenant?

A couple weeks ago members received a letter explaining this covenant and later a copy of it to sign and return to the office. The Elders hope this is helpful to you in understanding what it means to lead in the church. In part, it calls for solid understanding of the Bible and agreement on core issues which we have stated in our Statement of Faith. It also calls for leaders to pursue Godly character, to serve God according to your personal calling, and to build healthy relationships. In particular, healthy relationships require good conflict resolution skills: humility, active listening, compassion, forgiveness, and gentle truth-telling. I hope you want these things in your leaders and in yourself, as we do and join us in committing to pursue these things together.

What's up with staffing plans?

First, off we the Executive Team wants to celebrate the great blessing Doug has been to the church and his desire to follow God in being more fully equipped to lead by going to seminary. Thus we decided to move our outdoor service and picnic to Doug's last Sunday, July 28 at 10am. Join us, as we send off the Shotsky's with a blessing!

Secondly, the Executive Team reviewed the previous hiring process and discussed our current situation and future possibilities. The Elders later affirmed their desire to bring Gary Harrison to our next Consistory meeting to help us process where we are and where we need to go. Please pray for discernment.

Young Adult and College Mission Trip to Jamaica

All college age and young adults are welcome to join us on our mission trip to the Jamaican Deaf Village January 3-10, 2020. Whether you're married, single, working or in college, we want you to come experience God outside of the United States while bridging relationships between hearing and deaf culture and American and Jamaican culture. The cost of the trip is a \$50

non-refundable deposit and hard work with writing support letters and helping with fundraisers. Paperwork and deposits are due July 14th. Please email Jessa@altoreformedchurch.org or call 920-979-1853 if you are interested in receiving more information about the trip.