

Bluffs Summer Update

Greetings from La Crosse and Bluffs Community Church.

It's hard to believe that we have officially been here over a year. Sunday, June 21 marked the one-year anniversary of us packing up the moving truck and moving our lives to La Crosse. And what a year it's been! We've found ourselves reflecting a lot these past few weeks - still just amazed that we're here, growing a new family of faith. The message and hope of Jesus is needed more and more yet the obstacles seem to be growing rapidly as each day passes.

One thing that I've been doing (Michele) is working in the garden. If you know me, you know I'm more of an inside pet :). Yet, I find myself drawn to the outdoors, planting, pruning, watering anything that wants to grow. We have tomatoes, peppers, grapes, berries, mint and a whole garden of flowers. I'm even growing the weeds! Each time I'm out there, sweating under the hot sun, I find myself just calling out to Jesus about our sweet church and asking Him to show us how to plant, prune and water this precious new life. And I know He hears those prayers because despite the hard days, He speaks wisdom and encouragement to our hearts in real and tangible ways. We are so confident that this is HIS work and we know that He will grow the garden.

So what have we been up to?

DRIVE-UP CHURCH: We started Drive-Up Church in June and will be doing a hybrid of these services along with online services and podcasts through the first week of August. It's been so fun to see our people and worship together. Turns out honking your horn is a fun way to express joy. We've recently started a series in Ephesians - IT'S NOT YOU/ME. IT'S US. What a fitting message for our time. God's Word is truly timeless. This coming week, we're honored to have Adult and Teen Challenge of Western Wisconsin join us. Although Drive-Up Church has been a success, the challenges of weather and technology make it only a temporary solution. Our hope is to return to the Pump House on Sunday, August 9.

JUNE: Through the month of June, we had various groups meet on zoom for study and discussion along with our Wednesday online devotional. We were also able to collect a TON of food and needed items for those impacted by the riots in Minneapolis. A huge thank you to Brian and Carla Schultz for helping get these items delivered. We're so thankful for our partners in ministry. Bluffs Youth resumed meeting in person. Our team member, Esther has done a fantastic job of connecting with the hearts of the teens that are a part of our Bluffs family.

JULY: In July we've focused on small gatherings to connect and have some fun. We all are in need of fun, right?! One thing that has been especially rewarding, is that we've started one-on-one discipleship with some of our UWL students who have recently made the choice to follow Jesus. This is what it's all about, folks! The message of Jesus is still changing

people's lives - such joy and hope is found in Him.

AUGUST: We have some amazing opportunities ahead of us:

Word on the street is that we're fun so we've been asked to come and provide some family fun for those currently in treatment. Specifically, we've been asked to come and be family, have a grill out and game night with our friends at Adult and Teen Challenge. We're hoping that this can become a regular opportunity to serve for our Bluffs family.

Starting in August, we will have small group opportunities for men and women to jump into to grow closer to Jesus and to one another. As well, with our college students returning, we're excited to connect with them and see how we can help them as they return to campus. One thing we are particularly excited about is a spiritual emphasis week late August. We're still working out the details but it will include prayer, worship, connection and study. We're finding creative ways to help our Bluffs family connect to the sacred.

Despite all the activity, our whole team would say that the main thing we strive to do is simply this - be present and available. We're making lots of new friends who simply need a friend. We're humbled as we watch what God can do through friendship. Please pray that we would be the kind of friends to lay down our lives for others even when things get hard.

Thank you for your continued prayers and partnership.
We're so thankful for you!

Jake and Michele Smith
Bluffs Community Church