

October Remarks from Our Pastors

From Pastor Gregg:

This week's Gospel lesson ([Mark 10:32-45](#)) is a fascinating window into the human psyche. Jesus describes the rejection he is going to face in the most gruesome details yet – he will be condemned, mocked, spat upon, flogged, and eventually killed. Rather than dwelling in the uncomfortable details just shared with them, James and John come forward and attempt to secure a favorable position with Jesus in his coming reign. To say their request was ill-timed would be an understatement. That said, I think it would be dishonest to pretend their error is unfamiliar to us.

Practically all people prefer not to dwell in the sorrows of others, and that is especially true today. Our capacity to hear a sad story is diminished, given the worldwide trauma that we all continue to endure. We would prefer to jump forward to a time beyond this pandemic, a time when the world has already healed. There is nothing wrong with longing for a world that is better than what we have today, provided we are working together to make that happen. The trouble comes when we so long for a life that is different than the one we are currently experiencing that we lose all appreciation for the gifts God has given us. Even in the harsh wilderness, God's people always receive some form of manna.

James and John sought to look beyond the cross, moving past the suffering of their Lord to maneuver the future to their benefit. In focusing on the community they would experience in the *future*, they were missing the community already present in their time. Can you imagine how they felt years later, after Jesus had been raised, how they must have remembered this exchange? Even with Jesus right there beside them, they were focused on the seating arrangements in paradise. We risk a similar mistake unless we are intentional about the connections we make using the time we have.

We are in the middle of a stewardship drive that sets goals for the coming year. Ordinarily we would be outlining goals that require plenty of *financial* resources. As we look just a bit ahead, we are still inviting everyone to grow in their giving, yet we are also deliberately moving towards growth in connectedness. We have been apart from one another for too long. We have missed the once-routine opportunities to be together in worship, service, fellowship, mutual support, and many other ways we barely noticed. The coming year is going to be a time of drawing together, growing and healing. What that will look like, I will not attempt to guess. I do not want to predict too much about the specifics, only to need to adjust them later. Instead of relying on the details, I hope we can move towards a new year with a new mindset – that we will adapt however we need to, but one way or another, we will be church together.

An important part of the lesson from the Gospel is an awareness of our tendency to skip over the 'meantime'. I pray we apply that awareness to our goals for the coming year, because we can commit to connecting with one another anytime.

Our Grace Family is spread out, yet we are also only a phone call away. There are connections we can make today that will remind us of the grace we find in one another. There is compassion, encouragement, and strength we can find in one another, and we should not hesitate to reach out for these blessings that church offers.

For all those times you have reached out to me – regardless of the reason – I thank you. I am grateful for every opportunity to connect. Connecting is what makes us who we are as church, and your willingness to keep making connections serves a greater purpose than you realize. Let us not wait for some far-off day, some distant paradise. Christ has come to set us free in the *present*, not just promise a glorious future. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it – together.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Gregg

From Pastor Rachel:

This month, I want to highlight the 2021 Growing Across All Generations Goal work that's happening in the building, that not everyone is able to see day-to-day. We have 3 areas of Generations work we're focused on this year: the Narthex, the Nursery, and the Youth Room. Over the last 6 weeks or so, our work on these areas has really picked up!

Narthex:

- The Property Committee discussed ways to bring more light into the Narthex, and came up with a less invasive solution – they'll be looking into more open-structure light fixtures, rather than additional fixtures, which should let more light shine out.
- Our carpet for the stairwells and balcony will be in this Monday, and so in 2-3 weeks, we should have that installation done (the exact date depends on coordinating our installer & pew remover schedules)
- The front doors have been reviewed and quoted by 3 companies, and our door team has a recommendation to bring to Council

Nursery:

- Adele Evans has been leading the way on our Nursery refresh project. She has spent days going through all the items in the space, cleaning and deciding what should stay, what should be donated, and what is still needed.
- Mary Hinson has been working with Adele to sort and organize all the items in that space.
- Betty Sue Seigler has been assisting with cleanout and donation removal, coordinating with Hospice for pickup of the many items that no longer served us, but could serve others. She is also researching new items for the space.
- The space is now nearly ready for painting and new furniture and other items.

Youth Room:

- 3 companies have come to quote our walls for efflorescence removal (water seeping has pushed minerals through the concrete block, causing the paint to chip off significantly). 2 more have been contacted as well. This process can be done in just 2-3 days once it is scheduled.
- Betty Sue Seigler also coordinated the Hospice resale store picking up our remaining couches. They have served us well, and we are grateful to those who donated them to us. Now, they will go to a new home, and we will be using more flexible seating to make the most of our space.
- At our Oct 3 meeting, Youth members came down to the Youth Room and explored various options for their space. They each voted on various items, including what kind of seating to have, whether to keep or remove the pool table, what kind of wall display system they'd like, what paint color they prefer, how they'd like the room decorated, and more. The Youth were very excited to have a say in the way their space will turn out!

If you'd like to take part in this ongoing work, there is still time and a place for you! Just let me know, we'd be glad to have you. Keep an eye out in these spaces for the wonderful transformations that are nearly there. And thank you for your ongoing generosity which is making these projects possible.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Rachel