

Another Word July 3, 2023

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

Well it's hard to believe, but here we are the day before Independence Day. (And no Dale, not the movie.) We hope many of you can come out tomorrow evening for the fireworks display and help pass out ice cream treats and water to our guests gathering in our front yard. It's a great and fun time!

\*\*\*Important\*\*\* This Sunday there will be representatives from LifeWise Academy in our sanctuary (June 9<sup>th</sup>, 3 pm) to tell us more about their outreach to middle school students. We are exploring the possibility of allowing them to use our building for classes. I hope all of you will come to this important meeting and hear what they have to say as well as ask questions of them.

July 16 will be our first all church picnic immediately after our service. The church is providing hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks. There is a sign-up sheet in the gathering area for side dishes.

Associated Charities is in need of boxes of Mac and Cheese and packages of egg noodles. Please bring your donation in by July 16<sup>th</sup>.

Each Sunday, weather permitting, we will be worshipping at the pavilion. Come casual and bring a lawn chair.

Our scriptures for the next two Sundays are:

July 9- Psalm 45: 10- 17. Shelley Carpenter is our serving Elder.  
Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30. "You can't have it both ways."

July 16- Psalm 119: 105-112. Linda Gardner is our serving Elder.  
Matthew 12: 1-14, "The Lord of the Sabbath."

As we go to prayer, please remember Dick Gordon, Rev. Thom Gibson, and Glen Bille.

O most Holy and gracious God. Your love for us has no limits, and your guidance is always straight and true. We give thanks that we can come to you with our praises, fears, and even our anger. You understand us better than we understand ourselves. Please guide us through our lives that we may always act in accordance to your word. We raise up to you our friends and family that are in need of Your loving touch. May they feel Your peace and strength. You are our God and all praise and glory goes to You, and to You alone. We raise this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen.

During my time at college, I also worked at Ashland Florist. It was quite a learning experience. In fact, I think I learned more practical life lessons there than all my time spent studying.

My duties ranged from floral deliveries to floral arrangements. From decorating homes and businesses during holidays to the repair and maintenance of the boiler system. It was quite a broad education.

But one of the best duties was working in the 4 greenhouses we had. It was almost a non-stop job of preparing the benches, sterilizing the soil, and planting all types of flowers and plants. In fact, almost all the flowers that were sold were grown in-house.

I still remember the very first time I helped in the greenhouse. On a special bench with specially prepared soil, we planted the seeds; not too deep or too shallow. Once planted, all that was needed was regular watering, plenty of sun, and lots of time to allow them to germinate. Time was the hardest. Every day I would check to see if there was any growth. The wait seemed endless.

But then, small bits of yellow and green began to appear. I wanted to push some of the soil away to make it easier for the sprouts to come up, but I was told, the harder the effort, the heartier the plant would be. I found out that the most important stage of growth is during the time when these small sprouts are fighting their way through the soil toward the light of the sun. Sounds like there is a lesson here!

It's so easy to talk about all the accomplishments in our lives. All the good things we have attained. All the things that we consider triumphs and goals. However, if we are honest with ourselves, the true growth in our character that makes us stronger, is actually the result that comes from our times of pain and struggle.

James tells us to, "consider it pure joy" when we "face trials of many kinds." (James 1: 2) Full of joy as we face hardship and trials?!

God often allows us to go through hardships and challenges that will mold us into the person He wants us to be. Like the seedlings, He waits for us to come up, out of the struggles of life to become, as James writes, "mature and complete, not lacking anything." (vrs.4)

So, when life presses in around you, just remember, you are still growing, pushing up through the soil, ready to bloom into the beautiful flower you were meant to be.

In His Peace,

*Rich*