

Another Word October 19, 2021

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

Well, it's been an interesting week. I have really missed seeing you all and can't wait for this coming Sunday as we resume worshipping together. We are also back with our Tuesday study classes. And there are 3 more sets of books if anyone is interested. Brian is fine, and back to school, and we will have our Advent – Christmas planning session this Sunday, starting at 9:15.

Asking if there is anyone who would like to represent our church at The Trunk or Treat outing, October 30<sup>th</sup>, from 5 to 7 pm. You can decorate your car, dress up, and hand out treats to the children who come out. Dale Roy will have games available and it sounds like a fun time. Just let me know if interested. I have the needed information.

A work day is scheduled for November 6<sup>th</sup>, starting at 10 am. This will be a general cleanup around the exterior of the building, including windows.

As an update of the LifeWise Academy that we are helping support; Loudonville/ Perrysville schools have 120 students participating, Hillsdale began 2 weeks ago with 60 students, and now over 80 have signed up, and the New London system will begin November 1. God is moving in Ashland County. Pray that hearts are touched by learning about God's love.

Our Scriptures for this Sunday are: Psalm 34: 1-8, and Mark 10: 35-52, "The Blind See, Can You?" Todd Whitmer is the Elder.

May we pray. Dear loving God. We lift your name above all names. There is nothing or no one greater than you. Your power and strength and wisdom guide us to everlasting life. As we pause and listen for your voice, give us clarity, patience, and understanding. May we not allow the world and its

distractions to lead us astray. We ask for your healing touch, comfort, and peace for those we now lift up to you..... We ask for continued protection for our front line workers; police, fire, health, and military. May we each reach out to help one another in our quest for peace and harmony in our broken world. We acknowledge your love, and pray for your blessings to fall over your creation, and guide us on the narrow path to everlasting life. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.

I was really fortunate growing up. Our neighborhood was filled with kids around my age. There were so many that at times, we could field almost 2 baseball or football teams. And probably the most amazing thing was that we all got along. Our games of "hide and seek", always played at night, were epic, sometimes lasting over 2 hours. If we weren't playing sports during the day, we often played follow the leader, and included the youngest of the neighborhood to join in. You know the game. One person is picked to lead. Then that person will run, walk, jump, climb, and even crawl all around the yard, while everyone else had to follow his moves or be out of the game. One of the good things about this game is that the leader would never do anything to put his friends in danger. It's all in fun. The leader is the key.

But what about our day to day lives "in the real world." We all face pressure and enticements to "follow" and to do what the culture tells us. Children, youth, and adults all face these pressures; pressures that tempt us to take an easy, simple, or seemingly popular direction with our lives. But almost always it ends in failure and ruin.

I don't think it is an accident that Jesus, over and over again, compares people to sheep. Why? People, like sheep, tend to follow wherever the group is going. A few years ago in Turkey, a village lost 1,500 sheep. One got too close to the edge of a cliff and fell. The rest of the flock dutifully followed. It can be the same with us.

Jesus' words in Matthew are very telling. "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Matthew 7: 13-14. Jesus is saying that most of "the flock" in the world is following another sheep, and not the shepherd. He points out that the road to life is not popular or even used by many. And that many are flocking to the wrong road, because it seems wide, easy, and fun, while not seeing that it gets harder and harder to traverse.... until it's too late and takes you right over the cliff.

Sheep need a shepherd to care, protect, and to lead them from danger. I challenge you to reflect on who it is you are following. Is it the world and its temptations or Jesus our Shepherd? Then make a commitment to follow Him, even to the cross.

In His Peace,

*Rich*