



THE COURIER

A Monthly Publication of Bethany Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

LOVING *God.*
LIVING *for Christ.*
LISTENING *to God's Spirit.*

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Upcoming Sermon Series

The Lord moves in mysterious ways. Because of the quarantine, I had pretty much used up my church-related reading material, save for a ponderous theology book in which I was bogged down. Note to the wise – do not read ponderous theology books. In any case, I sat in front of the computer to find and order some new church-related books. Still, what about something to read in the week that it takes for the new books to get here? Giovanna found a free Kindle book by a Christian author I seldom ever read, and said, “Try this. It’s better than nothing.”

The author, Francis Chan, used to be the pastor of a megachurch in California. However, he felt God calling him to leave that behind for more faithful service. He took his six children to the mission field with him and his wife for a few years. Then, he came back to California and started founding churches. This time, however, his churches are based on forming disciples who go out and do ministry. In fact, when a church reaches twenty

members, he insists that it spin off a new church. He does not believe larger churches can properly disciple anybody.

Out of his journey came this book, **Letters to the Church**. While some of the book comes from a theological perspective some of us might not share, it nonetheless raises some rather provocative ideas about church life and about the Christian walk.

In the upcoming series of sermons, we will allow some of those provocative ideas to lead us into scriptural reflection on what matters and what does not matter in the life of the church and in the Christian walk. He even has one that fits with Pentecost.



The series promises to be both deeply spiritual and thought-provoking. Won't you make a point of taking in this sermon series? We likely will begin it online and finish it in the sanctuary, but whichever way we gather, come be part of this important reflection.

Covid-19 Quarantine Reflections

Some of you have quite understandably asked, "When do we get to worship in the sanctuary again?" While I will not be the only person or even the primary person making that decision, my hope would be that we would listen to the health experts and our local (El Paso and El Paso County) officials. They are not enjoying all of the opposition their quarantine is generating, but they have far more knowledge about infectious disease in general and the novel corona virus in particular than does anybody else.

The scriptures, particularly in the Book of Proverbs, urge us to seek wisdom and to get wisdom. For spiritual matters we find that wisdom in God and Christ, but God has given wisdom regarding infectious disease only to those who invest themselves to study it. Thus, we find ourselves seeking their wisdom, wisdom that God has allowed them to discover. It does not make sense that we would look for wisdom about infectious disease in any other place or in any other persons.

A number of churches have made a point of defying the medical authorities. The large church in Baton Rouge that has

done so has already seen the death of their lead usher and the critical illness of the lawyer fighting to keep them open, both from Covid-19. This happened in spite of the fact they were wearing masks and gloves. A pastor in Richmond, Virginia, vowed he would give up his pulpit only if he were in prison or in the grave. He died of Covid-19 and his wife is critically ill. A congregation in Illinois had dozens of members fall ill when they refused to go to online worship. There are other such stories. We endanger lives – our own and those of others – if we ignore expert advice.

While some are calling this interruption of worship by a quarantine unprecedented, the exact same thing happened in 1918 during the last major pandemic to hit Texas. In researching my Grandmother Arnold's genealogy, I found a collection of newspaper articles from little towns across North Texas (where she lived) for that very year.



In one town right after another, churches, lodges, clubs and other group gatherings were suspended until the pandemic eased. Fortunately, with modern technology, we do not have to suspend church. We just have to meet in an alternative format – online for many of us or in print for those without internet access.

Along those lines, we are hoping shortly after the beginning of May to make participation in meetings, Bible study, and Sunday school possible through an internet service called Zoom. As soon as we have the schedule worked out, those of you for whom we have e-mail addresses will receive the information on how and when to connect. This technology will allow for two-way communication.

Like all of you, I hope we can be back in the sanctuary (and back to more normal life in other ways) very soon. In the meantime, I am grateful to God for all of the ways that we can stay connected.

In Christ,

Pastor Bob



05/01 Noah Perez
 05/07 Sheldon Dively
 05/07 Jerrilu Mallo
 05/11 Bubbles Eads
 05/21 Trish Baxter
 05/27 Wayne Salgnero