



National Day of Prayer

On Thursday, May 6, our sanctuary will be open from 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m. to pray for our church, state, nation, and world.

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A Word from Pastor Blake

Purity of the Church and Unity in the Church

In college I worked as the assistant facilities director at the church I attended. Shortly after starting that job, the church hired a new senior pastor. His gift to every staff member was Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology. I still have the book and read it often. Chapter 45 is one of my favorite chapters in the book. It is titled The Purity and Unity of the Church. I read this chapter about 6 months after receiving the book because that same church went through a church split.

About a year after the split, I saw a former member of the church. We made small talk and then she started to explain why she left the church. She said, "I just couldn't worship in the same church as a pastor who doesn't hold to _____." You can fill in the blank. It was something that I would consider a minor doctrine.

This statement led me to think about unity within the church. My thoughts about church unity have been rekindled over the last year because the church has been hit with many different issues. I think we need to address the elephant in the room. The church has been split over politics, BLM, Critical Race Theory, Covid, masks, and vaccines. These issues are important! These topics have theological implications and sometimes, serious theological implications. This article is not about how we should think about these issues but how we can have unity with fellow believers in the midst of disagreement.

As believers we can fall into a trap of elevating our non-essentials beliefs to essential and then excommunicating people who don't hold to our non-essential. All of sudden the debate about how to stop the spread of Covid has become a gospel issue.

There is a real tension between the purity of the church and unity in the church. A purer church will more closely resemble God's ideal for the church. This includes doctrine, love for Christ, love others, and personal holiness. A unified church is free from division within the church. You can see where there is tension!¹

In the midst of the tension how can we maintain unity with other believers? How can we maintain unity within our church? These are important questions! There is much to say but not that much room. We need to start with the Bible if we want to understand unity.

Jesus' Prayer

In John 17, Jesus prays for Himself (1-5), His disciples (6-19), and future disciples (20-26). As Jesus is praying for future saints he prays, "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

Jesus was both human and God at the same time, and was aware how easily humanity can drift towards disunity. He knew that as people came to trust in him that the diversity would cause friction. Jesus makes three requests in this prayer: 1. That believers would be unified. 2. That believers are unified in the Triune God. 3. That the unbelieving world would see this unity and come to believe in Jesus.

What does unity look like? I don't think it means that we have identical viewpoints on all things. We can be unified with other denominations even though we hold to different doctrines. We can be unified with fellow believers who think differently about mask mandates. Unity means that we speak highly and lovingly of others even when we disagree with them. It means patiently enduring with those who might not be as "sound doctrinally". It means worshipping in the same church with those with whom we disagree.

I was recently reading a critical book review of a book that I really like. I made the mistake of reading the comments under the Facebook post. There was a lot of hate coming from both sides. One person called the author of the book a wolf in sheep's clothing. Other people shot hateful comments at the reviewer. I wonder what a non-believer would think if they stumbled across this comment section?

The unbelieving world is watching us. We can disagree and yet still be unified around the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Our unity affects our witness to the world. Our view on lockdowns is not as important as our effort to maintain love and unity with those who differ from us.

Jesus' Example

In Philippians 2:2-4 Paul says, "² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Philippians 2:5-11 roots these commands in Christ. Jesus is the prime example of humility and serving others. I believe humility is the key to interactions with people that we disagree with. Especially if the topic is not an issue of sin! We have Christian freedom in certain areas, and it is troubling to me when I see believers breaking fellowship because of minor doctrinal issues. It is even more troubling when the break happens because of personal preference and not doctrine.

What current issue makes your blood boil? How does Jesus' example of humility help you? Jesus was perfect in his knowledge of doctrine, yet he was loving, kind, and patient with his disciples who sometimes didn't get it. He would show anger when needed but it was often about prideful actions not towards those who were humbly trying to understand.

Our posture towards believers who disagree with us matters more than the issue of disagreement. Are you humble in conversations with people who disagree? Are you trying to understand their position? Can you love each other after the conversation, or does it cause anger? It is easy to advance our own agenda instead of looking to others as more highly than ourselves. Do you need to repent and make relationships right with others? Let's be a church that strives for unity and repent when our disagreement causes disunity.

¹Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 784



EASTER SANCTUARY

I would like to sincerely thank Rene Sundling, Gaylen Olson, and Peter Soto for their willingness to aid and abet me in preparing the sanctuary for Easter. We went where man and woman have never gone before . . . a job well done and clearly one I could not have done myself. They truly were a God-sent!

My great appreciation.
In Christ,
Gary Noggle



Prayer Warriors for Sunday Morning

Ladies, we need a few women in the prayer room at church from 9:00-9:45 a.m. to pray for various things related to our church body on Sunday mornings. Please sign up on the link below or let Ruth know a slot that works for you.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080C45A8AA2CA2FD0-sunday>



Join Us For Breakfast

Saturday Morning Event—May 22 Join us for Breakfast and Card Making!

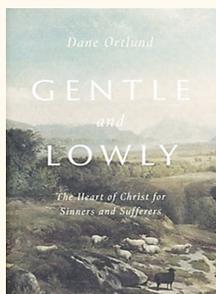
Ladies, you are invited to a morning of fellowship that includes food, crafting homemade cards and a testimony of a life changed by Christ. This will be held on Saturday, May 22 from 9 to 11:30 a.m., guests welcome! Please RSVP by Tuesday, May 18th either by letting Ruth know in the church office or by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080C45A8AA2CA2FD0-breakfast>



Summer Book Study!

In Matthew 11, Jesus describes himself as “gentle and lowly in heart,” longing for his people to find rest in him. This book reflects on his words, diving deep into Bible passages that speak of Christ’s affections for sinners and encouraging believers as they journey, weary and faltering, toward heaven. Join us as we read this wonderful book over the summer. Details as to meeting times and places coming soon. Contact Ruth in the office if you are interested.



Growing God's Way Ministries

What's Happening in Children's Ministry:

What a joy it has been seeing and hearing the enthusiasm from the children each Sunday morning!



Ages 3 yr.—5th Grade: will be in the book of Acts the month of May. Some of the lessons they will be learning: The Holy Spirit, The First Church, The Lame Man, and Saul to Paul.

Lil' Sprouts: this month's theme is God Made Me!

Pictures from this Month

Hosanna



Easter Review:
Making crosses & cups



John 21:1-14
A Net Full of Fish



Conversation Starters! Do you ever sit around the dinner table in silence: Well, we have a solution. Find out more.....watch for details on the Bulletin Board in the main hallway by the Sprouts Room. This will be a fun interactive activity for all.



Come and join us on **Sunday nights from 6:00pm-7:30pm** at the church for our Yamily Gatherings. Everyone is welcome!



Elders Report



As I think through some of the aspects of ministry, my mind begins to start down a journey of vivid experiences and conversations with believers and unbelievers alike. I have the tendency to pinpoint all the “crucial” moments in each conversation as though the results were dependent on those moments. As a new Christian, I relied almost exclusively on my personal ability to win a person to a specific end, by persuasiveness, knowledge, and ability to foresee any form of response ahead of time in order to address it appropriately. My intention in bringing this up is not to diminish the importance of those things, but to shed light on the mentality I had during my early years as a follower of Christ. This was, in fact, my mentality; but more importantly, it was the result of my insufficient perspective of the triune God.

In Ephesians chapter 2, the apostle Paul lays out in clear fashion the sovereignty of God in declaring His power to redeem and transform a people by His eternal choice, according to the purpose of His will. The heights of God’s power to save, transform, and sustain is something to marvel at. Paul goes on to declare our deadness in sin, and our nature being children of wrath. In chapter 2 verses 8-10, the inspired apostle links faith with the gift of God. Our faith as Christians is a gift. Philippians 1:29 is echoed in this regard, as Paul writes, “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake...”. My efforts to “win” people to Christ as a young believer, was not reliant upon the sovereign work of the triune God. This is not to say God cannot save people through our insufficient understanding, indeed He can! God can strike a straight blow with a bent stick. This becomes more of an issue of obedience to His word. As our commitment to God’s word brings maturity, one’s efforts in evangelism and ministry become a work of obedience rather than self-reliance.

My boldness to speak truth became “supercharged.” My tip-toeing around the tulips, as it were, began to lessen, and my desire for the unadulterated truth of God’s word became the dominant desire on my mind and also on my lips. As it relates to reaching the lost, God is the one who saves. God doesn’t do some of the work of salvation, and leave the rest to the dead sinner. Who that is spiritually dead, decides spiritual life? I cannot convince a dead sinner to repentance and faith any more than I can convince a tree stump to fly figure eights in the sky. Be encouraged that we are not in the results business, but God is. I can only be a tool in the hands of the living God, through prayer and obedience, in hopes that I can be of use to Him in His plans and purposes. Please know this and be encouraged, the God of heaven and earth saved you...not because of anything in you, but all because of what’s in Him. Praise this God daily. Praise Him not for throwing you a life-raft, but for reaching down from the heavens, digging you up from the sinful depths of your sea of willful rebellion, and breathing life into you. He has purchased you, sealed you with His spirit, and cares for you more than anyone can fathom.

With love and prayer, go tell someone.

Andy

Controlling Our Thoughts Will Give Us A Grasp on Controlling Our Actions

“Imagine being so pure in thought, word, or deed that everyone around you could know all your thoughts and you would have no fear of risking their displeasure. Imagine that your deepest cravings would be so holy that they could be thoroughly known to your family and friends without embarrassment. Everything you think or do could be gloriously known, with the assurance that nothing revealed would change the unconditional love of others and God. No need to hide, no desire to hide.”—adapted from Erwin Lutzer, *When Good People Do Bad Things*, 63-64).

This quotation from Erwin Lutzer strikes a chord that could resonate with each of us. Occasionally everyone has a thought or two that we desire to keep secret. In addition to this, we also have thoughts that we should keep to ourselves for fear of saying things that might possibly be offensive or harmful to others—things that might even be true, but we should *pause and think* before saying them. In “thinking” about this, the questions we need to ask ourselves involve how these thoughts come into our minds and how do they influence or impact our actions?

Years ago when I was enrolled in some computer programming classes, there was a sign on the wall that simply said “**GIGO.**” Everyone in the class knew exactly what it meant: **G**arbage **I**n **G**arbage **O**ut. If the computer program you were putting into the system wasn’t correct, the result of the program would be incorrect. That makes perfect sense, and the professor regularly reminded us to make sure we weren’t trying to process “garbage.” I was surprised earlier today when I researched this acronym (**GIGO**) and found out that it’s still being used within the digital world. But I’d like to suggest that it also applies to our personal lives in a very practical way. Whatever we feed our minds will be seen/heard in what we think, do, and say. **GIGO!**

In view of this, it might be beneficial for us to consider **Proverbs 4:23—27.**

23 Watch over your heart (mind) with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth And put devious speech far from you.

25 Let your eyes look directly ahead And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

26 Watch the path of your feet And all your ways will be established.

27 Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil.

At times I’ve heard different individuals suggest/claim that they’re not “personally” affected by what they watch on TV and in movies, or by the things they read in books, magazines, and on—line. However, based on what Proverbs 4 tells us, it seems unlikely for this to be true—or many have been deceived into believing that they’re not being seduced by our society. I’m aware of some people who avoid “the media” because it bothers them so much; while others seem to be addicted to it without realizing it. In today’s world, due to the way our minds are being exposed to so many harmful influences, it’s become increasingly important that we monitor what feeds/fills our minds since it will eventually become evident in our attitudes and actions—and in the way we exercise and express our faith.

In order to draw some conclusions that might apply to our personal lives, let’s consider some questions that might put **GIGO** in perspective.

- 1— How embarrassed would I be if others could read my secret thoughts or see what feeds my mind?
- 2— How often do I find myself thinking inappropriate thoughts, or being tempted to do what would dishonor or displease the Lord?
- 3— How often do I try to process **garbage** without thinking about the end result?
- 4— Do I have any protections in place that help me **watch over my heart** and **keep my gaze fixed straight in front of me**?
- 5— What does Philippians 4:8 tell me? *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think deeply and concentrate on these things.*

I pray that this is an encouragement for each of us as we pursue God’s priorities for our lives!

With prayer for God’s glory and praise for His grace ...
And as always, with prayer for our ACEFC family, Pastor Greg

Mission of the Month— Andy & Barb Krause



“The Prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” James 5:16

Praise Points

- **Online Prayer Gatherings** – Praise God for the ongoing online prayer gatherings that I am participating in regularly.

One of these gatherings is led by a key partner in the Philippines who are focused on church planting among Muslims. This time with them this past month greatly ministered to my soul. We were urged through II Corinthians 4:7-18 to not lose heart in the trials we face, but to keep our eyes on the eternal.

A second prayer gathering this past month, being led by Mark, one of the ReachGlobal staff I coach, is *Pray Taiwan* – a hour long prayer time focused on praying for the EFC Taiwan Initiatives. The next two gatherings are scheduled for April 30 at 7:30 PM CST and June 11 at 7:30 PM CST. If you want to join us praying for Taiwan, please let me know. I will send you the Zoom invitation. We need more prayer warriors.

Prayer Points

- **Church Planter Catalyst Training** -

○ **Urgent Prayer** – Please pray for **Ameet** and **Rajendra**, two of the Indian Church Planter Catalysts that I am coaching. They are sick with Covid-19. Ameet has been hospitalized with difficulty breathing. My last text with Ameet, seems to indicate that he has turned a corner and is improving. Pray for complete healing for Ameet and Rajendra. Pray also for protection over Ameet and Rajendra’s families that they would not get sick.

○ Last week we met as a large group for a 2 hour online training with all the Church Planter Catalysts from South Asia cohort who are participating. This week I am meeting with at least **Kirpal** and **Raj** for an individual coaching time with them. I will not meet with Ameet and Rajendra for this individual coaching time until they recover from their illness. Pray that everyone would learn and apply the things being taught through the reading, cohort training, individual coaching, and peer group gatherings.

Our ministry partners in the Philippines – As the Covid 19 pandemic continues to rage worldwide, it is still on the rise in a number of Asian countries including the Philippines. It has become extremely challenging for some of our Filipino partners. The **Evangelical Theological College of the Philippines (ETCP)** is one of those partners. They train Christian educators and church pastors. For a number of years now the basic operations of ETCP have been locally self-sustainable. But now because of Covid-19, student enrollment has drastically dropped. This has impacted the school financially. ReachGlobal has a long history of working with ETCP – so the Lord has led us to provide some financial assistance to help them through this time of crisis with the goal to return ETCP to that place of self-sustainability. Our assistance will go to provide for teacher and staff salaries, student scholarships, and other basic operation costs. Please pray! If the Lord would lead you to contribute to this need, please give to:

ETCP Covid Relief - Account #2300-5618

Online: <https://give.efca.org/>

By check: EFCA ReachGlobal, 901 E78th Street Minneapolis, MN 55420

Pray also for Pastor Rey’s son who has a brain tumor. Pastor Rey is the president of the ETCP. Ask God for healing. This has been an extremely challenging time for Pastor Rey and his family.

- **EFC Taiwan Initiatives** – Continue praying for the collaborative church planting effort we learning how to launch in Taiwan. I am playing an important role in shaping direction as I work alongside the Steering Committee. Ask God to raise up and send people to serve with us in Taiwan.

Health concerns for Andy – Please continue to pray for my health. Still no clear diagnosis on the health issues I am experiencing. We are thankful that tests the past few weeks have eliminated some potentially serious diagnoses. But the doctors are still probing. I have additional tests and appointments at Mayo both in Eau Claire and in Rochester over the next month. Ask God to keep our eyes on Him through this journey. Please ask God to provide a clear diagnosis, healing, strength, and confidence in His care.

Grateful for you!

In Christ,

Andy Krause

ReachGlobal Asia

Asia Division Leadership Team &
Leader of Strategic Partnerships

Our Mission here at Appleton Community EFC is to lead all people in a growing relationship with Christ.

Growing together in Christ we value:

Biblical Truth

We depend on the Bible as our source of authority in what we believe, what we teach, and how we live. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Worship

We believe that we are created by God to worship Him. Therefore, we live in worshipful response to God's character and activity. (Psalm 86:11)

Prayer

We believe that daily prayer is essential in the life of a believer and as such we pray with expectancy knowing that God is actively involved in our world. (Colossians 4:2)

Evangelism

We believe in sharing the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ with honesty and humility. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Fellowship

We believe that accountability, caring and a sense of belonging are essential for each believer to grow in their relationship with Christ. (Philippians 2:1-4)

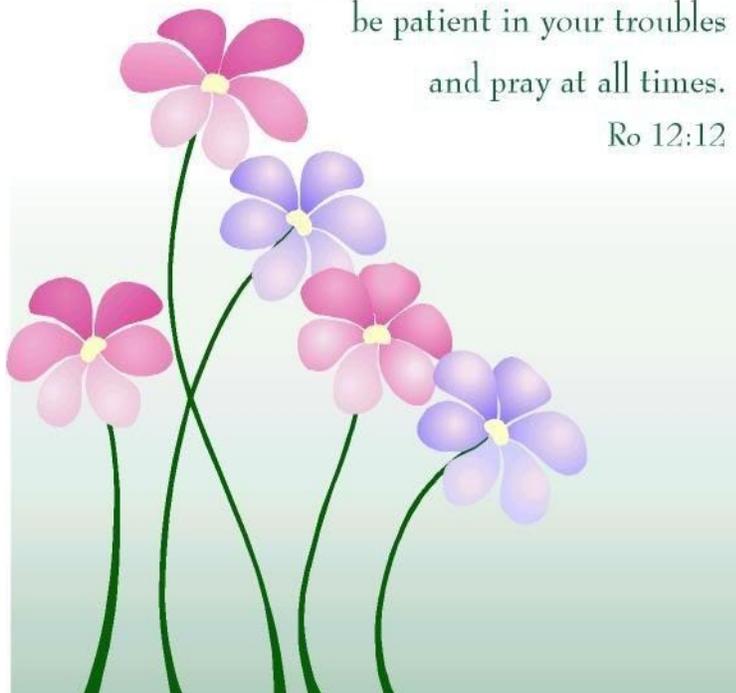
Encouragement

We believe we are responsible for caring for and encouraging one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)



Appleton Community
Evangelical Free Church
2490 West Capitol Drive
Appleton, WI 54914

*Let your hope keep you joyful,
be patient in your troubles
and pray at all times.
Ro 12:12*



We're on the Web!
applefreechurch.org

Church Office Hours

Closed Mondays
Open Tuesday—Friday
8:30 - 2:30