

August 2021
Growing Together In Christ

For behold, the winter is past;
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

Song of Solomon 2:11-12



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GROUND**E****D**

Standing Firm in a Shaking World

October 8-9, 2021 Livestream of Revive '21 is Coming to ACEFC !

The storms of our age are taking a toll. In the midst of this tumultuous season, you need to get grounded. That's why we are bringing you the Livestream of the Revive '21 Conference, **Grounded: Standing Firm in a Shaking World**. Through worship, prayer, and messages, you'll be challenged to get grounded in Christ, in the gospel, in God's love, in your design, in trials, in community, and in God's Word.

Come to Revive '21 and let the roots of your faith grow deeper into the soil of God's Truth. As you hear from steadfast women of faith and open God's enduring Word, you'll be reminded that you can stand firm in a shaking world. Stay tuned for more information!

Are Growth Groups Essential?

It was 8:15 and we heard the door open and saw someone from our small group walk in. He was over an hour late! Why would he show up to small group? He sat down and said, "it's been a rough day. I gave my wife divorce papers." We all sat there shocked. We knew he and his wife were struggling but not to that level. We sat there and listened as he shared what was going on in his life. After he was done talking, we all prayed for him.

I have been wrestling with the question "are growth groups essential?" The church I was a member of said all people should be in a growth group because they are vital for the Christian life. I am going to ask you the same question. Are small groups essential for your life?

Growth groups are not essential for your Christian faith, but the elements of growth groups are essential. There is no verse in the Bible that commands you to be in a growth group. Instead, I will use wisdom principles to show you that you should be in a growth group.

What is a growth group? I define it as a small subset of the local church living out the "one another" passages in the Bible through the application of God's word, prayer, encouragement, and accountability.

These elements are vital for your Christian faith. I am fine if you say, "I don't need to be in a growth group", but I will ask you questions. How are you living out the "one another" passages in scripture? When you sin do you confess it to someone? How are you intentional about fellowship?

Growth groups become a rhythm and routine in your weekly schedule. You can't go too long without someone asking yourself about your walk with Christ. It is hard to live out "one another" passages without creating space for them in our busy lives.

Corporate application of God's word

Colossian 3:16 says, "let the word of Christ dwell in you, teaching and admonishing one another." We are told to teach each other and learn from one another. We are also to warn each other of dangers. All this comes from the word of God. When talking through scripture, we can't help but be convicted. Scripture reminds us of how far we have fallen and how much we need a Savior. Your growth group gives you an opportunity to move from what the passage of scripture says to how that text affects your day-to-day life.

Prayer

I love when people pray for me and ask me for personal prayer requests. James 5:15 tells us to confess to each other and pray for one another because the prayers of the righteous bring healing! We are a church that believes in the power of prayer and that God hears us. He knows and He sees what is going on in our lives. Now we can recruit others to pray for us. This doesn't have to take place in small groups but it is an easy outlet to spend time praying for one another.

Encouragement

Multiple times the scriptures tell us to encourage one another. Hebrews 3:13 tells us to encourage one another to protect us from the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 10:24-25 tell us to encourage one another to do good works. 1 Thessalonians 4:18 and 5:11 tells us to comfort each other with the promise that God is coming back for His people. We encourage each other with the promises of God! We are often downcast, but God's people and God's word can give us the energy we need to keep going.

Accountability

James 5:16 tells us to confess sins to one another and then pray for one another. Galatians 6:1 says that we should restore people with gentleness. We need people who will not let us get away with sin and will help to restore us. We need people whom we trust so we can confess our sins to them.

I saw the beauty of small groups that night when one of our members came in and said he filed for divorce. I saw real, honest, and raw emotion. I saw a man become vulnerable with other men. This isn't stereotypical manhood, but I think it is biblical manhood. This concept of mutual ministry and vulnerability is not what society historically thinks of being a man. Being a man is being able to pick yourself up by the bootstraps and when life gets tough, you rub some dirt on it and keep going. The Bible paints manhood in a different lens. It is putting to death sin and growing in godliness. I am calling out men because we need to take leadership in this area. God calls us to lead our families and the church. The qualification for eldership is mostly a set of character qualities.

How many sins would be prevented if we would confess our sin to one another? How much embarrassment can be spared if we nip the sin in the bud before it grows out of control. Accountability is what God can use to keep us on the straight and narrow and weed the sin out of our lives.

Therefore, I think growth groups are essential because they create the rhythms and routine of living out the "one another" passages in the Bible which help us grow in godliness.

Updates and Opportunities



Pillars Shelter Meal

Thank you to those who donated their time, food, and \$\$\$\$! A special thank you to Greg Southard for grilling 90 hot dogs! The shelter was so appreciative for the meal our church provided. Great job!



Come and join us August 15 at Pizza Ranch (5450 W. Integrity Way).

We have reserved a community room for after church so we can spend some time eating and enjoying fellowship with one another. If you can't join us this time, you can join us next time. We are going to get together for lunch once a month.



The Nest

Get ready ladies! The Nest is back. We will be meeting at **7:00 p.m. on September 14th**. It doesn't matter if you have an empty nest, a full nest or just want to have some fellowship with the ladies from our church. We are excited to see you all!



Mission of the Month



For August & September we will be collecting shower supplies for the homeless shelter (towels, soap, shampoo, flip flops, foot powder). Please place your items in the donation box located between the prayer room and Lisa's office.

Women's Bonfire Night



It's coming ladies! The summer activity you requested. A bonfire evening for fellowship and fun with sisters in Christ. Of course there will be s'mores and other snacks to keep it yummy! This will be held on Friday, August 13 at 7 p.m. at Nancy DeDecker's house, with a rain date of August 14. Her address is N2918 Jenner John Court, Hortonville. If able, please bring a lawn chair. Guests are welcome! Please RSVP by August 10 using signup genius or contact the church office by phone or email. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080C45A8AA2CA2FD0-womens1>



Biblical heroes are examples of what happens when an ordinary life intersects with an extraordinary God. Join us for our fall study *Elijah* by Priscilla Shirer beginning Tuesday, September 21 at 6:00 p.m. or Wednesday, September 22 at 10:00 a.m.

Contact Ruth in the church office if you are interested!
Cost is \$15.00

Youth and Children's Ministry/Updates and Opportunities

What's Happening in Growing God's Way Children's and Youth Ministries:

Lil' Sprouts (6wks.-3yrs.) Thank you God for **Music!** The children will have fun with instruments celebrating music.

Sprouts and Evergreens, will continue to teach about Jesus' Miracles. Jesus heals a deaf man, blindman...

Mark Your Calendars!

AUGUST 29, 11:00—12:30

Slip & Slide & Ice Cream - Fun end of summer celebration.

Parents, please bring a towel and extra set of clothes for your children. We will do a short review of Jesus' miracles and then head outside to do slip & slide & ice cream. After the service, join us outside for the fun.



Remember, children are never too young to learn about Jesus' love!



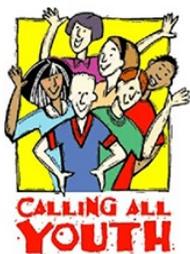
We are planning a fabulous year of faith, fellowship, and FUN for 2021-2022! We will be meeting this year in-person, from 6:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m., starting September 8. Masks will not be required, but families who wish to wear them are welcome to do so.

We are currently opening up our Awana registration to returning families from '20 - '21.

Registration for new families will start in August, if there is space available, based on how many leaders we have for this year. If you or someone you know is interested in serving as a leader, please have them email appletonawana@gmail.com.

Please join us in praying for our upcoming Awana year.

Pam MacDonald, Awana Director



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



Elders Report



“You are not your own; you were bought at a price.”

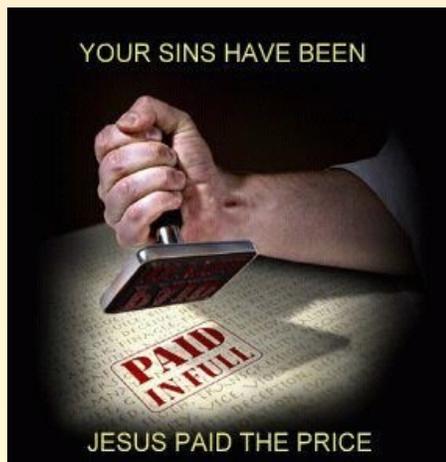
From 1 Corinthians 6:19 & 20 (NIV)

I am currently on a work trip in Maryland, and I was fortunate to be able to bring Steph along with me to do a quasi-work/vacation trip together. We drove out to Maryland and made it a point to see several places along the way that neither of us have ever been to, one of these being Gettysburg National Park in Pennsylvania. In early July of 1883 this was the site of one of the most pivotal battles in the history of the Civil War and it was also one of the costliest. As we stood at the top of Cemetery Ridge, I kept trying to imagine thousands of Confederate soldiers pouring out of the tree line only three-quarters of a mile away and charging at the dug-in, artillery-backed, and well-fortified Union soldiers. One cannot help but think through whether the cost they paid that day was worth it in the end. What was it that they were really trying to accomplish?

Cost. When you really think about it, we measure cost in almost everything that we do in life. We compare costs when we go shopping to try and gain the best value and we compare the cost of our time in doing one activity over another. However, all these costs are temporary and even the cost of over 7,000 men killed on the fields of Gettysburg eventually fades into the annals of history as a sad tragedy, a decisive victory, or an epic moment of heroism, depending on which lens of history you want to look through.

However, there is one cost that was ultimately paid that does not need to justify itself to historians or feel the need to be explained away by scholars. This cost was calculated, decisive, and most importantly, final. This was the cost of Christ’s death on the cross. A cost so high and so unattainable by any human being that we struggle sometimes to understand why God would send his own Son to die for any of us, let alone all of us! Christ looked into the eyes of those who spit on Him, beat Him, mocked Him, and eventually nailed Him to the cross and still He went willingly to His death because He loves all of us and knew His death was the only redeeming action that could be done to rectify us with an almighty God. As it says in Corinthians, all of us were bought at a price. Let us never forget this and use the knowledge of Christ’s sacrifice to show love, patience, and grace with others.

Justin



Some Relevant “Ramblings” from Pastor Greg

Gaining Some Perspective About Small/Growth Group Ministry

Do you ever think about times from the past and consider the changes we’ve experienced? Change is a natural part of life and when it provides an appropriate sense of advancement or improvement, it’s usually good—but sometimes it’s helpful to pause and analyze how it has impacted our lives in a specific way. Before you say I’m sounding like an “old—timer,” please realize that technology has been the major source for what’s taken place and the rate of change has escalated at an enormous pace since the year 2000, or so.

With regard for the focus of this article, **small group ministries** are a relatively new concept compared to many of the other activities that are part of “church life.” Some Christian leaders would suggest that in many churches (and probably the majority would be similar to ours), small groups have replaced the Sunday night worship service, and possibly some other events that used to be more common. When I was growing up—and through much of my adult life—Sunday included both morning and evening church attendance. Another weekly ministry that used to be part of our regular



—Hebrews 10:24—25

Let us consider how to motivate one another toward love and good deeds, **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, **but encouraging one another**; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

routine was a mid—week prayer gathering often combined with Bible study, typically on Wednesday evenings. Please realize that I’m not in any way suggesting that I’d like to revert back to that type of a schedule, but in reflecting on this, it seems important to understand what level of commitment is/was involved in being active in the church; and also what other options were provided to encourage spiritual growth. In reality, typically there were more church classes and activities that I could mention, but this is a brief summary. And personally I have many fond memories

attached to what I’m describing and long before I became a pastor, they had a major influence in how my lifestyle was shaped. **But there’s something more important to note from my experience. What I’m describing had an even greater impact on how my relationship with the Lord was shaped. Active and consistent participation in what our church offered to encourage spiritual growth and discipleship was a major factor in equipping me for ministry.**

Please notice what I’ve inserted above from Hebrews 10. The author of Hebrews is placing a strong emphasis on the role each faithful follower of the Lord has in encouraging, stimulating, motivating, and inspiring one another to stand out as a testimony and witness to the world around us. God wants us to have a mutual accountability toward one another and that happens best within a more intimate setting. ***Small groups provide that. It gives us a place where we can help one another grow deeper in our faith—where we can discuss what the Lord is doing in our personal lives—where we can say things or ask questions on a personal level—where we can enjoy the benefits and blessings of confidentiality without the fear of being misunderstood—and where we can pray for one another’s specific requests.***

Pastor Blake and I are trying to re—establish and re—energize the ministry of growth/small groups within our church. The past couple years have impacted all of us and have limited what we could do in this area of ministry. It’s likely that we’ll be making some adjustments as we go and possibly next year, we might launch our small group ministry with some additional changes. But we both believe that this is an important ministry that provides an opportunity to equip the saints for the sake of building up the body of Christ. Therefore, we’d like to encourage everyone to get involved in a growth group. Please watch for more info and an email providing a sign—up tool to add your name to the list.

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

Cru-Destino



Let's go for a Swim...

These last couple months since the end of Ramadan, businesses have resumed normal hours, students are finishing up their school year, and summer has arrived! So many good as well as difficult things have been happening, but I want to share with you my most favorite thing that occurred just in this last week. Our

G*d is so faithful!

I can remember being in my room back in the US pr*ying about my hopes for this year and things I would love to see G*d do in our time here. I remember so clearly one desire of mine was to be able to see local believers here b*ptized. I had no particular person in mind, but I just felt compelled to pr*y for this and to trust G*d with His timing of when this would happen. In the last couple months since easter, we had the opportunity to invest more in our sister "O" and my teammate specifically asked her at one point if she had ever been b*ptized. She answered saying that she had not been b*ptized but very much wanted to be. From then we started to have discussions with a local brother we are connected with about finding a time we could do this, and finally last weekend, *we were able to witness "O" go to the water, and officially be b*ptized!!!!!!*

When I tell you we were overjoyed, it feels like an understatement. The nature of us meeting "O" and our relationship with her ever since has been truly a gift from G*d and all the credit and glory goes to Him for the ways He prepared her in advance for us to meet her. She knew that to be b*ptized was to publicly declare that she was dead to sin and alive in Chr*st J*sus, and that there was no turning back for her. In a place like this, this is no small thing. Please be pr*ying that for "O", this would just be the beginning of a long lifetime of her faithfully walking with J*sus and making an impact for Him. And please be pr*ying that G*d would open doors for more opportunities like this to "go for a swim" even this summer!

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Romans 6:11



Prayer Requests

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Please pray for strength and protection for local believers like O, Avery, Zack, and others online from the attacks of the enemy. Pray against the spirit of fear and anxiousness and that it would be replaced with the Spirit of peace, truth, love, and boldness to be witnesses to those around them.

Some brothers and sisters online have been facing persecution since starting to follow J*sus from their family. Pray they would cling to their faith in J*sus more than ever as they face this.

Please pray for G*d to be opening doors for the summer team coming. That they would be used mightily by the Sp*rit in their time here.

Pray that my team and I could finish this year well and that we would lean into G*d to carry us through this transition.

Please pray for me, Bea, and Kevin as we have decided to return as long-term international staff here, and will be raising funds to return here in G*d's perfect timing. (prayerfully January).

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

appletonfreechurch.org

Church Office Hours

Closed Mondays
Tuesday—Friday
8:30 am – 2:30 pm

