



# December Newsletter



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# Glory



## TO THE NEWBORN KING.



Church Office Closed  
December 24—January 3  
for Christmas Break

Have a joyous and blessed  
Christmas.



# A Word from Pastor Blake

## Confrontation for the Glory of God

I desire that Appleton Community Evangelical Free Church would be a church that is defined by confrontation, forgiveness, and peacemaking. This may sound odd because confrontation is a word that brings negative connotations. We don't like to be confronted because it normally means we have done something wrong. We have either sinned against someone or we got caught in sin.

I have been confronted many times by people and I have never felt comfortable during the confrontation. I also have not handled it very well. I get defensive and try to defend my words or actions. I feel hurt and lash out at the person who was confronting me. I feel ashamed and shut down during the confrontation.

In college a few friends and I went to Florida for spring break. I don't remember what led up to the conversation, but I remember my friend confronting me with a question. He asked, "do you ever experience joy in your life?" That question pierced me because I knew that I lacked joy and contentment in my life. As a Christian I should have joy! It is part of the fruit of the Spirit. That one loving question caused me to repent and fight for joy in my life.

Looking back, I realize that these moments had a huge impact on my faith. The confrontation allowed me to confess my sin and turn to Jesus. They allowed me to grow as a Christian. I hope that you have faithful brothers and sister in Christ who can confront you. I also hope that you are a faithful brother or sister who is willing to confront others. Confrontation should always be for the benefit of the other. It should lead to forgiveness, peace, and godliness.

### How to confront?

Bring glory to God – Ken Sande has helped me think through these things in my own life. Our goal should not be to get a pound of flesh when we are wronged but to bring someone to repentance. Our goal when caught in sin should not be to hide and make excuses but glorifying God through repentance. We should always ask ourselves a couple of questions. What does God want me to do? What does the Bible say about my lifestyle? How do I trust God during this?

Get the log out of my own eye (Matthew 7:3-5) It always good to humbly check ourselves before confronting others.

Gently restoring the other person (Gal. 6:1-2) The goal is always restoration. We hope the person repents of sin. We hope that the relationship will be made right. Galatian 6 has a great warning for us. Keep watch on yourself, lest you are tempted. We could very well be the one being confronted next time.

### When to confront?

When someone is in sin (Matthew 18:15-20) – This is not so much a verse on church discipline but more on confrontation and forgiveness. We can get a wise strategy for discipline, but the goal is restoration. This confrontation can happen when you witness sin or are sinned against by another person.

When you sinned against someone else (Matthew 5:23-24) – If you sinned against someone and you know it, you go to them. The ball is always in your court when there is a break in a relationship. You either confront when sinned against or you go to the person when you are the offending party.

### How to respond when confronted?

Listen to the person – they may notice something that we don't see in our own life. Listen to them and then search your own heart to see if it is true. Thank them for pointing it out.

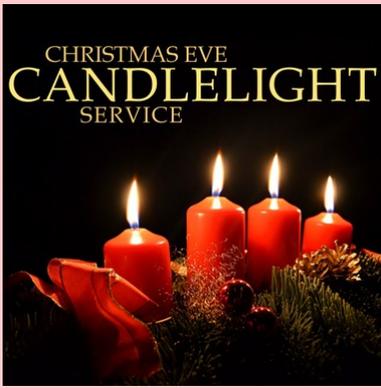
Ask Friends – You may disagree with the assessment. That is okay! Ask friends who will be real and honest with you to see if they see the same sin. Don't go to people who will tell you what you want to hear. Go to people who will tell you the truth.

Repent of you sin – Go to God in prayer and thank him for his grace. Thank him that this sin has been brought to light so you can turn from it.

Thank the person who confronted you – it may seem hard in the moment, but confrontation is a gift from God.

We live in a fallen and broken world. We are still sinners who are enticed by our flesh. We will sin against other people. People will see us when we sin. The question is how we deal with a sin. A healthy church is one that is quick to confront and restore others. It doesn't allow sin to grow and fester because we sweep it under a rug hoping the problem goes away. Sin that is ignored creates division. Sin that is brought to light creates peace.

# Updates and Opportunities



**Candlelight Service**  
**5:00 p.m.**  
**Friday, December 24**

Everyone is encouraged to come for this special time of worship as we take a break from the hectic pace of getting ready for Christmas by pausing to honor our Lord & Savior, Emmanuel!

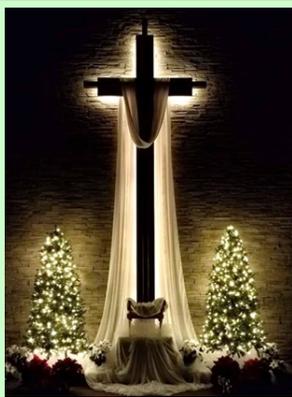


Thank you so much to those who made shoeboxes for OCC this year! We collected 68 boxes here at church, and 36 online, for a total of 104 total boxes! There will be 104 little children who will hear the gospel perhaps for the first time and have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior!



## The Nest

Ladies, come to our first Cookie Exchange on December 14th at 7 pm. Bring 2 dozen of your favorite Christmas cookie/treats, the recipe to make copies for everyone there, and an extra container to bring your other cookies home! We can't wait to see you there.



**A heartfelt, "THANK YOU!" to all who so generously volunteered their time and effort to install the Christmas decorations this year. Words cannot describe my great appreciation and gratitude. God's rich blessings on you this Christmas season.**

**Gary Noggle**



**Come and join us December 12 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.**



# Growing God's Way Ministries



Here's what's happening this month in Growing God's Way Ministry:

**Lil' Sprouts ages: under 4 years old.**

The children will be learning about the Real Meaning of CHRISTmas.

**Verse:** She will give birth to a Son, and name him Jesus. Matthew 1:21 (paraphrased).

**Sprouts/Evergreens ages: 4 years old through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.**

We will be in the book of Luke, focusing on Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, and the birth of our Savior.

**Verse:** She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins. Matthew 1:21.

December 19 children 4yr.-5<sup>th</sup> grade will sing two songs during worship. Please have children at church by 9:30 on December 19 so we can practice in the sanctuary.



Ideas to make Christmas more Christ-focused and less me-focused:

- \*Give gifts or time to others in need.
- \*Do a Christmas Devotional as a family.
- \*Advent reading.
- \*Read about the birth of Christ in the book of Matthew and Luke.
- \*Make treats and cards for neighbors.
- \*Use money that would be used for a gift for yourself to bless someone else.



December 15 - Christmas dress up night. Dress up in your favorite Christmas clothes or favorite nativity character.



December 22—No Awana  
December 29—No Awana



Awana will resume on January 5 with pajama night!



Join us Sunday nights from 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m. at the church.





## A Gift for God

This is an exciting time for our church. We're welcoming new members, sharing many special events/gatherings once again together and witnessing God's providence in our ministries, all while continuing to learn from His Word every Sunday. As we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus and reflecting on the perfect gift God gave us all, I wonder, what gift might we return to Him?

He lacks nothing and created us from dust, yet offered His only son as the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sin. Created in His image, we exist to glorify Him, but we all fall woefully short. How then can we even consider approaching Him with anything? Romans 5 has much to share; I encourage you to grab some hot cocoa and be warmed by the truth of His love.

What then shall I offer? I'm reminded of the numerous examples of those devoting time and travel, or dedicating treasure and trust. But I still struggle to get past the fact that all I deserve is a lump of coal... ..maybe that's it! Not the coal, but simply my recognition I have nothing to give and He freely gave everything to me. Therefore, before I can enter His grace to offer anything, I must first be cleansed. I will turn my coal to ashes, don my sackcloth, and seek His forgiveness which He is so faithful to give.

Let us recognize that there is no greater gift we can offer Him than to return our contrite hearts to Him through repentance. Only then will we be prepared to worship, praise, and serve Him as He deserves!

Psalm 30: 11-12

You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. LORD my God, I will praise you forever.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas in Him,

Marshall Legg



## ‘Tis the Season (of Lights, Delights, Silent Nights, & Biblical Insights) Celebrating The Glory of His Presence ... By Focusing Our Eyes on Jesus!

*The Christmas Season has arrived once again and in a very personal way, I’m convinced that in my lifetime, there’s never been a time when the Christmas Message was more needed than it is today. I’m trusting that this comment doesn’t seem to be overly dramatic or an exaggeration, and to many of us, it might be relatively obvious. When we face the facts, there are so many things happening in our “world” that seem hard to believe and even more difficult to process mentally and emotionally. That’s why our culture needs a reason to be joyful and a reality that leads to hope. It seems as if our society is desperately crying out looking for answers and searching for something that will provide a sense of genuine hope! ...But it doesn’t know what it really needs!*

As faithful followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, our understanding of God’s Word helps us recognize/realize that this world has nothing to offer that will provide authentic (or long—lasting) hope! By drawing attention to this truth, it becomes essential for us to find a way to look beyond what we see around us, what we hear from the news media (or other sources), and what we feel when we become aware of any of the challenges and changes our society is experiencing. Sometimes the distractions are difficult for us to avoid ... and ignore!

An important (and helpful) part of looking beyond the things that often distract us is taking a closer look at what God has revealed to us about what happened when our Lord Jesus Christ was born. **The Christmas Message revolves around real people and real events that took place in real time 2000 years ago.** Many different characters had an important role in helping to fulfill God’s plans and purposes and most of them were caught “off—guard,” not expecting to be part of such an important narrative that would change the course of history. It’s interesting to find that most biblical scholars identify the time leading up to Jesus’ birth as the “400 years of silence” because that’s the timeframe between the last prophetic writing of the Old Testament and when John and Jesus’ births were announced to their parents. Other than Herod’s attempt to kill the “Newborn King,” there was very little attention given to the Lord’s arrival. That’s why John the Baptist had the role of being His “forerunner” who would “introduce” Jesus as the “Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.” Jesus was God’s answer for hope then ... and He remains to be the answer everyone needs to know!

**To be bold, direct, and straightforward, if we claim to be faithful followers of Christ, we also have a distinct role in helping fulfill God’s eternal plans. We’ve been called by God to “set our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Fulfillment of our faith.” We’re also instructed to “sanctify Christ as Lord of our hearts, always being ready to explain that trusting Christ is the only thing that will authentically lead to hope for the future.”**

As I draw this article to a conclusion, I’d like to insert the lyrics of a song written by Michael Card. It’s entitled, *Could It Be?* If you want to listen to it, here’s a link from YouTube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVYuKKwigzw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVYuKKwigzw)

In the ebb and flow of living  
We can't hear with our ears  
Is there really any purpose

As we wander through the years  
They say to live by something  
To this foolish exercise?

We're told to listen to a voice  
That you can't see with your eyes

*{Chorus} Could it be You make Your presence known so often by Your absence?  
Could it be that questions tell us more than answers ever do?  
Could it be that You would really rather die than live without us?  
Could it be the only answer that means anything is You?*

In our words and in our silence  
To the foolish and insane  
You are the only answer even still  
It's a question you can't answer  
Is the source of happiness

In our pride and in our shame  
To the ones who care to seek You  
{Chorus}  
An answer you cannot express  
You'll never solve the mystery

To the genius and the scholar  
To the ones who never will  
That the gentle Man of Sorrow  
Of this magnetic man

**For you must believe to understand {Chorus} Could it be the only answer that means anything is You?**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, “Faith is not a result of seeing, but seeing is a result of faith!” As we reach out to others and proclaim the glorious message of the Lord’s birth during this Christmas season, let’s pray without ceasing that God’s Spirit will open people’s hearts to help them trust in God’s only provision for hope.

## Forest Lakes District of the EFCA- *We Are Better Together!*

### *Our MISSION:*

We exist to strengthen our member churches so that together we may multiply transformational churches among all peoples.

### *Our strategic values:*

- Connect: Create environments for relationships.
- Equip: Offer resources and training.

**Multiply: Support the multiplication of disciples, leaders and churches.**

*Our VISION is to enable multiplication by:*

### **RELATIONSHIPS**

The foundation of everything we say or do is our personal relationship with all pastors and lay leaders in the District.

- Personal contacts between District staff and pastors/lay leaders

### **RESOURCING**

- Consulting and coaching
- Training
- Staff issues (hiring, evaluating, compensation, etc.)
- Disciple-Making, Leadership Development, Elder Training
- Crisis Intervention and Conflict Management
- Conferences, Retreats, Special Events

### **REFOCUSING**

- Church Health Assessment
- Visioning and vision casting
- Pastoral Health (Ministry Support Program)

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Placement Services (including interim pastors, pulpit supply)
- Credentialing (licensure and ordination)

### **Discipline**

*The Forest Lakes District is VALUE DRIVEN:*

In all that say or do, the FLD is driven to provide value to local churches as they seek to fulfill their mission. The idea of being “driven” brings to mind being compelled, forced, pressing ahead, relentless exertion, setting in motion, energized, determination, no detours, and mission accomplished. Value is taken from the Latin valere; “to be worth”. Value is further defined as “relative worth, utility or importance; degree of excellence; something intrinsically valuable or desirable.” We are value driven.

We are value driven:

- To build relationships with and between churches, pastors and leaders that ...
- To offer or recommend resources that ...
- To help maintain or refocus the efforts of the local church so that ...
- To fulfill our responsibilities in a way that ...

enhances the leadership and ministry of each pastor, leader and church member toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

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  
Phone 920-735-9971

Church Office Closed  
December 24—January 3  
for Christmas Break

Have a joyous and blessed  
Christmas.

Regular Church Office Hours  
Closed Mondays  
Tuesday—Friday  
8:30 am – 2:30 pm

The magic of  
*Christmas*  
is not in the presents,  
but in  
*His*  
presence

We're on the Web!  
[applefreechurch.org](http://applefreechurch.org)

