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I CAN
do all things
THROUGH
Christ
WHO GIVES
ME
strength.
PHILIPPIANS
4:13



A Word from Pastor Blake

Creating Life Transforming Community at ACEFC

I just finished teaching a Sunday school class meant to train growth group leaders and encourage people to participate in a growth group. I am going to summarize the three-week class in two points!

Christian Community is not optional

I attended a church that emphasized small groups as the primary vehicle for Christian discipleship. The pastor would say that you must be in a small group to be a growing Christian. I asked the Sunday school class how they felt about that statement. It led to good discussion among the people in the class. I concluded that small groups are not essential, but community is not optional.

If you are not part of a small group, then how do you experience Christian community? I think it's possible to experience community outside of small group, but you must be intentional about it. I think growth groups are an easy way to have community with other believers.

I admit that community is messy! Our world is filled with relationship issues. You may be hesitant to enter relationships with others because you have been abused, manipulated, and taken advantage of in the past. You may prefer to isolate from others instead of seeking others out. I don't think this is the right response. We as Christians were created for community. I think this roots all the way back to creation. God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Notice the plural pronouns. This verse implies that God existed in fellowship and community with Himself since eternity past. It also implies that we were created in His image. One way to reflect God's image is to be in community.

Bruce Ware says, "we should not view ourselves as isolated individuals who happen to exist near others, but as interconnected and interdependent persons in community." We can admit this is hard! It's not easy to live this way, especially in a world tainted by sin.

The good news is we are calling you into community with other Christians. Colossians 3:12-17 gives us a beautiful picture of a redeemed community. It is one filled with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, peace, truth, and wisdom. Who doesn't want to belong to a community like that?

Community is not an event

Have you ever been part of a growth group that felt like a chore? Have you ever dreaded going to growth group because it was life sucking and not life giving? There are many reasons for these feelings, but one reason could be you are looking at community group as an event and not as people and relationships.

I look forward to Labor Day every year. Not only because I get a day off work, but also because I get to spend a weekend with my friends. You don't have to twist my arms to hang out with my friends. I joyfully and voluntarily meet with them. I am hoping the same is true with our small groups at ACEFC.

Friendship doesn't just happen. It takes time, effort, and shared experiences. We need to move from viewing our growth group as a once a week or once every other week event to viewing our growth group as friends. Friends do more than study the Bible together. They eat meals together; they do activities together; they share life together. A growth group needs to be able to talk about the Brewers and the Packers before they can talk about the hard things in their lives.

Community is built by spending more time together, not less! Fill your calendars with more activities with people in your growth group. Plan for supper together, park dates, grill outs, bonfires, and game nights.

Life giving growth groups happen when the people in the group are your friends. It happens when you want to be around the people instead of dreading their presence.

I understand that this will take a culture shift for some people. Culture will really change when people start seeing other people in the church being transformed. Culture changes when people in the congregation get the vision for community and start inviting people into their community.

Will you join this year? Will you consider leading a growth group or being part of a growth group? Will you try it for a year? I challenge you to join a growth group in September and stick it out through May of 2023. Make it a priority and make people a priority. Go all in on a growth group and see how your life changes between September to May. I am not saying it is a magic pill but I bet you will be surprised how God works in your life, through other believers.

¹Brad House, Community: Taking your Group Small Group off Life Support, 149

Updates and Opportunities



Mission of the Month—Lac Courte Oreilles “The Shack”

For June and July, we are collecting school supplies for the children and teenagers of the Lac Courte Oreilles Indian Reservation. They are in need of all basic school supplies, including crayons, pencils, rulers, folders, notebooks. etc. Back packs are especially needed. If you don't feel like

shopping you can make a donation, mark it for school supplies and put it in the giving box.

Non perishable food is also needed to help feed the hungry teens that come to Bible study.



Men's Breakfast

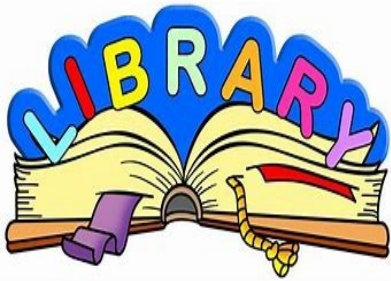
Calling all men to breakfast on June 18 at 7:30 a.m. here at church. Stay tuned for more information. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Matula or Chet Kamark.



“Let's Do Lunch”

Come and join us June 12 at Pizza Ranch
(5450 W. Integrity Way).

We have reserved a community room for after church so we can spend some time with one another after our church service.



ACEFC Library

Need a little help witnessing? Stop by the entryway table which has a variety of tracts and bookmarks that you can use to make sharing easier.

Our library has continued to add new books that promote spiritual growth, provide Christian themed fiction and allows you to read about leaders of our faith. Make it your goal to add reading to your summer to do list.



Student Ministry—Operation Fox Valley June 19-24

The youth will be participating in a local serving trip called Operation Fox Valley. Here are some ways the congregation can participate in the trip.

1. Pray for the serving. Pray for the people we will minister to and for the hearts of our students and leaders.
2. Do you have any projects we can do?
One of the afternoons we will be serving the people in our church.
3. Would you consider volunteering for one of the days? We need adults to minister with the students and to the students. We need volunteers to help transport students to ministry locations.

Please contact Pastor Blake if you would be interested in a group come to your house or if you are interested in serving.



Growing God's Way Ministries

Growing God's Way Children's Ministry...

Lil' Sprouts ages: under 4 years old.

This month the Sprouts will be learning about a few of Jesus' disciples. We need to follow Jesus like the disciples:

Verse: Matthew 10:1 Jesus called for his 12 disciples to come to him.



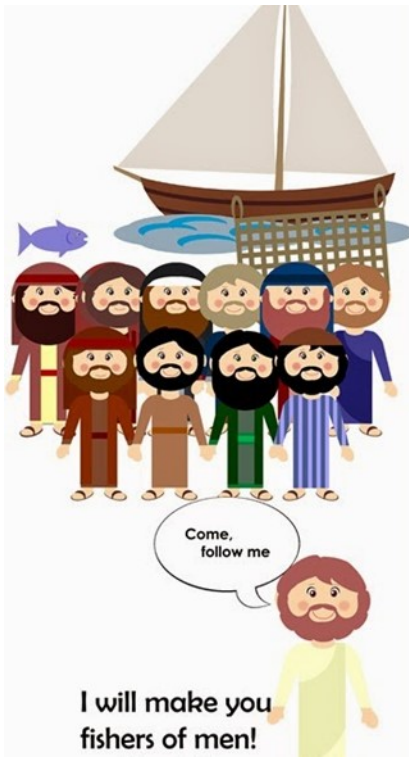
Sprouts/Evergreens ages: 4 years old through 5th grade.

This summer the children will be learning about Jesus' 12 Disciples.

We will enjoy learning about each one; we might even have some surprise visitors.

Key Verse: Verse: Matthew 10:1-4

1. Jesus called for his 12 disciples to come to him. He gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every illness and sickness.
2. Here are the names of the 12 apostles. First were **Simon Peter** and his brother **Andrew**. Then came **James**, son of Zebedee, and his brother **John**.
3. Next were **Philip** and **Bartholomew**, and also **Thomas** and **Matthew** the tax collector. Two more were **James**, son of Alphaeus, and **Thaddaeus**.
4. The last were **Simon** the Zealot and **Judas Iscariot**. Judas was the one who was later going to hand Jesus over to his enemies.



KIDS' BIBLE CHALLENGE is still happening!

Have your child fill out the Bible Challenge slip and return it Sunday morning. The goal is that we have lifelong learners of the Word, that they will crave His Word every day. If they continue to fill the container with the challenge slips we will have a celebration sometime in June or July.

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' " Matthew 4:4



Come and join us on **Sunday nights from 6:00-8:00 p.m.** at the church for our Yamily Gatherings.

Everyone is welcome!





Church Is More Than The Sermon

Why do we come to church at ACEFC?

If it were just for the sermon, we could lay in bed and listen to the sermon online on the church website, but what are we missing? We can get biblical truth and we can pray while we are comfortable at home.

prayer
encouragement
biblical truth
evangelism
Worship
fellowship

Can we encourage one another from home? What do the scriptures say?

Hebrews 10:24-25 English Standard Version

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Can we have fellowship from home? What do the scriptures say?

1 Thessalonians 5:11 New International Version

11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Hebrews 10:24-25 New International Version

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,

25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25 English Standard Version

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Matthew 18:20 New International Version

20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

We can and should worship the Lord at all times, but for me my corporate worship far exceeds my private acts of worship. Nothing compares with many voices of praise & worship joined in with my voice.

Psalms 95 New International Version says -

1 Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

3 For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Psalms 150:1&6 New International Version

1 Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

Church Happenings

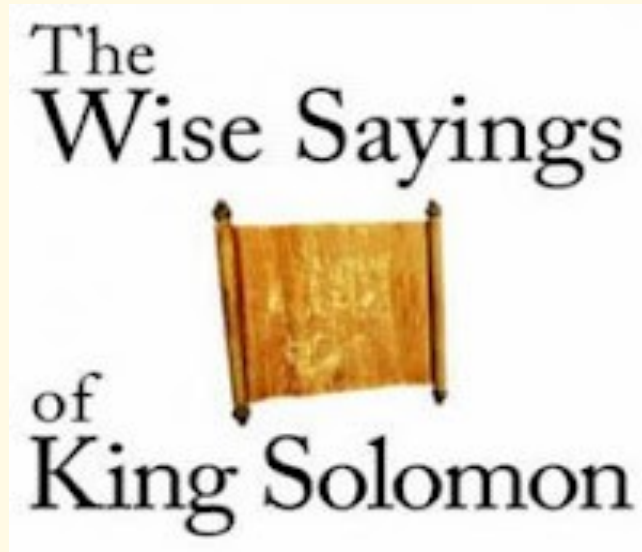
Lac Courte Oreilles Mission Trip

A baptism, devotion by Jeff Davis, party/craft making time, and building picnic tables.



Church Happenings — Con't

Children's Church—Learning that King Solomon wrote Proverbs



Church Happenings — Con't

Youth “Mystery Night”



Church Happenings — Con't

Youth "Mystery Night" - con't



Managing Our Minds: Recognizing What —or— Who Controls Our Thinking

Over the past few months, I've heard an increasing number of people making comments about wanting to avoid hearing or watching the news. Then noting how some of the events during the past couple weeks have been so heart-wrenching and extremely overwhelming, we might find ourselves searching for an appropriate blend of being informed about what's happening in the world around us and also shielding our minds from the stress and strain it causes. I suspect that many would also agree with the idea that our culture has taken us to a point of “information overload.” At times like this, it's normal and natural to desire a way to step back to rest, relax, and retreat from the hustle and bustle of this fast-paced society.

A couple weeks ago, when Donna was spending a some time with our daughter, Kristin and her husband, Jeremy, I had been doing some reading and decided to watch a television program—a one hour crime drama with a preview that looked relatively tame and entertaining. Actually it had a good story line, with no violence, and it included some interesting character development. This included some interactions between the characters that seemed true-to-life. Previously, I had never seen any other episodes of this program so I wasn't aware of any of the people involved. By the end of the hour, the criminal case that was highlighted in this episode was solved and it appeared to be a good conclusion. But, in the final scenes of the show, it became obvious that some of the interactions between the characters had a different agenda than I was able to discern from simply watching once. When I recognized that things were moving toward some inappropriate and immoral behavior, I turned the television off. Maybe the cliché stating that “You can run, but you can't hide!” would relate to what I'm trying to say. Or worded more directly, it seems that in our world today, it's becoming more and more difficult to avoid being influenced by ideas and philosophies that are contrary to our biblical views and values. When I read recent surveys being done by reputable Christian researchers (like Barna) saying that a only small minority of pastors and church leaders in our country (37%) hold to an authentically accurate biblical world view, I find this to be shocking and also logical at the same time.

When I was very young, I learned several songs and choruses that taught me biblical truths or concepts.

Recently one of them has been “on my mind” (pun-intended). I imagine many of you might also remember it.

“Be careful little eyes what you see. O be careful little eyes what you see. For the Father up above is looking down with love; so be careful little eyes what you see.” Then it goes on with more verses identifying other actions: **“ears what you hear; hands what you do; feet where you go; and mouth what you say.”**

This chorus also brings Romans 12:1–2 to my mind. **“Therefore, because of God's mercies shown to us, I encourage you, brothers and sisters, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, pleasing to God. This is your spiritual worship. And don't allow yourselves to be controlled or shaped by this world's system, but instead be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you will be able to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”**

—Here are two recommendations based on Romans 12:1–2 that will help us manage our minds in a way that allows God to control our thoughts and thus, avoids being manipulated by our society.

—1} God wants us to **present our bodies to Him by paying closer attention to the mercies God has given (shown) to us.** We know that God's amazing grace provides us with something we don't deserve: Christ's righteousness! **But in a very practical way, it's God's mercy that allows us to escape the punishment we deserve.** Along with His mercy, He provides us the privilege of escaping the problems that are connected with a lifestyle that's characterized by sin and rebellion. Christ bought us by paying the price for our sin; **He owns us and it's our responsibility to present our bodies to Him.** That's an important step toward developing the type of thought life God desires us to have.

—2} It's beneficial to **recognize that our minds are controlled by the things we put into them.** Warren Wiersbe says it this way, “God transforms our minds and makes us spiritually minded by using His Word.” **As we spend time meditating on God's Word, memorizing it, and making it a part of our memory bank, God will gradually transform our minds to become more able to think about what's true, what's honorable, what's just, what's pure, what's lovely, what's acceptable in His sight.** “O, be careful little eyes, what you see! For our Father up above is looking down with love! ...”

As always, with prayer for God's glory and praise for His grace, Pastor Greg



Boozhoo Niichij,

Happy Ziigwan/Spring! Happy indeed! the snow is melting, the rivers are flowing, the snow is ..., the birds are singing, snow, the cubs and kids are waking up and making their way back to the Shack, ... MORE SNOW!?! Anyways, I'm ready to move on from winter.

One of my favorite ways to enjoy the changing of seasons is with a daily walk with the dogs. As Gus and Oodie led the way today, I started a game of pick-up sticks thanks to our recent ice storm. The dogs were not amused and ran off the path and into the woods. As

I slowly cleaned my way down the path, I was happy to see Oodie come back and cheer me on, or so I thought. It took me a few minutes, but I suddenly realized that the dog hanging out with me wasn't Oodie at all. It seems I started my walk with two familiar dogs and finished it with a complete stranger.!? It all ended with a friendly meet and greet back at the Shack.

Here on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation, we walk out daily paths and routines with each other. And it seems there is a lot to clean up after the season that was/is the pandemic. Many that we walked with pre-covid have left the path and the hope is that as things get "cleaned up," we will meet again. Still others have joined us on this journey centered around Jesus.

A new venture begins with spring in the air. Food! If you cook it, they will come. This isn't completely new as most gatherings we have also include food. In this relational ministry we walk out here as the Church, we are looking to bring old and new, young and elderly together around a meal ... meals. Pray with us over this meet and greet with our neighbors near and far. The hope is to do a weekly meal all the way through the summer and see where it might and who it may lead us to.

Another way I enjoy the changing seasons is in a canoe. It was a treat for me to share the river with our InterVarsity crew from UW Eau Claire again this year. They spent their spring break blessing the community here with their time, energy, love, and prayers. Miigwech to all of you BluGolds (whatever that is?)!

All of you basketball fans I assume are currently enjoying some March Madness. I had the privilege of experiencing madness for a whole season again this winter.!? It was another good season with half the players finishing it out.!? The connections were great and the basketball wasn't bad either.

Speaking of madness, the Boys and Girls Club could use some prayer. This open door to the community is currently filled with kids bouncing off the walls and staff bouncing out the door.

Your prayers are also appreciated as people struggle here in not so healthy ways. Pray that I/we will help usher in health, hope, and healing all wrapped up in God's love, as we meet people where they're at.

You and your prayers are very much appreciated.

Your partner in Christ,
Bob



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



We're on the Web!
applefreechurch.org

Regular Church Office
Hours
Closed Mondays
Tuesday—Friday
8:30 - 2:30