

THE MESSENGER

Franklin United Brethren Church

7171 Central College Road

New Albany, OH 43054

WWW.FRANKLINUB.ORG

Sunday Service 10:15 AM

MAY 2024

“WIN – TRAIN – SEND”

HOW TO HAVE FUN AND BE POPULAR WHILE THE WORLD GOES TO HELL

Many years ago, I remember attending a massive youth rally with the youth group of Franklin Church. It was in Washington D.C., and it was massive and impressive. Massive because the numbers were about 5,000 youths. Impressive because the music and technology rivaled anything Hollywood had. It truly was a great spiritual event; I was glad I went and glad our church youth went.

Some of the images that struck me were the “cool/flashy” fashions worn by the entertainers (I mean musicians), the light shows, and some of the gymnastics singers performed while singing to us. In its day it rivaled Brittany Spears (think Taylor Swift today). The music WAS Christian, and it was high quality but some testimonies that accompanied the music were “Look at what I’m doing for God.”

Lest I sound like I’m picking on youth, fast forward to a typical middle-class American church today. If you’re a visitor, you are likely to be directed to the Welcome Center/Guest Reception where you may get a Starbucks gift card. It looks more like a Marriott hotel lobby than a “church” lobby (which isn’t bad). During the announcements you are likely to hear more about Zumba class than discipleship class. The congregation sings top-forty-style songs that are more heavily peppered with “I” and “me” “love”, and “peace” than “the blood of Jesus” and “sinner.” The pastor, likely to be wearing the latest Polo or Ralph Lauren (or Hollister if he’s young) preaches. When he preaches, he’s not just going to be speaking words (that’s boring), he’s using the newest PowerPoint version, sprinkled with enough video to make you feel like you’ve had a few commercial breaks. When he preaches, you’ll hear about falling in love with Jesus, claiming your personal wealth promises, having your best life now and being an overcomer. No mention about personal sin, suffering for Jesus, guilt, or judgement. Why would he mention them? They’re not popular and if it’s not popular or fun people may not want to come back. So, it goes in too many American churches today. The other day when I read about some of the suffering and murder Christians are facing in North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Iran, and Iraq I thought of something: “Our American Christianity of having fun, being popular, and getting rich” wouldn’t fly in the face of the persecuted church.

Thomas Bergler in his book *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* says: “Juvenilization is the process by which the religious beliefs, practices, and developmental characteristics of adolescents become accepted for Christians of all ages.” It is extremely important for adolescents to be popular and to have fun! So...we’ve incorporated that philosophically and theologically in the way we teach what the Christian faith is about. I mean, after all, how easy it is these days to draw someone to Jesus by saying: “You are, by nature, sinful and you need to turn from self-centeredness-surrender to Jesus and then be prepared to be unpopular for obeying the Bible.” That kind of truth is not popular in Zumba class.

On the other hand, “Come to Jesus so your problems will go away, your bank account will get bigger, and you can achieve if you believe” will not be popular before God on judgement day. I fear both the “liberal” and evangelical churches are so busy having fun and being popular that they are letting the world go to hell. Not on purpose, of course, but mostly out of the neglect of the hard teachings of the gospel. The juvenilization of Christianity in our country is a story not of a sinister plot or a noble crusade but of unintended consequences of the desire to avoid being seen as irrelevant or unpopular. Sadly, when this desire wins out the world goes to hell.

In Christ’s Love,

Pastor Mike

SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

Proverbs 23:4-5

PRAYER NEEDS

Rev. Les Smith, Gabe Smith, Helen Smith, Paula Martin, Dick Fisher, Erick Alden Family, Barb Pittenger (shut-in of the month)

Missionary of the Month – Restricted Access Missionary (RAM): The United Brethren Church (UBC) is a relatively small denomination. We have only 14 missionaries sent to other countries from the United States and 6-7 sent out from other countries. Of the 14 US missionaries, 4 are called Restricted Access Missionaries. Meaning, they serve in a country where Christian Missionary work is either illegal or extremely restricted. To get caught sharing Jesus means to either be expelled from the country or jailed. The UBC cannot reveal the name of the RAM missionaries or their location. Additionally, the denomination cannot use their names on any social media. To do so puts the missionaries' lives in danger. Please pray for the newest UB RAM (our 4th). I think she goes by the name "A", and I know she is serving in a strict Muslim country. She is single; pray for her family back home as well.

Shut-Ins: Helen Smith, Barb Pittenger, Trish Dolejs, Faye Cooper, Betty McCombs, Clarabell Harlan, Margaret Jewett, and Bonnie Boone

Shut-in of the Month – Barb Pittenger: It hasn't been too long ago that Barb was featured in our shut-in of the month. However, the number of grandchildren has doubled since our last report. Barb has not been able to attend Franklin Church for ten years due to M.S. She is completely wheelchair bound, unable to even stand up. If you have not seen Barb in the past 10 years, I can assure you she still has the happy, faith-filled attitude that she has always had. On a recent visit to see her, she informed me that in the last few months, she has gone from having two grandchildren to four grandchildren. Each of her children (John and Emily, spouses Sally and Christopher) had a child! Barb and husband, Robert, are very happy these days! Send Barb a card or visit her if you get a chance: Johnstown Point, 383 W. Coshocton St., Johnstown, Ohio 43031.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

May 18th 8:30AM - 12:00PM: Work Day For All - Come, get a light workout and make work worth it through fellowship as you work. Questions? Ask Tom Dague. NOTE: THERE IS A SIGN-UP SHEET FOR SPECIFIC WORK ON THE BACK TABLE, AND IF YOU CAN'T BE HERE THE 4th, WORK ON YOUR OWN SCHEDULE. SIGN-UP SHEET IS FOR ALL WHO CAN HELP NO MATTER THE DAY. Lots of variety!

Sundays 9:00AM: Sunday School Class/Bible Study. This is a relatively new study! "Zech, What the Heck?" Come and learn about the century prophet, Zechariah, who has perhaps more prophecies of the Messiah and the end times than any other prophets than Isaiah and Ezekial. To understand Zechariah is to better understand Revelation!

Women's Ministry: May 16th at 6PM. Join us for food, fun, and fellowship!

May 19th 6:00PM – 7:00PM: Fourth Sunday Prayer on the third Sunday. What? Yes, moved up a week due to Memorial Day Weekend!

Men's Group Breakfast: May 31st at 6:45AM at Tim Horton's – 7400 Fodor RD, New Albany. Join Tom Dague and others for breakfast food and spiritual food.

Want to Help Children Learn About Jesus? Volunteer to teach during the church worship hour (see Ruth Eller). Or volunteer to read a Bible story to kids of the pre-school. Bible Story is each Wednesday morning (weather permitting) 10:30AM – 10:45AM. Questions? See Pastor Mike.