

Good News People in a Bad News World

Dear Oak Hills Family,

It's been a "bad news" kind of year. I won't even list the major headlines – we all know them. We've gotten used to bad news. We're almost numb to it. The negative developments in our world are so relentless, often we don't even have the emotional bandwidth to register it all. I've heard from some of you who are truly struggling, trying to make sense of it all, trying to be faithful, to do right, to maintain hope. But it's not easy.



One thing that's helped me recently is to put our present moment into historical perspective. Take the first century, for example. People living in the first Century AD faced an average life expectancy of around 35 years. Plagues were a regular occurrence, and science hadn't yet discovered germs or hygiene, so people and communities were defenseless. Politically, the world operated according to the tyranny of the powerful. Inter-racial and inter-religious hatred and violence were the norm. Women were viewed as property, children were free labor. Life, as Thomas Hobbes famously put it, was "nasty, brutish and short." I can only imagine what a first century "news feed" might have looked like!

And yet it was into this kind of world that the gospel was first announced. "Gospel" literally means "good news." This news was hinted at way back in the days of the prophets (Isaiah 61:1), declared by Jesus himself (Luke 4:18) and echoed ever more loudly by his followers (Mark 1:1). Something was happening. God was on the move. A new reality was dawning, in a world overrun by bad news, that made it possible to feel hope, to find joy, to experience peace. From the beginning, we Christians have been "good news" people – a people who have glimpsed a new reality so bright it outshines all the world's darkness. And today, even right now in this bad news year of 2020, the good news is still better than the bad news is bad.

So what is the good news? We'll be exploring it all summer! But here's the short answer: God is a Redeemer. He keeps justice. You are not alone. You are forgiven. You have a glorious future. When you are weak, then you are strong. Nothing surprises (or hinders) God. God has a plan and purpose for your life. History is headed somewhere good.

How's that for a different kind of news feed?! We Christians are good news people, not because we ignore the world's pain, but because we believe in a God whose goodness and grace are bigger than that pain – a God who intends to "make all things new." (Rev. 21:5). As we explore the fullness of the good news, I pray you and I will become more and more like our earliest forebears in the faith – good news people, lanterns shining in darkness, a living presence of hope in a hopeless world. The good news is true. The good news is good. The good news is better than the bad news is bad. May we be good news people, together!



Jeremy Sanderson
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503-654-6173 (Pastor's study)

Yours in Him,
Jeremy

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeremy", written over a light blue horizontal line.

the
OAK HILLS
ACORN

**July
August
2020**

Volume 18, Issue 4

SUNDAYS

Summer Sermon Series: "Good News!"

July 5	"A River Runs Through It"	Genesis 1: 6-10	Rev. Stasia Van Burskirk
July 12	"God is a Redeemer"	Genesis 50: 15-21	Communion Sunday
July 19	"Nothing Surprises (or Hinders) God"	1 Kings 19: 11-18	
July 26	"You Are Not Alone"	Genesis 16: 5-15	
August 2	"You Are Forgiven"	Luke 7: 36-50	
August 9	"You Have a Glorious Future"	Jude 24-25	Communion Sunday
August 16	"When You Are Weak, You're Strong"	2 Corinthians 12: 7-10	
August 23	"God Keeps Justice"	Isaiah 2: 1-4	
August 30	"God Has a Plan & Purpose For You"	Ephesians 2: 1-10	
September 6	"History is Headed Somewhere Good"	Romans 8: 18-25	



THANK YOU!! To date, donations to our **Loaves and Fishes Fund** exceed \$5,000! With these funds, we've been able to support organizations working on the front lines of local poverty, as well as help individuals and families connected to our church who are struggling. We rejoice in the privilege of showing God's love in a tangible way. Praise God, and thank you, Oak Hills Family!

Women's Retreat is on hold until further notice. I am in communication with Twin Rocks.
~Cathy Searles



OAK HILLS

PURPOSE

Gather... Grow... Glorify
To be gathered by the Spirit as a community of faith, to grow into the likeness of Christ, and to glorify God every day in all we do.

CORE VALUES

Bible-Centered, Prayer, Missional, Generosity, Hospitality, Sabbath, Empathy, Wholeness



CHILDREN & YOUTH



Summer Update: Due to rising COVID-19 cases, we will not be offering an in-person **Vacation Bible School** this summer. In addition, our **Idaho Servant Adventure youth trip** is cancelled for 2020. These cancellations are a big disappointment for everyone, I know. But our Youth and Children's Ministries team will be looking more closely at creative ways to engage our young people from a distance. On a positive note, Oak Hills has decided to donate this year's camp deposit to help ensure that Idaho Servant Adventures ministry will continue for many years to come. ISA coordinator Faythe Vollrath sends her love to Oak Hills, and assures me that their ministry will survive this crisis thanks to individual church donations. So, we're already looking forward to next year's trip!

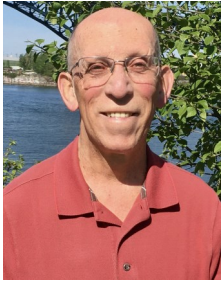
AWESOME OAK HILLS WORD SEARCH!

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Sunday School Teachers
 Youth group
 Children's Time
 VBS
 CE Building
 Old Testament
 New Testament
 Big Field
 Bible
 Youth Room
 Prayer
 Lesson
 Memory Verse
 Xmas Pageant
 Easter Egg Hunt

~Pastor Christy, 503.422.1555, christy@oakhillspres.org

ELDER NOTES



Larry Totzke

Sylvia and I returned from Vietnam right before the quarantine began. We were motivated by missionary friends we visited in Hanoi to begin a more earnest Bible reading program together, so we determined that we would try to read and study one chapter of scripture a day as we went into quarantine. The less structured schedule and extra free time afforded us by the quarantine has given us the opportunity to faithfully keep our commitment most every day. We started reading in the book of Daniel and then continued through most of the minor prophets. While we had each read these books before during read-through-the-Bible challenges, we had never studied them. By confining ourselves to one chapter a day, we have had the opportunity to dig into each chapter. We have learned so much about God's faithfulness to the Israelites even as they were going through a time of exile. We have learned more of his utter distaste for sinful living even as he did not abandon his chosen people. We have seen answers to prayers that we can clearly attribute to our prayer times. And we have grown closer together through some very meaningful discussions that have resulted from our commitment to read, study, and pray together. We are now taking a break from the Old Testament and studying through the book of Hebrews together. What a blessing. Larry T.



Tom Heimburger

Windy and I are very thankful that our families are healthy and in good spirits, and that we can still visit with them from time to time. I have been using some of my spare time to digitize old 35mm slides and VHS videos, which has heightened my appreciation for family relationships, both past and present. Remembering the ones I have lost has afforded me the opportunity to be even more thankful that God has blessed me with the loving families that I am surrounded with today. Photos: we enjoyed a 5th birthday "driveway party" for our granddaughter in May; Windy has been teaching some of our great-granddaughters home economics classes in our home this spring to supplement their homeschooling curriculum.



ELDER NOTES



Sue Munn

Elder for ASN Adult Spiritual Nurture

Hi, we are in very unusual times, something I thought I would only read in a book or see in a movie; not experience in my lifetime. The photo shows Craig and I on our daily walk by our favorite cut through. We have spent our quarantine time working around the house, in the yard, reading, and probably a little too much TV. We played Monopoly with our youngest daughter's family on Facetime. Did a backyard picnic for our youngest granddaughter's 8th birthday. Celebrated our oldest granddaughter's graduation from high school. Cheered our 16 year old grandson's full scholarship to Adidas' travel team which was not able to travel. Thank you to Larry Totzke for keeping our small group going on Zoom. Thank you to Jeremy, all the church staff, Tom Heimburger, and Abby Sanderson for keeping our services going. Bless all of you and hope we will be together soon.



Joan Spencer

I am coping with being at home by chronicling each week, with a project of writing on fabric. I write about the week including a chosen scripture and the number of cases and deaths of void-19 in the world and in America. I add seven pieces of fabric that relate to what happened during the week. Unbelievably, there are fourteen and I think there will be many more. I rely on God to see us through the pandemic. Blessing to our church family.



Don Sheets

I hope this finds all of the Oak Hills Presbyterian Family doing well and staying safe. There is no doubt this is a challenging time and coping with the need for social distancing has at times proven challenging. However, Susan and I are maintaining close contact with our children and grandchildren. We have been fortunate to have some visits and while maintaining safe practices. I am able to work from home and have discovered a real joy in listening to classical music on Pandora. There are times when technology can be troublesome but, having the ability to find all types of music is really a great benefit. We are looking forward to July 4th as our youngest grandson will be with us for a few days. We will definitely be shooting off some fireworks. I hope you remain safe and are finding ways to stay connected. I look forward to being of service to our church family as a new member of the Session. With gratitude, Don Sheets



Cathy Searles



Gratitude is such a gift to me from God! Through this covid time the past few months with so many changes in our lives, I have tried to focus on gratitude and serving others. Times have been tough because other life challenges still continue even during covid 19. A few things I am so grateful for are God in my life, Scott, family, church and church family, health, and our wonderful horses and dogs. Great therapy these animals! I have volunteered with Love INC and other agencies in different capacities, but when the virus hit, most of these stopped until Love INC began Love Does. Love Does gave me the opportunity to deliver boxes of essential items to families in need every Wednesday for the past couple of months. What a gift to fill my car with boxes and take them to families in Milwaukie, Oregon City, Sandy, Estacada, or wherever needed every Wednesday. God knew how to fill my heart, and he knew I needed this opportunity to still serve others. God is good!

ELDER NOTES

Jim Bradshaw

After 12 years of retirement we have worked out a routine that works well for us and our little pooch. We have been able to work in the yard and get a few projects completed. Jim enjoys working on his bonsais and Barbara has practiced her cooking skills and picked up her water colors again.

Sunday's are not the same without our church family. We will be glad to reunite with all of you again.



Louie Spisla



Barbara had to finish the school year learning how to teach online very quickly; a steep learning curve for her students as well as her colleagues. Both worked well together but she missed the human connection of not physically being at work. While working from home, she noticed more families walking the neighborhood together and the relative peace without jets flying in the sky. Near the end of the school year, I was quarantined due to association of close contact with another person that tested positive for COVID. I tested negative and we were able to work from home together for my fourteen day stint. I put new bicycle tires on her bike and we both learned how to spell quarantine!

We have both enjoyed the online sermons with our family with us and have noticed a steady improvement in the Youtube content. Last summer Larry and I were talking about wisdom and since that time I have been in and out of Proverbs but with a special emphasis lately. Slow and steady through the first five or so books of Proverbs with several rereads as well. We may only know in hindsight what He was accomplishing or preparing. For me, though, it is not about knowing what will happen but internalizing that God loves humanity, corrects and loves again. If by grace and humility, we can deeply internalize and believe that nothing can separate us from the love he has for us, I believe we are one step closer to attaining that wisdom.

MISSIONS & CARING NOTES

Lace Up for Love INC

Begin your shoe shopping now, because August is our annual shoe drive for Love INC.



We need brand new tennis type shoes for children from the age of 5 to 18. The shoes are given to children in need from Love INC's shoe room in the fall. Shoes can be

dropped off at church, I can pick them up from your home, or I can buy shoes for you. There are even more children in need during this time! Please contact me with any questions:

~Cathy Searles, Missions Elder. Bless you!

Backpack Buddies

Shopping has already started for Backpack Buddies! Thanks to several "friends of Backpack Buddies" we have a growing supply of peanut butter, bought at Fred Meyer for a very good price at the end of June. Watch for the first packing date in late August or early September.

Suggestions of food donations include: Mac & Cheese; canned fruit; canned soups, chili, ravioli, spaghetti or beef stew; canned tuna; Vienna sausages; peanut butter in plastic 16 oz jars; snacks, e.g. raisins, granola bars, cheese crackers, peanut-butter crackers; oatmeal in single serving packets; boxed juices (no pouches).

~Louise Anderson

Lahash International

THANK YOU to all our friends at Oak Hills for your participation in Rice & Beans for Lent this year! It was a Lenten season like no other, as the coronavirus spread around our world and impacted our communities and gatherings. But we were amazed at the generosity that you and so many others extended during this difficult season. Together, Rice & Beans participants raised over \$11,000 to increase nutrition for the Lahash kids! And we praise God that some of those funds were put to use right away to help our African ministry partners purchase and provide emergency food to vulnerable families as the virus spread, economies dropped, and food prices rose across East Africa. To find out more about our coronavirus relief efforts, visit www.lahash.org. Thank you for giving, praying, and standing with us in solidarity with these precious kids!

John and Jody Wilson, Wycliffe Bible Translators

Most of our ministry is coaching new missionaries for Wycliffe online. Some are preparing to go and some are already at their assignment, mostly in other countries. Of course the Corona Virus and world pandemic have deeply affected most of our people but we are always encouraged to see how God graciously keeps partnership development going forward and how ministry opportunities open up! Many of our translators are working on the translation of health documents and even trauma recovery documents utilizing the translated Scriptures.

Jody's father passed away as the home sheltering was beginning so we were not able to be with him in his last days on earth. We continue to care for Jody's mom who lives next door. After hosting our 15 year old grandson for six weeks (which included Jody doing e-learning with him and his teachers back in IL), Jody decided to do an online Bible study with our grandkids which is both fun and encouraging! To receive their newsletter, send an email to them: jody_wilson@wycliffe.org.

Kent & Kim Rasmussen, Wycliffe Bible Translators

Our plan is to fly out of Yaoundé on July 9, and three of us (Kent, Joel, and Anna) will stay in Texas for three weeks. Kim will stay longer to get James settled in Austin. The rest of us will return to Cameroon in time for Joel and Anna to finish quarantine before school starts. There are lots of authorities with lots of rules to negotiate, and they seem to be changing more often now. *Praise God!* Kent is finally in great health again! James completed all AP exams online and graduated June 11th in an outdoor ceremony! Provision of plane tickets to Texas and a great place to stay much of our trip! Kent's work mentoring linguists here is going well! *Please Pray:* The international borders open in July, so we can move James back to Texas. Air France flights will not be canceled and we would travel safely together July 9-10th. Provision of off-campus housing arrangement in Austin for James. Reliable car to use for 3 weeks. All our medical checkups are done on our short visit.

~Sylvia Totzke

Ramblings from the Pastor: Reflections on Faith and Race

Simeon and his wife Akilah were our neighbors in the Princeton seminary student housing complex. She was from Barbados, he was from the Midwest. A black couple, they had met at a historically black college in the south, and now Simeon had come to Princeton to study for the ministry. I remember sitting with him across our tiny apartment dining table, parsing Greek verbs late into the night, or cramming for our exam on the kings of ancient Israel. He was a good study buddy – a perfectionist, like me. I also remember seeing him step out of his apartment one day in a crisp pressed suit and bow tie. “Where you headed?” I asked. He paused, weighing whether, and how, to explain himself. “To the auto mechanic. Our car needs some work.” I waited for him to offer some explanation for his attire. He could see I was puzzled. “Look” he said. “I’ve learned that if I go to the auto shop dressed like you (t-shirt and jeans), I just won’t get taken seriously. I’d never get a fair deal – people tend to look down on guys who look like me. I have to walk in looking like someone who commands respect. Thus, the suit” He sighed. It took me some time to process what he’d shared. This was my first clue that some folks live in a very different America. One I had never had to see or face up to before. As a white person, I’m used to getting the benefit of the doubt. I’m taken seriously. I’m viewed favorably. Twice now, I’ve been let off from traffic citations I *deserved* because, according to the officer involved, I “look like a nice guy.” I suspect my friend Simeon doesn’t often receive the same preferential treatment.

We as Christians have a deeper reason to care about racial justice than most. We care because God cares. One of the Bible’s most important storylines is the story of racial hostility, and of God’s actions to heal a divided humanity. It’s a story in three parts:

The Tower of Babel: According to Genesis 11, it was the pride of humankind that first led to the fracturing of the human community into tribes, races and language groups. Our collective rejection of God’s reign meant that we could never walk together peacefully as a people, and so from Genesis 11 onward, humanity is marked by division, inter-group fighting and hostility. This all has its roots, according to the story, in human pride and the rejection of God’s Lordship. Racial injustice is part of our original sin, and its roots are spiritual.

The Day of Pentecost: The healing of this hostility begins at Pentecost, where the good news of God’s grace is announced to a diverse crowd of many ethnicities, gathered for the Pentecost festival. Empowered by God’s spirit, the apostles speak the gospel “in the native languages” of each of the gathered peoples (Acts 2:6). By sending the gospel out into the native languages of many peoples, God is re-creating the unity of the human race that was broken at Babel. Humanity is again invited to become “one” – not in defiance of God’s reign, but under his new reign of grace announced in Jesus Christ. Yet this unity is not uniformity. God does not erase the differences between peoples – he dignifies these differences by sending his word out “in the native languages of each.” The day of Pentecost gives us a glimpse of God’s ultimate purpose for a divided humanity: not to erase our differences, but to bring us together in a glorious display of diversity under the banner of his peace – all of humanity’s various expressions purified and made whole by the cross. The church, “entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18), is to be the launching ground for this new humanity – a living display of God’s healing power across human dividing lines. This is our task and calling until he comes again.

The Heavenly Throne Room: In the book of Revelation, we’re given a glimpse of the gathering of the saints in the presence of Christ at the end of all things: “a multitude... from every nation, and from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” (Rev. 7:9). John of Patmos peeked into heaven and saw... *color*. The many shades of the human race, redeemed and gathered in worship. This is what our eternal home looks like. This is our destiny. Not a tidy white Presbyterian worship service, but a many-colored chorus of praise, each race and tribe and language adding dimension to the fullness of our worshipful expression. That’s heaven! Which means that when our earthly worship is racially homogenous, it’s missing something. And when our daily lives are racially isolated, we’re missing out.

We're not yet ready for heaven. We're only seeing one side of the fullness of God's creativity shining through the faces of his people. We're not getting the whole picture.

In the aftermath of George Floyd's killing, I issued an invitation to our congregation, to contact me if you'd like to talk and process what had taken place. I was encouraged by the response. Through phone calls, notes and emails, I heard from many of you. Some of you shared stories of friends and loved ones who had experienced racial injustice first hand. Some of you sought ideas about how to help, what to do, where to start. And some of you wrestled honestly with concepts that feel new and threatening. White privilege? Systemic injustice? For many of us, these are terms we're not sure what to do with, and they create feelings of discomfort and defensiveness. Yet I've been moved by the honest struggle of many of you to seek understanding, to choose the way of humility, to put Christ first and, through him, to soften our hearts to the testimonies of our brothers and sisters of color.

I wish I knew where to go from here. I'd love to be able to spell out what we each need to do to carry out God's vision of racial justice and harmony. But I don't have answers just yet. I'm reading and listening. I'm praying. I'm asking God to show me where I've missed the mark – the complacency of my own heart when issues of race are brought up. The tendency I've shown to be content with the status quo, when scripture calls us to so much more. I know I'm not yet ready for heaven – to take my place in that many-colored chorus of praise. God is still working on my heart, making me ready. And so the best I can do is to invite you to join me on that journey. Let's get on our knees and pray – repenting for the sins of the past, asking God for his Spirit of love and truth to indwell his people, showing us – each in our own place and neighborhood – what comes next. I want my friend Simeon to live in a world where he gets a fair deal without having to wear a suit to the auto shop. I want my church to look and sound a little more like heaven. I want in on the joy of God's vision for us, singing his praises in a glorious harmony of languages. "For He Himself is our peace – he has broken down the dividing walls of hostility between us, and made us.. one." (Ephesians 2:14). May it be true in our own lives.

For Christ and His Kingdom,

Jeremy

