



The 4th Focus

Follow Me

Before Matthew wrote a gospel account of Jesus, he operated a tax collecting booth for Rome. Tax collectors weren't popular because they were agents of Rome's occupying force, and they lined their pockets by overtaxing their fellow Jews. Matthew isn't the kind of person you'd expect to be disciple material, but he's exactly who Jesus called.

Luke records that Matthew responded to Jesus by leaving his tax collecting days behind, and throwing a party at his house for Jesus. Matthew invited his friends, which meant a large group of tax collectors and "sinners" came to eat with them. In their context, if you sat at someone's table, and ate with them, you were essentially saying you approved of their lifestyle. Jesus didn't care about the appearance though, he went to the party, sat at the table, and ate with the unscrupulous people there.

The Pharisees, who would never have associated with Matthew or his friends, because of the message it would send, were appalled at Jesus. They complained to the other disciples about Jesus eating with tax collectors and "sinners."

Jesus fires back saying, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Jesus is on a mission to make disciples and cure the sickness of sin through repentance.

The Pharisees and religious folk don't want to dirty themselves, or even appear dirty by hanging out with "sinners." They want to keep their public appearance of righteousness. But Jesus doesn't care what people think, and more than that, he knew that the only way the "sinners" can be cleansed, and disciplined into the kingdom of heaven is if he goes to them in love.

Jesus didn't eat with them to affirm their lifestyle or sin, he ate with them to love them to repentance. I honestly don't know if Matthew realized he was spiritually sick before he met Jesus, but when he met him, there was no going back. By following Jesus, Matthew experienced healing from the sin of his life. While it's not recorded, he likely repented for his past. He spent the next three years learning what it meant to be like Jesus. When Jesus died, Matthew, and honestly, every other disciple, still didn't really get what it meant to be like Jesus. John records that the disciples didn't really understand until they received the Holy Spirit. Even then, Acts and the New Testament Epistles to the church show us that even the disciples, now apostles, were continuing to learn what it meant to love Jesus, and follow him, until the time that they died.

Matthew was transformed by Jesus calling him to new life, and Matthew continued to be transformed through years of discipleship. This is important for us to grasp as believers. We've all been transformed by Jesus calling us to new life, and we express that through profession of faith, but like Matthew, we all need to wrestle with the reality that we need to continue to be transformed through gospel discipleship.

When we answer that initial call from Jesus to follow him, we make profession of faith and become members of the church. We rejoice when that happens in the life of someone, and we should! But that isn't the end of discipleship.

Matthew publicly followed Jesus, and then experienced a lifetime of discipleship. And that's a great model for us as well. We need to start thinking about ourselves as disciples and embrace the reality that we are all a work in progress. To be a disciple is to be spending time with Jesus, letting him speak his love and truth into who we are. The more time we spend with Jesus as his disciples, the more we'll see parts of our old life we need to leave behind, sin that needs to be rooted out, and the power of the gospel as our lives are made new.

Each of us has received a call to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus reached out to us in the sickness of our sin, and provided us with healing through his sacrifice. We have been healed and yet we are still being healed. We still need Jesus every day speaking his love and truth into our lives so we can continue being treated for the parts of us that still enjoy sin.

Like Matthew, Jesus is saying to each of us, "follow me," and it's not to a static place, but a lifelong journey of being disciplined. We're going to explore what this means in the coming months, but in the meantime, I really encourage you to seek out someone who will disciple you, dig into Scripture daily, join a Bible study, and invite the Holy Spirit to transform your life.

Check These Out!

Birthdays



Unoffendable by Brant Hansen

Drop your anger, let things go, embrace forgiveness and choose to be unoffendable, and you'll flourish the way God intends you to.

Blessed Are The Misfits by Brant Hansen

Great news for believers who are introverts, spiritual strugglers, or just feel like they're missing something.

Both of Hansen's books come highly recommended.

The Next Right Thing by Emily Freeman

"This book will leave you with confidence, wisdom, intention, and a perspective shift about the big and small decisions in your life. Reading *The Next Right Thing* is your next right decision."

Once We Were Strangers by Shawn Smucker

"What friendship with a Syrian refugee taught me about loving my neighbor."

If I Run - If I'm Found - If I Live by Terri Blackstock

Three books in the "If I Run" series. Won't disappoint Blackstock fans!

YOUTH

The Garden The Curtain and The Cross by Carl Laferton

The amazing story of why Jesus died and rose again.

Alzheimer's Support Group

5.8 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's Disease which accounts for approximately 70% of all people that suffer from a form of dementia. Fourth Church is not untouched by dementia, so in 2017 our consistory approved having an Alzheimer's Support Group meet at Fourth. Our group of about ten is advertised in the GR Press and anyone who cares to join us from Fourth or our community is invited. The purposes of this monthly group meeting are:

- provide support to caregivers, family, and friends of persons with dementia, emphasizing maintaining good physical and mental health
- share feelings, needs, and concerns in confidence; see videos; receive printed materials; hear speakers addressing the issues which dementia raises

May

2 - Amy Baragar
7 - Kara Berrevoets
7 - Jaidyn Ann Bolt
9 - Tim Randall
14 - Sam Wammack
16 - Liam Baragar
21 - Grace Wammack
22 - Jeff Boehm
23 - Jeremiah Parks
24 - Bill Pyper
24 - Beka McDowell
26 - Norma Boehm
27 - Greg Hawkins
28 - Mike Berrevoets
29 - Aaron Wetzel
30 - Ralph Simone

June

2 - Julie Schalk
3 - Caren Bills
5 - Lorraine Smith
8 - Dawn Faasse
13 - Laura O'Brock
14 - Eric O'Brock
14 - Sam Tubergen
16 - Violet Meendering
16 - Ephraim Parler
23 - Betsy Coutchie
24 - Marty Pyper
24 - Leslie Hawkins
28 - Becky Berrevoets
28 - Linda Randall



GEMS Summer Happenings

June 17- dinner at Fourth from 5:30 - 7:00.

July 15 - meet at church at 5:30 and then travel to Millennium Park. Back at 7:30. Will switch with movie night if weather is not favorable.

August 19 - movie night at church from 5:30 - 7:30.

September 16 will be the Annual Fall Carnival Kickoff for the 2019-2020 year.

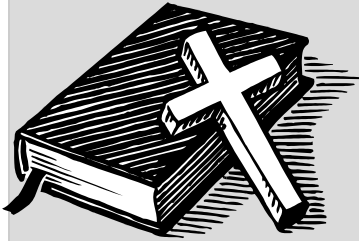
Thanks for your prayers and support!

Our group is supported by The Alzheimer's Association of West Michigan which provides free literature, training, and seminars. Last month we had the opportunity to hear from an attorney who presented information about elder law. He spoke about how to maximize financing the high cost of health care and discussed how to prepare an estate plan.

Our season of meetings has ended and will resume the second Wednesday of September. Next year, our goal is to include more speakers on topics related to aging. Watch the bulletin in the fall for our topics of discussion and please join us for any that interest you.

- Tom Boehm

The Reformation



The Church Before the Reformation: The Babylonian Captivity

The Roman Catholic papacy reached its highest pinnacle of earthly power under Innocent III (ruled 1198-1216) and steadily declined thereafter. Most popes lived in great luxury, supported by oppressive taxation. Powerful kings, with popular support and large armies, refused to share wealth and allegiance with the pope and successfully opposed him. One example of this was England's enactment of the *Statutes of Provisors* and *Praemunire* which effectively curbed papal interference in the English church appointments and royal courts.

Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), aspired to renew the greatness of Innocent III but his strength only exhibited itself as pompous oratory. He was especially vulnerable to King Phillip IV (the Fair) of France. At war with each other and needing funds, England and France each taxed the church. Boniface issued a papal letter entitled *Clericis Laicos* (1296) which forbade taxing the church without permission. Phillip responded by burning the letter and cutting off all French money headed to the papal treasury.

Relative peace between Phillip and Boniface continued for a few years until Phillip arrested a papal emissary charging him with treason. Boniface ordered the official's release and summoned Phillip to Rome. After Phillip refused, Boniface responded with the letter *Unum Sanctum* (1302) which declared that "It is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff." Phillip charged Boniface with various crimes, which included having a sexual affair with his niece. Phillip had Boniface seized and imprisoned. Rescued by townspeople, he died, probably insane, a month later.

The papacy fell under direct French control. Clement V (1305-14) never left French soil but transferred the papal capital from Rome to Avignon where it remained from 1309-77. All seven popes elected during this time were French as were 84% of the cardinals. The city of Avignon, surrounded by the papal enclave of Comtat Venaissin, was purchased by the Avignon papacy and remained papal land until the French Revolution. Although at the time not part of France, Avignon was right across the Rhone River and subject to French royal influence and interference.

Thus began the so-called Babylonian Captivity. There are a couple of ideas how the name originated. It could have been easily compared to the Babylonian captivity of Old Testament Israel, since both were around 70 years in length. The other idea may have come from the Italian poet Petrarch. Living his early life in Avignon, he described the city as the "Babylon of the west."

Steps were taken to try to return the papacy to Rome. The pious Urban V was the only Avignon pope to be beatified. Despite strong opposition, he returned to Rome for the last three years of his papacy, rebuilding a greatly deteriorated city that had descended to a state of anarchy. Living in Rome, the mystic Bridget of Sweden entreated Urban to permanently return the papacy to Rome and predicted that the pope would quickly die if he returned to Avignon which was exactly what happened. Urban's successor Gregory VI (1370-78), facing a revolt in Italy and influenced by the Italian mystic Catherine of Sienna, returned the papacy to Rome in 1377. He died the following year, bringing the Avignon papacy to an end, at least for a short time.

Back in Rome, most of the cardinals sought to elect another French pope, but instead chose the Italian Urban VI (1378-89) after an angry mob surrounded the Vatican, demanding a Roman or at least an Italian pope. Urban proved to be a tactless dictator. The French cardinals declared that his election was illegal since it was made under extreme duress. They elected a second pope Clement VII (1378-94) who returned to Avignon with his supporters in 1381. Although several cardinals failed to vote for Clement, they abstained out for hatred for Urban. Never before had two popes been duly elected by two sets of cardinals, one in Rome and one in Avignon. In the next article, we will see how the European continent would be torn apart by this division.

- Eric O'Brock

Next - The Great Schism

Youth Update



In our last article we mentioned that we would finish up this year talking about HOW to get closer to God. Even long-time Christians struggle with this question! We want a step by step, perfect process that allows us to know God more and to be certain that we are in a real relationship with him. Sadly, there isn't a cure-all for the waywardness of the human heart. From the wonderful cloud of witnesses that we have to learn from, no one has found that one magic formula that does everything we need.

Thankfully, we have the Word of God and it teaches us about different practices that all together will help us get closer to God, and then maintain that relationship in the future. A few that we talked about this past semester were daily prayer, reading Scripture, and journaling. There are many more that we could have talked about, and there are many ways to do all of these.

One particular journaling method that helps to give purpose in writing and stick to the Scripture being studied is called **H.E.A.R. Journaling**. This is an acronym that allows different questions to be asked about the passage and to dig into it with or without a Bible study library! The short version of how it works is this:

Highlight: What verses stuck out to you as you read?

Explain: What is going on in the text?

Apply: How can this help me be more like Christ? What does that look like in my life?

Respond to what you have just read; a prayer, call to action, poem, etc.

This summer we have set up a Challenge for the youth to be able to try out the method alongside their own Bible reading, or to use passages that we will provide. The goal is to do this just twice a week for the summer months. Because we like to up the fun-factor, of course, there will be rewards based on group participation: king size candy, pop, Kristi dying her hair (yes, permanent hair dye) RED for a month, Sam shaving his head (facial hair, particularly eyebrows NOT included!!), and the kids are working on ideas for what to have Pastor Eric do. An initial idea was to have Pastor Eric spend an hour with birds - and we all know how much Eric LOVES the "dreaded birds of the air!"

My favorite part of studying the Word is that it never returns void. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that God "earnestly rewards those who seek him" and what reward is greater than being with God?

So as you see the youth over the next few months, please encourage them, ask them what they've been journaling and enjoy learning about our great God alongside them!

- Sam and Kristi Dennis

Kids Hope USA



On March 24 we had the awesome privilege of celebrating 20 years of partnership with Kent Hills Elementary School through our Kids Hope ministry. Through the faithfulness of mentors, subs, prayer partners and those that have served on the leadership team, we have been able to touch 117 students and their families with Christ's love. The tree that you see in the picture represents everyone who has been involved in the Kids Hope program over the past 20 years. Thank you to everyone for being the hands and feet of Christ. I can't thank you enough for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful ministry these past 20 years.

On April 17, we had a great time with our Kids Hope students and their families at our Easter Celebration. The night began with an Easter egg hunt, which is always a highlight. We enjoyed a ham dinner together and Dr. Branson Parler gave an Easter children's message which raised some good questions from some of our students. We ended the night with a little Easter bingo and dessert. It's so great to have these opportunities to build relationships not only with our students but also with their families!



We're in our final days of mentoring and we'll end this school season with a picnic at Aberdeen Park on May 22.

Thank you again to everyone who has made our 20th year a success!

- Mary Kay Townley

Mission of the Month

THANK YOU Fourth family for using the month of May to pray for our family and ministry in Guatemala! We are truly honored by your love and support for us!

Our boys are doing well and growing up so fast! Iker is almost walking and says a few words. On the contrary, Xavi talks non-stop and is working on learning some English. He'll be going to an American school next year and they require him to at least understand and follow directions in English. So that will be our challenge for the next year. Both boys love going to the ministry with us each week. They've made many friends their ages and there are plenty of arms to hold them!

Gary and I are also doing well. We took a couple days off during Easter break to disconnect and spend some much needed family time at the beach near where our ministry is. It was a very refreshing and calm time!

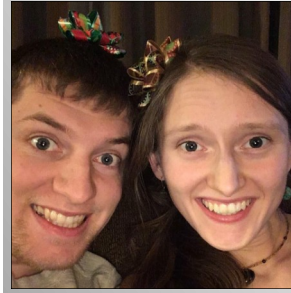


Here are some updates and prayer for our ministry:

Updates:

1. We are still waiting for electricity from the mayor to be able to run the program. For now we will be adapting a community kitchen space that has electricity and transform it into a classroom setting with the computers for the online vocational training program. This is temporary since it's an improvised space.
2. The shipping container is already in the process of being refurbished to turn it into a classroom. We have the help of one pastor from the community and a few church members who are professional welders who will do the modifications. This space will be the future vocational school.
3. 168 families will be receiving permanent homes that have been built for them by the government and are ready for move in. The first community to receive their permanent homes is Trinidad. They will be moving in the end of May. The government is planning to build homes for 1000 families from the three main communities that were affected by the disaster. The plan is to hand these homes over the course of the next three years.

New Members



Welcome to Kevin & Kandi Zeller!
Let them introduce themselves:

We both grew up with godly parents who loved Jesus and taught us to love Him and His promises. Kevin is from Tustin, Michigan, and Kandi is from Muskegon, Michigan.

We met as students at Kuyper College. Kandi studied English and

TESOL and Kevin studied Journalism and Bible/Theology. We were married in May 2018. For the first several months of our marriage, Kandi worked part-time as a children's ministry coordinator at Bridge Bible Church in Muskegon (where we had been attending for some time) and part-time as an editorial assistant for the *Keys for Kids* devotional at Keys for Kids Ministries here in Grand Rapids.

Currently Kandi is the editor of *Unlocked*, the new teen devotional from Keys for Kids Ministries, and Kevin is a cook in the Kuyper College kitchen and does some freelance writing and editing.

Since we were living in the Grand Rapids area and after a lot of thought and prayer, we decided it was time to find a church in GR. We were given a loving send-off by our church family in Muskegon and the search began. We're good friends with Gideon & Taylor Eising, and, during that time of searching, they recommended Fourth to us.

We love how gospel-centered and Scripture-rooted it is here! We're excited for the opportunity to continue to pursue Jesus in such an amazing community. We love reveling in and sharing the truths of God's Word and the promises of Jesus, and we can't wait to see all the ways God will call us to serve and grow here at Fourth.

Prayer:

1. Our biggest struggle and barrier for ministry right now is the lack of electricity to be able to run the program. Pray that this issue will be solved soon and that God will provide the solution for us to begin as soon as possible.
2. For the future students of the program. We have expanded from working with youth to working with youth and adults since there is a larger interest from the parents of the youth.
3. For the work with the churches and pastors. There are three evangelical churches in the community and all three pastors are wonderful people but we are still building that relationship and helping them see the need to train new church leaders. There is some hesitation and lack of interest on their part, but we are hopeful that with time they will be more open.

Thanks again! Love, Gary, Rachel, Xavi & Iker deLeon

Inclusion Column - Incomplete Without You

1 Corinthians 12

Several months ago I wrote an article for this publication titled “Disability and the Stranger”. I ended with saying that our mission cannot just be about getting folks in the church. That is inclusion and that is just a first step. Our goal and mission needs to go beyond that. We need to work towards making sure everyone feels that they are a part of the church. That is belonging, where everyone belongs and everyone serves. In this article I would like to highlight what belonging may look like.

Dr. Erik Carter in his January Series presentation titled “Including People with Disabilities in Our Churches” stated that there are Ten Dimensions of Belonging. Now understand, Mr. Carter’s expertise is in assimilating individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities into our churches. But, if you look closely you will see, and Mr. Carter would agree, that these Ten Dimensions, or core needs, apply to all of us.

The Ten Dimensions are:

Present – when you look at who is sitting in the pews does everyone look like you?

Invited – everyone enjoys a personal invitation not just an invitation by general announcement. An invitation provides a feeling of being sought out.

Welcomed – it’s not what is said but how we feel about the experience. It is being hospitable, not avoiding because we don’t know what to say.

Known – how do people recognize me? By my problem(s) and deficits or by gifts and passions and what I can bring to the community? Am I moving from being a stranger to being a friend? No one enjoys being a perpetual stranger.

Accepted – without conditions. It involves making a personal investment in a relationship, in someone’s life.

Supported - knowing what the needs are and then doing something about it. May take investigation to offer what people actually need and not what we think they need.

Cared for – beyond the walls of the church after the benediction. Caring for one another and staying connected the other six days of the week.

Befriended – this is a close relationship. Life lived together. When I am absent I am missed.

Needed – we all have gifts to bring to the community. This is ministry “by” not “for”. I want to be more than an afterthought.

Loved – unconditionally by those around me. I am seen as valuable.

When you read these Ten Dimensions you might have felt like there was some overlap. But I also hope you realized how these could be applied to everyone in the community. It is also my hope that you can see the difference between inclusion/integration and belonging. Belonging goes so much further, it’s about sharing lives just not space. Why is this important? Because, as Mr. Carter states, isolation and loneliness are bigger health risks than smoking and obesity.

So no matter the color of your skin, your political preferences, your abilities, your disabilities, whether overweight, underweight or slender we all have a very active need to belong.

I do not think that making everyone feel like they belong will be an easy task. It will take work. Part of that work will be a discussion around what it means to be accepting. Is accepting the same as affirming? This could be tough. It also means realizing that it’s more than being a friendly church or a sign that says all are welcome. It’s realizing that it’s all about relationships not referring to someplace else. It’s realizing that we all have a part in this and that it is essential for Fourth to be a thriving community. The good news is you do not need to be an expert.

I would like to end with a line I once heard on a commercial: “When everyone plays we all win”.

- Don Coutchie

For the Inclusion Team

* Dr. Erik Carter is Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Special Education at Vanderbilt University. You can watch Dr. Carter’s January Series presentation at youtu.be/sRZHwj6CarM