



CHRIST CHURCH PRESS

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The Pastor's Pen Pursuing Kingdom Priorities in the New Year

Birthdays

- Jan. 01.....Diann Chew
- 02Anne Gojda
- 02Ed Russell
- 03David Robeson
- 05Fred Cornelison
- 05Blase Emerson
- 05Matt Russell
- 06Kira Smith
- 08Jacob Denis
- 10.....Emily Adams
- 11.....Wade Caldwell
- 11.....Christian Romero
- 12.....Bill Kemp
- 13.....Scott Doss
- 14.....Gene Gojda
- 17.....Ken Moody
- 20Janice Britt
- 21.....Lauren Hatcher
- 24.....Teal Bailey
- 24.....Sue Moncrief
- 25Bob Rihl
- 25Sam Bailey
- 30Sloan McLaughlin

The beginning of a new year is a wonderful time. It provides an opportunity for a fresh start, a chance to hit the reset button, if you will. Thus, as we reflect on the year that has passed and our hopes for the year to come, we set goals and make resolutions. Experience, of course, teaches us that there are many goals we set and resolutions we make that, for lack of time and energy, we cannot attain. This is not necessarily problematic, however, if—and this is a big if—we follow the course of wisdom and so prioritize our goals in such a way that we do not fail to pursue what is most important.

But how are we to prioritize our goals? How, in all our planning and pursuits are we to ensure that we go after what is most important? Jesus' words, spoken long ago in the Sermon on the Mount, provide us with the most crucial instruction in this regard. He reveals what must be the first priority, which then shapes all others. He declares, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [i.e., temporal necessities] will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). To state it concisely, our King tells us that we must pursue the Kingdom of God and His righteousness as our first priority. If we do that, all else will fall in place.

What is this Kingdom of God, which we are to seek as our first priority? At heart, the Kingdom of God is the rule of God. At His first coming, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of God through His life, death, resurrection, and session at the right hand of the Father, thereby providing for the liberation of sinners from the rule of sin and Satan so that they might be ruled by Christ. This kingdom will be consummated at Christ's second coming with the complete destruction of all the enemies of God and the final deliverance of the people of God. At present, though, the kingdom rule of Christ is established in the hearts of men and women through Spirit-empowered proclamation and Spirit-enabled reception of the Gospel, so that they are "delivered ... from the domain of darkness and transferred ... to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:18).

To seek the Kingdom of God, then, as our first priority involves at least two crucial demands upon us. The first is to direct our first and best effort toward the advancement of Christ's saving rule through the spread of the Gospel. It means focusing our time, talents, energy, and resources first and foremost toward seeing the glorious liberating reign of Christ spread both near and far in the hearts of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation through the Spirit-empowered communication of the Gospel, which "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). The second is to commit all of ourselves, body and soul, to submit to Christ and His rule in our lives. Christ has established His Kingdom not only to bring salvation from sin and Satan, but also to bring submission to His righteous will. This is why Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Our pursuit is to follow our prayer, which is that Christ would so rule our hearts that we would gladly and perfectly submit to the will of God as the angels in heaven do. While we will not attain this perfect submission until glory, it should be our prayer and pursuit now. Practically speaking, this means that our highest priority should be to know God and His will through His Word and to honor Him and obey His will by the enabling power of His Spirit.

Often, as we make our New Year resolutions and set our goals, we tend to focus on those things which improve our temporal comforts and circumstances (e.g., getting in better shape, getting that promotion, going on our dream vacation, finding that special someone). Pursuing such things is not bad in itself. However, our King teaches us that such are not to be our primary pursuit. No! The glorious spread of Christ's saving rule and glad submission to Christ's holy will should be our priorities. That is what it means to seek first the Kingdom of God. May God grant us, the people of Christ Church, Presbyterian, to pursue these Kingdom priorities in 2013 for the glory of our King and the gladness of His people.

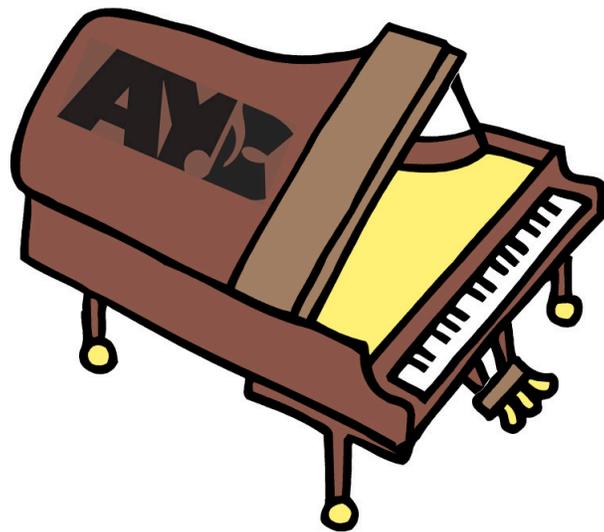
Canadian Pianist and the Augusta Youth Chorale to present Benefit Concert at Christ Church

On Thursday, January 24, at 7:00 p.m., the congregation is invited to a Piano Recital by Canadian pianist, Dr. Brad Parker, Director of Keyboard Studies at Erskine College. He earned a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from Wilfrid Laurier University (Ontario) prior to completing Masters and Doctorate degrees in Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music (New York). Dr. Parker also spent a year studying the music of French composers at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris*. He has previously taught piano at Houghton College, Finger Lakes Community College, and the Music Camp at *Université Chrétienne du Nord d'Haiti*.

Dr. Parker's program will feature Edvard Grieg's famed *Holberg's Suite*, and Brahms' *Variations & Fugue on a Theme of Handel*.

Also appearing on this program will be the Augusta Youth Chorale, for whose benefit the recital is presented. A free-will offering will be received on their behalf, with the resulting funds applied to the purchase of touring choral risers that will expand the AYC's performance possibilities. The AYC presently has gifts of \$1,250.00 designated for this project, and need an additional \$1,000.00 to complete it.

Plan now to enjoy this fine program and support the Augusta Youth Chorale, a community ministry sponsored by Christ Church, Presbyterian.



The Trivialization of God - The Dangerous Illusion of a Manageable Deity

*The following paragraphs are excerpted from **The Trivialization of God - The Dangerous Illusion of A Manageable Deity**, by Donald W. McCullough, published by NavPress.*

Why can you enter many a sanctuary on Sunday morning - formal or informal, liberal or evangelical - and find very little reverence? Respectable reserve may be there but little, if any, flat-on-your-face awe; self-conscious dignity may hang in the air like incense after high mass, but nothing unsettling, nothing disorienting, nothing to strip away your certainties until your soul lies prostrate in naked embarrassment. You may find much good, such as vibrant fellowship or inspirational teaching or emotional music, but too much of it happens on the horizontal plane with only a courteous nod toward the vertical. Chatty friendliness moves from the narthex into the sanctuary, intruding on preparation for worship. The purpose of the whole enterprise, it seems, is to guarantee that everyone feel comfortable and entertained.

The trivialization of God inevitably leads to the trivialization of worship. The gods of our own creation - fitting neatly within the borders of our cause or understanding or experience, and serving well our comfort or nation or success - in no way transcend us, and for this reason they neither terrify nor attract us.

A chapel service during my year at Wheaton College had an unforgettable impact on me. The speaker was Dr. V. Raymond Edman, beloved past President of the College. His health had been precarious, and so it was a special moment when he stepped into the pulpit.

He wanted us to learn greater reverence before God. Worship is a serious matter, he told us, and to illustrate the point he recalled visiting Haile Selassie,

then Emperor of Ethiopia. He described the preliminary briefings, the protocol he had to follow, and the way he bowed with respect as he entered the presence of the king. In the same way, he said, we must prepare ourselves to meet God.

At that moment Dr. Edman slumped into the pulpit, fell to the floor...and entered the presence of the King of kings. He was dead, but for a few moments at least we had come to life. The dividing line between heaven and earth suddenly dissolved, and we were no longer restless college students with textbooks on our laps, worried about exams the next hour and dates the next weekend; we had joined angels and archangels around the throne.

Soren Kierkegaard said we have gotten confused about who's doing what in worship; we think of worshipers as an audience; pastors as entertainers; and God as the prompter. In fact, worshipers are performers; pastors are prompters; and God is the audience. When we gather for worship, whether with a handful in a storefront chapel or with thousands in St. Peter's Square, we perform a drama with different parts - speaking and singing and praying and giving money and baptizing and eating bread and drinking wine for the delight of God. At the end of the show the only applause that matters comes from God.

The word ritual has fallen on hard times. It usually follows a condemning adjective, such as "dead ritual" or "boring ritual" or "empty ritual." Forget ritual, we think. Leave that for stuffy traditionalists and strive for spontaneity! Such sentiments are nonsense.

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The Dangerous Illusion of a Manageable Deity (continued)

We need rituals; we can't live meaningful and productive lives without some sort of structure. Think through your day, and you will have to admit to engaging in a dozen routines before lunch time. I typically start my day by getting out of bed and going downstairs to grind coffee beans and start the pot brewing. After taking a shower, brushing my teeth, and pouring a cup of coffee, I read my Bible and pray...every morning. These things are rituals, patterns that give my life order.

We dare not leave things we value most to vagaries of whim. So we join God's people at a certain time and in a specific place. And when we get together, we practice our rituals of worship. Every service, whether a Pentecostal revival meeting on a sawdust trail or a Roman Catholic high mass with "smells and bells," has structure, a pattern of praise. Even congregations that would never think of printing an Order of Worship because they consider themselves "free churches" nevertheless follow a predictable routine.

The choice, therefore, is not between structured or unstructured worship, but between thoughtful or unthoughtful structure.

How should the community of worship structure its praise of God? It would be inappropriate for me to suggest one "proper" ritual...But this

much can be said: all worship ought to be ordered toward God; services should be put together in a way that keeps our attention centered on God.

After Arturo Toscanini finished conducting a brilliant performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the audience rose to its feet and applauded, shouting its delight. But Toscanini waved his arms violently for it all to stop. He turned to the orchestra and shouted hoarsely, "You are nothing!" He pointed to himself and shouted, "I am nothing!" Then he shouted, "Beethoven is everything, everything, everything, everything."

Christian worship must say, "God is everything, everything, everything." What we do...whenever we gather, the order of events and the manner in which we enact the drama, must always point to God, must reinforce again and again that God has taken the initiative and called us together, that God's grace is more important than our desires, and that God's glorification is more important than our edification.

This God-at-the-center worship happens only as we acknowledge another priority: God's Word is more important than our words. The Word alone - as it comes to us in Scripture, sermon and sacrament - has the power to turn us toward God.

[But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).]

Missionary Spotlight

Missions Update – January, 2013

Please be in prayer for these missionaries and agencies during January. As you pray, consider the needs you would have if you were in their place such as:

- Trusting the Lord in all things,
- Having the spiritual and physical strength to complete the tasks before them,
- Being patient, kind and gentle in their service,
- Having courage in demonstrating the love of Christ.

Missionaries Prayer Focus

- Alliance Defense Fund, Scottsdale, Arizona
- Rick and Betty Aschmann, Mission to the World (PCA), Ecuador
- Dick and Nancy Baggé, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Kenya
- Bob and Andrea Burnham, Mission to the World (PCA), Ukraine

Praise and Prayer Requests

Institute for Creation Research (ICR)

- Pray for ICR's communications staff as they try to reach younger generations with the truth of creation that points to Christ. While God's Word never changes, the communication method and style can and should change to reach people for Him. This has proven to be a challenge, so ICR is seeking God's direct guidance and blessing to be more effective in reaching the next generation for Christ.

Kurt and Pat Nelson, East-West Ministries, Int'l., Albania, Kazakhstan, Spain, Cuba

- Pray for East-West's new five-year goals that began January 1st. Pray that, over the next five years, God would enable the ministry to mobilize 200 long-term missionaries, make one million new disciples, equip 250,000 local church leaders, and plant 50,000 new churches, with 50% being among unreached people groups.
- Please pray for the Nelsons' financial situation, as they have lost a few supporters during the past year. Pray for the Lord's provision for the family throughout the coming year.

Doug and Amy Nunziato, World Team, Spain

- Pray for their safety and for good health as they travel, spending time with family and friends and speaking to supporters.
- Pray for Doug, Amy, Analise and Nate as they prepare to head to Spain in mid-March. Pray that God will give them a good time of rest and refreshment before they begin their ministry.

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 4201 Southern Pines Drive
 Evans, GA 30809
 706-210-9090

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January Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
			7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	7 p.m. - Adult Bible Study (Moncrief Home)		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
11 a.m. Worship 6 p.m. Worship		7 p.m. Joint Session / Diaconate Mtng	7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	6:45 p.m. Women's Bible Study (Boyd Home)	7 a.m. Men's Prayer Meeting	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
11 a.m. Worship 12:15 p.m. Fellowship Luncheon 6 p.m. Worship 7:30 p.m. Youth Gathering			7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	7 p.m. - Adult Bible Study (Moncrief Home) 7 p.m. Young Family/ Young Married Couples Bible Study (Parish Home)	7 a.m. Men's Prayer Meeting	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
11 a.m. Worship 6 p.m. Worship		7 p.m. Men's Bible Study (Hatcher Home)	7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	6:45 p.m. Women's Bible Study (Folley Home)	7 a.m. Men's Prayer Meeting	
27	28	29	30	31		
11 a.m. Worship 6 p.m. Worship 7:30 p.m. Youth Gathering			7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal		7 a.m. Men's Prayer Meeting	