

THE NEWS
of
East Washington Heights Baptist Church

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EPIPHANY

“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”
(Matthew 2: 10 – 12)

The Pastor's Message

Every Member a Transformed Disciple: Transformational Worship

Our church-wide theme for 2016 is “Every Member a Transformed Disciple. “ This theme is relevant because as a church family we are on a journey to becoming a “Transformational Church.” A transformational church is a church where the members are becoming like Christ Jesus, the congregation comes together as the body of Christ, and the community around the church is being transformed with the values of the Kingdom of God.

A key to transformational discipleship and becoming a transformational church is transformational worship and this was revealed in a survey that was done with 7,000 churches across the nation to determine the key characteristics of growing thriving churches vs. dying churches. The survey found that churches that are thriving have vibrant worship and worship that actively embraces Jesus.

What's surprising is that transformational worship doesn't have much at all to do with the style of worship. It focuses on maximizing the presence of the Lord. Here are the keys to transformational worship from the book *Transformational Church : Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* by Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer:

Did you even wonder what musical style God prefers? He doesn't! He calls people to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Music is only one aspect of worship. Worship is the goal. God is not about ritual or methods. He is about relationship.

- Worship is a lifestyle.
- Worship leaders, worship. They must experience authentic worship before leading others.
- Authentic worship always produces the experienced presence of God. People's lives are changed in His presence.
- “Worship is totally God-centered! God focused! Out of worship comes a clearer and more focused relationship of faith and obedience with God.
- Transformational Churches place worship at the center of their efforts and we don't mean the sixty to ninety minute gathering on Sunday mornings.
- Instead of asking how many people attended worship, we should be asking, how many people encountered the transforming presence of God through worship? When people attend worship are they observing a show or are they being transformed by God?
- Real Worship will transform the worshippers and transformed worshippers will change the world!
- Reducing worship to a style removes God as the reason for gathering.

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- God's purpose in worship is not to make everybody happy. God's desire is for people to discover and glorify Him through worship.
- A church seeking the transformation of a community of far-from-God people must make their worship about God and His glory rather than their preferential styles.
- We should measure our worship not at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning, but at 8:30am on Monday in the places where people go to work.

It is my prayer that in 2016 and the years ahead, we will earnestly work to become transformational disciples who practice transformational worship!

Peace and Blessings, **Pastor Kip Banks, Sr.**

The meaning of Epiphany

Epiphany, which comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, means "an appearance" or "a revealing." Centuries ago, the church set aside January 6, the 12th day after Christmas, to mark the revealing of Jesus as Christ to the wise men, who were Gentiles. Jesus' first followers were Jewish, so the revelation of the divine Christ to the non-Jewish magi reminds us that Jesus came to earth to save the whole world.

Symbols of Epiphany include light, a star, a crown (or three crowns) and a globe or stylized portrayal of the world. The color of Epiphany is green to symbolize life, growth, hope, and eternity.

On the church calendar, the Epiphany season lasts until Ash Wednesday, which is determined by the date of Easter.

Hate vs. love

Civil-rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. compared hate to "an unchecked cancer," saying it "corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity." Unfortunately, the destructive force of hatred is often evident in nations, communities, families, and even churches.

The obvious, though not always easy, antidote to hatred is love. As *The Message* translation of Proverbs 10:12 states, "Hatred starts fights, but love pulls a quilt over the bickering." The image of a comfy quilt symbolizes the soothing impact that loving words and actions can have on enemies as well as friends.

Plus, it's tough to share the gospel without showing love, which social reformer Elizabeth Cady Stanton called "the 'open sesame' to every soul."

Happy Anniversary to all who were married in January!

THE NEWS

Kindness counts

- Make blankets or scarves for homeless people.
 - Send a care package to someone who's in college or the military.
 - Collect coins for a charity or cause.
 - When you can't attend an event, give the tickets to strangers.
 - Provide tutoring or mentoring in your field of expertise.
 - Offer to babysit or pet-sit for free.
 - Send a note of appreciation to someone who's made a difference in your life.
 - Share your gifts of music, reading or conversation at a nursing home.
 - Donate old sports equipment to schools.
 - Give someone the benefit of the doubt, maybe even a family member or yourself!
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Before all else fails ...

In *Too Busy Not to Pray* (InterVarsity Press), Bill Hybels cites reasons that prayers may seem to go unanswered (unconfessed sin, selfishness and so on). The most common cause, though, is prayerlessness:

"People often tell me how they have attempted to address a pressing need," Hybels writes. "They have gone to counselors, read self-help books, claimed biblical promises, practiced self-discipline, confided in Christian friends, practiced assertiveness or submission or self-denial or positive thinking, even read books about prayer — and their need is still not met." But when asked if they've prayed "fervently and regularly" about the matter, the answer is usually no.

James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask God." So instead of thinking "When all else fails, pray," try this: "Pray before all else fails."

"The name above every name"

O what is Jehovah El Shaddai to me?
My Lord, God and Savior, Immanuel, He;
My Prophet, Priest, Sacrifice, Altar and Lamb;
Judge, Advocate, Surety and Witness, I AM;
My Peace and my Life, my Truth and my Way;
My Leader, my Teacher, my Hope and my Stay;
Redeemer and Ransom, Atonement and Friend;
He's Alpha, Omega, Beginning and End.

—Rev. John H. Sammis

Happy Birthday to all who were born in January!

Resolve to revitalize

Church revitalization is a hot topic, and ideas for congregations can bring fresh energy and meaning to personal and family life, too. Consider the following tips:

- Have a clear vision. It's easy to go along day to day without considering what you're moving toward. Beyond the everyday routine, what bigger vision does God have for you? This year, take specific steps toward living that out.
- Ask questions. What gets you excited — even passionate? What issues or situations break your heart? What are you good at? Resolve to use a talent or something you enjoy to help heal hurts.
- Balance history with innovation. Honor your past as God's gift that makes you who you are, but be open to change. Dare to step out in faith for the sake of your life's mission. Try something new in the spirit of the God who's always doing a new thing (Isaiah 43:19; Revelation 21:5).

The best way to revitalize a church might be to revitalize the lives of its individual members!

Special dates in January 2016

- New Year's Day, January 1
 - Epiphany, January 6
 - Baptism of the Lord, January 10
 - Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Observance, January 18 (Church office closed.)
 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25
 - 5th Sunday Breakfast and Bible Study, 8:30AM, January 31
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The History of Homelessness in America 1640s to present

By: Robert Fischer, Plymouth Congregational Church

Frequently references are made that homelessness as we know it today is rooted in severe HUD cuts in the early 1980s. While policy changes did have a large impact exacerbating the problem, homelessness has been documented in America since 1640.

In the 1640s homelessness was seen as a moral deficiency, a character flaw. It was generally believed a good Christian, under God's grace, would naturally have their needs met. People outside of that grace somehow were deserving of their plight as God rendered justice accordingly and fairly. If one found themselves homeless in the 1600s, a person or family would come upon a town and would have to prove their 'worth' to the community's fathers,. If not, they would be on the not so merry way to the next town or hamlet.

Today, those experiencing homelessness has nothing to do with a person's intrinsic worth. Homelessness is a complex social issue with many variables. Unfortunately, for those experiencing homelessness, the impact of the values of the 1640s are still pervasive. In America many still hold to this tenet, that one only needs to pick themselves up by their bootstraps and into the pursuit of the American dream and for those who cannot, they deserve to be destitute for they bring no 'added value' to society.

Displacement of people has many causes; industrialization, wars and subsequent problems, natural disasters, racial inequities, medical problems, widowhood, and the values of a nation as represented by their policies relating to the disenfranchised (systemic issues).

The Industrial Revolution starting in the 1820s-'30s people began migrating from the farm to the city in search of jobs. Philadelphia and New York had many people walking the streets causing the country's first pan-handling ordinances. City jails became de facto shelter systems.

Poor safety regulation caused a lot of physical disability and death. Those disabled and widows, many with dependent children had no means to provide for themselves and nowhere to turn. The 1850s brought the first documented cases of homeless youth, many of whom were kicked out of their homes because their providers could no longer afford to raise them.

The Civil War was the first war where the newly discovered painkiller morphine was used. Now people with amputated limbs could survive. Opiate addiction became rampant with 100s of thousands of war veterans addicted. From the 1870s until the 1890s one could purchase morphine and heroin with syringes from Sears and Roebucks catalogues. Many rural housewives also became addicted in response to the monotony of life in the middle of nowhere. Criminalization of drug addiction soon followed in response to the epidemic. And of course the Civil War brought with it cases of what is now known as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). The terms "tramp" "hobo" and "bum" were born out of this era.

Natural Disasters are another factor in the homelessness problem. The Great Chicago Fire, The San Francisco earthquake, the massive flooding of the Mississippi in the 1920s from Ohio through New Orleans displaced over 1.3 million people. The drought of the 30s in Oklahoma and Texas, Hurricane Katrina, are just a few examples of disasters that affected millions of people's households. **(Continued on Page 7)**

(Continued from Page 6) Systemic issues have developed over time. People living in generational poverty do not have the resources and support to become educated and move out of poverty. Racial divides still occur in the areas of healthcare, education, access to mortgages, access to equal paying jobs among many others. The constant bombardment of racial messages takes root in the social consciousness. This ethos becomes obvious when we study policy choices. Embedded in subconscious, these systemic issues raise boundaries making it very difficult for any one individual to overcome on their own.

Internationally progress has been made on how we look at the problem of homelessness. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed at the UN General Assembly in 1948, states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his own control.” 155 nations have ratified this declaration.

Where do we go from here? A solid examination of our policies and the underlying values must be questioned. As a nation, we need to recognize and believe in dignity of each individual. Then, we need to speak up for what’s right.

Think about it!

The Choice Is Yours

Attitude is a choice: If you have any responsibility for others—as a parent, a boss, or volunteer leader—the attitude of your people is a reflection of your own. The people you lead reflect the attitude you possess.

God chooses what we go through. We choose how we go through it.

Character is a choice: Gifts and talents are given to us, but character is developed by us. We cannot rise above the limitations of our character.

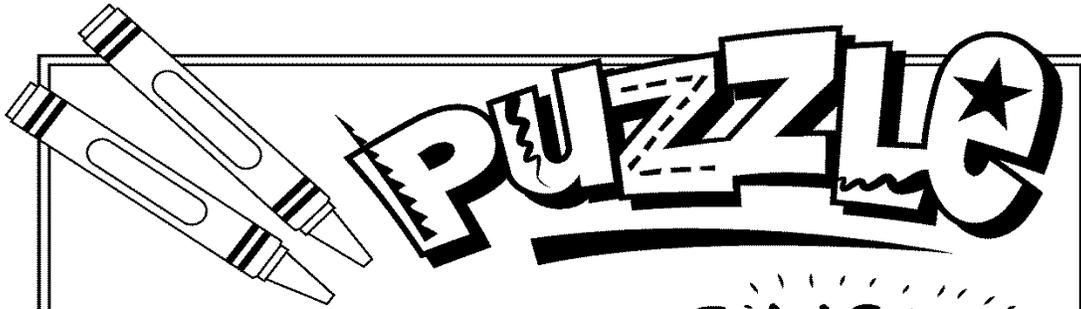
How you spend your spare time is a test of your character. Character is the sum total of all our everyday choices.

Self-discipline is a choice: Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Train yourself to make good use of your time. Study yourself, identify your strengths, and build on them.

No life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated, disciplined.

Commitment is a choice: It usually begins with a struggle. It has nothing to do with talent or ability. It is not a matter of conditions but of choice. Start with the little things. Trust in God.

Nothing of worth or weight can be achieved with half a mind, with a faint heart and with a lame endeavor. **John Maxwell, *The Choice is Yours***

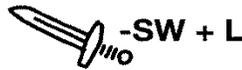


LET THERE BE LIGHT

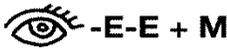
In a world of darkness, God guides us so we can walk in his ways.

Directions: Write the name of each picture, subtracting and adding letters as indicated. Then fill in the blanks to complete 2 Samuel 22:29, NIV.

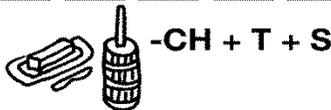
“ Y O U , _____ , A R E



_____ ; T H E



_____ M Y



_____ D +  +  - T + S

I N T O _____ .”



2 SAMUEL 22:29, NIV

Answer: “You, LORD, are my lamp; the LORD turns my darkness into light.” 2 Samuel 22:29, NIV