

The Window

On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world.

November 2019

LOOKING BACK BY ANDY HAMER, PASTOR

I'm grateful for those of you who have taken the time to tell me more of the stories of West Hills Church. This is, of course, immensely helpful to me, but it may also have value for those who have graciously taken the time to fill me in. In recent weeks I've had a series of these types of conversations with West Hills' ministry teams, Session, and staff. I asked them four questions (feel free to pause and answer them yourself):

1. What went well in the last few years?
2. What was hard about the last few years?
3. What still stings?
4. What excites you about moving forward?



These questions led us into insightful and heartfelt conversations. As we reflected on the past, we found an interesting mix of grief and hope. Consider your own responses: do any carry a certain weight in your heart? I would encourage you to share your thoughts with others.

In my reflections about these conversations I noted that many people showed an earnestness to “move forward.” I personally identify with this feeling. In many life situations I find myself asking questions like, “Where do we go from here?” or “What’s the next step toward the direction God is calling us?” In recent years however, I’ve been spending a bit more time looking back. As I consider our eagerness to move forward as a church, I wonder if there’s anything more to gain from where we’ve been.

When I’m hiking in the backcountry I have a tendency to always want to go a little bit farther. I want to know what is around the next corner or over the next ridge. Of course, some of the great joys of the wilderness are found when we turn around to look at the view behind us. Along with the view, there’s often an accompanying sense of accomplishment. Whether the path behind us was relaxed or grueling, no one can take away the fact that we ourselves have completed it. What have you gained by being a part of West Hills in these recent, challenging years? Those things are ours to keep.

Looking back can also provide a moment to take stock. How am I doing after that last stretch of trail? Is my heel rubbing uncomfortably in my boot now? Do I need to take the boot off and address the situation before it gets worse? As we take stock as a church, do we have any raw places inside of us? Now may be a good time to address them. God has set aside work for us to do as individuals and as a church. It’s important to remember that he also cares enough about each of us to empower us through the Spirit to do our inward work. As the famous mountaineer Sir Edmund Hilary once said, “It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves.”

WHAT I LEARNED FROM SAMMIE

by Cheryl Havekost, Caregiving Ambassador Deacon

I have always enjoyed being a dog owner. All of my dogs have been Humane Society mixed breeds (mutts). After several years of just having one dog, I decided that two would be even better.

Fifteen years ago I went to the shelter and got a six-month old puppy named Samantha or “Sammie.” Sammie was mix of Beagle, King Charles Cavalier, Jack Russell, and maybe a couple of other breeds. When Sammie was eighteen months old I decided to sneak her into a nursing home on a Saturday night to see a friend’s mother.

Surprisingly, Sammie acted like she had visited nursing homes her whole life. She stopped at every wheelchair and patiently waited for people to pet her. She cuddled closely to my friend’s mother on the bed. She stayed in that same position for about thirty minutes and when I left I had made the decision to see what it took to have her become an official therapy dog. No more sneaking around!

Sammie spent many years as a certified therapy dog. I used to say that she had a huge fan club. Sometimes when she was very content on a bed, I would joke that I could leave and she wouldn’t even care. Which was ‘sort of’ true—I could leave the room and when I returned she would look up as if to say, “I knew you wouldn’t leave me.”

When Sammie was ten years old I got another puppy, MacKenzie (Macc). The two of them were great friends, one aging dog and the other a newly minted, exuberant puppy. Macc required a lot of exercise and Sammie would gamely go along at a more subdued pace. I started seeking large fenced areas where I could have them both off leash to go at their own pace.

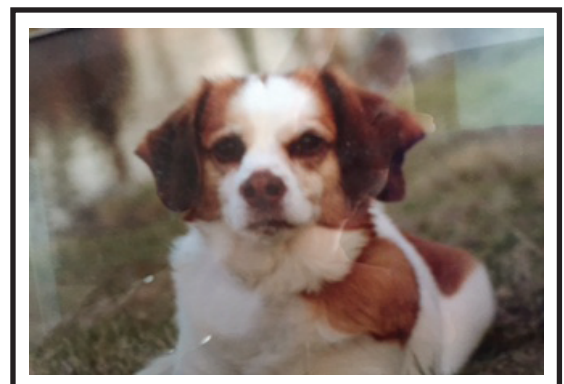
It wasn’t long before Macc would be far in the distance with me in the middle and Sammie lagging way behind. We began a pattern of me catching up with Macc and then both of us backtracking to find Sammie.

As she got older, Sam’s eyesight diminished as well as her strength and endurance. I tried to leave her at home, but that met with the disapproval of both dogs. Finally, there came a time when she could just

go a short distance. She would lay on her stomach and survey the world through cloudy eyes. I knew she couldn’t see me in the distance, but it never seemed to bother her. Stopping to rest when she was tired, looking around her at what she could see, and waiting for me to find her to take her home was enough. She never looked worried, rather she would gaze up at me as if to say, “I knew you wouldn’t leave me.” Such trust in me as her master!

Watching Sammie’s calm acceptance of her limitations, I realized that this dog believed I would take care of her NO MATTER WHAT. I doubted that I had that much trust in my heavenly master. Day after day Sammie reminded me that through trials, failing health, and weakness, there could be trust that everything would be okay. How much more did the Lord love me than I could ever love my dog? Luke 12:6-7 *Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.* (Or many dogs, for that matter.)

Sammie was diagnosed with widespread cancer at the age of twelve and the veterinarian suggested that she be put to sleep. I agreed, and held her as she took her final breath. As I held her I thought about how infinitely more my Father cared for this dog and for me. How reassuring to know that I’m never going to be alone throughout the changes in my life. NOTHING will ever interfere with His love for me. Thank you Lord for the lesson in trust that I learned from Sammie.



CHURCH BUILDING UPDATES

by Don Glasgow, Elder of Building & Grounds

Notable facility improvements for our church so far this year:

- New roof completed that protected us from snow and RECORD rains.
- North entry sidewalks and retaining walls repaired for safety and aesthetics.
- CINTAS now stocking all the paper goods and soap for bathrooms and kitchen areas on a weekly basis is a cost savings both in supplies and personnel time.

Building & Grounds says “THANK YOU!” to...

Daryl and Cathy Greger...for their many years of service working on all the gardens around the building.

Tim and Kelly Briggs along with Pam Culek...for picking up from the Gregers and supplying our colorful gardens with flowers and upkeep.

Joel Anderson, of Anderson Comfort...for keeping our air conditioner units running smoothly all summer long at a significant cost savings to the church.

Tim Schaffer...for coordinating the repairs to the dry wall in the pastor's office.

All those that came for the Church work day...for helping to maintain our building we get to call our church home. Many hands and feet were busy shampooing carpets, wiping down walls/hand rails, cleaning glass, laying down mulch, trimming trees, pulling weeds, organizing pew racks, cleaning off the roof and clearing the gutters.

Paul Bates...for the work done on the benches in the healing garden as you can see in the picture below.



SPIRITUAL CORRESPONDENCE

by Jana Prescott

“Jesus, the very thought of Thee with sweetness fills us.” (from the thoughts of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, a French abbot from 1090 until 1153). I’ve been reading that our love for Jesus is the one thing that will be a salve, a curing grace, for all of our sorrows, our seeming disappointments. We all have doubts in our hearts, but to help change those doubts, those fears, to a sweet feeling of joy is to have Christ’s courage in our hearts, and to keep rejoicing, even when life is tough. Just remember that Christ is with you, wherever you are: “I am the same yesterday, today, and forever!” (Hebrews 13:8)



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW
FOR CHILI & CAROLING!**



Everyone is warmly invited to participate in this year’s “Chili and Caroling” event on Sunday, December 15 immediately following the second worship service. Many activities compete to fill our December calendars, but this event perfectly combines fellowship with service. After enjoying a bowl of chili/chicken noodle soup with accompanying goodies, participants will share Christmas carols with church family members who are experiencing special challenges, and as a result, all involved will be blessed.

In order to help us with planning, you can sign up starting on November 24, but if you don’t sign up and can join us at the last minute, please do so. More details will be coming, but for now, make sure you have “Chili and Caroling” on your calendar as a not-to-be missed event!

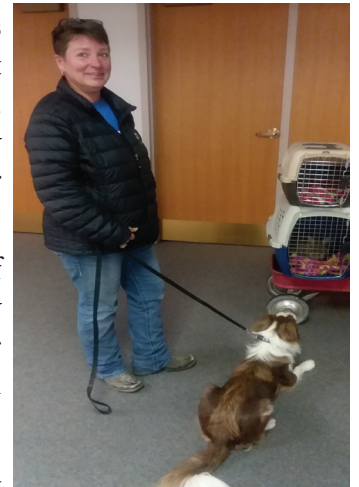
A SPECIAL SATURDAY - RESCUE AND PEACE



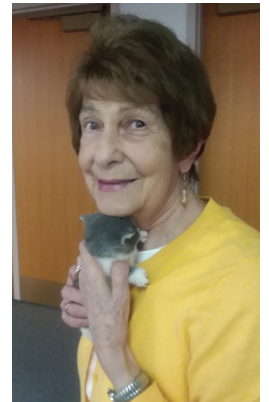
There is quite a story behind Scatter Joy Acres, as the attendees of our Special Saturday program and potluck discovered. Yes, it has a petting zoo feeling with a camel, guinea pigs, ducks, goats, sheep, potbelly pigs, donkeys, alpaca, horses and seasonal baby animals. As Joy Bartling, executive director, explained, Scatter Joy Acres is “a place of rescue and a journey of peace.”

The Lord rescued Joy in many of the most difficult seasons of her life. He constantly opened doors that could have so easily stayed slammed tightly shut. Joy gave her moving testimony to those gathered in our Fellowship Hall as she told how the grace of God has flowed like a mighty river, from Him, to her and out to so many others.

Joy Bartling founded a ranch in 2006 called Soby Ranch Ministry which transitioned to Scatter Joy Acres. There are twenty-seven acres with lots of room for animals and activities. The animals quickly capture the hearts of young and old alike. Wide open spaces are available in a country setting...salve to the weary soul! The setting allows visitors to be with nature and feel that rich calming effect that those many animal ambassadors provide.



Joy also spoke of animal assisted therapy, animal rescue, as well as the difference creatures can make in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, therapeutic boarding schools for teens as well as mental health facilities. Treatment takes place individually or in groups led by qualified therapists or specialized experts who guide each session. It seems that some people will interact differently with the animals. Sometimes barriers are broken and healing may have a chance to begin.



On Special Saturday at West Hills, Joy was accompanied by dogs, kittens and a bunny rabbit. Cuddling was encouraged! The SJA camel could not attend as he is preparing for his completely booked scheduled appearances as a participant in live nativity settings.

Following the presentations a delicious bounty of food was presented pot luck style. Can our members put out a spread! Lively conversations took place around tables with individual gift bags decorated as pigs, horses, cows and more. The entire October gathering was fun, informative and thoroughly enjoyable.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

AFRICAN PEPPER SAUCE

provided by Peg Shirley



Ingredients:

5 habañero or scotch bonnet peppers
1 medium onion
4 garlic cloves
2 TBSP bouillon or maggi
2 basil leaves
2 TBSP parsley
3 roma tomatoes
1/2 cup vegetable oil
salt

Directions:

1. Chop the onion, tomatoes and peppers after removing the seeds and stems.
2. Put all the ingredients in a food processor or blender.
3. Pour the pepper mixture into a saucepan and bring to a boil, then simmer for 15 minutes, stirring frequently to keep it from burning.
4. It will be spicy hot. You can add mayonnaise to cool it down. Add as much as you need until you are ready to eat it.

African Pepper Sauce is meant to be spooned over meat, however you decide how you want to serve it.

SCIENCE & THE BIBLE



Did the Bible foretell radio and light waves?

We now know that radio waves and light waves are two forms of the same thing: electromagnetic waves. Therefore, radio waves are a form of light. Today, using radio transmitters, we can send “lightening” which indeed speaks when it arrives. “Have you come to know the statutes of the heavens, or could you put its authority in the earth? Can you send forth lightening that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are?’” (Job 38:34-36)



The book “**Circle of Deception**” is a novel of intrigue by Roger Elwood. “Ephesians 6:12 puts the facts on the table: ‘For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.’”

CIA agent Nick Tazelaar has been killed in the line of duty. However, his wife Heather has questions as to what really happened to her husband.

Heather, along with her best friend Becky, explores her attic for clues to the last case Nick was investigating.

When the two stumble into a “secret file” they are sent into a dangerous world which leads them into a “Circle of Deception.”

According to the author, in his author notes:

“Circle of Deception incorporates a number of not generally known but nonetheless documented facts, designed to show in fictional terms how Satan can use the governments of this world for his diabolical purposes.”

MOVIE REVIEW



History Channel : Where The Past Comes Alive is a 100 minute DVD exploring the great battles of the Bible.

According to the History Channel:

In one of the most hostile lands on the planet, an ancient people called the Israelites forged an army and carved out an empire. Their ancient military exploits are described in one of history's most famous religious texts, the Old Testament of the Bible. But by reading between the religious lines, military historians unlock the soldiers' secrets of the Bible by examining the weapons, strategies, and the commanders, some of whom are not always thought of as warriors, like Abraham, Moses, and Deborah. In this feature-length special, we explore the biblical world from a military perspective from the time of Abraham until David's ascension to the throne. Blood often flows more freely than holy water in the days of the Old Testament, and the military secrets of the Bible have yet to be revealed...until now! This DVD is now available for check out in the Soul Café.

**REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR
PLEDGE CARD ON NOV. 3
AS WE MAKE OUR ANNUAL
COMMITMENT FOR 2020!**

COMMITMENT SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 3

BIBLE TRIVIA QUIZ

(answers on the back page)

1. Who did Jesus say had more faith than anyone in Israel? A. a leper B. a poor street beggar C. a Centurion D. Lazarus
2. He wrote more books in the Bible than any other writer. A. Moses B. Paul C. Luke D. John
3. Who said to David: "You are the man?" A. Uriah B. Absalom C. Joab D. Nathan
4. Who lied to the Holy Spirit about the money received from the sale of some land? A. Barnabas B. Ananias C. Caiaphas D. Nicodemus
5. Who decided to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes? A. Haman B. Ezra C. Zethar D. Mordecai
6. Who kept the ark of the covenant at his home for three months? A. David B. Obed-edom C. Abinadab D. Nathan
7. Where do we find the prayer that occupies an entire chapter in one of these Gospels? A. In Matthew 17 B. In Luke 17 C. In John 17 D. In Mark 17
8. After Malachi's death how long was the voice of the prophets silent? A. 400 years B. 1000 years C. 40 years D. 4000 years
9. What Pharisee, who knew the Bible very well, sincerely believed that the Christian movement was dangerous to Judaism? A. Timothy B. Paul (Saul) C. Barnabas D. Nicodemus
10. When did the Holy Spirit first become available to all believers? A. at the resurrection of Jesus Christ B. the moment Jesus died C. at Pentecost D. after Peter and John healed a crippled man
11. Who wrote, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" A. Ezra B. Jeremiah C. Moses D. Isaiah
12. On what mountain did Moses receive the Ten Commandments from God? A. Mount Moriah B. Mount Tabor C. Mount Zion D. Mount Sinai

(special thanks to Kathy Lloyd who gave us a book about questions from the Bible written in 1930)

OCTOBER *Session notes*

- Session will study Richard Foster's book Celebration of Discipline.
- Approved moving the sign-up tables back up in the Geneva Lounge area.
- Approved the Social Media Policy.
- Approved calling a Congregational Meeting on November 17, 2019 at 10:05 a.m. to elect deacons, elders, and Nominating Committee members.
- Approved and accepted the Guiding Values for West Hills' Session response to congregational concerns.
- Remodeling the Children's welcoming area has begun.
- An Advent guide is being created and volunteers are being sought.
- A new member class will run from October 20 - November 10

God's
Gift Shop
Begins
Nov. 17



Christmas

GIVE & GO CATALOG



Pick up a catalog in
Geneva Lounge to see the
special giving and serving
opportunities available to
you and your family this
Christmas season!

There will be a Congregational Meeting on Nov. 17 at 10:05 a.m. for the purpose of electing elders, deacons, and members of the Nominating Committee.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

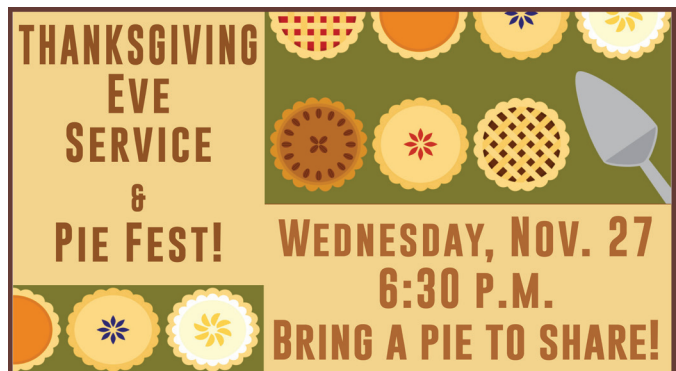
Check out our website at whcomaha.org for all upcoming events, but here are just a few...



**FALL BACK
PANCAKE
BREAKFAST**

Sunday, November 3
8:00 — 10:30 A.M.
Fellowship Hall

Provided by West Hills Men's Ministry Team



**THANKSGIVING
EVE
SERVICE
&
PIE FEST!**

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 27
6:30 P.M.
BRING A PIE TO SHARE!**



*We will be preparing the building
for Advent on:*

Wednesday, Nov. 20 @ 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 24 @ 12:00 p.m.

*This is an open invitation to
those that like to decorate for
Christmas!*



*Hanging of the Greens
Sunday, ~December 1
Six O'Clock*