

THE LEAVEN

First Presbyterian Church
Leavenworth, Kansas

APRIL 2018

SOULE SEARCHING

When Debbie and I were last looking to buy a house, I was walking around a potential neighborhood. There was a group of elementary school kids playing and raking leaves in the yard as I walked by. As I approached, one of the girls shouted "Stranger danger!" and ran for the house. I was shocked because I was the "stranger" she was shouting about and afraid of. How could that be? I told the realtor we were working with about my encounter and she said, "Well, that's a good thing. The right message is getting through to some of them." Not exactly the response I expected.



Most parents teach their children to watch out for strangers. That's a legitimate concern, of course, given that the world seems to be a much more dangerous place than it used to be. The truth is, however, that the world has always been a dangerous place. We just know more about that danger more quickly because of the 24-hour news cycle. It's kind of amazing, really, that my parents let me freely roam the neighborhood, walk to and from school each day, and sometimes be responsible for my younger brothers at the same time. It might never have occurred to them that some stranger in a van would scoop me up and take me away.

In the name of an abundance of caution in our own day, however, we may inadvertently be reaping what we're sowing. What is known as "stranger danger" in little children can quickly morph into middle school cliques, high school bullying and even a national policy on immigration. We become so afraid of strangers that we will do anything to keep them at bay, sticking with those we know.

But we forget one thing and that is that *we* are inevitably a stranger to someone else. We have to consider the fact that someone else might look at *us* with fear and suspicion, not knowing that we aren't all that scary.

That was the lesson to me when that girl shouted, "Stranger danger." We are easily misunderstood, categorized and refused hospitality because we aren't known by the people around us. The more we understand that we, too, are strangers to someone, the more likely we may be to extend hospitality to those who are strangers to us.

Fear of the stranger narrows our definition of neighbor. In Luke 10:25-37 Jesus answers the question, "Who is our neighbor?" Jesus tells us, "those who help those in need are neighbors." When we see them first as "Stranger danger," we pass by like priests and Levites on the other side

of the road in fear of our own safety. We will let that be someone else's problem. We fear being part of someone's suffering; we fear rejection; we fear the possibility of death.

But remember that Jesus showed his disciples that welcoming the stranger is part of the job description of cross-bearing disciples. Following Jesus means that we love, and love is risky. It appreciates boundaries, while extending compassion and friendship.

In a fearful world, those of us who follow Jesus need to demonstrate what loving neighbor is about. This week we all are likely to encounter many strangers -- some who are like you, some who are not. How will you approach them? Will you lead with fear or with compassion? Will you see them as a threat or an inconvenience, or will you listen long enough to hear their story? Who is your neighbor?

None of us makes it through life without relying on the kindness of strangers. Think about a stranger or two who may have helped you on your journey. Such reflection may indicate a possible avenue by which to extend yourself to the strangers you encounter. Some may just be friends in the making.

Tim

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Thank you for your donation of \$1282.61 was collected on, before and after Easter Sunday!!!

THOUGHTS ON HOLY WEEK

“What a great Holy Week and Easter we had here at church!”

I heard that many times this past week and of course was very pleased. I was pleased because a lot of people worked hard to make it happen. Freda, Marti and Elaine inspired us as we worshipped with the beautiful music they made on the organ, piano and keyboard. Their gifts were supported by the singing of the Choir and the ringing of the Bell Choir, both were outstanding. Speaking of outstanding, having Nick and Nathan Proctor on trumpet playing the prelude and postlude and accompanying the hymns gave Easter morning a glorious sound. The offertory by Jordan Proctor on cello and Riley Proctor on flute provided another highlight of the service. All our musicians did an exceptional job of praising the risen Lord.

When the Worship Committee began planning for Holy Week back in January several members expressed an interest in doing both a Maundy Thursday Communion service and a Good Friday service. I wondered if we would get a congregation for both services, but there was good attendance both evenings. The committee saw to all the details of the services from hanging the paraments and banners to flowers for the cross, palms, candles, Easter lilies and setting the table for the Lord's Supper (twice). Thanks for your good work and planning. Thanks also to the

congregation members who volunteered to read the Passion Story and others who ushered, served communion, provided a lily, and joined in the special events.

I can't forget the Deacons' help. They got our weekend activities' off to a yummy start by hosting a Potato Bar Supper. More than forty people enjoyed the good food and fellowship then went upstairs to worship.

After worship on Easter Sunday, Jim Garrett said, "Well, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and today all went well. Now all we need is a Sunrise Service." I added, "We can't do that without an Easter Breakfast!" We will see what next Easter brings.

Thanks for all your excellent work and Support. "Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed!"
Tim



PRAYER CONCERNS

Immediate: Breanna Hoffman (Cindy Scircle's relative), Roger Frazer, Rod Cox's parents

Ongoing: Marilyn Ferbert (Judy Jahn's daughter), Joe Hudson,

Al Pursell, Judy Jahn, Arlene Stovall, Jack Thomas, Dorothy Streiner (Cindy Scircle's relative), Aunt JB (Kristen Michaels), Gail Garrett, Gladys Griffin (Maria Traynham's mother)

APRIL FELLOWSHIP TREATS

Here is the schedule for providing treats for April:

April 1-Choir and Bell Choir **April 8-**Pot Luck

A, M-S- Salad, Sides and/or Bread **B,C,T-Z** – Desserts **D-L-** Main Dish

April 15-Congregation A-M **April 22-**Congregation N-Z **April 29-**Circle 3

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

2-Dody Marsh **10-**Jacob Litewski **19-**Judy Jahn **20-**John Strand

24-Gerald Carder **27-**Cathy Corley **30-**Cindy Geiger

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

1-Bill and Cindy Geiger **2-**Gerald and Miriam Bowman **25-**Gustavo and Katherine de la Cruz

COMMUNITY MEAL

Thanks to all that helped with the community meal Tuesday, we had just under 300 guests. We really appreciated the 10 Saint Mary Ministry students that came and helped out.