



The Shepherd's Voice

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MINUTE WITH MIKE

I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord!"
Exodus 6:8

Dearest sisters and brothers in the Lord Jesus,

Springtime greetings to you and yours! May the growing length of days warm your heart and remind you of the growing hope we have in Jesus who is Our Lord and Savior.

You know the story of the Exodus; God's people went to Egypt because of a famine throughout the land. After hundreds of years, these people lost favor in Egypt and became slaves. As they cried out to God, God sent to them a "deliverer," the man Moses. It is a great and powerful story of God's power, love and provision. Soon the Egyptian Pharaoh did in fact release the nation of Israel and they fled into the wilderness.

You can well imagine the joy the people felt from being liberated from bondage in Egypt. However, soon the reality sunk in that they were still – not home. And in spite of the fact that the wilderness offered a sort of victory and relief to be sure, it was not where God was ultimately leading them.

Well, that is our story. Many of us wrestled for what we believed God had called us to be. And God, in His sovereign timing and manner, "brought us out." We celebrated that victory in that we stayed together as a people, a family of faith. But after five years it is becoming clearer to me that we are not yet home.

Calvin Seminary has been extremely kind and gracious to us, and for that we will always give thanks to God. But many of us are praying for a new home, a place we can call our own. I'll share with you there are a few things that seem likely although we would certainly never limit God: That we would find another church about our size and either merge the two families into one, or learn to "nest" with them – two churches under one roof sharing with one another our ministries and gifts.

I share all of this with you asking that you would pray that God would reveal His plan and then direct us in the ways of His purposes. Pray that God would show us His glory, just as Moses prayed, and just as God had in the days of the exodus and wilderness wandering. Some amazing miracles that took place then (water out of rocks, bread from heaven, a pillar of fire...). This is the work of our wondrous and loving Father, who led His people then, and is still leading His people now. Thanks for your continued prayers to this end.

In the love and joy of His service,

Mike

SESSION NEWS

Membership

Active Membership as of 1/14/2020	54
Wally Leffel removed from active rolls; deceased January 17, 2021	- 1
Remove Carrie Barrett, Lois Stephens, and Arlene and Julie Koenes from the active rolls by their consent	- 4
Active Membership as of 2/10/2021	49

Worship Services

Attendance	1/17/2021	30 Adults	1 Children
Attendance	1/24/2021	27 Adults	0 Children
Attendance	1/31/2021	29 Adults	0 Children
Attendance	2/7/2021	18 Adults	0 Children (<i>Snow</i>)

Treasurer's Report

\$ 32,374	Cash on Hand as of 1/31/2021
+ 25,570	Certificate of Deposit (Northpointe Bank) (less following committed funds)
- 205	Accrued Joyful Noise offerings
<u>- 11,000</u>	Building Fund
\$ 46,739	Uncommitted Funds Available

Notes:

- Uncommitted funds as of the end of December were \$45,144. *Our cash GAIN in January was + \$1,595*
- It was noted that we've collected \$310 towards staff gifts. Bill Keating will prepare checks for distribution; Jim Miller will do the notes and envelopes. Gifts in the amount of \$62/each will be distributed to Pastor Mike, Arlene Koenes, Dr. Laura Smit, Marjorie Boerema, and Maureen Sweet.

Pastor – Following items, events and dates were discussed:

- It was noted in discussions that the church lacks a Manual of Ministries, which is called for by our bylaws. Pastor Mike will take that up and review.
- The Seminary will be conducting an Ash Wednesday service in the chapel on Feb. 17 at 10:00 AM.
- Cammi will be assembling and directing an Easter choir for Palm Sunday & Easter. Palm branches will be ordered for Palm Sunday. Lilies will be offered for both services.
- Maundy Thursday dinner – it was decided by common consent to forego this event this year due to the pandemic.
- Mike will work on a Good Friday service.
- Mike solicited suggestions on preaching topics for sermons after he completes the book of Mark; a number of suggestions were offered by Session members.

Other Matters –

- Pastor Mike and Donna will host the home group in March since Dana Bilyea will be in Florida for a month.

- Both Gary and Bill will be away in March, so a Session meeting is not practical; next meeting will be scheduled in April.
- Brooks Memorial Scholarship – it was agreed that Jim Miller will write an article for the March newsletter soliciting applications for scholarships.

Personnel & Nominating – Jim Miller, the existing Clerk of Session, submitted a job description to help the nominating team find a new Clerk.

Next Presbytery Meeting – TBA

Next Session Meeting – The next Session meeting will be **Thursday, April 8** at 1:00 PM at the Seminary.

Consent Agenda – Approve the Clerks and Treasurer’s Report, and the listed membership action; the minutes of the Stated Session Meeting of January 14, 2021; and the minutes of the Congregational Meeting of January 31, 2021. **A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to approve the consent agenda as presented.**

DATES

Thursday (4th) Bilyea’s Home group meeting – AT BAYNAI’S 1:00pm (all are welcome)
 Friday (5th) Men’s Breakfast – Bob Evans at M6 @ Kalamazoo 9:30am
 Sunday (7th) Worship and Communion at 10:00am Mark 14:53-65 The Trial; Joyful Noise Offering for February – Rev. Jackson Gachini (Kenya)
 Sunday (14th) Worship at 10:00am [DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME] Mark 14:66-72 The Denial
 Thursday (18th) Bilyea’s Home group meeting – AT BAYNAI’S 1:00pm (all are welcome)
 Sunday (21st) Worship at 10:00am Mark 15:1-5 Before Pilate
 Friday (26th) Ladies Luncheon – Grand Traverse Pie Company 1:00pm (*Pending*)
 Sunday (28th) Palm Sunday: Worship at 10:00am Mark 15:6-16 Barabbas

BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES – MARCH

1	Rachel Kimbrell
3	Mieraf Hailemariam
8	Shauna Gipe
13	Pat Doorn
17	Liam Adams
20	Mike Baynai
20	Joyce Vander Laan
24	Sandra Keating
27	Don Walstrom
23	Roger and Marie Zoerner (Anniv.)

SERVING THIS MONTH

Musicians: Marjorie Boerema - 7 & 14, Maureen Sweet - 21 & 28
 Preaching: Pastor Mike - 7, 14, 21 & 28
 Liturgist: Henry Gachini - 7 & 14, Robert Adams - 21
 Sound: Team Adams - 7 & 14, Team Lehmann – 21 & 28
 Communion Bread: Rachel Wahome
 Serving: Henry Gachini & Rachel Wahome
 Special Music: Pastor Mike - 7, Adams Family - 14, Dana Lehmann - 21, Choir 28

MEMBERS/FRIENDS IN NEED OF PRAYER

Linda Van Heuvelen, Jean Bailey (cancer), Barb Bailey, Joyce VanderLaan healing from shingles, homebound members Joan Walstrom, Pat Doorn, and Cathy Jo Walters

SHARING BURDENS IN THE CHURCH

(Submitted by Joyce VanderLaan)
 (Romans 12:9-13)

Although Pastors are called to care for the needs of people in the church, this duty is not theirs alone. And it has nothing to do with the size of the pastoral staff—the entire congregation is to be involved in caring for each other.

Every Christian is equipped to serve other believers. First, God has distributed spiritual gifts that enable His followers to minister in the particular ways He's determined for each one. And second, you may have experienced challenges similar to those facing another believer, which specially qualifies you to empathize, encourage, and strengthen that person. As you pray for your pastor and congregation, ask the Lord how He would have you share the load and help meet people's needs

The church is a network of shoulders supporting the collective weight of everyone's troubles. When you dive in and help hold a sister's burden, a brother takes on a bit of yours. Although your contribution might feel small and go unnoticed by all but the individual who is helped, your heavenly Father sees and will reward you for following His command.

The next time you go to church, ask God to direct you to those who could use your help. When you extend the hands of Jesus, people find rest for their weary heart.

THANK YOU

The Personnel Team would like to thank members for their contributions to the staff Valentines gifts. This year we collected \$310 shared by five staff members. We have a dedicated staff, and these gifts demonstrate our appreciation of their fine work.

CARD OF THANKS

It's not often that I'm at a loss for words, but I certainly was at the worship service on Valentine's Day. Thank you so much for the two Heart boxes and the bouquet. As good as the candy was and as beautiful as the flowers were, your cards of appreciation and love meant so much to me. I'm humbled and grateful. Your thoughtfulness is something I will always treasure.

Betty Rittersdorf

HOME GROUP FOR MARCH

Bilyea's and Baynai's?? That's right! The two March Home Group meetings which would normally occur at Dana Bilyea's Home will be moved to Mike and Donna's. So all are invited, and if you've never come before, this might be a great

opportunity to start a new spiritual discipline. The meetings are at 1:00pm on Thursday, March 4 and March 18. For more information contact Pastor Mike (616) 822-9988

PRAYING FOR AN HOUR

Praying for an hour may sound daunting, but you're going to find that this special time with Jesus will go by quickly.

To begin, predetermine where you will spend this time. It needs to be a quiet and comfortable place with no distractions. You may want a few things to make yourself comfortable soft music - paper and pen, a hymn book, your Bible...

Start by praying a Psalm, 103, 8 or 51 is a wonderful place to start your prayer. After a Psalm, worship God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Tell Him how you feel about Him. Praise Him and acknowledge that He is Creator and Lord; He is supreme; He is everything! Recount all that He is, all He is doing, and all He promises to do. You may want to say the Apostle's Creed or the Te Deum (you can find these on your phone...).

Consider now the context of your prayer time. Read one of the stories at hand (Matt. 26:17-27:66, Mark 14:12-15:47, Luke 22:7-23:56, John 13:1-19:42) Now thank the Lord Jesus for what He did for you and for what He did for all His children. What wonderous love is this! You may want to write God a thank you note.

Now pray for yourself, asking God to help you in every way. Then, pray for all those who are on your heart (spouse, children, family members... Maybe neighbors and friends...). You may want to write or list them. Next, pray for the church, perhaps you have kept our printed prayer list. If you did not read our Jesus' prayer in John 17 yet, you may want to do so now. Finally, pray for our nation and the people of the world, and pray for the person who prayed before you, and the one who will pray after you - the unbroken chain of prayer!

Close now by reading another Psalm (23, 91, 61...) and rest well knowing that you have done what the Lord has asked of you; "Can't you stay awake and pray for just one hour?" "Yes Lord!" All praise be to our wonderous and mighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

JOYFUL NOISE OFFERING

The Joyful Noise Offering for this month will benefit Mel Trotter Ministries. Located at 225 Commerce Ave. SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503 (616) 454-8249 [info@meltroutter.org]. In 1899, city leaders in Grand Rapids discovered an influx of homelessness and addiction. They called the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission in Chicago for help and Melvin E. Trotter, a former homeless and hopeless alcoholic, was tapped to start the Grand Rapids City Rescue Mission in 1900. In his forty years of running the Mission, he tapped many others to help start 68 other Rescue Missions across the country. The ministry is open Monday through Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm.

THE HEART OF OUR CHURCH

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, to “Brad” & Dagmar Bradfield where her father taught psychology and coached football, Betty Rittersdorf was one of three children. Her family moved to Pine River, Minnesota, where her family opened a clothing store. She acquired her love for football from her football coaching father. She attended Macalester College in Minnesota. Upon graduation from college, she taught junior high English in several different school systems before moving to Kalamazoo to obtain a Master’s Degree in orientation and mobility for the blind. Upon graduation she took a short-term position at the Association for the Blind in Grand Rapids and then joined the Orientation and Mobility staff at Western Michigan training future instructors in the field. While in Kalamazoo she met her husband Jim on an arranged square dance date, and the two have been married for forty-nine years. Circumstances led her back to the Association for the Blind where she served in a variety of positions including orientation and mobility instructor/supervisor, low vision clinic coordinator, and finishing her career as Assistant Director. She has a heart for people as is evident in her love of our church family. Betty loves to bowl and she and Jim enjoyed Square Dancing. Today Betty spends a great deal of time on her computer. She is a founding Elder in our church where she has served as a member of Session and Personnel Chair. Betty is our Newsletter Editor and a faithful member of our choir when we assemble. It is a joy

for us all to recognize the love and contribution Betty makes to us, the church and her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

EASTER CHOIR

Plans are underway for a Palm Sunday and Easter Choir. We are thrilled that Cammi has agreed to direct this work. We are now looking for all of you who will prepare to sing for the Lord on Palm Sunday (March 28) and Easter (April 4). Here is what you need to know:

- The choir will stand in family groups everyone else will be a few feet apart.
- The choir always sings in masks.
- The choir will stand against the back wall under the window and cross so we are the furthest away from the congregation.
- Practice times for about 30 minutes or so after worship on Sunday – March 7, 14 & 21.
- Warm up on Sunday – March 29 and April 4 at 9:30am.
- Marjorie and Maureen will be working with the choir on their respective Sundays.
- The selections are:
 - Palm Sunday – Hosanna Loud Hosanna (145)
 - Easter Sunday – Christ is Risen Alleluia (131)
- For more information, please speak with Cammi Adams.

BROOKS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

More properly named the Doug and Elaine Brooks Memorial Scholarship Fund, this fund was endowed by our beloved founder Elder Bob Brooks in memory of his dearly departed son and wife, for the purpose of assisting church members and their families with their education.

Each year at this time we solicit applications from qualified candidates for a scholarship award, with the intention of granting them a scholarship for the fall semester at an educational institution of their choice; be it college, graduate study or a vocational school.

Qualified candidates are urged to submit a letter defining their educational plan and needs for the coming school year to the board of trustees of the fund. The current trustees are Pastor Mike, Jim Miller, and Gary Lehmann. The trustees would like to receive these letters no later than mid-April for their consideration.

It should be noted that the fund is always in need of additional endowments, and members are urged to consider an annual gift. This is also a great program to consider when you are doing estate planning.

A PRAYER FOR THIS TIME

The prayer below was written by Pastor Mike at the time the COVID virus emerged and changed our world. Almost a year later it still pretty much holds true.

Father, our hearts are heavy as we ponder this current global situation. We are concerned as we feel compassion for so many. And so, Father, we come in the name of our glorious Savior, Christ Jesus The Lord, to ask Your healing mercy upon our land.

We pray, Father, for those across the world who do not have access to medicine or doctors or hospitals. Those who are unable even to be tested, those who have and will suffer and die. Your mercy, Father, upon them and their loved ones, their communities, and their nations. Help us, Lord Jesus!

Father, we pray as well for America; this crisis is without precedence for us. We pray for those in political leadership, that You would give them wisdom and strength to do what is best for our nation's people. We pray for our medical community; thank You Lord for all those who have dedicated themselves to our well-being. Keep them healthy, Lord, and bless them with discovery as we ask You for the breakthrough, the vaccine that will heal. Bless the populous that there would be kindness and thoughtfulness as we interact in this time of national emergency. O Help us, Lord Jesus! Heal us, Lord Jesus.

And, Father, we pray for Your church, that this would provide Your Bride with opportunity to show her love and faith. Bless our little branch as well, Lord Jesus. Abide with each and every one of us as we are apart. Comfort those who may be fearful, strengthen those of us who are weak, free the hearts of any of us who are held captive by depression or grief. Show us Your glory, Lord!

And, Father, I pray for myself. That You would teach me in this moment of crises to depend more completely upon You. That You would fill my heart in the power of the Holy Spirit, that I might be reminded once again of my own limitations, and Your boundless sovereignty. I turn to You, Lord Jesus, to love and worship You. And I seek Your face as I live out my life in the promise of the hope that I have You.

All to the praise and glory of Your most excellent name I pray. Amen.

