

March 2018

Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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*“Do the best you know,
until you know better”*

~ G. Knotts



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On February 13, Brother George Knotts went home to his reward. George was an unashamed Seventy serving the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints faithfully as a missionary with quick wit, humor, "one-liner" wisdom and a host of artistic talent. George was quick to remind all to, "Repent early and avoid the rush." He will be missed by so many people, including Graceland and KU, where George spent much of his time sharing the gospel and supporting the youth in sports. A memorial service will be held March 17 at 10:00 AM at the

Lamoni CoC church. Our prayers go out to Beth and their family.

Sunday, Feb 19 the congregation gathered at Ron & Di Smith's for an all inclusive (post) Valentines Day celebration. Approximately 30 gathered for food and fellowship that evening. Teams of two were blindfolded and commissioned to reconstruct famous architectural wonders of the world with just toothpicks and mini-marshmallows. What a marvel they were...er, NOT. The evening was capped with a hilarious version of mad Libs. Oh, what lovely poems were shared.



SAINTS MINISTERING ELSEWHERE

Brother Bob Rowland spoke in the Keosauqua, Iowa branch February 11th. Brother Ron Smith spoke at the St. Joseph, Missouri branch February 25th and gave two Patriarchal blessings in Iowa.

Brother Rob Rolfe is scheduled to preach in Keosauqua March 18.

Guest Minister Bob Moore from Independence will share at MARB March 25.



GOD KNOWS WHAT'S HAPPENING

Patriarch Ronald K. Smith
Lamoni, Iowa
January 21, 2018

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. - Isaiah 53:3-6

The message today is “God knows what is happening!” I want to tell you that God knows what is happening in your personal life, and he knows what is happening to the church. That is the message for today.

This has been quite a weekend. In our family, there were three funerals yesterday. As I was talking with one of the Jackel family and mentioned her mom, her funeral is next week, so they have another one down in San Antonio. At times like this, when there is separation and loss, sometimes we ask, “Does God really know what is happening?” You know, He is out there; he made the world, there are a hundred billion galaxies, each with a hundred billion stars. Does He really know what is happening? My affirmation—not that it means much—is that yes, He does. He knows what is happening, and He is aware.

Not too long ago, my wife and I were searching for something

to watch on television, and we came across “The case for Christ.” If you haven’t seen it, you might want to consider that. It is based on the true story of Lee Strobel. He was an investigative journalist back in the 1970’s. He had a perfect life going, he got some awards for his writing, but then his wife became a Christian. It nearly killed their marriage. He was an atheist—he did not believe in God at all, and they had to decide what to tell their young child. Lee decided that he would use his investigative skills to make a case against her faith. He started by trying to disprove the resurrection of Jesus in particular. After a long time of searching, he finally became a believer. It is quite a story. His focus was the resurrection. He asked if it was really credible. Of course, we have not seen a lot of resurrections, so how do we know that is true? One of the things that was astounding to him was when he began to look into the manuscripts. He found for example, that the evidence for the Odyssey was just a few scraps of papyrus. In contrast, there are hundreds and hundreds of manuscripts of ancient date attesting to the resurrection.

Another point that was convincing to him was that the women were the first witnesses to see Jesus. Of course, women’s testimony did not have any weight whatsoever at the time, so if you were making up the story, why would you have their testimony first? A third point was that essentially all of the closest eyewitnesses to Jesus died for their testimony. There were other points as well, but those were the ones that stood out to me.

We believe that there is a resurrection. We believe that the time will come when Jesus will return, and as far fetched as that may sound to some people, it is surely believed and testified and understood among us to be true. And this is one of those precious things about the scriptures that helps bring healing to the wounded souls among us. I know that in my family, my brother Doug’s mother-in-law’s passing was celebrated, because she was released from her difficulties. She had had a long struggle with dementia. And this is not just something that we are saying to make us feel better, as some would suppose. But this is something that we really believe. My prayer is that for those who are feeling that loss, that once again today, we would have the assurance of the Holy Spirit, that God really does know what’s happening, and He really cares.

Jesus said that God knew about every sparrow that fell. He knew about the number of hairs on our heads. (Some of us don’t have so many hairs, but He knows about the ones that we have. They say that God made a lot of different heads, and the ones that weren’t perfect He had to cover. I don’t know where that came from, but I think it came from Rob Rolfe.) But I think it is more than just that God is up there somewhere looking down and seeing those things. The scriptures tell us that he is the “light which is in all things” (DC 85:3b), and

...he comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things: and all things are by him, and of him; even God, for ever and ever. (DC 85:10c)

Not too many years ago, there was a big to-do in the scientific world over the Higg’s boson—the God particle as some people called it. As I understand it, the Higgs boson is a statistical anomaly that some physicists including Higgs predicted should exist in order for mass to exist. They went to their big colliders, and smashed particles together, and looked at the numbers, and said, “Oh, there is a little peak here where there should be one, and so we have discovered the Higg’s boson.” Clearly, I don’t know a lot about the Higg’s boson, but to my best understanding, light and energy and matter are essentially the same thing. You can convert one to the other—well I can’t, but God can. And there is something that is making that light and energy into matter. That has to do with



God. The scriptures call it the word of God. Scientists call it the Higg's boson. Whatever it is, it is there, and it is keeping every particle of the universe together, and it is the connection that God has with everything that is. He knows us, not just because He is looking, but because He is a part of us. He is there. And he has promised that He will do what it takes to bring about the immortality and eternal life of man. He has promised that in his house are many mansions, and he has prepared a place for us.

So yes, I believe that God knows what is happening, and he is concerned with each and every one. He knows the hairs of our heads, He knows our "uprising" and our "downsitting" (Psalm 139:2). I have always liked that phrase, because, of course, "uprising" has the connotation of rebellion. He knows all about us. And He still—in spite of that—loves us. And even though we were sinners, He still died for us. He took on our iniquities, so that we can stand whole before our Heavenly Father and have eternal life. That is what we believe.

The second part of what I have to say has to do with the church. Many of you have broken hearts over the split-up of the church that has taken place and the many different pieces that are



out there, and the disunity that seems to prevail. But I would like to share with you some evidence that God really does know what is going on there too. Evidence that He really cares, and that He has always cared, and that He is still in charge.

As you know, we believe that God still speaks to men today. The scriptures say that in the last days, "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;" (Joel 2:28) It is easy to look at the prophecies of the old prophets—the ones that are in the Bible—and say, "Yeah, that was good prophecy," especially when we don't understand them. But somehow, it is kind of the nature of prophecy that you never really understand it until after it has happened. I don't know why that is, but when Daniel was writing part of his prophecy, he said, "Lord what is this about?" And the Lord said, "You don't need to know what is about, but in the last days, they will understand it if they have my spirit." (Daniel 12:8-10 loosely paraphrased.) I keep hoping that I will have his spirit and know what it is about. There is also the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, in which is written all the things that will happen till the end of time. Well, why would the Lord have it written down and not allow us to see it until after it happens? I think if we really knew what was going to happen, we would be tempted to say, "Oh,

that is going to happen, so I don't have to have anything to do with it. I don't have to make any choices, that is going to happen." Or we would fight against it and say, "I don't want that to happen." Jesus told his disciples he was going to die and be resurrected, but they didn't really understand what he was saying until after it happened. And then Jesus came to them and said, "Look, now let me explain to you all the things that were in the scriptures. Everything that was written about me in the prophets and in the Psalms had to come to pass." (See Luke 23:43-45) Now we take all of these scriptures and easily see that they were prophecies about Jesus, but they did not understand that until afterwards. But the reason it was there was because he wanted them to know that God knew what was happening ahead of time, and he wanted them to have faith that God knew what was going to happen, and He does.

There is an interesting prophecy or dream had by Joseph Burton. I have tried to illustrate it so that we can keep track of what is going on. (The following was accompanied by a keynote presentation.) This is a picture of Joseph and Emma Burton. They were real people. They were baptized December 7, 1873, so this is quite a long time ago. Emma wrote about this dream, but she took her rendition of it from Joseph's diary. I don't know whether his diary is available, but you can find the dream in the book, *Infallible Proofs*, or you can look it up on the web. When they were baptized, they had not considered whether there were modern day prophets before coming into the church. They listened to the gospel, and they believed that they needed to be baptized in order to be saved, and so they were baptized. But it had not occurred to them to ask whether or not there were modern day prophets. Not long after they got into the church, they decided that they needed to figure this out, and have something from the Lord. So Joseph prayed for three weeks. I am going to actually read the account, because I want you to hear it in his own words as much as possible.

After this I sought earnestly for a testimony, but received none until near three weeks had passed. I attended a temperance meeting in the evening, and coming home late, found all the family in bed, asleep. I thought as all was quiet I would once more supplicate our Father for a testimony in reference to the latter-day work, that in its strangeness we had obeyed, because we loved it, but now we wanted the promised evidence of its divinity. I bowed in prayer, but all I could utter was 'Lord, have mercy upon me, and show me the truth', or words to that effect.

I went to bed and was soon asleep.

I dreamed my brother John and I were on the road to Hollister and as night drew on we had stopped for the night at an adobe house, were in bed in a room that had two doors, one by the head and one by the foot of the bed; while lying there the room got very dark, and the darkness increased until it caused an intense feeling of horror, so that I thought I must surely die.

Just then a man who was standing at the head of the bed, but unobserved by us, said: 'This always precedes a vision'. Then the darkness slowly passed away, and the room became lighter and lighter until it was filled with a beautiful, mellow light—very clear.


Then a woman came into the room through the door at the head of the bed, carrying in her hand a lighted candle in a candlestick. She passed through the room, then came back and went through the door by which she entered. I spoke to my brother, being very indignant that a woman should come into our room, but looking up towards the ceiling, I saw a hand holding a spearhead, with a few inches of the shaft attached. They appeared very beautiful, with a halo of brightness surrounding them, greater than the light of the room, which I thought was as light as could be. While looking with much pleasure at this, the same woman entered



the room again, with the same lighted candle and candlestick. Again I felt indignant, but as she passed by the bed I sat up, and after she had gone through the room I found myself holding my hands together, and upon opening them--as one would open a book--found I was holding the spearhead. It dropped into seven pieces lengthwise, the first off one side, the second piece was the full length from the tip of the spear to the end of the staff; the other side fell into five pieces. As I sat examining these, the man who spoke before said: 'These are the seven prophets of the latter days; two have been (i.e., one was and one is)'. I then thought this: 'Joseph was, and Joseph is. It is forty years since Joseph [Smith III] came; if the other five each have forty years it will be two hundred years yet till Christ comes, and that is too far off.' The man answered my thoughts by saying, 'Why do you murmur and wonder in your thought? Behold, the other five come quickly.'

I awoke; the day was just dawning. I was happy and satisfied that God had sent to the world a great light. That Joseph was His servant, and Joseph is our prophet. May God ever keep us in the light till the bright millennial dawn; that we may ever be with our Lord.

Burton's interpretation

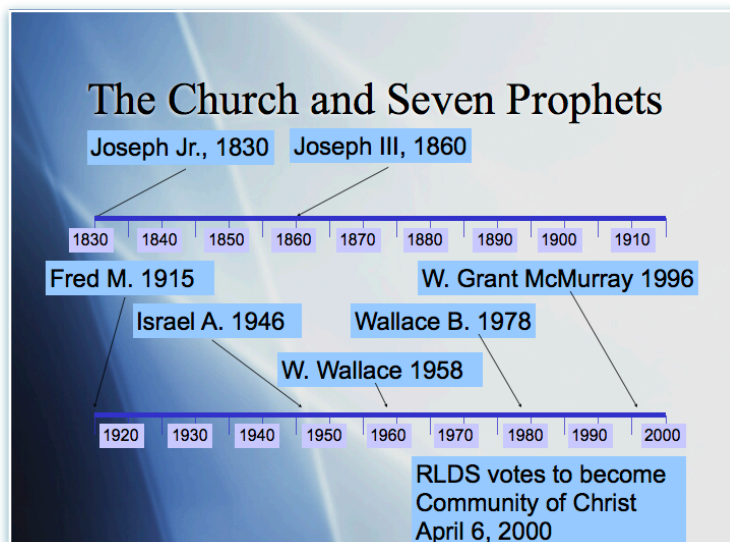


- Candle
Light of Christ
- Woman
Church of Christ
- First Exit
Apostasy after Christ
- Reentry
Restoration in 1830
- Second Reentry
Reorganization in 1860

The writer (Sister Burton) does not find the interpretation of the dream in his diary, but remembers well that when telling this dream or vision, he would give the interpretation that came to him at the time, like this: The room represented the world; he and his brother the religious and irreligious inhabitants. The world was in darkness when Christ came and lighted it by his presence. The woman with the lighted candle in her hand was the church in those days, and it was the religious instead of the irreligious man that had indignation because of her. Her going out was the first apostasy after Christ's time. Her coming back with the same light was the restoration of the organization of the church in 1830. The second going out and speedy return was the latter-day apostasy after the death of Joseph the Martyr, and the reorganization under the second Joseph, in the which was shown him the seven prophets of the last days.

When the woman came into the room the second time, Joseph interpreted that as the Reorganization of the Church in 1860. Now this version of the dream does not say that she left the room a second time, but I believe that she did. The messenger told Joseph that the seven pieces of the spear represented the seven prophets of the restoration. He said that one was, and one now is. In 1873, the prophet was Joseph Smith III. This was the person whom Joseph Burton was asking the Lord about. The prophet who "was" at that time, was Joseph Smith Jr. The Restored church, voted to accept Joseph Smith Jr. as its prophet on April 6, 1830. Joseph Smith III

became the prophet on April 6, 1860. Fred M. Smith came in 1915, Israel A. Smith in 1946, W. Wallace Smith in 1958, Wallace B. Smith in 1978, and W. Grant McMurray in 1996. It is interesting to put these on a timeline and notice the following: the time from Joseph Smith Jr (April 6, 1830) until Joseph III's successor (April 6, 1915) was exactly 85 years. The time from Fred M. Smith (April



6 1915) to the end of W. Grant McMurray's tenure (April 6, 2000), when the RLDS Church voted to become the Community of Christ, was also exactly 85 years. You can't appreciate that until after the fact, but in the dream, the spearhead was broken exactly in half, with two pieces in the first half and five in the last half. I believe this is confirmation that the light of the restoration in the RLDS church proceeded precisely as God knew that it would.

Now it is just a little thing, but Joseph Burton believed that the Lord was going to come after the time of the seven prophets. I believe we are living in that time right now. Did the Lord know what was going to happen? I believe that he did. If you read in Jacob, the third chapter, you will find a story about the olive tree and its branches being cut off and grafted in other places. This was written about the house of Israel, and Nephi says that he likens all the scriptures written to the house of Israel to his people, so I believe it is legitimate to liken the scriptures to us as well. What the Lord is saying is that he is looking for a certain kind of fruit. When he doesn't find that fruit, he takes the branches, and he separates them and puts them someplace else, because he wants to preserve the fruit. The fruit that the Lord is looking for doesn't depend so much on what grand organization that you belong to, but rather it depends on your response to the Lord. He has separated the groups to preserve the kind of fruit that he wants to preserve, and he is going to put it back together.

I know it is easier to acknowledge the old prophets and agree that they were right, but we have prophets in these days who have spoken for the Lord. And I would just like to remind you of some things the Lord has said in recent days that I hope will be of worth.

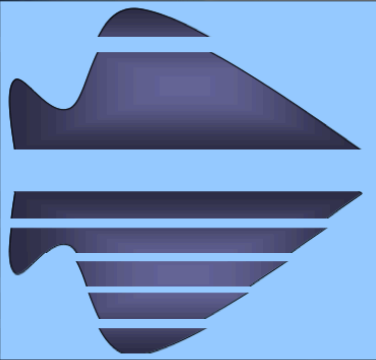
Speaking for the Lord in April of 2016, Fred Greene gave these words: (See conferenceofbranches.org resources for the full text.)

Be not disheartened by your small numbers nor lose faith in the work because of the many divisions among my Saints at this time. Soon, if you are faithful to my words I shall perform a marvelous work among the children of men that shall turn their hearts away from division to a desire to be united as one body in faith and the joy of my Spirit shall be upon them and they shall see my promises being fulfilled before their eyes. Therefore, remain faithful and strengthen your love for one another and of Me, for such are My people. Amen (Fred Greene)



This last summer Di and I went to the Maine reunion. Brother Aaron Pressler stood and spoke for the Lord in a very powerful sermon. He shared this, and because many of you have not heard it, I will read the whole thing.

Two halves of the Spear



<p>April 6, 1830 April 6, 1915</p>	<p>85 Years</p>
<p>April 6, 1915 April 6, 2000</p>	<p>85 Years</p>

Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

My people stand on the eve of the decisive battle for the very existence of my church.

If you choose to stand with one foot in my Gospel yet one foot remaining in the world, even Babylon, you will hold to your most precious doctrines, beliefs and priorities defending them with your arm of flesh while trampling on my law of love ... the greatest of my commandments ... hurting many of my precious Saints causing some to be lost to my church.

Contend not one with another over differences of doctrine or position lest you offend or take offense further dividing my Saints until none remain. You suppose that I have not the power to soften the hearts of those you contend with nor the power to soften your own heart that all may see and accept my truth. You have taken it upon yourselves to defend my Gospel, but have done so in the arm of flesh. Deny yourselves of ungodliness and fall upon your knees, yea even onto your faces, in repentance before me that ye may be broken and humble before me. In your humility you will finally trust in my power alone.

Must you wait until your trials and grief are so painful that your life hangs in the balance and my church faces extinction before your cries of repentance are lifted to my ears?

How long will you seek to use the power of my Armor only for your personal trials, tribulations and inconveniences for the purpose of easing the burdens of your personal life rather than using my power for the salvation of my people and my coming kingdom?

You have supposed my Zion will come even in your comfort, while living in Babylon, without the trials and tribulations and sacrifices necessary to be humbled sufficiently to trust in my power alone.

Just as a test of water separated the 300 of Gideon's warriors from the 9700, so is my church nearing the end of the sifting time when those who would depend more upon their own strength than in my power will separate from my church. Even those who supposed that I would share my power with their arm of flesh will separate because of their pride and self-righteousness.

As the 300 of Gideon's warriors were those who trusted completely in my strength alone, so all that will remain in my church in that day of the deliverance of my church from Babylon

and the establishing of my Zion will be those who trust completely in my strength alone.

These will be those who are humble. Just as the clay vessels carried by the 300 were broken to reveal light that I may deliver the enemies of Israel into their hands, so are those who remain in my church, broken clay vessels who reveal my armor of light having put on the Lord Jesus Christ who rules their lives, that I may deliver the church from the enemies that would destroy her.

Hearken to my voice of warning. The time is far shorter than you know when the sifting will end and the day of deliverance will be at hand. Then will I move in urgency and power to bring about the salvation of my church.

My heart is broken for those who will not leave the comfort and ease of Babylon and for those who use my power only to overcome personal tribulations.

Use my power to bring others into my fold. Pray for the salvation of ALL in my church and prepare yourselves by taking on my armor of light, in deep humility, that you may participate in the deliverance of my church. For Zion will be established.

God knows what is happening. He is there. He is willing, if we will humble ourselves, and pray for all the church that the unity and deliverance will come to pass. He is doing a powerful, wonderful work, and He has not forgotten you, and He has not forgotten the church. May God bless you.



TAKE A HIKE!!

Elder Tony Crandell

Lamoni, Iowa

January 28, 2018

Elder Ed Anderson presided over the service and used 3rd Nephi 5:66-67 as a Call to Worship. *And behold I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled; therefore come unto me and be ye saved.*

Elder Tony Crandell used Revelation 3:20 as his scripture reading. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

The last time I spoke back in November I spoke on the theme "All In!" and my sub-topic was "Pack Your Coffin." I talked about the commitment the "One Way Missionaries" made and the difference that D.L. Moody made when he took the challenge to go "all in!"

I remarked to you at that time the holy spirit had manifested to me that I personally have never been "all in." I told you that, as I looked back over my life, I saw that I was a 51 percenter. I had learned to just get by; how I was not "all in"; how I was not "going all out" for Jesus.

I ended my talk with saying "Since I don't know for sure where the Lord will send me or what he will have me to do, these



are the things I am going to pack in my coffin: my time, my talents, and my treasure. Remember Mr. Milne's monument read "When he came there was no light, when he left there was no darkness."

While I don't expect anyone to erect a monument for me like they did for Mr. Milne, I would at least like to have them say "When Tony left this world we were able to use some of the things he had packed in his coffin to erase even more darkness."

So today I am going to continue that theme with "Hold Back or Go All In?" and my sub-topic will be "Take a hike!" Have you ever had anyone tell you to take a hike?

I want to talk this morning about the difference between believing in and experiencing God. A lot of people believe in God. Isn't that why you are here this morning? You all believe in God or why else would you be here? A lot of people have an intellectual understanding of God and a place in their heart for Him, but it's another thing to experience Him. Believing in Him is important. That is where it starts. But just because you believe in something doesn't mean you will ever experience it.

Just because you believe in a place called Paris, France, doesn't necessarily mean you will ever experience it. Just because you believe in God doesn't necessarily mean you will experience Him. A lot of people believe in Him, but because they have not reached out to Jesus in a personal one-on-one relationship inviting Him into their very being, inviting Him to take control of their soul, acknowledging the sacrifice He made for them, they have never yet experienced the transforming power of God through inviting Him in their lives.

God's plan to rescue all of us that wish to be rescued (saved) has not changed. To say the same thing in the traditional sense, God's plan to save as many as will be saved in this world has not changed. God's plan of saving you, me, and us has not changed. John 3:17 says *For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.*

Now here is the good news! God's plan to redeem us, to save us has not changed. Jesus came that we could have the Holy Spirit living on the inside of us so we could experience Him. Not only do we know who He is, but we know can experience Him. By experiencing Him we can do more than just know about Him or hear other people tell you about Him. So here's the thing - you can sit on the outside and make your own conclusions about God, or let other people tell you what they think about God, or you can experience Jesus on the inside of your heart. I don't know about you, but I don't want to be on the outside, looking in. I don't want to have to listen to other people tell me about their experiences with God. I want my Own! Jesus came so that I could have my own personal experience with God...I want it! If you want your own personal experience you will have to open up your heart; you will have to invite Him in; you have to do more than believe. You have to receive Him; you have to ask Jesus to take charge of your daily life. Jesus didn't die so our relationship with Him could be intellectual; He didn't die so we could gaze at Him, or wonder about Him; He died so He could have a personal and intimate, and eternal relationship with us.

How many of you have visited the Grand Canyon? Sandra's father and her uncle were railroaders. Both her cousin and I wanted to sleep in a sleeper on the train, and we did. We took the train to California about four years ago. I think we slept on the train two nights. We stopped at the Grand Canyon. If you haven't been to the Grand Canyon yet, it is an overwhelming experience, especially on a clear sunny day, which it was when we were there. They now have created on one side of the canyon wall, a glass skywalk where you can literally walk out on glass over the Canyon itself and take in all of its beauty. But I have also learned that you cannot just see

the Canyon, but you can march down the wall of the canyon one mile, walk 21 miles across the floor and back up one mile on the other side. So you have a choice; you can either stand on the rim of the canyon and *observe* all of its beauty or you can *experience* it. I heard of a person who did it in two days. It was 110 degrees and he lost 13 lbs. in the two days it took to make the trek into the canyon. He took his son and marched down the side of the canyon one mile, he went to the middle of the Canyon 21 miles wide and slept overnight, and got up the next morning and marched up the other side of the Canyon.

Imagine this, when he got up there here are these folks standing there admiring the beauty and all of a sudden some guy crawls up over the edge of it. This guy has marched a mile down into the Canyon, 21 miles across it, and then a mile up the other side, and when he got there he saw a bunch of people standing there on the rim of the Canyon taking pictures. He was bruised, he was sweaty, he was filthy, and yet for a moment he felt sorry for them because they were only seeing it; they were *seeing it*, but they were *missing it*. He knew what they were missing. He stood next to



them - dirty, sweaty, worn out, bruised, cut up - and looked back on where he had come from. He took in the view just like everyone standing on the rim was doing, but a smile came on his face because he knew what they would never know - the Canyon like he did.

I wonder how many people believe in God, but have never experienced His merciful forgiveness and His healing power in their lives. Even though they can observe Him and even though they go to church and have other people tell them about Him, they may never have personally experienced God in their own heart. So here is my point - there is a big difference in knowing about God and knowing God. There is a big difference about knowing God and experiencing him.

In order to know Him you are going to have to take a hike! You are going to have to let go of that railing and leave the rim of that canyon and "take a hike." You can stand on the rim if you want;



you can gaze from a distance; or “you can take a hike.” You might get dirty, you might get bruised, you probably will get exhausted, you may not even make it to the other side. But here’s the thing, if you take a hike with God, you will experience God in a way that no one else can. If you will just let Jesus into your heart you will experience Him....

Here is an interesting thought - most people want to spend eternity with God but they have no time to spend with Him on earth today. So this year for me is going to be all about going to the rim and taking that first step of faith on that hike towards what He wants me to do. I don’t know what He is going to ask me to do, but I know He is going to ask me to do something.

I know as a congregation He is going to ask us to let go of the railing and take that first step of faith towards whatever He is going to ask us to do. I know it’s going to be a year when I have to quit doing what *I* want to do and how *I* want to do it and follow after Him with complete submission.

I wonder, in as much as I believe in the church, and particularly this branch, if the church has done to us what zoos have done to animals. Sandra is out there thinking “What do you know about zoo’s, you clown?” She knows I hate zoos. But there is a lesson here. You know, I believe zoos take away all of the danger for the animals. Zoos cause the animals to lose their teeth. They put up bars, and Plexiglas, and they eliminate all the danger for the animal. Sometimes I wonder if today’s church has done the same thing to us.

In the zoo today, the animals no longer have to fend for themselves. The zookeeper comes along and throws the animal a chunk of meat, gives them vitamins, gives them shots, takes care of them, and then the animal just walks back and lays down, content. And it’s all over till the zookeeper comes around again. I wonder if this is what the church of today has relegated us to. I wonder if the church has taken our teeth away. I wonder if the zoo keepers, people like our Pastor, people like me, come by and throw you a slab of “meat” every once and a while. It satisfies your spiritual appetite and you go home, then come back here the next Sunday and someone else comes and throws you another piece of “meat.” And you go back home content. I wonder if churches have done to us what zoos have done to the animals? Zoos have tamed *US!* Made us safe! Relegated us to the rim. They are causing us to lose our teeth, and are removing all of what we were created to be. I wonder if churches have created skywalks instead of paths on the journey we are supposed to be taking for God. I wonder if the church has robbed us of God’s ultimate plan for our lives.

So I ask you this morning are you a “rim hugger” or are you a “hiker?” We are going to soon find out because I believe God is beginning to reveal some paths which He wants this congregation, and the individuals who make up this congregation, to go on. I firmly believe, as our Pastor Joel does, that this congregation has a mission coming that we need to start preparing for.

I found this interesting fact - in the Hebrew language there is no distinction between knowing and doing. In the Hebrew language there is no distinction between knowing and doing. In other words, knowing *is* doing and doing *is* knowing. If you aren’t doing it then you don’t know it. If you don’t know it then you aren’t doing it. There is no distinction between knowing and doing because if you know, you do, and if you do, you know.

So if you aren’t doing, you don’t know and that makes you a rim hugger. We are not going to change anyone’s life, let alone our own lives, by being a rim hugger. Let’s go all in by going all out! “We can’t go all in if we don’t go all out!” Each of us has our own excuse why we aren’t going “all in.” You know on that final day

the Lord is not going to say, “Well done, Rim Hugger!” We can’t be the hands and feet of Jesus if we are still holding on the rail or sitting on the fence. Church is not intended to be a spectator sport.

Revelation 3:20 is one of my favorite scriptures because I think Jesus is talking to folks like you and me as members of His church. It’s not a scripture where Jesus is talking to folks outside of the faith. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Another version says in part *I will come in and we will share a meal together as friends.* In the old Boone church behind the pulpit, there was this picture of Christ standing at the door. Whenever I hear this scripture that picture will always come to my mind.

Here is something you need to know about Jesus...He won’t come knocking every single day. He is going to let you live your life. He is going to let you chase your dreams. He is going to let you live your life in accordance with your agency. He’s going to just let you live your life as you choose. He is not going to consume your life, He’s not going to come knocking at your door every day, to sit down at your table and share a meal with you. In other words, He won’t come every day to tell you what He wants you to do... But, I promise you, some day He will come to your house. I promise you that sometime He will come to your door, and there will be an opportunity to answer the door or go hide. I know this because you were created by God, and because you were created by God you were created with a unique purpose. In other words, there is a reason for your existence. Before the creation of the world, God said to Himself, I am going to need help! So He created Sherm, God said I am going to need help! So He created Rob. God said, I am going to need help! So He created Sue. Every single one of us has a reason to be here.

I know that sometime Jesus will come and knock on your door and will ask that you become a “hiker.” Most people think that when Jesus comes to the door, if they ignore Him, He will understand. People think that if they just ignore the knock, He will go away, and that somehow He will understand that we are too busy now. Maybe later....

Sandra and I get these daily inspirational sayings on the internet from various sources. One caught my attention the other day and it was from a movie by Matt Damon. As Sandra will tell you, I never go to a movie and I watch zero television. You would think I am Amish. So I was not familiar with the movie We Bought A Zoo. I am passing around a sheet on the movie and the next time I have “movie night” I will show it. When his friends found out he had bought a zoo, they thought he was crazy and they asked him, Why did you do that? A Zoo! What do you know about being a zookeeper? What do you know about animals? Why on earth did you buy a zoo?

His reply was this ‘Sometimes all you need is 20 seconds of insane courage.’ In order to do what God is going to ask this congregation to do; in order to do what God is going to ask YOU to do, I am going to tell you, when that call comes, it’s going to take 20 seconds of insane courage to answer the call! It’s going to take 20 seconds of insane courage for you to answer the door! Will you take the courage to open the door or will you hide?

So, now you know that when Jesus comes knocking on your door, He is going to want something. He’s never going to ask you to do something you can do on your own. He is going to ask you to do something that is bigger than you. It will be more than you can do on your own. It will be more than you can ever do on your own. Why? Because He doesn’t want you to eliminate Him from the equation.



Matthew 14:19-25 says, *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain, apart, to pray. And when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. I'll tell you what Jesus found...He found a boatload of "rim huggers." They were hanging on to the rim of the boat for dear life. Then Peter called out to Jesus *Jesus bid me to come*. Yes, come! Jesus said so Peter went over the side of the boat and he walked on the water towards Jesus. Now I want you to read verse 26, too. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* But I have to point out, Peter had let go of the rail; he went over the side of the boat and he walked on the water. Peter let go of the rail, and, yes, Peter saw the wind and the waves and took his eyes off Jesus and started to sink. Yes, Jesus had to take hold of him and put him back in the boat...*

Do think Peter said in his best King James language to the other disciples "Foresooth, Jesus sayeth cometh, and I wentith, and I sinkith?" No, I think Peter said "DID YOU SEE THAT!" I bet that as Jesus was helping him to get back in the boat Peter was flipping out and probably didn't even hear Jesus tell him he had little faith. All Peter could think of was that while all of his buddies where hanging on to the rim of the boat he "took a hike" and he experienced Jesus in a way the others had not! What enabled Peter to do that? Twenty seconds of insane courage.

Jesus will be coming soon to knock on your door. He is coming to embolden you to help Him in His work in these latter days. It won't be because you are a rim hugger, or a sky walker. He's coming to help you let go of the rail. He's coming to help you climb out of the boat and walk on some water somewhere. You know you have the promise that if you sink, if you fail, or if you come up short, He is going to save you. If you say yes to Him...He has promised He will rescue you.

Now, what about David and Goliath? So, David said one day, "I am going to take some food and water to my brothers." So David hikes out to the battlefield. But they weren't doing anything. Nothing was happening. Goliath had pinned the army of Israel down and was coming out every day and taunting and challenging them, and they were hiding like scaredy-cats in their trenches. So when David gets out there and sees what's going on, he has a choice. He can cower in the trenches with his brothers, or he can take a hike. So David gets out of the trench and looks back at his brothers and says "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of Israel?" I bet his brothers said "get back in here. Are you crazy? He'll eat you for lunch! He's going to kill you!!"

David walked out there and picked up five stones. You know why he picked up five stones? Because Goliath had four brothers. He let go and drilled ole Goliath right in the forehead and killed him. You know the rest of the story. How could David do this? Because he had 20 seconds of insane courage. And he turned to his brothers "the rim huggers" and said "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that has defied the armies of God?" This young David

saw the need and went "all in by going all out" and took advantage of 20 seconds of insane courage.

The Lord will soon be knocking at each our doors. Will we answer it or will we hide? He will not only be knocking at each of our doors, He will knock at the door of this building. Do you think that if we ignore His knock, He will go away but He will understand? Or, will we each seize the opportunity to take advantage of 20 seconds of insane courage and then "take a hike!"

As we know of the promises of this the latter days, Christ is already in the Canyon, He's already on the trail, He's not doing what we think He should be doing nor is He starting when we want Him to do it. He's not on the rim. He's not in the boat. He's not on the skywalk. He's on the water saying, "Come, trust me with 20 seconds of insane courage. Come!"



“ ‘God, I have a Problem. It is me.’ ”

‘I have the solution. It is Me’ ”

G. Knotts

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

Priest Tony Newland

Keosauqua, Iowa

February 4, 2018

Elder Michael Jordison: The Call to Worship this morning comes from Hymn 309 (Hymns of the Saints) partially and then I'm going to read from 1 Corinthians 2 just briefly. This is a hymn that most of us are very familiar with.

We limit not the truth of God
To our poor reach of mind
By notions of our day and sect,
Crude, partial, and confined.
No, let a new and better hope
Within our hearts be stirred-
The Lord hath yet more light and truth
To break forth from his word.



So Father, Son and Spirit,
 Send us increase from above;
 Enlarge, expand all Christian souls
 To comprehend thy love,
 And make us all go on to know,
 With nobler powers conferred,
 The Lord hath yet more light and truth
 To break forth from his word.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1st Corinthians 2:9-10)

Yesterday I had the privilege of attending the funeral service of Brother Brad Carr. Afterwards I shared with some friends who came over to our house. One of them was in my office looking at the things on the wall and happened to see my Taekwondo medals and certificates for my black belt achievements. We were talking about those. I knew that she has been struggling with some things of late and so I shared a little bit with her about Taekwondo and why I like to participate in it.

For me there are a lot of parallels in Taekwondo between the discipline in real life and in spiritual life and a walk with God. One of the things I shared with this young lady was the fact that as a student I enjoyed learning the martial arts and growing but what really has been exciting for me lately is having the opportunity to teach and to instruct others. We looked at the various belt progressions on the wall. You start with the white and go up. Every school might have a little bit different color or way that they progress but it's the same idea. As you learn things you test over them and then once you've shown that you have mastered them you move on to the next level.

I said, 'You know I view this a lot like God views us. Many times in our lives we feel like we're just a big disappointment to God because we make mistakes and we do things that God must be disappointed in. You see those belts on the wall? Those reflect different levels and different understandings and different places where I was at any given time.'

As an instructor I look at my students and I see these different colors of belts. I see my students at different skill levels, working and mastering, making mistakes and messing up. Maybe they're doing things wrong and I have an opportunity to help correct and to instruct them. I'm not disappointed in them. I don't expect a yellow belt to know the things that a brown belt would know. I'm not disappointed in them because they make mistakes or forget something here and there. What would disappoint me is if they just said, 'You know what? I can't learn this.' And they walk away from it never to come back and continue on in that progression.

I can't help but think that God is like that as well. He's our Master Instructor and we're all on different levels. We all do what we might term as disappointing things. We make mistakes but we're not disappointments to God. God's looking at us where we're at and He's always standing there with His hands ready to pick us

back up and to help us to master whatever it is we're struggling with at that particular moment to carry us through so that we can get to the next level and continue to grow. The only thing that would disappoint Him would be if we just said, 'You know what? I'm done with this' and walk away and never come back.

Today we have an opportunity in this Communion Supper to reflect on our lives and reflect on our disappointments, our mistakes that we've made and come to the Lord and say, 'You know what, Lord? I'm not going to give up. I'm not going to let something get the best of me here because I want to climb, I want to scale this mountain. I want to get to the next level. I want to see what it is that you have for me that is beyond where I'm at now, whatever the hardship or difficulty might be.' Today as we have the communion set before us, we have that opportunity to humble ourselves and to say, 'Lord, not my will be done. Let me be crucified as Christ was crucified. Let me be reborn today, be renewed in this experience.' If we can say that within our hearts and mean it, then the Lord says here, 'Partake of my flesh. Partake of my blood. Be called one of my children. Be a Saint.' It is a unique opportunity that we have to participate in that this morning. As we prepare the emblems and sing our preparation hymn, ask yourself, 'Am I willing to continue on in this battle and this fight, to not give up but to move forward? Lord, just take me as I am and make me into what I can be, what you created me to be.'

Priest Tony Newland then got up and shared, I'll be reading from Psalms 47:1-9. *Oh clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen; God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham; for the shields of the earth belong unto God; he is greatly exalted.*

Good morning. I'm glad that I was invited back again. I want to start off by sharing a testimony about my grandpa who passed away two years ago. This is one of the testimonies that he shared with me that has always stuck with me. I don't know why. Maybe it was because he shared this when I was going through the roughest part of my life. I was reminded of this testimony before I came because of the hip-hop music that I like to listen to. I'm very into that and I listen to a lot of Christian rappers. One of my favorites is Lecrae. One of his quotes is, 'Since I believe in God. If He is not real then I just wasted a lifetime but if you don't believe in God and He is real then you just wasted an eternity.'

My grandpa visited a man in the hospital who was on his deathbed. I think this was when my grandpa was first called to be an elder. My grandpa was talking to him and the man made a comment saying, 'I just don't believe in God.' My grandpa looked at him and he didn't know why he said this but he said, 'If I'm right that there is a God then you spend an eternity in hell but if I'm



wrong then you live the life of your dreams.' My grandpa's message behind this was if we spend our lives chasing after vanities and things that don't mean anything to us then I guess we do live a life of dreams that most people dream of. But then what's after that? That is the most important.

I'd like to start off with two testimonies. I started a new job as a CNA, a certified nursing assistant. What I do is I take care of the elderly in a nursing home. One of my favorite things to do is to sit there and listen to them tell their stories because they are very interesting. They are really fun and entertaining but the reason I mention this is God is kind of like a CNA to me. He kind of takes care of me when I don't think I need Him. There are a lot of times as a CNA that I get yelled at and screamed at and even hit. That's kind of how I see my attitude toward God a majority of the time. I am a young kid and I have a big head and I can do anything, not really. I learned the hard way how much I really do need God.

My testimony is that I was living at my grandma's old trailer and I didn't have a job. I was going to college and I couldn't afford to pay for gas. I couldn't afford to pay for food. I couldn't afford to do anything. Most days I had to miss school. I couldn't get there because I had no gas in my car. My school was about an hour and a half away so I couldn't walk to school nor ride my bike unless I started early in the day. Riding the bike on an empty stomach is kind of hard but I was too prideful to ask for help from my family or my church family.

I didn't want to move to Keosauqua with my family because I just finally got free and was able to be an adult. One of the things I didn't want to do was to apply for a job in Keosauqua because I knew that if I applied that I would end up living back with my grandma. I didn't want to do that. I applied for 15 or 16 different jobs around where I live, like an hour out from where I live. Not one place called me back. It was very disheartening because I was desperate. I needed money and I needed to be able to go to school because I really want to be successful in my life. I really want to do things that I think God has called me to do and I really wanted a job. That way I wouldn't have to go to move back in with my grandma and find a new college to go to. I was really reluctant to do this. All this time I didn't know that my family and my church family in Keosauqua were praying for me to get a job in Keosauqua.

I applied to a bunch of places that sounded good but I just didn't want to go to Keosauqua. Reluctantly my aunt convinced me just to apply and see if I got the job. So reluctantly I filled out the application but didn't send it in because I was still hesitant. Maybe two days after I filled out the application I got a call from this place that I hadn't submitted an application to. I got a call from Keosauqua Health Care saying, 'I see that you are interested in a job. Would you like to come in for an interview?' I'm in shock and I say, 'Yes.' I go in and right away when I got there I knew this was the place where I have to work. I shake her hand, smile the biggest smile I have and introduce myself. I say, 'Hello. My name is Anthony.' She said, 'Anthony, we'd really like to have you work for us.' That's how my interview went. Right away I was signing papers to work there and it was real exciting.

Now that I work there on the night shift I realize what it means to be a CNA. I realize how much Jesus and God are our CNA's



daily. They do things for us that we wouldn't want to do for ourselves. My job as a CNA is that I provide for the needs of the people that they don't want to do or can't do. The patience that God has with us is the patience that I see in nurses and CNA's every day. It is breathtaking and inspiring to know that there are people out there that still care for those who may not be family but they treat them like family. It is a blessing to work there.

I share this because I also want to share from Doctrine and Covenants 22:23. *And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying, The heavens, they are many and they can not be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine; and as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words; for this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man.* That's a promise to us that God is with us forever. God has never forsaken us nor will He ever forsake us. It is His plan of salvation to bring all men into His glory and to embrace, love and cherish each man. God is everything. He is an example in all things. God is the best at what He does because He's God.

One of the things in the health care center that I work at is that we have nursing meetings and before each meeting we pray. Which if you know anything about state regulations is not allowed because you are supposed to separate those things but we pray nonetheless and we pray often. The things that are on our hearts when we pray are not about the needs of the staff but of each individual inside the nursing home. We pray for their recovery, for less pain and for things of that nature. I didn't realize until my second week of working there how much of a blessing it really was to be able to sit



among His people, those who may have different beliefs and go to different churches but feel the humility and humbleness that I needed in my life; the lack of pride in these “successful people” and these RNs and LPNs and seeing the humbleness in them. It really humbles me and makes me realize the task that I’m assigned, how much of nothing I am, but how much of God’s grace is sufficient for me to be able to breath and live. Ever since I got the job every afternoon I wake up and think, ‘Thank you, Lord, for blessing me with another day, another opportunity to bring your grace and your life unto others.’ God has never in my life forsaken me even in my darkest moments.

I think I shared a little bit about my darkest moments before. I’m sorry if I repeat anything but I think sometimes hearing it a second time is also good. For those of you who don’t know, I was raised in a family with one mom and no dad. My dad abandoned us. The story behind that is my dad didn’t think I was his son and one day he tried to kill my mom when she was pregnant with me. If it hadn’t been for my older brother all of his kids might have been dead. My dad is a meth-head. He is in prison. He abandoned us and I grew up with my brothers and my sister. I was raised in the church somewhat but every day I was influenced by the world even more.

I grew up with hate in my heart. I despised my father. I despised my mom even though the sacrifice that she gave for me is much greater than anything I could ever do for her. But I hated the fact that my dad didn’t love me, didn’t accept me and I hated everyone around me. My aunt and my grandma thought I was the happiest kid but I thought I was the most miserable. Everyday I’d walk down the street where I lived angry saying, ‘Why do I live like this? Why is my life like this?’

When I was eight years old my best friend was burned alive in a house fire. His uncle burned down his house with him and his siblings inside of it. That’s when I stopped believing. It’s funny because I was baptized that summer and after my baptism I thought I would change. I thought I would be happy and then my friends died, one after another. In one year I lost three people and I blamed God. I despised Him and I stopped believing.

One of my favorite books as a child was the Book of Mormon. I read Nephi many times. It was the joy of my youth. Any time I was upset and mad, angry or happy I could go to Nephi and I could understand his pain. But after my friends died I just didn’t understand how God could allow kids to do things that were ungodly to die. So I got into hanging out with the wrong group of kids. I started hanging out with older children. I started running away from home. One night I remember being super mad at my mom. I packed all of my stuff and threw it outside and walked away. I came back a couple of hours later calmed down because I realized that I had nowhere to go. It was the darkest time of my life.

At the age of 12 I was probably the biggest bully where I lived. I beat up kids just because they were looking at me. I bullied those who were smaller than me. I’m small now but I was big back in junior high to those smaller than me. I picked on those who were weaker than me just because they were a little different or just because they had things that I didn’t have. I know I picked on one kid because he had a father and I didn’t and I was mad about that.

Every time I saw him I would just punch him. I remember going to detention multiple times for violence or getting kicked out of class for throwing chairs. I was a mad kid and I did things to express myself because that’s who I thought I was.

It’s not that my household lacked love. My mom loved me dearly. My brothers loved me dearly. They cherished me. My two oldest siblings took care of us like we were their own kids. My second oldest sacrificed his life, his back for us. He went into the military to support my mom. He left happy but came back mad. I do not know the things he had to witness but I know they weigh heavily on us heart and it’s hard to reach him because he is still angry. But his sacrifice makes me happy because it made me realize that life is not just about me. It’s about others.

My oldest brother gave up his house for my mom. My mom moved in on him and his fiancé at that time and instead of my oldest brother telling us to get out and to leave he shouldered that burden, raised us and taught us the ways to be a man and the ways to be like family. He taught us to sit down at dinner, to eat like a family. He taught us our morals and the things that we needed to grow up. At a young age I learned quickly the moral wrongs and rights. Because of my brothers and because of my aunts and grandma I was able to learn about God. That is my background.

Even in this time of hatred and darkness God never left me. I remember when I was five years old I was attacked by a black lab. It ripped open the back of my neck. My aorta just happened to roll an inch away. I was lying on the ground and couldn’t move, I could only cry for help because this dog was on me. I remember looking up and all I saw was the sun. There came an image in the sun and it said, ‘Do not worry my son for I have a work for you to do’ and that was all.

I remember the testimonies of my mother talking about being pregnant with me. Her kidney had fallen and I was swimming around in urine because she only had one kidney. The doctor told her that the best option was abortion because if she didn’t have one she would die and I would die with her. But because God’s hand was with her and God’s hand has always been in my life, we both lived. At the age of 12 I decided to commit suicide. I had a gun to my head and I pulled the trigger but it was empty.

All this time God had been with me and yet I denied His existence in my life until the age of 14 when my grandpa had an experience that I would be called to the office of deacon. When grandpa told me that he knew I had a calling, I laughed because I knew I wasn’t worthy and that God wouldn’t be able to use someone like me to bring a message of hope and love because all I knew was destruction and pain.

The summer when I was 13 I moved in with my aunt and I started changing things in my life. But still even at 14 and 15, it was hard for me to see God’s love. I decided to open up sometime that year to Dave Drummond my pastor at the time. I had never opened up about my friends dying and about the decisions that I had made that had contributed to some of their deaths. I never said anything and it ate at my heart and the guilt I felt. I blamed myself. I thought I had killed my friends because of my actions. I was afraid that if I told anyone they would judge me as well and that



they would blame me. I couldn't talk to my mom, my aunt or grandma because they thought I was a sweet little kid and innocent. It was hard for me.

I started talking to Dave about my issue and asked for administration. I can't remember the words that were said but they were powerful enough to shake my entire core of being. They were strong enough for me to know that God had forgiven me long before I had asked and that God would be there to receive me because He knew what He would have for me to do.

I would like to read Doctrine and Covenants 2:1a-3c. *The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God, cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught, for God doth not walk in crooked paths; neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; therefore his paths are straight and his course is one eternal round. Remember, remember, that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men; for although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet, if he boast in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him. Behold, you have been intrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember, also, the promises which were made to you, if you did not transgress them; and, behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men: for, behold, you should not have feared man more than God, although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words, yet you should have been faithful and he would have extended his arm, and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble.* Our God is amazing, our God is powerful.

When I came up here this morning this is not what I had planned to give you. I had told Isabel I don't know what I am going to say. I was worried. One of the things I was most fearful of is when I come to people that are smarter and wiser than me that I will have nothing to say in front of them because they know so much more than me and I have nothing to give. As I came into the back room before the service, Rob had told me not to worry that there are people with doctorate degrees. I knew what I was going to say. God does not only do things for me because He does not have respect for persons. I am nothing special in the eyes of God anyway because God loves us all equally. If He does this for me He'll do it for you. The power of God will not be frustrated nor will His work and His work and His glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of every single one of you in this room and every man on this planet that walks and breathes. All you have to do is seek and ask and He will open the door and let you in.



“A drop of ink will make ‘em think!”

G. Knotts

WHY ME, LORD?

Elder Gordon Winkler

Mount Ayr, Iowa

February 11, 2018

President, Joe Mickelson shared: Good morning. I do want to welcome you in the name of Jesus Christ this morning. Anna and I were here yesterday afternoon getting bulletins ready and Anna was playing on the piano a little bit. We don't have a piano in our home any more so she likes to come here and practice. I was standing there folding bulletins thinking to myself that it wasn't that long ago that I came here very begrudgingly. Mornings like this when the roads are slick and it's 10 degrees out there's a lot of other places that I would rather have been but as I sat there folding bulletins I realized that there is no other place that I'd rather be this morning than right here with you all. Each and every time that I come here I am blessed to be able to worship with you and fellowship with you and to be able to commune with our Lord. There are times that I come here fasting and feeling very prepared and there are times that I come here feeling very unprepared and even ashamed. There are times that I come joyful and there are times I come sorrowful and heartbroken but it doesn't matter what my condition is coming in every single time I leave this place on Sunday I feeling closer to the Lord than I did when I walked in the door. I know that there are services where everything seems to go according to plan and then there are services where we might have hiccups or take some detours here or there but it never fails whether it's through the ministry of the word or the ministry of the hymns we sing together or a prayer that somebody offers or even in conversation with our fellow Saints after the benediction has been prayed. At some point in each service I do feel that the hand of God has been upon us and especially touched us. My prayer this morning is that each of you might feel that same feeling this morning, that we might leave this place feeling as though we have communed with our Lord and feeling closer to Him than when we walked through the door.

As I contemplated what scriptures to use for a Call to Worship this Sunday, I wasn't making a whole lot of progress and finally I stumbled upon a few scriptures that I had highlighted in the past that centered around the concept of faith and the promises that we are to receive because of faith. So for the Call to Worship this morning I want to read to you from Ether. I am going to start in verse 3 of chapter 5. *For he (Ether) did cry from the morning, even until the going down of the sun, exhorting the people to believe in God unto repentance, lest they should be destroyed, saying unto*



them, that by faith all things are fulfilled; Wherefore, whoso believeth in God, might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God. And it came to pass that Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not. (Ether 5:3-5) Wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith, for it was by faith that Christ shewed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; And he shewed not himself unto them, until after they had faith in him. . . (Ether 5:7-8)

I think a lot of times we expect our faith to come before the trials. I remember listening to a sermon given by Ron Smith that I stumbled upon online where he talked about the fact that having faith to move mountains means that you start walking toward the mountain expecting it to move rather than seeing it move as I'm walking forward.

Gordon Winkler began: There are really two scriptures I would like to share and they are both just one verse each. You'll have to listen closely to get these. The first one comes from Psalms 37:23. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way.* The second one comes from Proverbs 20:24. *Men's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?*

You know preaching is one of those things that is not real easy for me to do. I can come up with a lot of excuses and reasons why I shouldn't stand here and preach and talk to you. But then I have to remember the fact that I accepted the responsibility for doing this when I said yes to the Lord when He called me to this priesthood. I stand here because the Lord stands here. I am grateful for the opportunity to share with you this morning.

I hesitate to begin this morning with the topic I have chosen and the reason is that as I looked around the congregation and reflected on each of your lives I am embarrassed by my self-centered thoughts but maybe our shared experiences will bring ministry to all of us that are here this morning. My theme is "Why Me, Lord?" By asking this question the inference is that God is missing. He is not present to make things right. Recently I shared my feelings of "Why Me, Lord?" with Sherman and then a little bit at a prayer meeting. Several of you have expressed having similar feelings in the past. The basis for my feelings is my family's experiences through the year 2017.

The year began with my father's death on February 4, 2017. I spent some real quality time with my dad the week before he died. We had good conversations and he shared his favorite scriptures and his accomplishments. He talked to me about my family history in the church on his side, and it was a good experience. Then my mother and I flew to Michigan for Dad's burial and services. Linda and our daughters, Melissa and Heidi, and the four grandkids drove up. While we were in Michigan the kids began to get sick. On the way back the two youngest had to be taken to the emergency room in the Davenport area. The next day they continued on their trip and by the time they got to Des Moines, Karaline was really struggling

with respiratory and breathing issues. By the time they got to Mount Ayr she had to be taken to the emergency room where she was intubated and then flown to Children's Mercy in Kansas City where she was admitted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. She was placed on a ventilator for a while and ended up staying in the hospital for about six weeks. That was quite a traumatic experience for our family. She had suffered from RSV which is a respiratory virus and pneumonia. As a result of her being a premature baby, she was susceptible to the effects of those respiratory illnesses.

That got us through the spring time. Then early in the summer Melissa called us to let us know that she had a recent suspicion at that point of breast cancer. Through the summer she went through some testing and other evaluations and it was determined that she did, in fact, have breast cancer. She went through a double mastectomy. Then this fall and early winter went through some extensive chemo therapy interventions that were hard on her. She is continuing now with radiation therapy.



During that same time in the fall Linda had a well-woman examination and part of that was a mammogram which she had done. They were suspicious of a finding on the mammogram. They did some additional testing and evaluation and determined that indeed she was facing a second breast cancer.

That was not a very wonderful 2017 when you consider those experiences in our family. So I began to ask, "Why me, Lord?" Although selfishly when you look at those experiences that I just talked about, none of them involved me personally but just involved my family members.

Like I said I am somewhat embarrassed to talk about this because of my self-centeredness but when I look around our congregation I look here in the front row with Steve and I can't



help but think about what he's been through: the loss of a son, the loss of eyesight, the stress of finding a job and employment and the deteriorating health of Elaina but still he sits here in the front row every Sunday. Steve, I don't know if I ever told you what a testimony that is to me. I look around the congregation further and I find that there are those of you who have lost spouses, lost a grandson, lost employment, that hurt and ache from your children's own bad past choices.

This morning I want to look at the question of why me, Lord. Why does God allow so much grief? Why do bad things happen? Why is there so much hurt and pain in the world and in our lives? A couple of weeks ago Melissa called us and told us of a family friend of their's that had lost their two-year old daughter in a tragic accident. The couple had four children and youngest were two-year old twins. Somehow one of the twins had gotten through a gate that surrounded the family's pool and fallen in and drowned. As we prayed for this family I said, 'Lord, we don't understand these things and I remembered the words of Paul reported in Romans 8:28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.* . . I thought how can that be? A loss of a two-year old is one of the most tragic things that could happen to a family. How could something so tragic, something so sad, something so painful possibly work for good? How could any good come out of this situation?

Having said that I thought it would be good for us to look at God's promises. Why does God allow things to happen? Why do innocent children die? Why do thousands of people starve to death? Why is there so much disease? Why do people have to suffer? Why is there so much pain, Lord? Well, I have an answer for you. This is really well thought out and deep so listen closely. I don't want you to miss this answer. Here's the answer. I DON'T KNOW. I don't know why God allows all of these things to happen or why they have. We don't know why God allows bad things to happen. We don't have that answer. Only God has that answer but we do have God's promise. All things work for the good for those that love the Lord. Our choice is do we love the Lord and do we believe in His promise. If we do we can't dwell on bad things, the pain, the suffering, the loss and disease. Why should we? We can't explain it. We don't have an answer for it so why should we walk around dwelling on the bad things with our heads down saying, 'Why me, Lord?'

God's word says that all things work for the good of those that love the Lord. Some of you have learned to live your lives based on this promise and I thank you for your example but I must point out that that's just part of what Paul says in Romans. If we were to believe that verse and accept our sufferings based on that verse, we would also have to accept the rest of that verse because the first part can't work without the second part. Listen to the whole verse from Romans 8:28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,* (and here's the rest) *to them who are the called according to his purpose.* That's the key. What is God's purpose for His people? It is for you and me to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and to become Christ-like. That's our purpose to take on the image of Christ, to live a righteous life, to be loving and compassionate, to be forgiving, become totally submissive to the will of God, to be bound to the things in heaven and separated

from the things of this world. To be Christ-like is to be focused on eternal things, things that are not of this world. The pain and suffering, the grief, the disease, the tragic accidents, the loss of life are all things of this world. These are not eternal.

That is why *all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and who are called according to His purpose.* His purpose is for us to conform to the image of His Son, become more Christ-like. When we become Christ-like we begin to focus on eternal things. In heaven there is no evil. There is no pain. There is no suffering, no disease. There are no more tears from hurting. The hard part is that even when we conform to the image of Christ, we still must go through the pain and suffering of this life.

Jesus walked in this life. Being the Son of God didn't exempt Him from all the pain and suffering. In fact, Jesus Christ suffered more than any of us will ever have to suffer. He suffered for the sins of an entire world. His suffering and death on the cross is the bravest example for us this morning. I can assure you that His followers, His mother and His disciples that were there at that Calvary hill could not see how any good could come from His death on the cross. How could this murderous act of violence work for good?

Well, three days later it was revealed to them and 2000 years later each of us can see how God used such a tragic death for our good. Because Christ suffered and died on the cross you and I have been saved through the blood of Jesus Christ. The horrible death of Christ has become our good salvation. We too suffer. We live in a world of suffering, a world of pain, a world of broken hearts. Christ did not come to do away with suffering. He did not come to explain it. He only came to fill it with His presence.

Theodore Steinway and his sons are the owner of a piano company. He once said, 'In one of our concert grand pianos there are 243 taunt strings that exert a pull of 40,000 pounds on an iron frame. It is proof that out of great tension may come great harmony.' Do you think of a piano that way? All those strings, all that tension whenever you play it?

As long as we live on this earth there will be tension, there will be pain and suffering, there will be broken hearts but take comfort in knowing that God has mended broken hearts. He takes the bad and makes it good. He takes sad and makes it joyous. He takes the hurt and makes it peace. He takes all things and works them together for good for those that love God and are called according to His purpose. We don't understand it but we must believe it.

One of the best examples from the Bible of things working together for those who love God is the story of Joseph, Jacob's youngest son. You can find Joseph's story in the beginning of chapter 37 of Genesis until around the 41st chapter. Let me quickly review Joseph's story for you or help you to remember it. Joseph was loved by his father. He was the youngest of Jacob's sons but he was hated by his brothers because he told them about a dream where he would reign over them. Do you remember that?

Jacob sent him out one day to check on his brothers who were tending their flocks. Joseph couldn't find them but he came across somebody that could direct him to where the flocks were feeding and so he went there. His brothers could see him coming from a long ways away and they began to plot against him. When Joseph got there they stripped him of his coat and threw him in a pit and conspired to kill him, but during that time of contemplation a long



came an Ishmaelite caravan, camels and traders and such, and the brothers decided to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelite's for twenty pieces of silver. At that point Joseph's life changed from being the beloved youngest son to being a slave.

The Ishmaelite's took him into Egypt and they sold him as a slave to Potiphar who was the captain of the guard. Potiphar made Joseph an overseer of his house and Potiphar's estate prospered because of Joseph. Potiphar's wife took a liking to Joseph but Joseph didn't submit to her advances. He was falsely accused and cast into prison for two years. In prison he interpreted the dreams of a butler and a baker of Pharaoh. Word got to Pharaoh that Joseph could interpret dreams and God revealed the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams to Joseph and he shared them with Pharaoh. There would be seven years of great plenty followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh set Joseph over his house and over all the land of Egypt because he had a grain storage plan.

As things worked out Joseph's brothers came to ask for grain during the time of famine. Joseph was reunited with his family. There were many twists in Joseph's life which could have led to a different path. He could have said, 'Lord, why me?' But Joseph never did. Joseph was accepting of all that came his way. He never disobeyed the commandments of God and he trusted in God.

So what if the brothers decided to kill him? It would have been a short story that way wouldn't it? What if the Ishmaelite caravan traveled in a different route? Joseph never would have been sold into slavery. What if Joseph had been sold to someone other than Potiphar? He might have been sold to somebody who just kept him as a slave his whole life and didn't give him the opportunity to be over his house. What if he had submitted to Potiphar's wife? He might not have gone to prison but he wouldn't have the opportunity to interpret the dreams of those two that were there. If he hadn't had the opportunity to interpret those two dreams the word would have never reached Pharaoh and he would not have met Pharaoh. If there was no meeting with Pharaoh he wouldn't have been able to share what God had in store for Egypt. If God hadn't had that plan in store for Egypt Joseph's brothers would have never come to Egypt looking for grain and they would not have discovered Joseph. The whole plight of Joseph being united with his family wouldn't have occurred.

Everything that happened in Joseph's life was not good but everything worked together for good. Every step directed by God will take us closer to the vision and the plan He has for our lives. We are not called to worry about our future. Worry fades away when we know for sure that our future is in God's hands.

When we suffer in this life, when sorrow comes our way, when things go bad and we find ourselves saying, 'Why me, Lord?' that's when we need to put our trust in God. We need to do that and remember we are called according to His purpose. God's promise that all things work together for good is true if we are Christ's and focused on eternal things and heavenly things not earthly things.

Remember the account in Matthew 27:50 about Jesus on the cross. *And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? (That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?)* Jesus struggled in this world just as we struggle. In our moments of weakness we may also ask, 'Why me, Lord?' Remember the answer is only known to God but

His promise to be with us is always true.

Paul concludes in the 8th chapter of Romans with these words. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (35) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (38-39)*

Remember Saints and friends that everything works together for good to those that love the Lord if we accept Him and become conformed to a Christ-like image the way He has designed each one of us to be.



AN INVITATION

The Lord has made it very clear that we cannot claim to be *His people* unless we truly love one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:9-11; and 1 John 4:7-8, 20-21). This invitation, therefore, comes to all who truly love God and thereby love their brothers and sisters; to those that stand ready to defer to the direction of the Spirit.

I want to affirm my understanding that there are only two churches in this world:

1) the church of the Lamb of God, and 2) the church of the devil (1 Nephi 3:220-237). Regardless of the many names we have attached to our various organizations, we ultimately belong to one of these two churches. It is important to love one another and to put an end to all of the things (and doctrines) that we have allowed to separate us. The doctrine that is important is summarized in II Nephi 13:7-32; Alma 16:130-138; III Nephi 5:29-42; and III Nephi 8:32-57. There are others too, but it always comes back to loving God and loving each other. Obeying God and upholding one another in prayer, with a willingness to have all things in common (physical and spiritual), is key and can happen only where there is an absence of pride.

The invitation to attend and participate in this conference is not an attempt to proselytize for the JCRB. The JCRB is simply an organization, amongst several, which desires to help in bringing people to a knowledge of Christ and His Father, the great Jehovah (Moroni 10:31); to assist them in remaining faithful to their covenant with God. Hopefully those who participate in the activities of the JCRB, like this conference, will be found to be a part of the Church of Jesus Christ when they stand before the judgment bar of God. However, the JCRB is not in and of itself that Church. It is simply an organization which hopes to support the work of said Church and encourage those who commit themselves



work of said Church and encourage those who commit themselves to that work as God’s children.

As I have penned this invitation I have felt it important to also share with you my view of my own role in the JCRB. I was asked by the spring, 2017 Conference body to act as President of the JCRB. I felt prompted by what I believed to be the Lord’s Spirit to say “yes,” and I agreed to do so. In thinking about this role I have become convinced, and want you to consider, that I am not the president of the church in this role. God is the head of His Church. He needs no man to take His position. I am only the presider over the planning for the upcoming conference – nothing more. For this conference to be of any worth to God’s people it has to be presided over by God’s Spirit for His purposes. His purposes are not restricted to one organization or “ite.” His invitation and His promises are extended to all who love Him, take upon them His name, obey His commandments, and remain faithful to Him all the days of their lives. Hopefully, by His power and direction, this conference will help and strengthen those who attend to become and/or remain His people—His Church—as He has defined that in the scriptures cited above.

If you have a desire to be a part of His people, if you feel a need to be encouraged and strengthened in your efforts for the kingdom, please come and participate in His conference. Come fasting, humble, repentant, prayerful, having prepared yourself to be open to His Spirit. This conference will be judged by the fruits it bears in your lives, not by those who sponsored it. May God give you wisdom and direction in knowing how you should respond to this invitation.

Your brother in Christ,
Sherman W. Phipps,
General Conference President (2017-2018)



Due to a publishing error Lynda’s obituary was omitted from the February newsletter. We’re sorry for that mistake and we have included it below.

LYNDA SUZANNE (PROPST) ROLFE

April 29, 1946 - January 13, 2018
Lamoni, Iowa

Lynda Suzanne Propst Rolfe, of Lamoni, Iowa, passed away at the age of 71, Saturday January 12th, 2018 at

5:30pm. Lynda was released from a two year battle with cancer and died peacefully surrounded by family, even singing the night before.

Lynda was born in Orofino, Idaho and she was many things to many people; Beloved Mother, Wife, Grandma, Sister, Aunt, Cousin, Neighbor, Artist, Vocalist, Gardener, Cook, and so many more...

To us all she was a Teacher, and a Friend.

Her legacy of creativity and kindness will live on in us All, as one of her many gifts was her ability to encourage us To Try, to be better today than we were yesterday, to strive to be our best. She was a natural teacher and everyone felt like she could be their mom. She spent much of her life teaching; every subject and every grade. So many lives were changed by her touch.

She was silly, creative, a fiery red head, brave, strong, tough, kind and loving. She saw art in everything and was a very talented painter and potter. Born in the mountains, she also felt at home by the sea, traveling the world to places like Scotland, Italy, Mexico, England, Guatemala, and coast to coast across the USA. She loved to sing and always encouraged us to follow our passions. Her strong faith in God taught us to have hope and strength in our convictions. We will follow our passions like you did Lynda.

We will remember what you taught us and will make you proud.

“When I die, Hallelujah by and by... I’ll fly away!”

Services were held at Lamoni Community of Christ on 531 W. Main, on Saturday January 20th, at 4:00pm.

Special thanks to all the amazing care givers in hospitals and clinics from Iowa to Missouri. Specifically the Oncology Staff at the Bloch Center and KU Med. Your dedication to serving others and giving while they were in pain, has touched and blessed our families. Words hardly relay our gratitude for your service.

In Loving Memory



Valentine's Dinner & games





Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps
15581 270th St
Lamoni, IA 50140



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Visit the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch website at:
www.gospelrestored.org

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Mar 1,8,15,22,29 Book of Mormon Night.** Every Thursday evening at Joe & Anna Mickelson's in Lamoni at 6:45 PM
- Mar. 2** "Ladies Night Out" - 6:00 PM at Quilt County with fellowship following dinner.
- Mar 10** Men's Breakfast at Pizza Hut 11:00 AM
- Mar 17** George Knotts' Memorial Service - 10:00 AM at the Lamoni Community of Christ church
- Mar 26-30** Breakfast with the Master - Mount Ayr
- Mar 30-Apr 1 Congregational Fasting Weekend** Prayer and Fasting Weekend for the "souls that know not God." Fasting Friday at 6:00PM through Sunday 10:00 AM
- Apr 1** Easter service (Early morning Communion with Brunch following)
- Apr 2-7** JCRB General Conference - Independence
- Apr 27-28** Book of Mormon Symposium - Independence

