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October 2020 Newsletter Taking the Frontier

Last month I talked briefly about the idea of “holding the fort,” making sure everyone in the local congregation is cared for and protected. Jesus is the strong tower to whom His people run for safety. Christians strive to bring God’s words of peace, grace, mercy, and life to every last person in our care.

This month we shift our focus a little bit by considering “taking the frontier.” What do I mean by this? In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says that He will build His Church on a rock, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. There’s all sorts of debate that we could have about what Jesus is considering to be the rock. But we’ll leave that for discussion and debate at another time, preferably in person.

What I can assure you of is that the Church built on a rock is something we wouldn’t expect to move. It’s like the fortress that is guarded. Solid, immovable, high and lifted up. Yet as we picture the gates of hell, we are looking at something separate from the Church. It’s in a different realm.

We need to take very seriously the fact that when the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, the Church is not staying put in one place. Otherwise there would be no conflict regarding the gates. On the contrary, the Church is now pictured engaged in an offensive maneuver. It is attacking hell.

Just as Jesus, the light of the world, came into the darkness, we, His people, a city on a hill, give light to our darkened world. We shine the light of God’s Word, by which everyone can see clearly. The light of Christ penetrates to all our dark places, and all the dark places of the world. It shows sin and evil, which are no longer able to hide in the shadows. It shows Jesus as the savior for all the world. It lights our path so we can know which way to go. And it reveals that we are saved by grace, through faith, not of our own works, but by Christ’s all-sufficient life, death, and resurrection for us.

For almost two millennia, Christians have been at the forefront of progress. It’s Christians who have valued life and condemned the killing of countless children through abortion or abandonment. It’s Christians who not only condemn abandonment of children, but who adopt the children they find abandoned. It’s Christians who have rushed into places where plague and pestilence have been threatening entire populations. It’s Christians who had the idea of establishing hospitals, including spaces for those who couldn’t care for themselves. It’s

Christians who devised schools for everyone instead of only for those who could afford to hire tutors. It's Christians who condemned slavery and moved society in a direction that holding slaves would be unthinkable. It's Christians who make up a veritable *Who's Who* of science and technology, especially up to the middle of the 20th Century. And it's Christians who have acted upon Jesus' command to go into all the world, baptizing and teaching the people of God's good word and all the things we have been commanded.

God's Word is good for us. It's good for our world. So we move out to take the frontier. We assault the gates of hell, which would, in our day, reinterpret societal norms that are founded on Scripture, casting them to the wind. We hammer away at the idea that there is mercy and grace to be had in Jesus. And we trust in Jesus' promise that even the gates of hell will not stand before the truth of God.

How do we do this? Jesus says we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5). It is through our presence, bringing God's words of light, warmth, flavor, and a cleansing, preserving action, that we take the frontier. In our school, in our workplace, in our home, among our friends, and even when we are in places of tension and enmity, we hold to Christ's loving care. We encourage one another in Christ, remembering to assemble ourselves in His name. And we trust that He is with us, even to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

Let's go. Saddle up the horses. Prepare to move out on the mission the Lord has given you, for the good of your world.

Wittenberg Door Financial Update

Ministry expenses have remained below budget, largely because travel and dinners have not been happening. Giving has remained stable. At present income represents about 40% of the year's budget. We trust that as the doors are open for more activities including support raising that income will increase. It was an ambitious step to begin tracking our giving with the hope of raising the entire budget for Wittenberg Door activity including full support for pastoral staff. Non-Wittenberg Door income has kept everything running. However, giving has been a great encouragement and we do have hopes that over the next few years we will come to be in a position of full support.

We still need additional contributors. Our goal remains to have a total of about 300 monthly individual contributors or about 30 churches or organizations, each representing about the equivalent of 10 monthly donors. We are realistically a little over 60% of the support we need to be fiscally responsible in the long run. We've made it thus far, by God's grace, for which we are thankful.

If you or people you know want to support the work of bringing on-site, face to face, pastoral care to our academic communities, please consider making Wittenberg Door a part of your regular charitable giving. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Checks mailed to us are deposited with no commission paid to any intermediary. Most of our contributions are actually received this way, but we can receive funds sent through Paypal or Google Pay as well. Giving is easy! Simply visit our website at www.wittenbergcomo.com and click on "about" and "support us."

Uganda Update:

We've recently received word that schools in Uganda are opening up again! This is great news. Not only do the young people of that developing nation need to receive education, but we are also very conscious of the fact that many students depend on a meal at school. Often their families do not have the resources to provide adequate food on a regular basis.

Our friends at Eleos Ministries do maintain a list of young people who are in particular positions of need. The school tuition, which is really very little in American terms, is an area of critical need.

We'd also ask you to remember our friend Alice in prayer. She has continued with monthly follow-up appointments and treatment using medicines since the end of her radiation therapy. In early November she will have an MRI. Pray not only for adequate funds for her review, but that the medical team will be ready to move her to less frequent, complex, and costly review! Under normal circumstances, she has an overnight bus ride each way, to and from the hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. Since the onslaught of COVID, an ambulance transport has been necessary to get her across the border. Thanks to her faithful supporters, all her medical expenses have been paid for the past three years!

Upcoming Activities:

Thursdays at 12:30 pm – Lunch and Learn Bible discussion live and via Zoom

Saturdays 11:00 am Matins service via Zoom

Watch the calendar for times and places where Pastor Spotts can be found around campuses in coffee shops or restaurants!

We are having occasional picnics in a local park, depending on weather and health department requirements. Drop Pastor Spotts a text asking to be included in notices.

Sundays, 10:00 a.m. Pastor Spotts at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Centralia MO

We always have something new at the website, the blog, and the activities calendar. Please be a friend on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. If you're in Columbia, let's get together on or near campus. Go to <https://www.wittenbergcomo.com/support-us.html> to provide financial support. The Wittenberg Door 300 needs you!