



Winsome

As a religion major, I was required to take a course on the study of Christian missions. I endured the class. I even learned a couple things I haven't quite forgotten yet. I read about the history of the ecumenical movement which began as churches cooperated in mission work (who knew?). I read prescient books that (twenty years before 9/11) noted the rise of a virulent expression of Islam which understood itself to be at war with the Christian West.

Most of what I learned in that class I forgot ten minutes after the final exam, but what sticks in my memory is the prayer that the professor used to open the class. Dr. Warren Woolsey almost always included this petition in his opening prayer: "God, make us a winsome people."

At the time I thought it a quirky prayer request: "Make us attractive, Lord. Make us likeable and lovely." Frankly, it irritated me. I thought asking God to make us look good so we could be effective in evangelism sounded like asking God to help us manipulate others.

Based on my experience with the institutional church and a lot of the Christians I knew, asking God to make them appear winsome would be asking God to engage in false advertising. Winsome? How about mean, judgmental, divisive? I was having a hard time seeing the church I knew as winsome.

But Dr. Woolsey didn't pray that we might **appear** winsome. He prayed that we might **be** winsome.



Prayer:

God, make us a winsome people.

Jesus didn't pray for his disciples to be great theologians. He didn't insist on their moral purity as the condition of being his followers. He didn't tell them to get out on the streets and overturn the oppressive structures of the Roman Empire and the patriarchal social world it inhabited.

He said, "Love one another as I have loved you." "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

I don't know if winsomeness means much in the mission field. I do know that ugliness and rancor, partisanship and triumphalism turn people away. Many people don't know much about Jesus; they don't know what he taught or how he lived. They form their opinion of Jesus based on the behavior of his followers.

For a lot of folks, what they see in the media is all they know about being Christian. All too often, the public face of Christianity is not winsome in the least. Christians who seek to dominate rather than serve, who stoke fears and resentment, who are quick to condemn and impose their morality on others attract no one. Many of those with the biggest megaphones who claim to speak for Christ are portraying the Christian faith in a way that I find totally incompatible with the teaching and character of Jesus.

It's foolish to think we can shout down that raucous bunch who misrepresent our faith. But we can, and must, be people of love for each other, for the ones in need, and even for the ones whose viewpoints we abhor.



Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky has the longest cave system in the world with more than 3,454 miles.

St. Matthew's Book Club ~ Summer

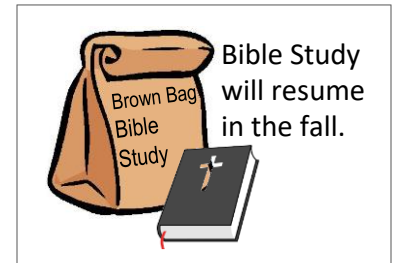
It was decided at the last Book Club gathering that we will meet towards the end of summer. Mark your calendar: Tuesday, August 15, 7pm at Pastor Lynn & Sandy's home.

As far as what book we will be discussing, here are the two options:

1. The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd.
2. To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.

If you are planning to attend, feel free to let Pastor Lynn know which one of these books you would like to read and discuss.

I am looking forward to some enjoyable summer reading and an evening of conversation, and I hope you are too! -Pastor Lynn



Karen & John Kaitanowski, Donn Mergenhagen; Daryl Nolan, 'Debi Thiel, Denise Woodruff; our elderly members & friends in assisted living or homebound: Lola Donner, Marilyn Fenske; Jewell McFarland, Reta Rauker, Yvonne Shearer, Helen Wilson, those serving in the military: Alex Steinbroner, Aydan Stormer



Pastor Lynn & Congregation,

Sincere "Thanks" for prayers, cards, visits and food during my hospital and rehab stay. God blessed me with great doctors, nurses and a very caring family. Pastor Lynn's visits always lifted my spirits. Bless all of you! I'm looking forward to be back in church soon. Sincerely, Nancy J.

On behalf of my family, thank you for your cards, condolences, and prayers at the loss of our mother Peggy Scales. I personally want to thank Pastor Lynn and my church family for all the support and love during mom's illness and passing.

God bless you all. -Brenda Carver

Jean Roth's family appreciates your thoughtful cards and messages. We are blessed by our St. Matthew's family. Jean loved you all! -Families of Cheryl Larson and Samantha Campbell

Paige Odebralski and Travis Meyers welcomed Aleksander Ryan Meyers June 12; 8 lbs, 10 oz, 21" long. He joins big brothers Jackson and Jayden Odebralski.

Grandparents Tracy Meyers & Marna Pritchard are, as Tracy says, "over the moon."



The next issue of The Upper Room daily devotional guide is here. Pick up a copy or two of the July-August issue from the magazine rack in the Narthex or table in Fellowship Hall. Feel free to take one for a friend!



1. Start by adding the year Columbus discovered America to the year William the Conqueror conquered England, then add the first year of the 21st century. What's the answer?
2. The following 15 letters can be anagrammed into 3 words that could be said to a short-order cook. OOOEINCRLTHGYLV
What are they? (see page 5 for answers)

Happy Birthday!



JULY: Liam Kaznica (7/7), Ken Kruszka (7/8), Luke Rich (7/8), Ed Simon (7/12), Jessica Goetz (7/16), Phil Vara (7/17), Lynn Kaznica (7/21), Alva Looze (7/21), Doug Stormer (7/24), Laurie Schwab (7/25)

AUG: Marna Pritchard (8/1), Gail Vara (8/1), Carl Ertel (8/4), Pamela Kaznica (8/5), Karen Kuhaneck (8/5), Judy Meegan (8/6), Nancy Jankowski (8/7), Max Zdrojewski (8/9), Joe Schneider (8/10), Juliana Hamm (8/13), Casey Zdrojewski (8/16), Pat McDonald (8/17), Adam Hamm (8/20), Devon Asboth (8/21), Liam Hamm (8/23), Perry Kaupa (8/25), Kurt Rich (8/26), Ben Hamm, Jr. (8/27), Lucy Hamm (8/28), Marilyn Rich (8/30)



Happy Anniversary!

Chrissy Mellerski & Kerry Shearer
July 5, 2014

John & Karen Kaitanowski
July 10, 1971

Gary & Gail Burdick
July 16, 1994

Bill & Devon Asboth
July 20, 2019

Adam & Kim Hamm
July 21, 2007

Ed & Kathee Simon
July 22, 1967

Rich & Barbara Middaugh
August 2, 1975

Kurt & Vanessa Rich
August 11, 1990

Joe & Karen Schneider
August 11, 2018

Gayle & Denise Woodruff
August 12, 1972

Bob & Linda Ferraro
August 16, 1997

Chris & Corey Wilson
August 24, 1996

Keith & Anne Kanaley
August 30, 1986



Caring for One Another

Through Prayer...

If you or someone you know would like prayers your church family, please fill out the prayer card in the pews and place in the offering plate or contact Pastor Lynn or Michelle in the office. Names will be put in the bulletin/Newsflash and/or sent to the prayer text chain upon your request.

There are currently 24 people who receive texts with prayer requests. Wherever they are, they take time to lift up that individual to God's care and add them to their prayer list. If you'd like to be on the text chain to pray for others, please contact Michelle in the office or via text message (716-245-1692) with your name.

Through Pastoral Care...

Individuals who are not able to attend services are invited to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion in their homes. Home visits are not just for those who are not well enough or mobile enough to attend services. There are many occasions in our lives where the prayerful support from a caring person can be of help. Your church family and your pastor are resources you can call on to stand with you in times of illness and hardship as well as joy. Please contact Pastor Lynn if you or a loved one would like a home visit.

Through Care Giving...

Another way we show our love and care for others at St. Matthew's is to help one another during sickness or other difficult times by providing meals or providing transportation if someone has no ride to appointments, church activities, etc.

If you or someone you know is in need of a care giver service, please contact the church office (716-649-1532) for those who need rides and Robin Federmann (716-432-7962) for those who need meals.

If you would like to be on the volunteer list to provide transportation or a meal when a need arises, please sign up on the table in the Narthex or call the church office.

Please let us know how we can help; we count it a privilege to share life's pilgrimage with you.



Outdoor Worship & Church Picnic



Great day of worship, fellowship & food.

Thanks to all!



June 25, 2023



You Just Don't Understand

Probably all of you are familiar with the prayer attributed to St. Francis that begins, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." There are all kinds of prayers that fall into broad categories like: "thanks," "oops," "help," "make this wrong right," "let the bad guys have it."

The prayer we commonly call the Prayer of St. Francis doesn't fit into any of those categories. It is an aspirational prayer. It is a prayer for transformation. It is also a prayer of commitment – a promise that we will cooperate with the asked for transformation.

There's not a sentence of this prayer that I instantiate, but the one that really trips me up most often is this: "Grant that I may not so much seek... to be understood as to understand." I want desperately to be understood, or at least not to be misunderstood.

I find that the lives of the saints manage to simultaneously inspire, encourage and remind me of how little I make of the life I've been given. One of my favorites is St. Marina.

Marina was born in Lebanon, sometime in the 5th century. Her mother died when she was quite young, so she was raised by her devoted and pious father. Her father planned to marry off Marina and then enter the monastery, devoting the remaining years of his life to prayer. When he shared his plans with Marina, she balked.

She didn't want an arranged marriage. She wanted to live a life of prayer like her father. So, she shaved off her hair and dressed as a man.

Together, father and daughter applied to the same monastery, but of course, the daughter was presented as a son, Marinos. They were admitted to the monastery where Marina continued to pass for the young man, Marinos.

In time, the father of Marinos died. Shortly thereafter, one of the village girls near the monastery became pregnant and accused Marinos of fathering her child. Marina/Marinos didn't answer the accusation, but rather took the child when he was born and raised him within the monastery. As you can imagine, the reputation of Marinos was in

Continued on next page.

ruins. He was the subject of ostracism and abuse in town and even among his fellow monks.

It was not until after Marinos died and his body was being prepared for burial that the monks learned the biological sex of their 'brother.' Monastery and town alike, lamented the abuse they had heaped on Marinos.

I love that the day St. Marina is commemorated is June 17 – smack dab in the middle of Pride month. The roles and manners of gender have been and continue to be constricting. Much harm has been

done to those whose way of life does not coincide with gender norms.

I celebrate Marina for more than the issue of gender non-conformity. Her willingness to bear the false accusations and unjust judgements of her community was more than the price she paid to live in a man's world. St. Marina is one whose life richly embodies the prayerful aspiration and promise to seek to understand rather than to be understood. She trusted that there was One who loved her without limit, who knew her completely, and whose judgements are always just.

Prayer: Forgive the ways I love my reputation more than you or my neighbor.

In The Box ... St. Matthew's Special Offerings

If you tithe using envelopes provided by the church, every month you will find extra envelopes in your box. On the first Sunday of the month, there is an envelope labeled Communion. The monies given in those envelopes go towards the purchase of wine and wafers.

On the third Sunday of every month, you will find an extra envelope labeled Fellowship Programs. Any amount you put in that envelope will be used to offset expenses associated with events organized by our Hospitality Committee (i.e., potluck lunches, game night, etc.).

There are also different envelopes including ministries supported by St. Matthew's. For example, we support the outdoor ministry of Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center and now sponsor 2 cabins. You may use the envelope dated June 4, 2023, to contribute towards the cabins' maintenance.



Potluck Lunch & USS The Sullivans Presentation

June 29, 2023



Thanks to LaDonna Painter and Brenda Carver for hosting a great event!

Brain Teasers' Answers

1. 4559 (1492+1066+2001 – the new millennium does not start with the year 2000)
2. Once Over Lightly

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www.stmattsucc.org



Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.



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Website: www.stmattsucc.org
Pastor Email: pastorlynn@stmattsucc.org

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