

Shepherd's Staff

June 2023

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m.

Identity

I just came back home after a visit to the greenhouse to get some tomato plants for our garden and was amazed at the number of varieties that we had to choose from. Each variety had a little tag in the planting box that would identify the plant and give a brief description of what to expect from the fruit. We bought four plants with the hopes of having large eating tomatoes that will be full of flavor and grow well in our garden. The identity tags proved to be very helpful and now we will see if we made the correct choice. The idea of identity tags is not limited to just tomato plants though. Churches that are going through the process of finding a new pastor are expected to identify themselves in a church profile. Knowing that we will soon be in need of a new pastor I wonder what our identity looks like.

The choices for an identity can range over quite a few possibilities. We could start at the least desirable with a couch potato church where the idea of coming on Sunday to be entertained sets the expectation. Not much effort is needed or expended in this variety of church, but it is also not productive in the fruit category. This would likely raise a red flag for any pastor looking at a call from a church. This is not the kind of church that Christ desires either. So, this is not who we should be striving to be.

The next type of church is one where everyone wants to see growth but are not all that active to make it happen. This church will leave the work of growing the church to the few while the many offer encouragement from the sidelines. The trouble with this approach is that the few soon begin to feel fatigued and experience the symptoms of burnout. The discouragement soon settles in and soon the excitement is drained from life in the church. This also would look like a red flag to a prospective pastor who may see that the church is looking for someone to not only take the lead but do the work of all single handedly. Not a good calling card for a church to have as an identity.

The type of church that would excite a pastor is one where there is evidence of the Holy Spirit working. Such a church has a robust effort at reaching out in the community and seeing the results of the Spirit's work. A group of new members or even a steady flow of visitors coming in to check out the church would seem inviting to a pastor. The joy of this type of church is that everyone is engaged in the work of reaching out to others. We all can do this as we all have a testimony to share. We can share with others the path that God gave to lead us to faith. For some it will be a long process of learning like Timothy in the Bible who was carefully taught by the faithful parents and grandparents. Others may have more of an 'ah ha' moment like the Apostle Paul. No matter how we came it is our story and we can share it with others who may be searching but unsure of how to find the hope that they are seeking.

The important thing about any identity is that we must not only choose one, but it must be a lived one. If we are truly in Christ, we should all be living the life of an ambassador for the sake of bringing others to the Good News of Christ. This takes faith to know that God is with us in our efforts and will bless the work that we put into growing His church. We must also be encouragers for others to fulfill the obligation of living the life we are called to as Christians. The bottom line is what is on the tag that identifies us as Christians? Are we filled with the Holy Spirit or are we living on the couch watching the days go by waiting for Christ to return? Are we ripe and juicy fruit ready for harvest or are we shriveled ready to be discarded. The time to really live for Christ is now.

Pastor Rus



WE LOVE YOU



June Birthdays/Anniversaries

WE LOVE YOU



Happy Birthday

- 6/1 Frances VanEllen
- 6/14 Lillian Reints
- 6/18 Chelsea Meester
- 6/25 June Karsjens

Happy Anniversary

- 6/20 Clarence & June Karsjens
- 6/28 Rus & Mary Boersma

Reminder: If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20th of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.



