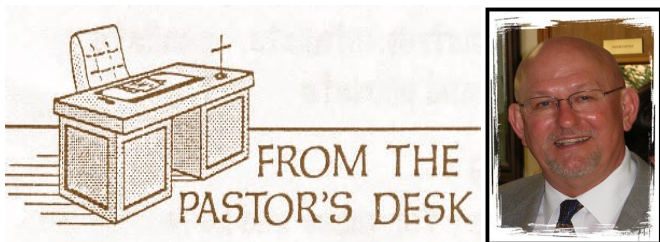


ECHOES *from the Valley*

June 2020

Volume 47, No. 6



Just now I want to have a very personal and completely honest conversation with you. I have to admit, although it's not easy, that I am just a bit stumped. Yes, I am perplexed, confused, and uncertain. I'm talking of course of being baffled over what course of action we should take regarding in person gatherings for worship.

This kind of reluctance for me is not typical. I'm usually ready to charge ahead, quick to develop a plan of action as needed, sometimes with more success than others, but to do so comes easily. I also know that as your primary leader (servant leader) you naturally look to me for guidance in making your own decisions. Let me assure everyone that planning is underway and information is being constantly evaluated and prayerfully considered as we consider our next steps.

But with this current situation, I quite frankly do not know exactly how to proceed. And the truth is, I don't feel too bad, because everybody else is stumped as well, although some may not want to admit it.

Now to be honest, some churches are developing plans and have begun to implement some forms of gathering. But everybody is guessing. You see, there are no textbooks, no manuals of procedure, no solid set of facts. We are dealing with circumstances that are unprecedented in our lifetime. Unfortunately, consistent, reliable, unbiased information is difficult to come by. There is little consensus.

Mostly we see division, argument, debate and expressed feelings. We all have "feelings" and I'm pretty confident that we don't all "feel" the same about how to proceed. That is also part of my consideration.

I'm watching the reports, paying attention to local churches in our area and our association of churches, while reading all that comes across my desk from many sources, including the CDC, the *Christian Index*, and our convention. So far, nothing of practical value has been noted. Opinions and theories are all over the map, even regarding face coverings . . . "to mask or not to mask?"

Incidentally, I have no strong personal views on any of the "recommended practices." But concerning the face coverings, and only as a matter of respect, whenever I'm in a store of any kind, I do put on a mask. I do not like it, but for me personally, it's important to do so, just for the sake of others who have strong feelings or fears. So far, I have not been in a situation where I've been told I must wear a mask. I'm not sure how I would handle that one as I don't like being told what to do, you know.

So yes, I'm a bit stumped. Now, I am eager to resume gathering. At the same time, I'm being very cautious. While your spiritual health is my primary concern, I must also be concerned with your physical health as we deal with the uncertainty before us.

I would like to see what happens as more area churches resume services and observe just how they are doing it. My caution is due primarily because 99 % of our congregation is in the "at risk" group. We have a great responsibility to get this thing right, so it's not a good idea for Valley Brook to be a pioneer in the re-gathering movement. I mentioned that I'm

(continued)

Valley Brook is a place of grace, where everybody is somebody and Jesus is Lord.

watching churches that are resuming services, but I'm also paying attention to the many that are not yet resuming, especially in our association (AMBA).

I admit that I was a bit naive in the beginning. I thought two weeks of suspension and we would be back to normal. That thought was quickly dispelled. Then a tentative "Dream Date" of June 7th was set, only to be dismissed with the governor's revised "shelter in place" directive for at risk individuals until June 12th.

This thing changes almost daily. We are continuing to monitor and filter information as more experience is gained and results noted. Based upon the present understanding, we could be looking at a date in late June or early July. We are leaning toward the cautious approach.

It's critical moving forward that we remain unified, connected, flexible, and patient. When we do return, I'm sure our experience will be quite different for a while. It may be emotionally difficult for some to gather while remaining physically distanced, avoiding contact and close interaction . . . things that are opposite of what we are accustomed to doing.

As re-gathering approaches, we will stress common sense. We all know the basic protocols and we understand how to remain safe.

When we do set a date, I realize some may not feel comfortable returning until later. That is understandable. Others may not agree with the safety practices we will follow, or perhaps not follow. I realize some think this crisis is being used as a conspiracy to gain control of the people, while others think it's a sign of the end times. Yet, we must be unified and flexible.

I cannot say for sure, but I can say that we are actively monitoring and moving forward toward a plan for re-gathering and will do so in the safest, most respectful way possible. We will apply lots of common sense, relying on the current information available while expecting everyone to assume personal responsibility.

I know you are praying for our church family and for God's leading in our decision process .

Paster Mike

22 Prompts to Inspire Your Prayer Life

by Jordan of Dayspring, 4/29/2020

Have you ever found yourself feeling stuck in your prayer life? Maybe you don't know where to start, you don't know what to say, or you just feel totally lost. It's absolutely normal to feel this way, but part of being a Christ-follower is getting to know Him on a deeper level, which comes through prayer. In 1 Thessalonians, we are called to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in everything, because it's God's will for us. It's about as straightforward as it gets - to honor the Lord, we must pray.

"Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 CSB

If you don't know where to start, then these prompts can guide you through different ways to pray for your community, your family and friends, and your own life in ways you may not have considered. As you pray through the list, include other specific areas that need prayer in your own life and community, and keep growing. And of course, ask God to guide you every step of the way.

Pray for your family and your home.

Pray for your spouse (or future spouse).

Pray for your extended family and friends.

Pray for the health of your family, community, the nation, and the world during this time - and always.

Pray about something you need to confess right now.

Pray about someone you are having a hard time loving right now.

Pray for the frontline workers that are keeping communities safe right now.

Pray for schools in your community, teachers, administration, and the students.

Pray for your church, church leadership, and the congregation as a whole.

Pray for other churches and leadership in your community.

Pray for those in your life that you know are going through a hard time right now.


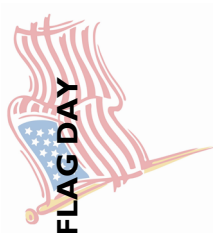


Pray over a big decision you are facing in your life and ask the Lord for guidance.

(continued on pg. 4)



VALLEY BROOK BAPTIST CHURCH

June 2020

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|----------------------|--|--------------------------|-----|-----|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14  FLAG DAY | 15 8:00 pm AIFD ? | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20  First Day of SUMMER |
| 21  FATHER'S DAY Baptist Men Emphasis | 22 8:00 pm AIFD ? | 23 | 24 6:30 Druid Woods ? | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 Citizenship and Religious Liberty Day | 29 8:00 pm AIFD ? | 30 | | | | |

Birthdays:

Jesse Creech 6/5
Lee Morris 6/25

J. W. Hodges 6/5
Kenneth Kennedy 6/28

Janet Roper 6/17
Terry Markert 6/28

Kate Broyles 6/22

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Written by Harry Eskew, a teacher of hymnology for his entire adult life.

Read his full bio at singwithunderstanding.com.

Spirituals are a distinct type of American folk hymn originating in oral tradition. Like the gospel hymn, they are characterized by text repetitions of phrases and usually a chorus. Although the African American spiritual is better known, spirituals have been a part of the oral hymn repertory of both whites and blacks since at least the early 19th century. (Two of these verses can be found on page 119 of our hymnal.)

*Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.
There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul.*



*If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus and say, "He died for all."
There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul.*



*Don't ever feel discouraged, for Jesus is your friend;
And if you lack for knowledge, He'll never refuse to lend.
There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul.*

(continued prayer prompts from pg. 2)

Pray for our government and political leaders.
Pray for boldness to share the message of God's love with someone today.
Pray for a fruit of the Spirit that you would like to grow into.
Pray over a situation that you need to seek forgiveness in.
Pray over a fear that you need to face today with God's strength.
Pray for peace and comfort during uncertain situations.
Pray for strength to have that tough conversation.
Pray for missionaries and their families as they travel spreading the message of God's love.
Pray for our nation, our leaders, and our government.
Pray for God to show you someone who needs some love and encouragement today.

*When we start to see how desperately dependent
we are on Him for every little aspect of life,
we start praying.*

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Monthly Financial Report

(as of April)

Receipts - \$15,971.00

Thank you!