



# "THE STARTER"

October 2025

Rev. Mark Harder. Minister

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Web page: [firstcongregationalperu.net](http://firstcongregationalperu.net)

Phone 815-223-0722

## Special Choir Recognition

With grateful hearts, we CONGRATULATE, Dick Ristau, for 80 years of praising the Lord in song. A special recognition Sunday was held on September 28<sup>th</sup>. celebrated with friends and family.



## Budget Sunday

Members are asked to stay following the October 26<sup>th</sup> worship service to review and approve the proposed budget for 2026. Copies of the budget will be available soon.



## Shoebox Time

We will once again be collecting shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child this year. Shoeboxes will be available in the narthex soon. There is a shipping charge for each shoebox sent of \$10 please include with your box.



## Food Pantries and Illinois Valley Pads

There are donation boxes on the table for any financial donations to the two food pantries and PADS. And please do some shopping at Lily Pads. All sales help support the homeless shelter.



*I do not at all understand the mystery of grace - only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us.*

*Anne LaMott*



## Sermon Series

- |         |                               |               |
|---------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Oct. 5  | Restoring A Demon - Possessed | Mark 5:1-20   |
| Oct. 12 | Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand | Mark 6:30-44  |
| Oct. 19 | That Which Defiles            | Mark 7:1-20   |
| Oct. 26 | The Way Of The Cross          | Mark 8:34-9:1 |



## Adult Sunday School

- |         |   |              |
|---------|---|--------------|
| Oct. 5  | A Dead Girl and A Sick Woman                | Mark 5:21-43 |
| Oct. 12 | Prophet Without Honor/Sending of the Twelve | Mark 6:1-13  |
| Oct. 19 | Faith and Healing                           | Mark 7:24-37 |
| Oct. 26 | Feeding Of The Four Thousand                | Mark 8:1-13  |



## Pizza Praise and Prayer

Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:00PM



October 9, 2025 at 10:00AM in the parsonage.



*Youth Event*  
**Save the Date:** *Sunday October 26<sup>th</sup> from 5-7PM.*  
*There will be more information to come.*



### Covenant Harbor Trip

*There will be an informational meeting/potluck on Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup> from 5:00PM to 6:30PM. Anyone 60 and over are invited to attend. Please sign-up on the welcome table for the potluck and attendance.*



*Enjoy breakfast and a time of devotion. All Church  
Breakfast at Liberty Family Restaurant at 9:00AM.  
October 25, 2025*



*Pastor Mark will be doing monthly service at Liberty Village in Peru. Tuesday, October 28th at 3:30PM.*

3# quality apples, cut in pieces  
1 Cup Flour  
½ Cup butter  
1 Cup brown sugar  
Lemon zest and juice over apples  
Mix ingredients  
Place in 7x7 greased pan  
Bake at 375 degrees for about 30 minutes  
Double recipe for 9x13 pan.



*\*\*Pray for the health of Mike Beuster, Dick Ristau, Marilyn Dunker, Pete & Char Belski, Les & Rita Tieman, Bernie Dahl, Charlotte Oglesby, Pastor Karl & Connie Johnson. Tricia Glasper's Family, Vicki Hall and Family, Lynne Rybarczyk, Jeanne VanSchaick and Family, Sarge Massat, Amy Crouch and Family.*

*\*\* Holy Spirit will touch each loved one whose name is on the Salvation Cross and bring them to the Lord.*

*\*\*Pray for the daily grace for our shut-ins:*

*Lillian Mini, Betty Martuzzo, Nancy Jannsen*

*\*\* Pray for Peace Mission in India caring for children & widows*

*\*\* Pray for the Surbers with Supply & Multiply in Haiti*

**\*\* Pray for Abigail Women's Center helping women in crisis**

*\*\* Pray for Cup of Cold Water supporting missionaries*

**\*\* Pray for Wycliffe Bible Translators**

**\*\* Pray for Jews for Jesus**

**\*\* Pray for Transport for Christ reaching truckers  
at truck stops**

**\*\* Pray for our local food pantries**

*\*\* Pray for PADS providing shelter for the homeless*

*\*\* Pray for persecuted Christians around the world*

*\*\*Pray for Trans World Radio Broadcasting  
bringing God's message into countries that are  
closed to missionaries*



north side. Also, gathering estimates for a new heating system. The grounds look much better with the weeding completed by our lawn care company. It was asked if you should be inclined and see weeds that need removed, please pull them. **Pastor** was away and not available for a report. **Pizza, Praise and Prayer** will resume the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday in September at 5 p.m. Discussion Group will resume at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, September 3. **Our cleaning person** has had to do additional cleaning unnecessarily. Please be sure to pick up and clean up after yourselves leaving the



### Session Board Meeting Summary

The **Session Board** held its monthly meeting August 13. Ellen reported that the choir will begin singing the end of September. We will also recognize Dick Ristau for 80 years of singing with the choir. This will be on Sunday, September 28 with a small reception following worship. We have 2 folks interested in joining the church. The planned date for that is after Pastor returns in August. Diana reported the **Kan Do Club** held a successful Vendor Show. There were 18 vendors and we had a lunch counter and bake sale. The Concert August 9 had a nice turn out. The Harder Castile family did a great performance and we all heard from one person his testimony to Christ. Diana reported that the committee is finished with events for 2025. They will only be hosting 2 events in 2026 which will be the Mother Daughter Tea in May and the Vendor Show in September. The club also paid to have the sidewalk repaired and leveled by the parsonage and will be reimbursed when the church finances allow. **Christian ED** is held VBS on July 22-24. We are grateful to those who those who volunteered to help. A wrap up session will be held on August 20 and there will be discussion for the 2026 VBS. **Rally Day** will be September 7 after worship. It will be an all church potluck and games for all ages to follow. It is supposed to be a family friendly day and for the congregation to have fellowship and fun. Age appropriate games will be provided. The **Trustees** are still evaluating different material to rebuild the canopy on the

*Give people a bit of your  
Heart  
rather than a piece of your mind.*



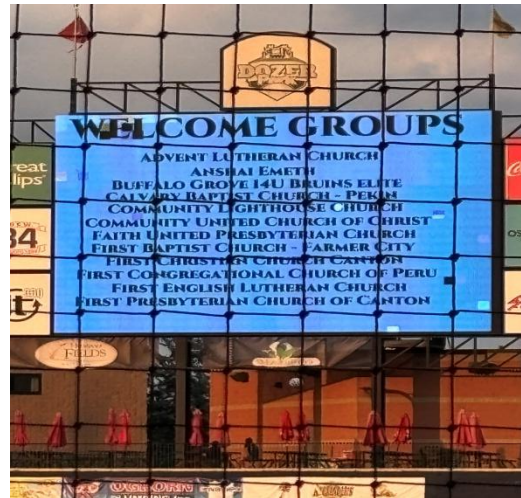
Every phone needs a charger,  
Every car needs an engine,  
And every soul needs Jesus!  
Amen!







*Christmas in July Vendor Show*



**PEORIA CHIEFS GAME**



*Father's Day Root Beer Floats*



**PEORIA CHIEFS GAME**

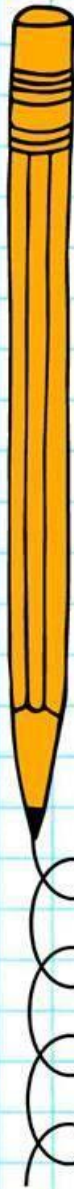


### Discussion Group

The group is open to anyone who wants to join us. We discuss biblical topics, news topics applied to religion or news topics of interest. We will meet the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday at the church at 11 a.m. each month. Pastor will conduct the group the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday. Diana will lead the group the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday unless someone else has a topic. We will skip the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday as it is Pizza Praise and Prayer night. Lunch will be ordered in unless the group decides to go out that day.

**Please contact Diana (815-228-5352) or the Church (815 -223-0722) if you won't be attending.**

## the ABC's of *Praying for Students*



Attitude ... Psalm 14:14  
 Boldness ... Psalm 27:1  
 Courage ... John 1:9  
 Discernment ... Philippians 1:9-10  
 Enthusiasm ... Colossians 3:23  
 Friendliness ... Proverbs 18:24  
 Generosity ... 2 Corinthians 9:7  
 Humility ... Philippians 2:3-5  
 Initiative ... 1 John 3:18  
 Joyfulness ... Philippians 4:4  
 Knowledge ... Proverbs 18:15  
 Listening ... Proverbs 12:15  
 Maturity ... 1 Corinthians 14:20  
 Neighbors ... Mark 12:31  
 Overflow ... Romans 15:13  
 Perseverance ... Galatians 6:9  
 Quiet ... Proverbs 29:11  
 Respect ... Romans 12:10  
 Self-control ... 2 Peter 1:5-7  
 Thankfulness ... 1 Chronicles 16:34  
 Understanding ... Psalm 119:130  
 Victory ... Psalm 18:29  
 Wisdom ... James 3:17  
 eXcellence ... Proverbs 3:9  
 Youthfulness ... 1 Timothy 4:12  
 Zeal ... Romans 12:11

*juliesanders.org*



*With Sincere Sympathy*



### Bibles and Cell Phones

*What would happen if we treated our Bibles like we treat our cell phones?*

*What if we carried it around in our purses?*

*What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?*

*What if we flipped thru it several times a day?*

*What if we used it to receive text messages?*

*What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?*

*What if we gave it to kids as a gift?*

*What if we used it as we traveled?*

*What if we used it in case of an emergency?*

*Unlike our cell phones being disconnected, it can't happen with your Bible because Jesus paid the bill.*

*Never any dropped calls!!*



### *Discussion Group Dates*

**2025 dates to meet:**

**2026 dates to meet:**

*September dates: 3,10,24*

*October dates: 1,8,22,29*

*November 5, 12*

*December 3, 10*

*January 7, 14, 28*

*February & March 4, 11, 25*

*April 1, 8, 22, 29*

*May 6, 13, 27*

*Please come and join us and share information with us.*



VBS STAFF



VBS ELEMENTARY CLASS



VBS 2025



VBS PRESCHOOL CLASS



Pastor Mark Pied



VBS JUNIOR CLASS







*commitment to upholding its principles and ideals.*

*The flag's design and symbolism are rooted in the nation's history, with the stars and stripes evolving over times as the United States grew and expanded.*



### Flag Day

Flag Day commemorates June 14, 1777, when the Continental Congress determined the composition of the nation's banner: "Resolved, that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.

The holiday is a time to celebrate American values, including freedom, unity, and patriotism.

To properly honor the flag, you want to be sure you're displaying it correctly: Raise the flag briskly and lower it ceremoniously. Never allow the flag to touch the ground or floor. The flag should never be transported flat or horizontally, but always aloft.

Symbolism of the flag elements:

#### **Stars:**

The 50 white stars on a blue field represent the 50 states of the United States.

#### **Stripes:**

The 13 alternating red and white stripes represent the 13 original colonies that formed the nation.

#### **Colors:**

- **RED:** Symbolizes hardiness, valor, and courage, representing the readiness to sacrifice for the country.
- **WHITE:** Represents purity, innocence, and independence from other countries, reflecting the nation's core values and ideals.
- **BLUE:** Represents vigilance, perseverance, and justice, symbolizing the nation's





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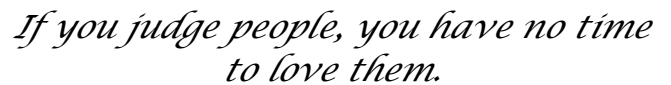


*Isn't this also the secret of holding power of the Christian? Daniel found this to be true. Surrounded by pagan environment, tempted to compromise with evil, urged to weaken his grip on God, he refused to let go. He held firm when others faltered because he was a man of prayer. He knew the power of the bended knee, from sleeping birds we can learn the secret of holding things which are precious to us – honesty, purity, thoughtfulness, honor and character. That secret is the knee bent in prayer, seeking to get a firmer grip on those values which make life worth living. When we hold firmly to God in prayer, we can rest assured he will hold tightly to us.*



*Cordell Pelka will be graduating from Hall High School on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Elijah Harder will be graduating from Home School.*

*and you follow Him in the dark.*  
*Amen.*



*Isn't it strange how difficult and boring it is to read one chapter of the Bible, but how easy it is to read 100 pages of a popular novel?*

Agree with God  
Move with God  
End with God  
Never Doubt God





*I Don't know much but 3 things I do.  
Prayer has power  
Faith moves mountains  
God love never fails  
Amen*



*Congratulations Confirmation Class of 2025*

*Evan Hall  
Jeremiah Farling  
Saleen Farling  
Theresa Panicucci  
Abigail Redmon*

*Sue Gillio will be hosting a Flute day for her students on February 22, 2025 from 9AM-5PM. There will be a concert at 5:00PM open to everyone.*

*Sunday, February 9<sup>th</sup> is Scout Sunday. Cub Scout Pack 3709, who meet here in the church will be bringing in the flags and leading the Pledge of Allegiance. This is an excellent opportunity to get to know some of the families and scouts.*

*Faith Salander will be hosting a violin recital of her students, here on February 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:00PM with a reception to follow.*

*Jen Ebner will be hosting a parent night out on Febraury 14<sup>th</sup> from 5-9PM. She will be looking for volunteers to assist. For more information please see Jen.*

**IF GOD HAS BEEN GOOD TO YOU,  
PRAISE HIM, AMEN.**

*Vitas will be facilitating a Five Wishes presentation on Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>. This event*



*should mar the page, it will become a day to remember with pain.*

*I am the New Year. Each hour of the three hundred sixty five days, I will give you sixty minutes that have never known the use of man. White and pure, I present them. It remains for you to fill them with sixty jeweled seconds of love, hope, endeavor, patience and trust in God.*

*I am the New Year. I am here – but once past, I can never be recalled. Make me your best!*



**WHERE**  
**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
**1431 FOURTH ST.**  
**PERU**  
**815-223-0722 WITH ANY QUESTIONS**



### *I Am the New Year*

*I am the New Year. I am unused, unspotted, without blemish. I stretch before you three hundred and sixty five days long. I will present each day in its turn, a new leaf in the Book of Life for you to place upon it your imprint.*

*It remains for you to make of me what you will. If you write with firm, steady strokes, my pages will be a joy to look upon when the next New Year comes. If the pen falters, if uncertainty to doubt*



## VBS IS COMING



## WHO IS JESUS

Grab your bandana and dust off your boots! We have tickets to Wonder Junction, where we will discover who Jesus is and how to live for his glory.

- \*Learn nuggets of truth through hands-on Bible lessons
- \*Explore God's world through science experiments
- \*Munch on tasty vittles
- \*Gallop in for exciting games
- \*Create fun and creative crafts
- \*Sing toe-tapping tunes

## WHEN

July 22<sup>nd</sup> 9AM-12PM

July 23<sup>rd</sup> 9AM-12PM

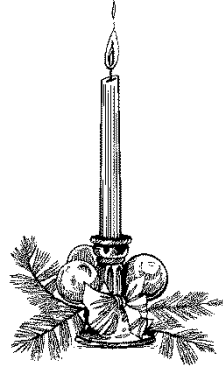
July 24<sup>th</sup> 9AM-2PM (lunch will be served with water activities following)



### VBS Prayer Checklist

- \*\*Pray for all the planning that is being done for this year's VBS
- \*\*Pray that we would have all the volunteers we need for a successful VBS
- \*\*Pray for health and safety for all volunteers, church, staff, and children coming to VBS
- \*\*Pray that the signup process would be smooth and easy for parents and staff
- \*\*Pray that every day VBS would run smoothly
- \*\*Pray that all of the children coming To VBS would leave knowing that Jesus loves them
- \*\*Pray that children will make a commitment to follow Jesus at VBS
- \*\*Pray that new families would join the church as a result of VBS

## *When Christ rules the heart.*



### *Christmas Eve Candlelight Service*

*We will be celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior with our scripture, music & candlelit filled service at 9:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. All are welcome!*



### *Join the Choir on December 15<sup>th</sup>.*

*Have you always wanted to sing with the choir but could not make a weekly commitment? We're inviting all those of you who answered yes to join us on the 15th. Come to the choir room at 10:00 AM and we will rehearse a Christmas carol from the hymnal. Make a joyful noise!*

### *Offering Envelopes*

*We will be discontinuing the use of preprinted offering envelopes in 2025. We hope those who use these envelopes are not inconvenienced.*



*With Sincere Sympathy*

*We extend our love, prayers and sympathy to Vicki, Brianna and Evan Hall. Terry was called to the Lord's side on November 4<sup>th</sup>. Terry was an active member of our church family.*

*Don Walker went home to the Lord on October 27<sup>th</sup>. He had been a faithful member here since 1954.*

*Sandy Starr went home to the Lord on November 4<sup>th</sup>. Services are pending.*

*Mitten Tree*





We will once again collect hats, gloves and scarves for our mitten tree. These will be distributed to area schools to keep kids warm.

### Operation Christmas Child

'Oh yea of little faith.' That applied to me (Ellen) regarding the shoeboxes for Operation Christmas child. I thought it was crazy to load the narthex table up with 50 empty shoeboxes. We only filled 9 last year. Well, this week I delivered 29 to the processing center. The Lord worked through all of you bringing these gifts to over 220 million kids in 170 countries. I also want to thank those of you who donated money to cover the postage costs. What a loving congregation we have!



The small group meetings will be Dec. 20th at 10:00AM. We will be discussing pages 367-482. Asking the questions: 1. What stood out to you this week? 2. Was there anything confusing or troubling? 3. Did anything make you think differently about God? 4. How might this change the way we live?

### Discussion Group

The Discussion Group meets on Wednesdays with an alternating schedule. The first, third, and fifth Wednesday will be at 11:30 at rotating

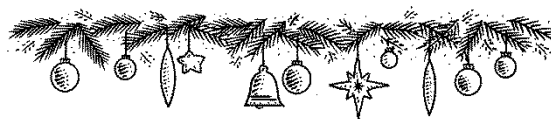
restaurants. The second and fourth Wednesday will be 11:00AM at the church and having lunch here. Everyone is Welcome! Any questions see Pastor or Diana Dornbusch.

### Pads and Food Pantries

Don't forget the shelter and food pantries this winter. The donation boxes on the Welcome Table are for monetary donations for both Hall & Ill. Valley food pantries.

### Finances through October

Year to Date Income	\$154,150.25
Year to Date Expenses	\$204,616.54
Shortage	\$ 50,466.29



The hanging of the greens will be following the worship service on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Decorating for this sacred season is such a festive time of fellowship. Please stay and join us.

### Peru Christmas Parade

We will be entering a float in Peru's Christmas parade on December 7<sup>th</sup> beginning at 5:00 p.m. If you'd like to ride on the float, please see Dean Tieman. But everyone else, come on out and cheer us on!



Our Annual Meeting will be January 26, 2025. Those responsible for reports to be included in the

Annual Report are asked to have them submitted by January 12<sup>th</sup>. Thank you.

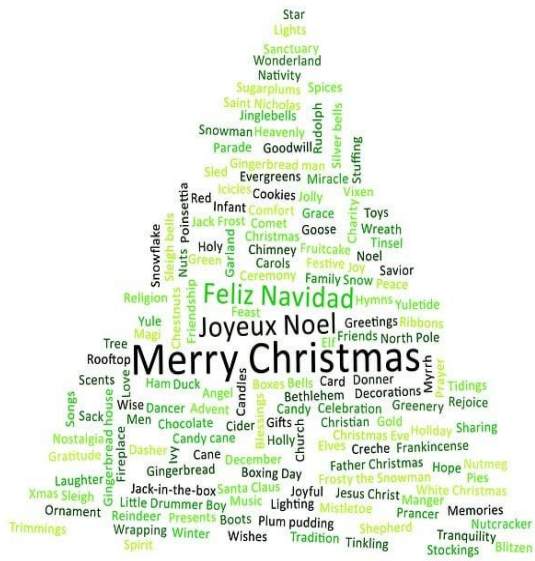


### Session Board Meeting Summary

The Session Board held its monthly meeting November 13. A moment of silence was held in respect of the passing of Terry Hall. Christian Education reported the Peru Christmas parade will be December 7 at 5 p.m. Decorating the float will be at 9 a.m. at Tieman Builders. Sunday Funday will be December 1 from 4-6 p.m. All Mission donations are up to date for the missionaries. Diaconate is gearing up for the Christmas season. We will be hanging the greens on Sunday, December 1 after worship. We hope many will stay to help decorate. You may be contacted to light the Advent candle on one of the 4 Sundays in December before Christmas. Trustees have had the handicap toilet in the ladies restroom raised and moved. A new grab bar has been installed. We also addressed more boiler issues. Also we are hiring a new cleaning person. December 15 Flutes for Vets will be hosting a holiday recital in the Sanctuary. Pastor will be inviting those who may be interested in membership to the church to attend a luncheon after January 1. Pastor will also be doing at service at Liberty Village starting December 26<sup>th</sup> month. He is looking for a couple of volunteers to go with him to help serve communion. We no longer will have offering envelopes beginning January 2025. People are welcome to remember their envelop number and use a small white envelope to put their tithe in the offering plates. We are still searching for a part time maintenance person. The Kan Do Club reported they will meet in January to begin preparations for 2025. Anyone else interested in joining the committee should contact Diana D. Pizza, Praise and Prayer will continue first Wednesday monthly at 5 p.m. Coffee with Pastor continues every 3rdThursday of the month; men's breakfast is ongoing the last Saturday of each month at Liberty Restaurant and the book club continues to meet monthly. Pastor Mark will be gone December 26 – January 2. Dean has agreed to take the pulpit on December 29th. The constitution

was approved at the Budget meeting in October. Also the budget for 2025 was approved. We continue to see expenses exceed income and are hoping folks will find it in their hearts to be able to give more. The board discussed the transition into the 2025 fiscal year and how they will be elected. A full nomination slate will be prepared and all positions on the board for this next year will be up for election. Anyone interested in an office or board position should reach out to Dean Tieman or anyone on the Session Board. The slate will be voted on at the annual meeting in January. The choir is still looking for voices, so if you are interested in joining the choir, please contact Ellen. The Wednesday discussion group will continue to meet each Wednesday. On the 2nd and 4th Wednesday, it will be at 11 a.m. at the church with discussion and lunch to follow. On the remaining Wednesdays, it will be at a local restaurant (TBD) at 11:30 for fellowship and lunch. If you would like to join the group on any given Wednesday, please let Pastor Mark know. If you have Facebook or any other social media platform that you see church postings on, please like and share them to help spread the word of our activities and services. We are already reaching a good amount of followers, but we want to continue. The board approved the use of Morgan Hall on the 3rd Tuesday each month in the evenings by a local 4H group. The next board meeting will be December 11 at 5:15 p.m.









I always get to  
where I am going  
by walking away  
from where  
I have been.

### The Bible Reading Experience Program

Part of NLT Immerse: The Reading Bible, Complete Set, the Winner of the 2022 Christian Book award for Bible of the Year!

Messiah is the first of six volumes of Immerse:

### Immerse

#### *The Bible Reading Experience*

*Messiah takes the reader on a new and unique journey through every book of the New Testament. Each part of Messiah begins with one of the Gospels, and together combine to provide the reader with enjoyable and impactful readings all centered on Jesus. The end result is a Bible developed for the purpose of being read and understood, not referred to. Messiah is a new way to interact with God's Word.*

*Messiah delivers scripture to the reader as it was originally created: without chapter or verse breaks. While references are made available for ease of finding specific scripture references, those references do not appear within the actual text of scripture. This makes for uninterrupted reading of God's word. Created with the look and feel of a paperback book, and written using the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, the most readable translation available, Messiah enables you to easily read and understand the Bible.*



### Back to School with God

Be still, and know I am God.

Psalm 46:10







### A Pencil Maker Told the Pencil

Five important lessons just before putting it in the box.

- \*\*Everything you do will leave a mark.*
- \*\*You can correct the mistakes you make.*
- \*\*What is important is what is inside of you.*
- \*\*In life, you will undergo painful sharpening which will make you better.*

*\*\*To be the best pencil, you must allow yourself to be held and guided by the hand that holds you. We all need to be sharpened. May this parable encourage you to know that you are a special person, with unique God-given talents and abilities. Only you can fulfill the purpose which you were born to accomplish. Never allow yourself to get discouraged and think that your life is insignificant and cannot be changed and, like the pencil, always remember that the most important part of who you are is what's inside you.*



*Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us,  
Choosing gratitude until we are grateful,  
and praising God until we ourselves are an act of Praise.*

*Richard Rohr*



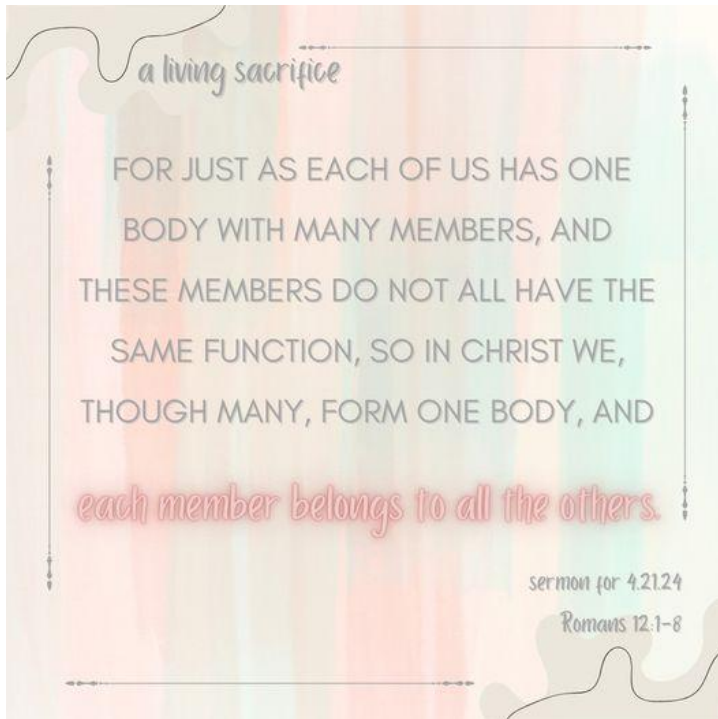
### Fifteen Characteristics of Faith

1. Faith is a choice.
2. Faith is a step of obedience.
3. Faith is a spiritual exercise.
4. Faith is taking God at His word.
5. Faith is saying yes to God.
6. Faith is looking to Jesus for everything.
7. Faith is knowing we are never without hope.
8. Faith is what lifts us out of our circumstances.
9. Faith is not holding anything back from God.
10. Faith is being obedient even if we don't feel like it.
11. Faith is a gift from God as we read His Word.
12. Faith is knowing that everything will work out.



13. Faith is a way out of our limitations.
14. Faith is the mother of hope.
15. Faith is the road of peace.

available, ask Diana. Thank you all in advance. Many hands make the work less hard.



### Landscaping

Over the past few weeks and with the rains, the weeds are growing fast. Some of our folks have already taken time to weed some of the landscape and we thank them for their time and work. However, there is still a number of areas around the church including the playground, the parsonage and the white fence between the church and hospital that need help. If you have the time and would like to adopt an area to work this summer and keep the weeds pulled, it will help keep the grounds looking manicured. It would be similar to the Adopt a Landscape project we did a few years ago. You do not need to trim bushes. It's the weeds that are getting out of hand. More time will be necessary in the beginning to get the area under control followed by regular monitoring will keep it under control. If you have a specific area you are interested in working, please let Diana Dornbusch know, and she will keep track. If you want to know what is

