

Another Word July 16, 2024

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

It's hard to believe that July (which just started) is already half-way through. Oh, and thank you all for your cards, phone calls, and texts to wish me a happy birthday. It's nice to know I am remembered and thought of.

July 28th will be our first outdoor service at the pavilion. Bring your favorite lawn chair or find a place at one of the picnic tables. It is wonderful to praise and honor God in the midst of His awesome creation! I'm feeling that we need a church picnic very soon. Carol's deviled eggs are calling me!

Scriptures for the following weeks are;

July 21: Psalm 29. Elder Dale Campbell. Isaiah 6:1-6. "Can you say, 'Send Me?'"

July 28: Psalm 14. Elder Lana Bell. John 6:1-21. "The Power of God!"

Aug 4: Psalm 51:1-12. Elder Shelley Carpenter. John 6:24-35. "I Am the bread of life!"

Please keep Miriam Brady, Shannon and her sister Healey, Pam Burrier, Pam Coffman, Wendy, Lyle, Bill Schaefer, and a new acquaintance of mine, Rick and Nancy Grace in your prayers as we go to God.

O Holy and gracious God. We thank you for Your wonderful creation. A place fashioned for us to enjoy and to thrive. You always offer us Your best. May we be humble enough to accept Your gifts with love and gratitude. Our lives were shaken this past week with the evil that showed itself. We know You are always with us. Help us to find the courage to stand against all evil with the knowledge that You and You alone are with us. We also thank You for hearing our prayers as we lift

up to You our fears, praises, as well as those loved ones in need of physical and spiritual healing. (Silent prayers.) May we always seek ways to serve our neighbors as we walk in Your presence with confidence and joy. We lift this prayer to You in the Holy Name of Your Son, Jesus the Christ, Amen.

“Keep Sweet”

Growing up in Ashland, as I walked or rode my bicycle around town, I often saw these words imprinted on slabs of sidewalk. For the longest time I thought it was a misspelling. Maybe someone meant to say, “Keep Swept.” You know, keep this nice sidewalk clean. But not so. Actually, it was the slogan of Ard Blackford.

Ard moved to Ashland in 1909 and ran a coal and cement business. He was a very devoted man of God and Jesus Christ. He had a heart for the youth, establishing many Sunday School classes and was responsible for organizing the first Boy Scout Troop here. It was important to Ard that our youth had a love, knowledge, and understanding of our Lord.

The slogan of “Keep Sweet” was the title of free pamphlets he printed and handed out that contained articles about virtue, honesty, courtesy, and having faith in God. And of course, on every cement sidewalk he poured, before it hardened was stamped “Keep Sweet,” A reminder to all who passed to follow Jesus and love one another. The key words here are, the “soft cement.” You must write in it before it hardens. Once it is hard, the message can’t be written.

In Psalm 78, King David says these words; “We will not hide God’s commandments from our children, and we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.” Powerful words! Imagine, over

3,000 years ago David instructs the people to “tell the next generation about God!” David knew that if the youth weren’t told about God before they became an adult, they may never know Him. It was the same here in Ashland 100 years ago when Ard told the stories to the youth, introducing them to our Savior while their hearts were soft and open to learn. He was following David’s directives.

The sad truth today is that over two thirds of the youth in America who come to Christ, do so before they reach the age of 18. Once they enter this growing secular world, their chance of coming to Jesus will fade quickly. And our world with its temptations is making it harder and harder and enticing our youth at ever younger ages. So, what can we do, here in Ashland, to reach those who need to hear about God’s love? We need to look to King David and even to Ard!

First, we need to pray to God for protection for our next generation. Ask to have our hearts broken for the youth in our community. Ask God what you personally can do to reach one child. Support programs like LifeWise, our Christian Schools, and even reach out to families who may not have a church home and invite them.

Like Ard’s message of God’s “Sweet” love that has lasted a hundred years, we also need to write the message of Jesus on the hearts of our next generation. But we must act quickly because the cement in their young hearts is soft for only a short time.

In His Peace,

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