



Living Stone Prison Church

Pastor Jason Wiersma & Pastor Dan Ebbens

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Greetings friends,

As it seems to do every year, the summer has flown by. Some of the things on my summer bucket list have happened and some of them are going to have to wait for another day. (Sadly, I only fished once but I got that fence up!) I've been thinking about seasons a lot lately. As Fall is upon us, I do enjoy the cooler weather and the colorful leaves that decorate the trees and the ground this time of year. I've also been thinking a lot about the seasons of life.

There have been many blessings of having planted and pastored both Living Stone Prison Church and Freedom's Gate Church. One blessing is that I've had the opportunity to witness many individuals move from a dark and cold winter season in their life, to a fresh new Springlike start through the Light of the Son and the nourishment of His Living Water.

I think of Cody, who I met back in January during the cold of winter as a mutual friend of ours passed away in a hospital room. Cody had battled addiction and anger his whole life due to many horrific instances of trauma stretching back to his childhood which led to a stint in prison. When life would get difficult, he would often let anger control his actions which burned bridges with people that could have helped him. Thankfully that's all changed now, through the work of Freedom's Gate and a well-timed men's retreat I invited him to attend, Cody has now found the Peace of Christ and is walking in it. He's gone from someone who had been written off by many into a new season where he has found joy in serving Jesus in a variety of ways. I thank God for the change I've seen in him over the last months!

Speaking of seasons, we would like to humbly ask for your help in our current season of ministry. As some of you know, we have been part of the Alliance of Reformed Churches for a couple of years. One of the changes with the new denomination is that funding for local and global missions is something each individual church decides on and we no longer receive denominational funds. This, as well as some other factors (flooding in our area being one) has led to a significant drop in our general fund in this season (2024) of ministry. It would help greatly if we could pick up some more support from individual churches, as well as maintain the support we've already have. We trust that God will pave a way through this difficult financial season, and we thank you for all the support and prayers over our last 13 years of ministry!

Please contact us if you'd like to know more, or to have someone come and speak at your church.

Blessings in Christ

Pastor Jason and Ruth Wiersma -Freedom's Gate Church

Dan and Natalie Ebbens-Living Stone Prison Church

Psalm 16:8-9 I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.

New Roots Review September 2024

Anchored in this Wavy Ocean called "Life"

by Fred Wilgenburg

It was recently said to me, "Two things are sure to happen in life." I responded, "That we will die, and we pay taxes, right?" To which the response came, "That we will die, and we will experience loved ones dying."



The second part, that I will experience loved ones dying, hits much harder than paying taxes. I am so thankful I haven't experienced a sudden, shocking loss of a loved one during my lifetime, so far.

I had that conversation at Smithfield Foods, where we offer chaplaincy services. Later in the day, another employee told me that his 29-year old nephew committed suicide the day before, which was a complete shock. How terrible! As this employee is a person of faith, we reflected on that. We couldn't imagine being hit by that kind of "wave" in this big ocean of life, without being anchored by our personal God and all He gives, as well as by the support of our siblings in God's family. Yes, the waves still can hit incredibly hard, but they won't likely upend and completely topple us.

Thankfully, people often come into a personal relationship with God, and He becomes a tremendous anchor for them. Even if they don't presently have faith, as they perhaps actively adhere to another religion, often I find them to be open or interested, and almost always welcoming of prayer. This makes sense as we humans have God's image upon them, so it's within our original design and capacity to be in relationship with God.

Here's a concern: I know of many people who accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior at one time, and then they backslid, even seemingly losing their faith. God was their anchor, and then they seemed to have cut the chain. We see this especially in people who come from other religions. I have a friend who is Laotian. His dad left Buddhism upon coming to faith in Jesus as a young married man in the early 1990s, and then he and his young wife and child (my friend) attended a church led by a Laotian pastor. A few years later, the man and his wife divorced, and they each married other Laotian people who were Buddhist. They each then left their faith in Jesus and took up



Homary, originally of Congo, and Kaw, of the Karen people and originally of Thailand, joined me at a worship service. Homary offered a mission moment, including about coming out of Islam and into faith in Jesus. Kaw is trying to find his way, but enjoyed the road-time, fellowship, and meal, and he wants to come with us again.



As is typical with our Everyday-Ambassadors Practicum, these ambassadors were well-received on the streets as they spoke and prayed with people. They were equipped with helpful openers, personal testimonies, water bottles and light snacks, and social service information, as needed.

Buddhism again. Since then, they have both had other children, so that my friend's younger siblings presently all adhere to Buddhism, if not religiously, at least culturally. Sadly, the father now mocks my friend, a young man who has remained faithful in the Lord, for not joining the rest of the family in Buddhism. We are seeking to mentor this friend as he desires to be a light of the Gospel to his community. As many adherents to Buddhism are culturally Buddhist and uncommitted spiritually, they remain open.

Bhutanese/Nepali people started to come to Sioux Falls about 15 years ago. Though most of them were

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language. Some other Nepali churches then started, but unfortunately mostly as divisions away from Mother's church. While Mother's church eventually quit, and the other Nepali churches have done quite well, we have seen quite a few Jesus-following Bhutanese/Nepali people backslide to Hinduism.

This backsliding to a place of no longer having God and His Word as an anchor, and as a foundation, is often due to a lack of discipleship, and therefore a lack of establishing a foundation early on in one's

(continued...)

Hindu, they attended a kind African American woman's spiritual revival event, which she led with her grandson, at a time when it was very cold outside. This woman provided food and winter clothing for these newly arrived refugees, as well as a bus ride to the revival, even if they understood little English. Some gave their lives to Jesus, and all of them deeply appreciated the kindness they received, today still calling this woman, "Mother." Well, Mother's revival event became a church for Bhutanese/ Nepali people as the worship services were translated to the Nepali

What is New Roots Ministry? It's "a springboard for new Americans & their churches." This is done through workplace chaplaincy (we provide chaplaincy at Smithfield Foods & we train & place bilingual chaplains on commercial farms), through Timothy Leadership Training, through hosting special educational events, through empowering new American pastors, leaders, and their churches. through offering unique Service Opportunities—serve in, or visit, stores owned by new Americans. then hear their stories, through helping people navigate the American system and achieve their goals, like education, through driver training for new Americans, and through Everyday-Ambassadors Practicum.



It is always good to work with SERVE teens of the CRC. They come from other states to serve in SF. They did well, on a very hot, humid day, interacting with, and offering kindness to, people on the streets.

faith. Discipleship is good, always, for believers, but it is especially important for people who come from a background that is different from having a faith in God.

Let's not be discouraged, as much as encouraged; many will come back to God, largely because His love and grace, through the steady counsel of the Holy Spirit, has never stopped for them (John 10:27-30), including as He hears our prayers on their behalf. As well, we often receive new opportunities for discipling, and loving and helping people. (Consider John Mark described in Acts 15:37-39, & then in 2 Timothy 4:11.) This time, let's do it more faithfully and thoughtfully. I find that new Americans, especially, enjoy friendship, they enjoy fellowship and food together, they are open to, even enjoy, learning from the Bible, which some of them are largely ignorant to, especially if they adhere to a different faith, and they appreciate prayers. In essence, even those who have maybe backslid, in part because they were not discipled sufficiently by Jesus-followers, will be forgiving of our earlier weak efforts, and they will welcome us back.

Be encouraged, Church, that "the ball (of opportunity) is in our court" in the way of being part of God's kingdom growth, and in reaching our society and our world desperately hungering for some good news—what we know as the Gospel! And most of all, thank God that He forgives our failures (John 21:15-18), He continues to refine and redeem, and He continually welcomes our efforts in His harvest fields (Matthew 9:35-38).

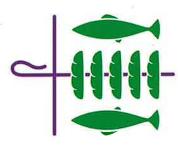
We realize you probably receive information on many ministries besides us. While we like sending our newsletter to you, if you wish to no longer receive it, we understand. Please just inform us of that by emailing us at sfnewroots@gmail.com, or texting us at (605)376-6330.

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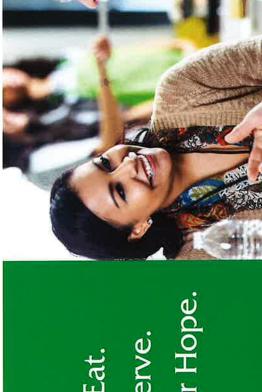
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sharing our hearts, our humanity, and our of people; we then become one group hope at a common table. When each meal begins, we are two groups

meal in a safe place. For others, we offer the For those who are hungry, we offer a warm

meal, it is not a requirement to be a volunteer. While we appreciate the sponsorship of a opportunity to serve our community.

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