

HEARTBEAT

The Hope in Christ Church Monthly Newsletter

Volume 27 June 2020 Issue 6

Do You Believe in the God of Prosperity?

By Pastor Scott

Today as I was driving Bekah to the airport, I spent the return trip talking to God. One of the big frustrations in my Christian life is that it seems that God doesn't talk back. There have been times when I have clearly heard His voice, when He has directed me in very specific actions, and when life with Him has seemed close. There have been times when God has clearly directed me to go here, do that, see them. But now is not one of those times. In fact, as I have matured in my faith, it seems that the verbal direction of God has diminished. That seems counterintuitive to what should happen, but that doesn't mean that I have felt abandoned. Quite the contrary. As I have matured, I am more aware of His presence than ever. It is as if God is in the room, the car, the park with me, but He is quietly with me. An awareness of His presence has grown, while an ability to hear His voice when seeking concrete direction seems to have diminished.

As I was talking with (or more correctly, as I was *talking to*) God, I told Him how I felt and that I wanted to experience the old way of things. I wanted Him to tell me what to do or not do, who to see or not see, where to give or not

give, what investments to engage or not engage in, what scriptures to read or not read, etc. It was at this moment that the thought occurred to me –

“You want a health and wealth God. You want a God who keeps you from making mistakes in the flourishing of your life and ministry. Would you continue to follow Me if I told you to do something that cost you financially? Would you blame Me and quit listening? What if I directed you along a path that made your ministry shrink instead of grow?

Would you still follow me?”



It was then that I realized my conception of God, my desire for God really, is to have a God who gives

me prosperity. I longed for a version of God that intellectually I rejected and knew to be false. But that is what I wanted. Now consider, the way I addressed my “god” was different than the way the typical prosperity gospel preacher addresses his “god.” I viewed prosperity as a matter of piety and clothed my prayers in piety. He views prosperity as a necessity of Christianity, something he is entitled to have, and so he addresses God with this in his heart. But the core God underlies both misconceptions.

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How often do we want God to lead us to the easy life? How often do we desire Him to guide us into comfort? How often do we try to avoid the hardships of life and Christian obedience by appealing to some idea of God that alleviates suffering? How often do we couch our disobedience to the Word in language like this, “God didn’t tell me to ...!”

But that isn’t the God we love and serve. God is not a puppet to ensure our material blessing, or even our psychological ease. Rather, God is a

God who wants us to rely on Him – not to rely on Him to tell us what to do, but rather to rely on Him in good times and in bad times. He wants us to obey the Word, and then trust that He is with us even when the situation turns south. He wants us to sense His presence with us even though He isn’t speaking to us, so that we grow out of our need for prosperity, ease and comfort, and grow into our calling as disciples who follow and know Him in adversity and blessing.

Happy JUNE BIRTHDAY to You!

1 Len Vander Woude
4 Bud Brouwer
6 Georgi Figenbaum
8 Bill Brewster
13 Mattea Ruiter
13 Jolene Skovron
18 Darlys Recker



20 Amariah Ruiter
20 Wilma Kelln
23 Kylie Thramer
25 Paulino Estrada
27 Lisa Oppenhuizen
27 Anne Geleynse
30 Rockelle Ruiter

Northwest Hispanic Ministry Report for May

By Joe Strong

What a wild few months this has been for everybody! Of course, we all know several people who have had the coronavirus. In February, our church had 3 people who were so sick that I thought that maybe I was going to get it as well. Thankfully, that did not happen. So, we all had to learn a few new things. At first we did our church via Facebook. It was so hard to preach to my computer camera instead of looking into the faces of the people I care about. Then we went to Zoom and it was much better. We have had people from India, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador and Columbia participating in our meeting via Zoom.

Here is a picture into my life from last week. Monday was a Zoom meeting for Bridges of Hope, while the prayer group was meeting via Zoom. Tuesday, Pastor Marco preached via Zoom. Wednesday, the young people met and I facilitated the meeting via Zoom. Thursday, our discipleship course was taught via Zoom. Saturday, I met with a man for the first time who was struggling with some issues via Zoom and then on Saturday afternoon, our church had a marriage seminar via Zoom. Finally, Sunday we had our church service via Zoom.

"Brother Jose, could you explain why Gerardo gets to teach the discipleship group? I have a lot of experience teaching this." Gerardo is 26 years old but eager to participate. Our Junta Directiva agreed to allow some of the younger people in our church to teach the discipleship class. So, I selected 4 people who I felt were very able to do

this and set them up for success. I told the man above that my job is to equip the saints for ministry and that he could help by participating and walking alongside those who taught. This has been going very well.

Most of our people have jobs that are deemed essential. Many of those who were laid off have found new work. A few people were just out of work and I used some of the stimulus money that I received to bless them. Some supporters even send me money to help those who were struggling. Over all, our churches have been blessed by God. My job has been made much easier because the Amor Viviente Church and the Vida Nueva Church are having all our meetings together via Zoom. The downside is, of course, those who either do not have a computer or for some reason cannot figure out how to make the computer work for them. There are several people like this. I do try to stay in contact with them by the telephone.

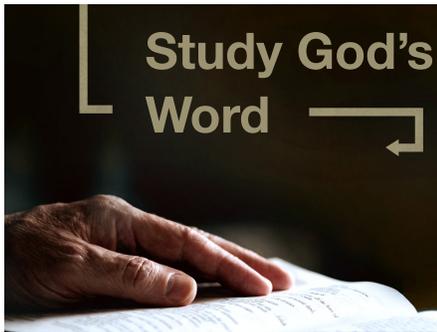
There will be no fundraising banquet this year. God provides for the birds of the field and He provides for this ministry. Thank you for praying for this exciting work and thank you for supporting us financially.

Northwest Hispanic Ministry
701 W. Blackburn Rd. Mt. Vernon, WA 98273
Phone: (360) 540-7474



Thinking Scripturally About our Responses to Covid-19

By Pastor Scott



In the midst of the current coronavirus situation and the responses of many well-meaning Christians,

I am struck by how few of the arguments, being leveled by Christians on every side, are led by Scripture. I hear people appealing to doctors to support every possible action or inaction. I hear people appealing to governmental authorities – some appeal to a governor, others to a president or constitution, some to health officials. There are people appealing to their children and their desires, even people appealing to their concern for loved ones. But one thing that seems missing is anyone actually appealing to Scripture and basing their actions upon the Word of God.

Has Christianity, even protestant and/or reformed Christianity, gotten so far away from the belief in Sola Scripture that well-meaning Christians aren't even aware of the absence of the Word of God? Sola Scripture is the belief that the Bible is the final ruler or determiner in all areas of faith and life. This doesn't mean one can't take government officials, family desires, medical advice and such into account, but when a final decision must be made, then the Word of God must not be violated. One of Jesus' harshest

indictments of the faith of his time was this, "[You are] making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do" (Mark 7:13). Tradition was just another authority in Jesus' day. It was a way of appealing to something else in order to bolster one's argument. We could just as easily substitute any of the things many Christians are appealing to in the Covid-19 situation into this passage.

There are a multiplicity of questions that the Covid-19 situation has raised. There are questions about: Should we wear masks or not? Should we continue the lockdown? If so, for how long? Should churches continue to refrain from meeting together?...

The first question is one which the Scripture does not address directly. The Word declares that we are to submit to those in authority and those who govern (Rom 13). My ability to worship God and obey his commandments is not in any way infringed upon by the presence of a mask over my face. I may not like masks. I may not believe them to be efficacious in preventing the spread of this virus. I may think they are ridiculous. Or conversely, I may like them and believe they are helping to save the lives of people. But how I feel, or what I think, or whatever argument I can make, doesn't matter. The officials in charge have the right to make decisions of this kind and we as the citizens have the right to remove the officials by vote, but are called to submit to them until a legitimate vote occurs.

The second question appears on the surface to be similar to the first, but there is a difference. For a lockdown in its strictest sense would impinge upon Scripturally mandated actions like

worshipping, evangelizing, and caring for one another in need. But we are not living under the strictest interpretation of “lockdown” that can be levied. That makes this second question more difficult to undertake. Again, barring any direct violation of the law of God, Romans 13 would urge us to live with the inconvenience of lockdown, even the loss of our business, etc., until the authorities change their plans or the people change the elected authorities.

The third question is the hardest. For it is arguably a theological question and touches on numerous doctrines of Scripture: What is worship? Who is to worship? How are people to worship? What is the church? Where is the church? Is virtual church really church? Who has the right to determine when worship occurs and how it occurs? Do non-ecclesial authorities have the right to hinder or stop any part of worship?

Do you see how complex this question is? Add onto it further questions about the Bible’s understanding of law such as - What about partiality? Is anyone above the law?, etc. - and the question gets even more complex. To answer these questions would take more time than a *Heartbeat* article allows. Instead, I urge you to study the Word instead of quoting the latest politician, physician, family member, or fear that comes to mind. Let the Word of God guide you, and when your study of the Word comes up against another’s study of the Word, engage in thoughtful, respectful, and honest dialogue. For those willing to engage the study, here is a link to some references on worship:

https://www.openbible.info/topics/worship_together

A Note of Thanks From the Lance Family

We wanted to say thank you for having us come out and share all that the Lord is doing in the Arab world!

Thank you as well for the Abee family who hosted us and the great dinner at the church!

Blessings to you all,

the Lances

Serving the Lord in Tripoli, Libya

Hope in Christ Church Giving in April 2020

	<u>April</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Designated Fund Offerings:	\$ 1,210	\$ 9,871
General Fund Offerings	\$20,116	\$ 94,679
Rent / Utilities Income	2,479	13,466
Interest Income - Undesignated	<u>11</u>	<u>152</u>
Total Undesignated Income	22,606	108,297
General Fund Expenses	<u>(18,508)</u>	<u>(86,137)</u>
Income Over(Under) Expenses	<u>\$ 4,098</u>	<u>\$ 22,160</u>
Total 2020 budget, including ministry quotas	\$ 273,588	
Year-to-Date Budget for 5 months	\$ 113,995	
Total Undesignated Income	<u>108,297</u>	
Income Over (Under) Budget	<u>\$ (5,698)</u>	

Loan Balances:

Classis: \$ 12,500

Hello Church Family,

As you may remember, in February my friend Fritz Mompont, who is a pastor in Haiti, came to visit me and he spoke at church. This is a thank you letter to all of you from Fritz and his church family in Cap Haitien, Haiti. They want to express their thanks for your generous support to his ministry.

Blessings,
Christine Speyer

Dear Brother and Sister in Jesus Christ,

May the peace and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you all.

Our church would like to thank you for your huge financial support which our elders and church members decided to put toward our "Land Purchase Project." Your recent donation of \$8,400 USD was sent through our Senior Pastor Fritzner Mompont when he was in the United States after being well received while speaking to your hearts, friends and your church. Because of your generosity, among others, our church was able to fully pay for a plot of land for \$10,000 USD, which is 500 square meters (which is more land than we had originally planned for). This gives us lots of peace of mind to keep preaching the Gospel.

For the future this will also allow us to:

1. Be able to get our bank account fully open soon.
2. Build a permanent chapel and restroom/roaming project
3. Keep linking Haitian families to a real better life spiritually and financially, through our Moringa project.

Again, many thanks for your generosity. It means the world to us and all of the people in our village who know right now that Grace Baptist Church of Lory has a place where they can call home (before we move up to our real forever home in Heaven, and taking many more with since we will have much more room in our new church to spread God's love and the gospel), instead of having to keep moving around in rental places.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Fritzner Mompont
Father Luckner Mompont
Pastor Monel Alcira

Items of Interest from the May 13, 2020 Council Meeting

By Herman Laninga, Secretary

1. As announced by Pastor Scott at the close of the May 13 worship service, the proposed slate of Elder/Deacons was approved. All returned ballots (62 out of 80 sent out) approved the slate. Thus our first order of business was the drawing of lots via our Zoom meeting for Deacon (2 needed) and Elder (1 needed). In view of all present, Rockelle Ruiter drew the following names for Deacon: Dan Obbink and Barbara Zylstra. Jerry Hop drew the name of Brian Koning for Elder. Many thanks to our retiring Deacons Rockelle Ruiter and Tena VanderPol, and Elder Jerry Hop for their faithful service! The Elders installed the new officers on Monday evening, May 18. The installation was recorded and will be shown after our May 31 virtual worship service.
2. Two people have responded to our ads for open staffing positions. Morgan Roberts has indicated an interest in the Education Director role while Brent Carter of Blaine (works for Faithlife and attends Grace Church) has applied for the Outreach position. Loy Cidalio T. Mije from Brazil who also responded to the position has not responded to further communications sent to him. These positions were scheduled to close April 30 however, due to the Coronavirus restrictions, we are extending the deadline at least until the May Council meeting. Again, if you know of someone who would be a fit for either of these openings please let Pastor Scott or an Elder know immediately.
3. Deacon Jennifer Boer reported HICC has been approved for the amount of \$26,700 from the Payroll Protection Program (CARES Act) to help cover payroll and related expenses over the next 8 weeks.

4. A team of HICC volunteers have re-sided Gina Nicolaas' house that had been damaged by fire. The Deacons supplied the funds and enough remains to also purchase paint to finish the job.

Deacons Digest

By Elaine Snapper

1. At the May meeting the Deacons discussed how to spend the funds for the Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) for the staff at Hope in Christ Church.
2. We also discussed the quick hiring of the new education person so that they could be on board no later than June so the June salary could be paid from proceeds of PPP.
3. Missionary support for the Bos family was also discussed. We may include them in the budget/line item for next year's planning. This is through Resonate Missions.
4. We also discussed community support and encouraging the congregation to give a monetary donation to the Bellingham Food Bank. We also want to encourage the congregation to make cards for patients at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Anyone interested in contributing may mail a check to:

Bellingham Food Bank
1824 Ellis Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

Cards can be mailed to St. Joseph's Hospital at the following address:

St. Joseph's Hospital
2901 Squalicum Parkway
Bellingham, WA 98225

Getting to Know Our Church Family

By Elaine Snapper

This month I am featuring Marlene Butenschoen. Marlene was born in Bellingham. She had two sisters and three brothers. She was third in line. Of the siblings, three of them had blue eyes and the other three had brown eyes. One of her sisters passed away two years ago.

For the first four grades of school, Marlene attended grade school in Lynden. For grades 5 and 6 she attended Harmony School in the Mt. Baker district. From grades 7 to 11 she attended Mt. Baker High School. She quit after the 11th grade and got married to her husband, Walter. Walter is a retired carpenter.

The couple had three children, two girls and one boy. One of their daughters lives in Conway, and the other daughter lives in Burlington. Their son lives in the house they bought in 1963 in the Silver Beach area. All of her children are married, and she has five grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. All of them live around here, except for one grandson who lives in Texas, and he is a pastor. His wife is a teacher.

For hobbies she used to crochet a lot and she embroidered 10-12 tablecloths, made doilies and napkins. She quit doing that. She likes to camp in Lyman along the river with her family. While she camps, she likes to read and she likes to play Solitaire on her iPad.

When she was a teenager, Marlene attended the Christian Missionary Alliance Church in Bellingham and made profession of faith there.

Then a sister-in-law, Elaine, invited her to go to a Bible class at our church. She went to that several years, and then she was baptized by Pastor Jim Peterson in 1994. She said she grew as a Christian gradually, and didn't really have an "aha" moment. She attended the Wednesday morning Bible study for many years.

For employment, she worked when the kids were small in the Safeway Bakery in Bellingham when it was on Cornwall Street. Later on, Marlene worked for the Bellingham National Bank in the accounting department. Their offices at that time were in the Bellingham Towers.

In November, Marlene and Walter will be celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary.

We are so glad Marlene is a part of our church!

