



North Fort Myers Church of the Nazarene Messenger

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The Soil of the Soul

The time has come at last. In around 18 hours, 12 members of our congregation will board a plane and set off for the Native American Christian Academy in Sun Valley, Arizona. Our goal is to bring some help with needed repairs to the facility, and hopefully offer help and encouragement to the students and leaders as well.

Interestingly, the days leading up to the trip have been marked by struggles for several of our team. Most of them do not seem like a big deal individually. But viewed in collection, it feels like an attack has been undertaken.

Of course, we are not surprised. Our enemy always seems to think he can win by nibbling away at our health or our finances or our peace. But he always underestimates the power of Christ, doesn't he? Or, at least he tries to persuade us to.

Interestingly, we have talked much in our recent study on Wednesday nights – Soul Keeping – about the parable of the sower and the seed. We've studied the fact that the seed and the sower in the parable, and in life, never change. And it has brought all of us a distinct and solid assurance of peace. We have also considered how important it is for us to work to maintain our souls as "good soil," open always to the Sower and the Seed.

An important step in maintaining that good soil, we have discussed, is keeping the "ground" of our soul soft. We do that by maintaining our relationship with the Holy Spirit and staying open to every lesson He might be teaching us. We also work to keep a listening heart wherever He might be showing us that we have grown hard or calloused in an attitude or an action. The picture we were given in our study is of beautiful, black, soft, compliant soil, rich with nutrients and easily cultivated. A gardener would see it as soil that is particularly welcoming to the planter and especially nourishing to the seed.

As we go and as we work, our team will try our best to minister Jesus in this school. And while the enemy may try to confuse and complicate our process, he is fighting a losing battle. Because our team has been recently taught how important it is to purposefully take steps to keep our soul soft and tender to the work of the Spirit in us and through us. If there is any success derived from this project, it will be because of His touch and His Presence within each of us and on our behalf.

This team has not been hand-picked by any leadership of this church. They have not been selected because they are special or have been specifically trained for whatever lies ahead. This team has been selected by a much more important process. GOD chose who would be on this team. The process was His and His alone. The project has been prayed over and offered as a sacrifice to Him, and He will bring any success that results.

It will be as this team prays and submits the health of the team, the attitudes of the team, the unity of the team's spirit, the quality of the team's efforts, and the collective seeking of GOD's glory in the work of the team – that the soil will be prepared and all the reasons for this trip will come to light. It will be as the soil of the individual hearts remains compliant and open to whatever work the Lord wants done – both physically and spiritually – that this project will truly earn the title "Work and Witness."

If you read back over everything that has been written in this article, you will notice that everything written about this group of 12 people also applies to the church at large. Because everything we do, every project we undertake, every measure of sacrifice or offering we give relies upon the willingness of each person to do exactly what is being required.

Every one of us has been hand-selected by GOD for the work of His Kingdom. Every one of us have the responsibility of maintaining a compliant, welcoming, easily cultivated soul.

The work we've been called to do is specific to every individual, but every believer works in tandem with every other believer ... a team approach. Each one recognizing how important it is for us to be "keepers of our own soul," so we can begin repairing a world in need of "fixing," encouraging and offering hope to those who desperately need other souls who care. Repairing walls, bringing beauty and new life to old structures and always staying completely obedient (soft) in a world that works around the clock to make us hard and calloused.

There's a work to be done. Keeping our souls will take all our time and effort, no matter where we are called, and no matter where we may go. But what a lovely garden we will be helping create. Pastor Becky

Calendar

2/28-3/7 – Work & Witness trip

11 – Food Distribution

12 – Lifeline Family Benefit Dinner

12 – Board Meeting

14 – Billie Swamp Safari

15 – Jim Hutson in Concert

20-21 – District Ladies Retreat @ LPC3

March



Birthdays & Anniversaries

03 – Karen Haiflich

11 – Stacie Jo Fizer

Lorraine Jungles

15 – Kitty Baxter (90th)

17 – Brody Fizer

19 – Elmer Jones

20 – Mary Kisner

Tom & Julia Moore (50th)

Judy Rice

25 – Norma Gruber

28 – Gary Rice

30 – Marilyn Colter

Tim Dillehay

Janice Kent

Lynn Kent



Phoebe Barr
Ida Chaplow
Laurel Chapman
Ernie Rybold
Sheryl Colie & Family
Ardyth Eldridge
Mark & Kim Barr
Kenny & Gail Goodman
Children & Teen Depts.
A Youth Pastor

Elis Lodge
Patrick Lindsey
Judi Predko's family
Paul Jones
Dan & Orion Predko
Marlene Ryan
Louis Perez
Phyllis Obney
Eileen Jennings
Unsaved Loved Ones

Prayer Needs:

Betty Coolie
Janice O'Lynn
Eileen Massett
Betty Predko
Dorothy Chapman
Joseph Groves
Lisa Koch
Regina Williams
Kitty Baxter
Franklin Graham Tour in Great Britain

Ben Bergman
Pastor Jim Spear
Mark & Lisa Koch
Tom Blakeman
Paul & Grace Boling
Lorraine Jungles
Dave Peck
Allice Daugherty
Our District Family



Jim Hutson

in Concert

Sunday, March 15, 10:45 A.M.
Bring your friends, neighbors and family and prepare to be blessed!

We need volunteers to help with the distribution of food on Wed., Mar. 11, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, to help with a variety of tasks. Please spread the word to anyone you think could benefit from this special outreach and join us as we partner to help those in need. And once again, thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus in North Fort Myers.

Saturday, March 8



Daylight Saving Time Begins!

Results from our 2020 church elections:

Church Board:

Dan Bowker
Arnold Burris
Dave Fregeau
Lucille Logan
Dave Parker
Linda Romano

Missionary President:

Sheryl Colie

District Assembly Delegate:

Arnold Burris

NMI Convention Delegate:

Lucille Logan



BILLIE SWAMP SAFARI



All Church Outing
Saturday, March 14
Cost \$15, plus lunch
 (There is a restaurant on site, but you can bring a picnic.)
More details to follow.
Sign up in the foyer.

Southern Florida District

Ladies Retreat

“Known, Understanding our Identity in Christ”

Friday & Saturday, March 20-21

at Lake Placid Camp and Conference Center

Check-in: 4-4:55 P.M. - Dinner on Friday: 5:00 P.M.

Michelle Butler will be our guest speaker. Michelle is the creative worship arts/communication pastor at Pompano Beach, and is a proud mom of a son in the Navy, a son at FSU, and a daughter at Trevecca. Alicia Esque will be leading us in praise and worship during the weekend. She is the Assistant Worship Leader at Palm City New Hope. There will be 3 powerful worship/teaching sessions and focus group time to encourage us in our spiritual growth.



This retreat will have something for everyone – fun, bonfire, rest/relax time, laughter, friendship building. Feel free to bring games to play with your friends during the free time. BUNK \$49 (until February 29). BUNK \$60 (March 1-13), MOTEL \$59 (until February 29), MOTEL \$70 (March 1-13), Register NOW! The deadline to register is March 13, 2020.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

It is difficult for me to believe that I am writing a devotional for the third month of 2020. Time is marching on! (Forgive the pun.)

Because we are holiday centric, we naturally think of St. Patrick's Day when we think of March. The wearing of green, celebrating all things Irish, shamrocks, and proudly proclaiming to all who will hear, "Kiss me, I'm Irish," if you have even a hint of Irish ancestry.

In researching St. Patrick's Day, I have found some facts that might have slipped through your holiday celebration without notice.

The first thing I learned was that he was far from a saint in his early years. Patrick was a self-professed pagan and only found the Christian faith during a stint in prison. He studied in a monastery where he found his life's passion. Irish folklore adds leprechauns, rainbows and pots of gold into the mix. But those symbols have little to do with Patrick. He actually spent more than thirty years converting the Celtic Druids to Christianity and building schools and churches across Ireland.

St. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, was born in, what was then, Old Kilpatrick, Scotland. When he was fourteen, Patrick was captured during a raiding party and taken to Ireland as a slave to tend and herd sheep. He managed to escape at age 20 after he dreamed God told him to leave Ireland by going to the coast. He was able to persuade a group of sailors to bring him back to Britain where he reunited with his family. Patrick had many dreams that influenced his decisions in his life. In one dream, he heard the people of Ireland, who practiced paganism at the time, calling out for him to walk among them. He began his priesthood studies shortly after having that vision. Though Ireland was made up of mostly Druids and pagans, Patrick was able to convert entire kingdoms to Christianity over the three decades he spent there. History says that Patrick used the shamrock in his sermons as a visual aid to help represent the Trinity, showing how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can all exist as separate parts of the same entity. Though much about Patrick's life is speculation, we're pretty sure his real name wasn't Patrick. According to Irish legend, his birth name was actually Maewyn Succat, or in Latin, Magonus

Succetus. He took on the name of Patrick when he became a priest.

We read about the characters in the Bible and are in awe at how God used them to change the minds and hearts of peoples and nations. We marvel at Moses, Ruth, and Daniel, in the Old Testament and John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, and Saul who became Paul, in the New Testament.

The truth is God has never stopped working and using ordinary people who are willing to listen to and follow him. St. Patrick is a prime example of what God can do with someone willing to follow Him in obedience.

What are you willing to do to see the gospel spread?

Matthew 25:40 (NASB)

The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

What this verse should say to us is even the small acts of kindness that we consider insignificant go a long way in building the Kingdom.

You may not convert entire kingdoms to Christ, but you can be influential in the world you touch every day. Volunteer at a food collection and distribution bank. Ask the local elementary school if you can help tutor or mentor at risk students. Help coach a sports team. Become a big sister or big brother to a child who might need a friend. You can make a difference.

If St. Patrick taught us nothing else, it was that God wants to use anyone willing to step out and follow the One who is in control.

Blessings and have a safe St. Patrick's Day! Pastor Van



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