

News from Cobham Park Baptist Church

AUGUST 2020

The LIGHTKEEPER

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." —Matthew 5:14

Dear Cobham Park Church Family,

A friend and I were talking the other day about the Coronavirus. What else, right? In small-talk, Covid-19 seems to have dethroned the weather. Anyway, we were discussing how The Texas Medical Association had ranked attending a religious service at the same risk level as going to a bar, sports stadium, or music concert. That didn't make sense to me when I considered all the precautions most churches are taking. I quickly concluded, "Oh—they must be talking about extreme church: big crowds indoors and in close proximity, with congregational singing and everything else." My friend agreed. I chuckled at the phrase I'd just used: "extreme church." It sounded like some wild and wooly daredevil stunt. A year ago, opening a hymnal would not be classed with barhopping or leaping into a mosh pit. And yet here we are.

We all want to get back to such extreme church activities. Maybe you could even get really crazy—like passing an unsanitized offering plate to a non-mask-wearing-neighbor sitting less than six feet from you on the same pew (gasp!). Don't worry. Until this pandemic blows over, we'll continue using the long-handled fishing nets.

All this has opened my eyes to another surprising development which is as insidious as any virus. Over the years, we've come to classify prominent activities of the New Testament church as extreme. I'm talking about wild church practices like prayer meetings that go on for hours (but no one notices the time), sacrificial giving, miracles, passionate proclamation of the gospel, missionary zeal, taking Christ's teaching seriously, and the Holy Spirit's leadership.

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common (Acts 4:31-32, ESV).

Yikes! What if this pandemic made us wake up to the extreme church we've been missing for generations? This has little to do with where we worship or how far apart we sit. Such things do not define what church is—but Jesus does. I won't settle for anything less than Him!

In Christ's Love,



Pastor Keith

PROVERB-PICKING CHALLENGE

Thank you for your wonderful feedback on Proverbs all through July! I now have plenty to chew on as we read Proverbs together again in August. I challenge you to join us in reading one chapter of Proverbs each day. Just match the chapter with the date: we read chapter one on August first, chapter two on the second, etc. I plan to write a devotion based on your input from July every day. We'll post those on the church Facebook page and send them out by email (let us know if you want your e-mail address added).



We've continued our 10am Sunday worship services under the church pavilion and a large tent. With the help of good weather (thank you Lord!), fans, plenty of ice-water, and shade, we've braved the summer so far. Outside, we can spread out, enjoy the fresh air, and skip some of the difficulties that would come with meeting indoors. We're grateful to the deacons, sound system volunteers, singers, pianists, and church leaders for all their hard work every week! Bring a lawn chair and join us in person or on Facebook Live!



PRAISE PAGE

What do the following hymns from *The Baptist Hymnal* have in common?

To God Be the Glory
Rescue the Perishing
All the Way My Savior Leads Me
Praise Him, Praise Him
Tell Me the Story of Jesus
Speak to My Heart
I Am Thine, O Lord

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior
Close to Thee
He Hideth My Soul
Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine
Jesus Is Tenderly Calling
Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It

If you guessed that they were all written by Fanny Crosby, you are correct! Fanny Crosby lived to be 95 and spent her life in blindness from infancy. Her father died when she was six months old, so Fanny was raised by her mother and grandmother. These godly women raised her in the church, grounded her in Christian principles, and helped her memorize long passages of scripture. Under the encouragement of her grandmother, she began memorizing five chapters of the Bible each week at age 10. By the time she was 15, she had memorized the gospels, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and many of the Psalms.

Crosby thanked God for His blessing that she was blind: “If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.”

Crosby has been attributed with writing over 8,000 hymns. She described her hymn-writing as a process that began with prayer: “It may seem a little old-fashioned, always to begin one’s work with prayer, but I never undertake a hymn without first asking the good Lord to be my inspiration.” She set a goal of winning a million people to Christ through her hymns and prayed when she wrote a hymn that it would bring people to Jesus.

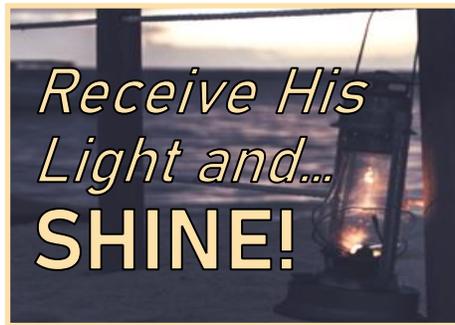
During a cholera epidemic in New York City in 1849, Crosby stayed in the city to nurse the sick rather than leaving for her safety. According to biographer Bernard Ruffin, “In this atmosphere of death and gloom, Fanny became increasingly introspective over her soul’s welfare. She began to realize that something was lacking in her spiritual life. She knew that she had gotten wrapped up in social, political, and educational reform, and did not have a true love for God in her heart.”

During this pandemic, have we experienced a feeling of death and gloom, finding ourselves wrapped up in social, political and educational reforms? Has the situation caused us to reflect on our spiritual lives and our soul’s welfare? If so, we can learn much from Fanny Crosby’s example. In 1873, she penned the words which are carved on her gravestone: “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.” Despite her blindness, God used her in a mighty way to help us praise Him through song, as Fanny did, all the day long.

In Christ,

Cindy

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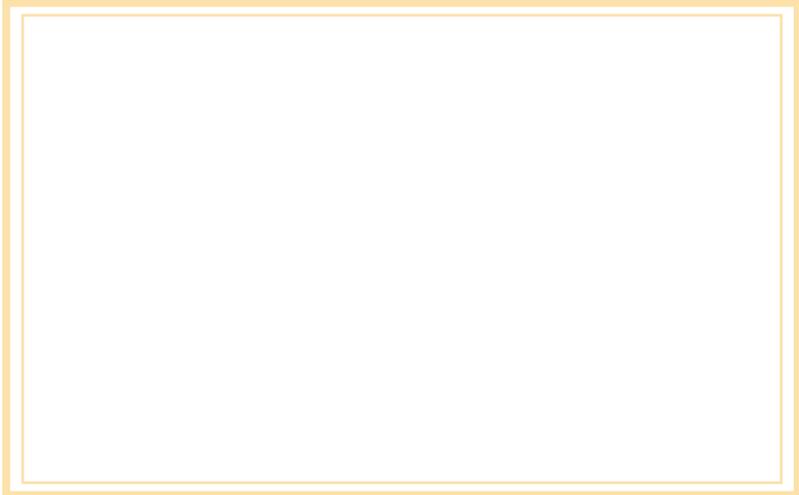
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