

FOREWORD

Dear Hillside Christian Church Friends,

This November we will celebrate 65 years in ministry as Hillside Christian Church! Sixty-five years of worship, Bible studies, VBS, weddings, baptisms, funerals, and baby dedications. Decades worth of service and mission projects, feeding hungry people, housing homeless people, teaching the faith to all people, and throwing wide the doors of welcome and hospitality.

That has been our practice since our beginning. It has become our identity, in a sense, that Hillside is known in the community for openhearted and generous reception of any who enter these halls. It's really the essence of Miss Lewtie Summers' legacy. Hillside's original visionary and benefactor, she deeded her family's homestead to Hillside to help start the church. And the legacy of generosity continues as we focus on "Extending Our Welcome" to provide biblically-inspired hospitality for our ministries and our community.

We hear the Apostle Paul's encouragement to the church in Rome to "reach out and welcome one another" (Romans 15:7 The Message). And we welcome one another as Christ welcomes us, by providing hospitality, by producing disciples, and by proclaiming good news.

I invite you to consider the words, verses and prayers in this collection, that they might nurture your faith, strengthen your spirit, and guide you toward your place as we prepare to "Extend Our Welcome."

It is a joy to serve in ministry alongside you.

Rev. Andy Beck

SUNDAY, APRIL 28

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own thoughts."

Proverbs 3:5

To trust requires that we believe in what we have been taught and become obedient. We may trust in ways that lead us in the wrong direction.

To confess our wrong directions brings us to our knees seeking God's forgiveness. And again, we just trust God's grace to forgive us. As forgiven sinners, we are ready to forgive others.

Trusting God develops a new relationship with God, others and our enemies. This opens the door to enable you to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. No wonder Proverbs 3:5 teaches us to "Trust in the Lord."

Great God of grace and eternal forgiveness, empower us to trust your love with soul, mind, and heart. Amen.

Dr. George Campbell

MONDAY, APRIL 29

"Each person should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2nd Corinthians 9:7

As we consider our gifts to God, let us also think about His gifts to us. He gave the ultimate gift, His life. He only asks us to give what we are capable of giving and to give it joyfully. Let us put Him at the top of our priority list.

Lord, help us to be generous and cheerful givers.

Amen.

Howard Brazelton

TUESDAY, APRIL 30

... "Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart."

1st Samuel 16:7

When you meet someone new, how do you form your first impression of them? Do you concentrate on the way they are dressed, style or color of their hair, piercings or tattoos, or if their speech isn't the same as yours? How differently would you 'see' the stranger if you could look into their heart or soul? As we meet visitors and new members coming through the doors of Hillside Christian Church, may we remember that Jesus welcomed with open arms all into His circle. Should we do anything else?

Holy Father God, Thank you for the living example of acceptance demonstrated by your Son and our Savior Jesus. We ask for eyes that see hearts instead of physical appearances and souls that never lose faith in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Eloise Glaspie

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Psalm 118:24

"God has created a new day, silver and green and gold. Live that the sunset may find us worthy His gift to hold." These are the words to my favorite Girl Scout camp

breakfast blessing. Every day is a gift, even when life is hard. Every day we have a new opportunity to see the beauty God has created and to have our own new beginning to live into the fulfillment of who God wants us to be. Let us contemplate the ways that we might do that, the ways that we may also further His kingdom. Let us strive to “Live that the sunset may find us worthy His gift to hold.”

Dear Lord, Help us to open our hearts and minds to new possibilities for ourselves as Christians and to the mission of Hillside Christian Church in furthering your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Bonnie Dickson

THURSDAY, MAY 2

“Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

Psalm 29:1-2

Generosity is at the heart of giving. Paul is correct when he says “The Lord loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). Something wonderful, almost miraculous, occurs when we open our hearts and purse-strings for the work of the Lord. It is as if “manna” is spread before us; we are called to receive more than we give and our eyes are open to a myriad of opportunities to serve more and more. The Psalmist says “Give unto the Lord...” and concludes with “The Lord will give strength unto His People.”

Lord, Accept our gifts and multiply them for Your work we call Hillside Christian Church. We gratefully accept the strength you provide and the opportunities to do Your will. Amen

Harold Watson

FRIDAY, MAY 3

"He was despised and rejected; a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on Him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down...But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed." Isaiah 53:3-4

Read the passage and then slow it down and read it again. Really let it soak in. At least once a day the thought that there are not enough hours in the day crosses my mind. This followed by the stress to get everything done that needs to be done, as well as staying mentally healthy to be the best parent and wife I can be. Life can be crazy no matter who you are. Much of the time, the craziness can affect our moods, emotions and reactions. The more stress there is, the more we tend to be short with others, and even worse, with God. Jesus was tortured and murdered by us and for us, and no matter what, He remained obedient to His father.

Take a minute and breathe, slow down, and understand what was done for us in spite of ourselves. Breathe in the unfailing love He has for us. It sure makes what's going on and our day to day stresses seem petty. This passage reminds me to look up to talk to God and let Him lead me. Because He is my father, my life is committed to Him. All I want to do is be obedient to Him. No excuses.

So often the chaos of life causes us to forget the true depth of what's been done for us, for our sins, for our wrongdoings. It's not we who suffered, it was Him, but for us! Read this passage over and over if you need to throughout your day and let it really put things in perspective for you. Understand the love He must have had and has for us for Him to have gone through it all. I am not worthy.

Lord, we are wrapped in your unfailing, unconditional love and there is none greater. Help us to keep our eyes on the bigger picture and that is not of this world. Let us never forget what has been done for us. Let us live a life that is y6 pleasing to you, Father. Nothing else matters! Life on earth is nothing compared to eternity with You! Amen.

Ginger Hill

SATURDAY, MAY4

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:1-3

When we become Christians we aren't instantly wise and knowledgeable. Learning begins at salvation and continues the rest of our lives. Some believers don't seem to grow at all. Spiritual growth requires time and effort. Through practice and God's grace we learn wisdom and develop spiritual maturity.

Dear God, Be with us all as we grow daily in our Christian faith. Amen.

Willena Downhour

SUNDAY, MAY 5

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways, acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6

I love the navigation that is available to us nowadays with smart phones. I just say, “give me directions to (location)” and I soon have directions displayed and a voice telling me how to get there! I trust that the directions are correct. I can visually see the route displayed and the turns I will be taking. I take some comfort in being able to see it all mapped out and knowing that I will hear each turn announced to me. Thank you, Google. But sometimes, I know a better route or I make a mistake and turn too soon and end up on a different path.

Navigating through life, though, that’s a different system altogether, isn’t it? My granddaughter (16 years old) told me the other day how she has her life planned. College, then marriage, then by age 23, her first child and so on. It’s good to have plans and goals, but we soon learn that there are turns we can’t see and hazards that we may not be able to avoid and if you don’t have a navigation system you can trust, we can feel devastated, abandoned and fearful.

Our scripture above directs us to trust the Lord and to lean on the assurance that He knows where we are and He will guide us through. It can be difficult not having it laid out before us; not seeing why we’re on a particular path. The key to certainty, that no matter what path our journey takes us, is our acknowledgement of God’s hand on us and asking Him to be our guide through the good and the bad.

Romans 8:28 says, “For we know that all things work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose.”

Heavenly Father, I bring to you today my hopes, fears, and concerns. I ask that you guide me in all my choices and decisions today. I want to honor you in all things. I know that you love me and I will trust you on this journey. Amen.

Alice Sharp

MONDAY, MAY 6

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of all; extend hospitality to strangers."

Romans 12:11-13

House Blindness is a phrase used in the Real Estate business. House blindness occurs as we live in our homes, not seeing the aging and accumulation going on around us. We only truly notice when we actually clean up and update. Then we regain the pride and joy we once had. The same thing happens with our church building. We only see the warmth and love that surrounds us and fail to see through the eyes of the new people who enter our building. When we do clean up and upgrade, we are surprised at the renewed warmth, joy and pride that we regain. It helps us project that warmth, joy and pride to all who enter Hillside – both the regulars and new people. We do a much better job of “Extending our Welcome!” Please pray, consider, pray again, and commit to “Extending our Welcome.”

Dear Lord who gives life, who gave His Son and so much more, be our advisor and help us determine what to give, with love, to “Extending our Welcome.” In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Bob Little

TUESDAY, MAY 7

"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

Ephesians 2:19

On a recent trip, I struck up a conversation with a lady in the hotel elevator. It started with the usual pleasantries –

Are you on vacation, working, visiting family or friends? During the short trip to the lobby, Linda and I began to share more of who we are. Usually I am hesitant about having long conversations with a stranger. For some reason, I couldn't walk away this time.

We talked for more than a half hour about ourselves, our families, and our beliefs. As we hugged and said goodbye, Linda handed me a bright new penny. To her the penny signified new beginnings and the brightness of family, friends and fellow Christians. Now when I am handed a shiny new penny, I am renewed in faith and in friendship. It is a reminder to me to be open to sharing myself and my faith.

Loving God, Thank you for the people you place in our lives. May we recognize and accept the opportunities presented to us. Amen.

Kathy Shirley

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking..."

1st Corinthians 13:4-7

1st Corinthians 13:4-7 is a passage from the Bible that we often hear at weddings. You know the passage. Maybe you have also heard it suggested that as you read these verses, you should replace the words "love" and "it" with your own name. This can be a very convicting exercise as we realize how far short of God's standards we fall.

Here is another option. Think of this passage as a description of God's love for you. Let His words heal you,

encourage you, and guide you. Let them reinforce the truth that nothing will ever separate you from His love and He will never leave you.

After basking in God's love, ask Him whom He would like you to love today. He may bring to mind someone you need to forgive (because love "keeps no record of being wronged"). He may prompt you to pray about a coworker you tend to avoid (because love is "patient"), or He may nudge you to take brownies to the new neighbors or a meal to a grieving family (because love is "kind"). Listen for God's direction, do what He says, and enjoy the blessing that comes with obeying Him and loving others with His love.

(Adapted from the book 100 Favorite Bible Verses)

Thank you, Lord, that You are love and You never give up on us. Please use me to share your love with others.

Susie Jones

THURSDAY, MAY 9

"I will lift up my eyes to the mountains from whence shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2

These have been memorable Bible verses for me for a number of years. When I felt burdened and did not know where to turn, these verses came to mind. The realization came slowly that God was working in my life when, for some time, I thought it was my efforts! God was pushing and pulling even when I didn't know it. So, if all else fails, PRAY!

Hear my prayer Lord, and open my ears that I may hear. Amen.

Bobbie Hawks

FRIDAY, MAY 10

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you're doing."

1st Thessalonians 5:11

The main thing when I think about Hillside is "family." I've been at this church for 10 years and there hasn't been a year go by that I haven't felt like I belonged. There are always people asking about my family and how I'm doing so that makes me feel welcomed.

Lord, help me extend this sense of family, that has been so graciously given to me, to others. Amen.

Curtis Lee-Wertz

SATURDAY, MAY 11

"Precious treasure and oil are in the dwelling of a wise person, but a foolish man consumes them."

Proverbs 21:20

You have given us everything. May we give generously from our entire harvest. May our generosity give us joy as we share our material things with others here and around the world. Accept our money, talents, and our time as we share your love in tangible ways.

Dear God, multiply our gifts. In Christ's name, Amen.

Charlene Wilson

SUNDAY, MAY 12

"Remember this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart - not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver."

2nd Corinthians 9:6-7

We are entering a special time in the life of Hillside Christian Church. As the scripture says, we should each decide the contribution that is right and appropriate for us. None of us can achieve it alone, but together we can do anything. It is important that we have a space that is comfortable and one that we can share with everyone.

Dear God, Assist me in this extremely important decision of sharing my resources generously. Amen.

Willis Wilson

MONDAY, MAY 13

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:19

The theme of our Capital Campaign "Extending our Welcome" refers to our desire to be gracious hosts to the many people and groups who enter our church doors. I think the theme also speaks to the way God extends His welcome to all who are willing to believe and follow His son, Jesus. I feel so blessed to be a child of God who accepts me as I am and continues to shower my life with grace and love.

Lord, Use me and this body of believers at Hillside as instruments through which the Holy Spirit can demonstrate your love. Amen.

Sue Britt

TUESDAY, MAY 14

"Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine."

1st Samuel 17:38-40

My favorite story in the Bible is the story of David and Goliath. It shows that when King Saul offers David his armor, David said that he only needed a few rocks for his sling. I like this story because when David slays Goliath it shows that God's power can come from unlikely places.

Dear Lord, Thank you for everything that you have given to us. Help us to be grateful for what we have and to not be greedy. Thank you for the sun, the moon, and the stars to light up our lives. In your Son's name I pray. Amen.

Noah Beck

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

"Forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who have sinned against us. For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Matthew 6:12,14-15

Each Sunday as we pray the Lord's Prayer and we reach the 12th verse, I have a sense of hesitation as I quickly evaluate myself and the forgiveness that I have demonstrated to others. Is this verse really saying that God will forgive ME in the same way that I forgive those who

have wronged me? I believe it does. Oh my, can I really do that?

I know without a doubt that I need forgiveness and I want forgiveness, but I didn't deserve to lose my job. I didn't deserve the pain and loss I've suffered at the hands of another. Do I really have to let go of my justified anger and righteous indignation? Must I really forgive someone when they have caused me so much grief? The honest answer is Yes. The question, then, is "how?"

Obviously, some things are easier to let go of and to forgive than others. I can easily forgive the idiot...er person...who cut me off and waved impolitely to me on the highway. I can forgive my child who has spoken hurtful words to me in anger or the friend who is careless with a word. But how can I let go of the much deeper and more complicated situations in my life?

Some things are truly a matter of letting go of our pride. Sometimes we just need more time and be given the soothing balm of empathy. It's understandable and it's human nature, but it's not God's nature. Those are the times when we finally need to stop and truly look in the mirror and reflect on what holding on to our pride and anger is doing to us and, possibly, to those around us. We must step back and ask ourselves, is holding these wrongs in our hearts making us kinder, more joyful, more loving, or more understanding? Am I becoming the person I want to be and should be? Am I as forgiving as I have asked God to be toward me?

*I must make one note of clarification at this point, however. If you are suffering or have suffered from abuse, please seek help. If you are currently still in that situation, do whatever you can to get out and seek professional help in working through the issues and pain. Tell someone and, if they don't help, tell someone else.

Heavenly Father, you know my heart and my mind. You know my pain and my anger. I ask that you transform my mind; that you soften my heart. Help me, Father, to forgive. Please release me from my pride and give me a heart for Jesus. Amen.

Alice Sharp

THURSDAY, MAY 16

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son..." John 3:16

As a parent, there is no greater love, and no greater gift, than that of a child. I can give no greater compliment or statement of trust than to say, "I trust you with my child." To that end, God said to us, "I give you my child. Care for Him." As keepers of a trust, it is our obligation and privilege to care for the living Christ. There is no greater responsibility. To care for a child, to tend to the homeless, to volunteer in the name of the Holy Spirit, to support the mission of the Church; the physical house of Christ as well as the spiritual...these all are ways of tending to God's trust in us.

Trusting Lord, Bring to me, and to our community of faith, the wherewithal to tend to your Holy Name, in whichever means you deem adequate and appropriate. Amen.

Dale Meyer

FRIDAY, MAY 17

"Give generously to Him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this, the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to."

Deuteronomy 15:10

Tithing can serve as a self-righteous diversion around Jesus' message. It can become a mechanical rule to justify luxurious living. The New Testament does not explicitly instruct us to tithe. Jesus and the Apostle Paul both encouraged liberal giving. Liberal offerings go beyond tithing, as we see in the case of the poor widow. Tithes were an integral part of the Old Testament system of sacrifices and offerings. The New Testament assumes the tithe as a minimal standard for giving.

The weakness of the tithe as our only guideline for giving is obvious. Tithing unfortunately focuses our attention on how much we "give" rather than on how much we "keep." In upside-down fashion, God cares more about what we "keep" than what we "give." God is concerned about our heart not our head. When we give freely with no thought or concern about self appearance but only for the good of the cause needed, then we are truly in sync with the love of God as expressed in the New Testament. God gave everything including His Son that we might be home with Him! Can we do less than follow this example.

Oh Loving God, Help us to open our hearts to the wonders You offer when we give generously above that which is expected of us. Let us see your treasures displayed like the dew drops that cover the spring grass... more that we can ever hope to count but arrayed in glorious splendor before our eyes! Always more and more, You are the gift that never diminishes. Amen.

Harold Watson

SATURDAY, MAY 18

"...I am the Root and the offspring of David and the bright Morning Star."

Revelation 22:16

Once planted, a Bamboo Tree must be faithfully watered and fertilized for 4 years before any growth is noted. However, in year 5, this tree often grows as much as 80 feet in just a few weeks. Was the tree lying dormant during those 4 years? Not at all. All nourishment and energy was directed to developing a strong root system that would sustain the future size of the tree.

Like the Bamboo Tree, Hillside Christian Church has been growing a strong, faithful root system in Jesus for many years. Now the time has come for Hillside to grow outwardly in our community and the world. With commitment and prayer from each one of us and with God's help, we will thrive from our deep roots and reach for the fullness that God has planned for us!

Holy Father God, We ask for your blessing that our roots will grow deeper into You. May our lives and the Tree that is Hillside Church thrive in the coming months and years with thankfulness for all that you have given us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Eloise Glaspie

SUNDAY, MAY 19

"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." Luke 22:27

The people of Hillside Christian Church are some of the most friendly people I know; and everyone has an attitude of service. All you have to do is look around after any potluck lunch or dinner. In almost military precision, the chair racks come out and are loaded, the tables folded and stacked, and in only minutes, everything is neatly stored behind closed doors in the designated closet. Yes, we have custodial service, but this is shared work, as is so much of the work done by Hillsiders. We serve the Lord, we serve our guests, we serve each other and we serve the community.

Lord, We thank you for the opportunity to serve. In all the ways we might honor you, we truly hope that serving others pleases you most. Amen.

Gary Langemach

AFTERWORD

A Prayer from the Journals

Of Miss Lewtie Summers,

Co-Founder of Hillside Christian Church

Our Father, may Thy Holy Spirit move in our church and in our community- -- that those who are weak may know your power; that those who wander away may find their way to you; that those who are lonely and afflicted may feel your loving, comforting presence, and the peace that passes all human understanding. Bless us all as you see we have need, and may we find in you our strength and peace. For Jesus' sake, Amen.