

April 2020

Celebration Magazine

A publication celebrating what Jesus is doing at Clear Creek



"This was a time Brock exemplified to his peers and other generations we can take our next step in stretching and sharing our faith without doubt or fear.."

from First Time for Everything... Even Preaching

DON'T WASTE THE PANDEMIC

It's tempting to believe this pandemic has put God's purpose on hold. But don't believe it.

Remember, in 1606, Shakespeare wrote the great plays *Macbeth* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* while quarantined at home.

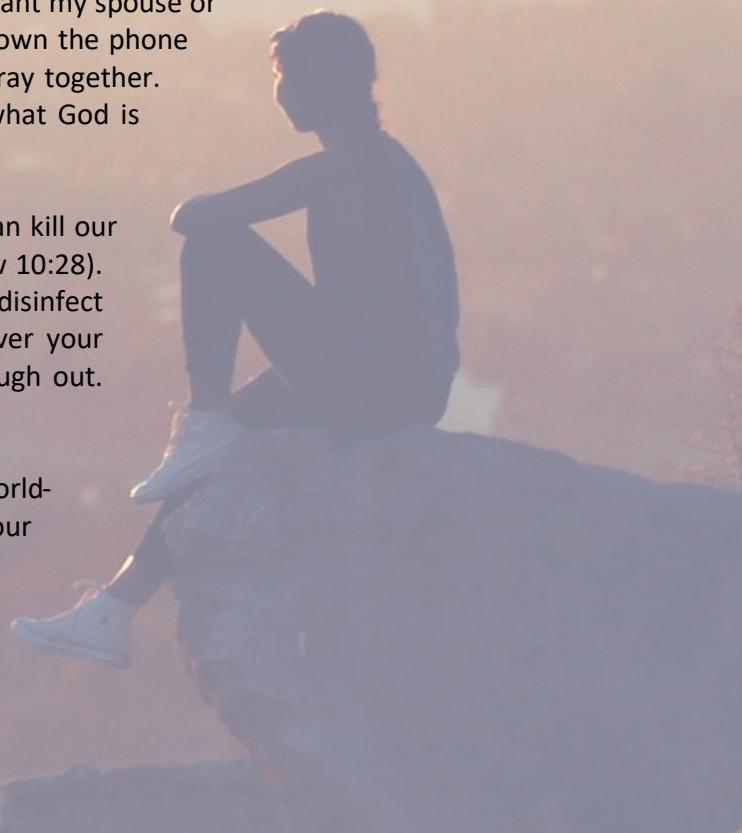
And in 1665, when Cambridge University closed for a year because of the Great Plague of London, a young scholar named Isaac Newton was sent home where he refined his ideas that later became his theory of gravity.

Shakespeare and Newton didn't waste their pandemics. And neither should we.

If you don't want to waste the pandemic, then...

- **Focus on what you can do more than what you can't.** Second Peter 1:3 says that God has "*given us everything we need for life and godliness*". You have what you need for now. So, don't look back on this moment and wish you did more. Take a moment to list everything you have the ability to do right now. Within that list you will find God's purpose for you today.
- **Read about God more than the pandemic.** This pandemic will pass, but your relationships with God will last. While this is not a call to ignorance, it is a call to invest your time and attention on the Author of life more than on an agent of death.
- **Train today for who you want to be after the pandemic.** Here's the question: What kind of person do you want to be when the pandemic passes? Train accordingly. Use this off season to train in prayer, study, sacrificial giving, love for your family and neighbors. Not sure how to care for your neighbor? Circle back to point #1 and brainstorm what you can do. Can you chat on the phone, run an errand, mow a lawn or pay a bill? Then do that.
- **Invest in those you're with.** Ask yourself, "How do I want my spouse or kids to remember this season?" Invest in them. Put down the phone and turn off the screen. Ask questions. Play games. Pray together. Tell stories. Look at the family photo album. Share what God is teaching you through this season.
- **Take sin seriously.** Jesus warns us not to fear what can kill our bodies, but to fear the sin that kills our souls (Matthew 10:28). In other words, avoid sin like the plague. Spiritually disinfect your environment. Quarantine yourself from sin. Cover your mouth when you feel a poisonous word about to cough out. Don't let it enter your heart.

You may not make a scientific discovery or write a world-famous play, but God will empower you to fulfill your purpose when you don't waste the pandemic.



Give Up, Right?

For the months of January and February, our youth ministry used the Wednesday night platform to focus on promoting and developing a culture of hospitality and community, as well as to coach our students in developing a missionary mindset so that they may become disciple makers. This was all to be a build-up to March's Awaken series, during which our whole church would be fasting, praying, and reaching out evangelistically into our community. It was a great plan! And then the virus hit.

Our students no longer experience anything like their normal routine, they don't see any of their friends face-to-face, and they certainly don't get to gather at our church building for worship or groups. The only thing to do was to give up on outreach, right? That would be the easy choice, but from what many of our small group leaders have been reporting, our Middle School students have been eager to get their "outside" friends connected to our weekly Zoom meetings.



In particular, our 7th Grade Boys recently met for their virtual Sunday morning small group and more than half of the thirteen boys were friends from school! In fact, every student in the group that day plays on the same football team. Beyond that, several of the boys we now consider "regulars" have only been coming consistently for THIS school year.

Middle School boys don't typically initiate spiritual conversations with each other or spontaneously log on to random church Zoom meetings. They do it because they've been invited. They've been invited by leaders like Bobby Hicks and Ray Russell. They've been invited by buddies from their team, like Houston Hicks and Ethan Lane. Disciples like these, who are ready and willing to seek out opportunities to connect people to the body of Christ no matter the external circumstances, know that the seeds they plant can grow into transformative faith.

Growing in Character

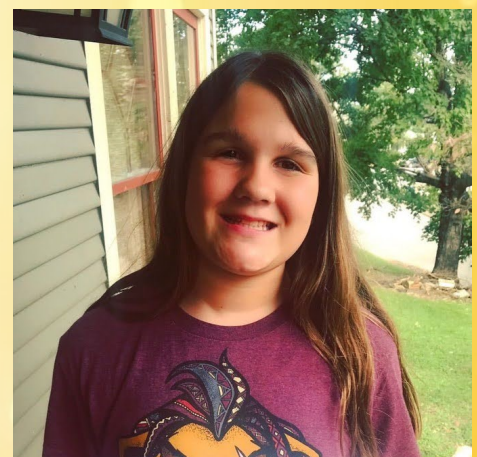
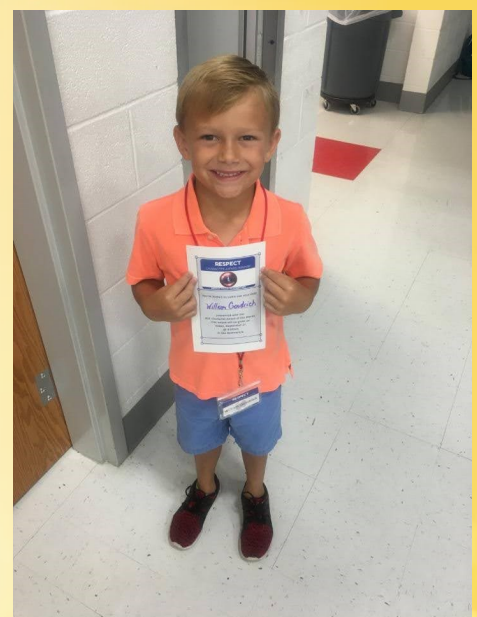
Our children seem to grow and change right before our eyes and are grown before we know it. First, they are babies, then riding bikes, then going off to college and then they have families of their own. We all know that their growth physically is inevitable. But what about their spiritual growth? Is it inevitable or does it naturally happen? Do we expect our kids to grow up spiritually without our thinking too much about it or really doing anything proactively to assure that it happens? I hope not because it can't "just happen."

At Clear Creek we know that just coming to the church building once or twice a week will not make us a growing Christian, thus just bringing our kids to Bible class and worship will not ensure that they will grow up to be mature disciples of Christ. There must be intentional conversations, consistent reinforcement and examples lived out before them daily among other things.

Some examples of families intentionally instilling Christ-like character traits in their children are observed when their children are recognized in their schools for possessing a Christlike character. In the last few months several of our students have been recognized in a formal way at their respective school award ceremonies.

Emma Diggs received the Character Award for showing RESPECT at Middle Valley Elementary. Rory Oleksik received the CARING Character Award at Middle Valley Elementary. William Goodrich received a RESPECT Character Award at Middle Valley Elementary. Callie Scharff received the HONESTY Character Award at Big Ridge Elementary. Both Brock and Arden Beach received KINDNESS awards from Normal Park. (There may have been more but we were not made aware of it.)

Let's all pat these kids on the back (when we see them again) for growing to be more like Jesus in their attitudes and actions and for letting it be evident as they go "on mission" in their schools each day. And kudos to their parents for their intentional parenting. It will reap eternal rewards.



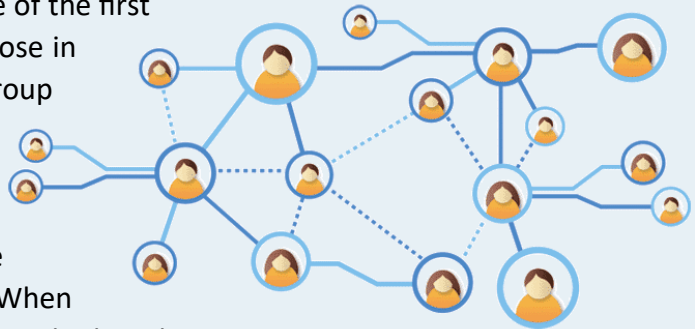
At Any Cost

One of the most remarkable things about the way Jesus lived His life was His incredible intentionality regarding His commitment to living a Godly life. He never allowed circumstances to dictate whether or not He was fulfilling that commitment. One of the greatest components of Godly living that our church family tries to model after Jesus is how He viewed Himself as the primary source of care for those He was in a discipling relationship with. This idea is currently being lived out in the life of one of our disciple makers Nancy Tallman.

For several years now at 10:00 on Tuesday morning in the café at the church building, Nancy and several other ladies in our church family have met to have small group. Like with so many of our groups, this was a much anticipated time of the week. Now of course these ladies routinely talked to one another during the week, but there truly is something special about being face-to-face with those you are doing life with.

Enter COVID-19. Among all the negative things this virus has brought to the world, one of the most disruptive to our daily lives is our inability to gather with those we love in a way that we are accustomed to. This is doubly true for people like those in our Tuesday Morning group that may find it more difficult to get out and about and therefore might not have as many social interactions during the week as others.

Understanding this, Nancy was among one of the first to try and bring a sense of normalcy to those in her group by trying to meet with her group virtually. But of course, there was roadblock after roadblock. When her computer didn't have necessary components to conduct an online meeting, she tried on another device. When that other device couldn't use the software, she bought



the necessary components for her computer. When she didn't know how to install those components herself, she had someone come and do it for her (practicing appropriate social distancing of course). When she didn't understand the tutorials for how to setup a meeting, she called and asked for help. And none of this even touches the time she put in helping and getting help for others in her group who were having the same issues! But after two full weeks of actively trying, the Tuesday Morning Ladies small group met (mostly) face to face.

Now what in the world does this have to do with being more like Jesus? Will the fact that the Tuesday Morning small group is meeting virtually determine whether one or more of them gets to heaven some day? Probably not. But what will endure is having the commitment to persevere through any circumstance to make sure that those with whom you are in a discipling relationship get the care they need.

Our Lives as Well

"Because we loved you so much we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of Christ, but our lives as well." - 2 Thessalonians 1:8

If life is a journey, then ministry as Jesus modeled it is about journeying together. We invite others into our lives as God invites us into the life of the Trinity. We step into their world as Christ stepped into ours.

UCM students have been blessed to know, love and journey with Jordan for the last year and a half. The journey started when we first met Jordan at a UCM Friendsgiving meal and it continued as Jordan became involved in our community during the next semester. That included formal things like our weekly meetings and retreats. But it also included shared meals, arguments, doing laundry together, and putting up with each other's annoying habits. UCM students consistently chose to love and invest in Jordan, even when he rubbed people the wrong way or criticized their faith. And Jordan kept moving deeper into the life of our community, even though he didn't yet believe.



Through prayer, patience and love, God slowly brought our journeys in step and wove our lives together. Within a few months, Jordan was open to reading the Bible and soon started talking about his new faith. Since the beginning of the year, we've seen God continue to bless Jordan's life and carry him through some big milestones.

At the beginning of this year, Jordan made the decision to be baptized into Christ. It was a great day as Jesus gave Jordan new life. Lots of UCM family - Christian students, non-Christians and adult mentors - spent the day together celebrating. Then in February Jordan married Icces, a young Christian woman he met in UCM. Not only was it an amazing day for Jordan and Icces, but it was also the first UCM wedding.

Jesus spent three years with his closest followers. As they lived together, the Gospel was about much more than just information or ideas. It was about shared life. Through Jordan, and others like him, God is allowing the UCM to share the Gospel and our lives as well.



First Time for Everything... Even Preaching

Recently, a group of upper elementary students spent time preparing to participate and lead the Sunday afternoon worship service at Martin-Boyd Nursing Home. This is chance for each child to take a next step in their faith as they begin to teach and serve others. It's always a sweet time watching two generations, young and old, connect because of our shared love for God.

After Josh Diggs visited and taught a group of boys how to prepare a sermon, one young boy in the 4th grade decided he would take his next step and preach the lesson at the Martin-Boyd service. His Wednesday group leaders were ecstatic and thankful for his

courage to try something new! A few days later, a call from his mom informed us none of her family would be able to attend due to a previous commitment, but in not wanting to disappoint or remove her son from having this opportunity, a solution came. Transportation was arranged and all was set for him to continue to prepare for this lesson.

During a couple more Wednesday night classes, two leaders listened and gave feedback to Brock Beach. However, they didn't have to give much as he had prepared an exceptional sermon and delivered it with much enthusiasm. Even at home, his parents said he wrote it out all by himself. The topic suggested for him was from one of the prophets we had been learning about in Bible classes. He chose Daniel and the story of his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3).

Brock delivered the message with great confidence in front of a room who were mostly strangers to him. This was a time Brock exemplified to his peers and other generations we can take our next step in stretching and sharing our faith without doubt or fear. In the closing line of Brock's message, he stated, "God saves us and is always with us!" May we all cling to that promise and hope as we take our next steps in our faith today and always because there's a first time for everything!

