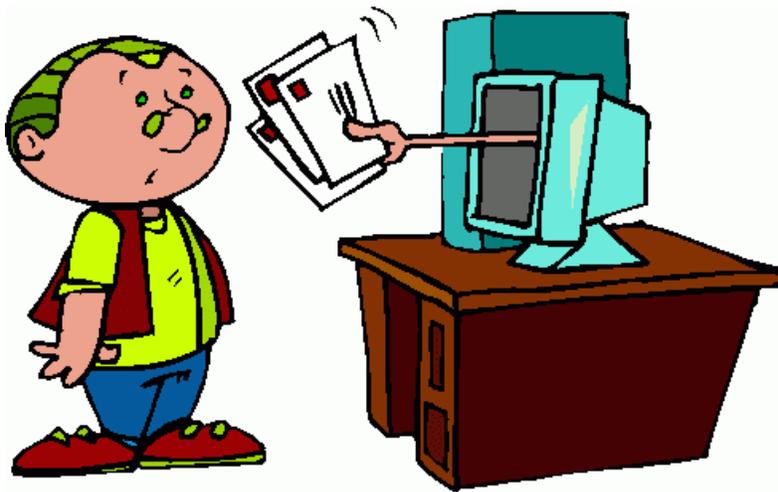


**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
JULY – AUGUST 2018
NEWSLETTER**



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In the days of days of the Old Testament, we read frequently the one sin that really made God angry was the sin of being inhospitable to someone in need. In fact, this sin was so egregious and serious, it was punishable by death. Anytime a stranger or person in need came to the home or village of an Israelite, it was their Godly duty to take care of them. For the most part, they did this and did it with a joyful heart. But when they didn't fulfill this command from God, it was not taken lightly. Remember the story of Sodom and Gomorrah? Too often this is horribly misrepresented by those who do not gay people. It's the most often quoted section of Scripture for the anti-gay agenda and those people have it completely wrong. The 16th chapter of Ezekiel tells us exactly why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and it had nothing to do with being gay. Ez. 16:49: *Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and the needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.* The sin of Sodom had everything to do with the way they treated the poor, the needy and the stranger and we have too long let this go on being misused as a reference for hate and intolerance.

I can recite verse after verse of Biblical reference in which God is commanding us to take care of the poor, needy, sick, and the stranger and point out just how important this is to God but most of us have heard this time after time.

Why is it then we refuse to do this? Why do we not hear the outcry of Christians throughout the country with what is happening at our border? We hear the voices of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, we hear the voices of other countries, but it seems the Church of Jesus Christ is silent on this issue.

Back in 1939, a thousand Jews escaped Germany on a ship called The St. Louis. These Jews were escaping what we now know as one of the worst human rights calamities of any century. What was the response of the U.S. when they came to our border? We rejected them. We sent them back to Europe where over a fourth of them died in the concentration camps. The others were persecuted and many were permanently displaced and separated from their families. What was our reason for rejecting these people in need? It was largely fear. Government officials were worried the Germans may have sent spies in this group so we sent them back to probable death. As we look back, there are very few who feel what we did was the right thing yet we did it listening to our worse rather than our better angels and the result was tragic. Leviticus 19: 33-34, *When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*

Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Venezuela are listed as some of the most dangerous countries in the world. Guatemala alone has over 90 murders per week. Parents, just like you and me, are scared to death to remain in gang-war ravaged countries; hoping to find peace and safety in what used to be known as a beacon to the world, the United States. Children are taken from their homes and recruited into these gangs as soldiers or victims of the lucrative sex-trade market. Parents are leaving behind everything they know, everything they have, and risking their lives traveling through hostile lands to find safety for their children and themselves. How are they being treated? They are called criminals, an infestation, murderers and drug-dealers, the worst of those countries, and they had their children taken from them. Most of these people are so poor and illiterate they cannot speak for themselves.

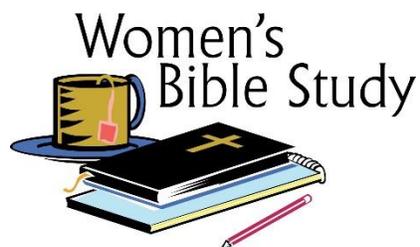
I cannot imagine a more urgent time God needs His people to step up to the plate and do what he orders us to do. God is counting on us to right this wrong. If not us, then who? Matthew 25: *Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.'*

Ugly things will happen when we listen to the wrong voices but only beautiful things will happen when we genuinely listen to our Father who has promised never to leave us, no matter what.

Hope you're having a wonderful summer.

Love and blessings,

Kurt



Women's Bible Study will resume Tuesday, September 11, at 9:30 a.m. in the Parlor at the Greenville First Presbyterian Church. Be sure to attend this special event!



Joan Wilson's new address is:

Emerald Pointe
105 Honey Locust Lane, Apt. # 102
Greenville, IL 62246



Congratulations to our 8th grade graduates! Best wishes as you enter high school.

Ty Ennen
Riley Lambert
Clayten Gan
Braiden Overbeck
Aly Schaub

Congratulations to high school graduate, David Thompson. Best wishes in the Army National Guard.



In Memoriam

Garey James Ahler, 78, passed away Wednesday, June 20, 2018, in Greenville Nursing and Rehab Center. His funeral was Sunday, June 24, at 2:00 p.m., in Young Funeral Home, in Greenville, Illinois. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.



Joint Outdoor Worship & Church Picnic

Have you seen our new picnic tables? Two have been delivered and assembled with a third on its way thanks to the generosity of three of our church families. We would love to add at least one more to our collection in anticipation of the Annual Joint Outdoor Worship Service we will host for both the Greenville and Vandalia Churches, Sunday September 16, 2018, at 10:30 a.m., here on the Greenville Church property. If you are interested in making a donation for a picnic table, please see Katy Wise. And don't forget to mark your calendar for this year's Outdoor Service & Picnic! Meat, drinks and table service will be provided. Please bring a dish to share and a lawn chair for comfortable seating.

