



Rev. Norwood N. "Woody" Hingle III, Ph. D; Sunday School: 9:15 AM; Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM

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A Word from Woody...

## "Angel Tree Inspiration"

Have you ever almost thrown away a book, only at the last minute open it and find inspiration? Such was my experience with the book *Inside: Voices of Prison Fellowship*.

Like you, I receive a lot of snail mail that gets quickly discarded in the trash bin. A few weeks ago I got what at first appeared to be one such mailing from the organization Prison Fellowship which organizes our special Christmas mission Angel Tree. This mailing contained that book *Inside*, and I believe I heard a wee small voice in my head that said the last thing I need is another book. The voice closely resembled my wife's. I could easily see it ruining my efforts to clean my office of material that quickly piles up on my desk. However, just before I tossed it into the bin I decided to open it and read a few lines. And I found I had trouble putting it down.

The book contains short stories of prisoners who had remarkable transformation stories through the Prison Fellowship ministry. For instance there is a woman named Della. She had been in prison five different times, and for 20 years was addicted to methamphetamines. Her Dad stopped talking to her because of her drug use. In her last imprisonment she was facing 10 years in prison, so she started bargaining with God. If He would reduce her prison sentence she would serve Him the rest of her life. Indeed her time was reduced, and her relationship with God, which started out with a "bargain", began to grow. As she entered the prison she was frightened by the electric fence she heard crackling. She recalls the Holy Spirit saying to her, "Don't be afraid. I am going with you." She replied, "If You are going to go to a place like that with me, what else will You do with me?" In prison she attended a Prison Fellowship Bible study, while at home her parents cared for her two teenage children. When she left prison both her children were adults, and both had been incarcerated. She took initiative to heal her relationship with her parents as well as her two grown children. She recounts that over the years her son asked, "Mama, you're not going to go back, are

you? I am so proud of you. I don't care what you do. I just don't want you to go backward." It took five years until her children could see her relationship with Christ stuck. Today she works for Prison Fellowship as Program Support Specialist. She says, "Now I look at my time in prison as a gift to me. . . Christ saved me in prison, and I want people to know what Jesus can do. He goes to the depths of the earth for us".

Or consider Nat. He recounts, "By the time I was 27, I had a son and a daughter, but I was in prison for methamphetamines and weapons, and then later for trafficking drugs. When I was in federal prison. . . a

Prison Fellowship group came in. They taught Great Dads, a class that approaches parenting from a biblical perspective." He could see the difficulty in living for Christ. ". . . I felt like God was telling me that I had to choose who I was going to serve with my life: Him or my homies. He wanted me to repent and trust Him." So he obeyed the Lord. At 31 he earned his GED, got disciplined as a believer, and had his kids signed up for Angel Tree for seven years. He completed

70 credits of college education in prison, and a family from Texas helped him pay for his remaining college courses when he got out of prison. He repaired his relationship with his parents and children. He volunteered with Prison Fellowship to reach out to prisoners, and now he serves as their Field Director. He states, "I've made a lot of mistakes on this path. But the difference since I've been out—before, I would fall backwards, or in a rut. Today, though I fall, I fall forward, and it's easier for me to get up. I've cut those connections with the old gang ties. Now my ties are connected to good Christian people. Good Christian counsel, mentors, people who are walking right with the Lord. I'm getting lifted up in Jesus now."

In the presence of such amazing evidence of the transforming power of God, I share the wonder and awe of a first century AD prisoner: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Yours in Christ,

Woody



# Youth Corner

## Nashville on the Horizon

Last month we enjoyed going to see the movie "I Can Hardly Imagine", a wonderful, spiritually inspiring telling of the life of the lead singer of Christian band Mercy Me.

This month we'll hold a planning meeting at the Grimm's house on Tuesday, May 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM for our upcoming youth mission trip to Nashville, Tennessee. We will leave on the trip on Monday, June 18<sup>th</sup> and return on Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Please keep this trip in your prayers!

### Meetings This Month

- ◆ VBS Planning Meeting, Monday, May 14, Fellowship Hall
- ◆ Finance Committee, Monday, May 21, 6:45-7:30 PM, Parlor
- ◆ Church Council, Monday, May 21, 7:30-8:30 PM, Parlor
- ◆ Youth Trip Planning Meeting, Tuesday, May 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM, Grimms' House



### Church Family Night

We will meet from 6:00-7:30 PM on Wednesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> for our final Church Family Night of the season. To celebrate we will have the option of Popeyes fried chicken and crawfish! Our speaker is Maris Lee, a personal trainer and author of two books on physical fitness, who will speak to us on healthy living and eating from 7:00-7:30 PM.



*Last month's speaker Bakhtier Rizaev and his wife Elvira, from Uzbekistan shared how they became Christians.*

### Mission Opportunity for AA and Alanon

We have a tentative date set for providing refreshments— e.g., chips and dip, desserts, soft drinks, bottle water, etc.—for the Alcoholic Anonymous and Alanon groups meeting at Lake Vista UMC on Tuesdays at 7:00 PM. We hope to provide this for them on Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>; more details will be forthcoming. Let us be sure to pray for these groups, which do very important work.



April showered us...

## Coastal Chorale Performance

Allen Henson will conduct the Coastal Chorale in a performance entitled, "Let Freedom Ring" on Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-3:00 PM at Christ Episcopal Church, Bay St. Louis. Myrna Henson will be participating in this performance, which will include Christian spiritual songs. If you would like a ride to this wonderful event please contact Pastor Woody.

### *Come Sing in the Choir*

Choir practice continues to meet at 9:00 AM on Sunday mornings with our Music Director Leonardo Santos and Worship Leader Randy Roberts. For more information please contact the Church Office.

## VBS Planning Meeting

Vacation Bible School will be on July 23-27 from 6:00-8:30 PM. We will hold a Vacation Bible School planning meeting on Monday, May 14<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-8:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Our VBS program is called "Shipwrecked: Rescued by Jesus" (published by Group), which focuses on Jesus' delivering power in our lives. Please keep VBS in your prayers—and please be involved with VBS as much as you can!

## Prayer Focus

- ✝ Barbara Velasquez, health
- ✝ The UMC, unity and faithfulness to the Bible and its doctrines
- ✝ Matthew Cull, recovery from accident
- ✝ Jay Goudeau, recovery from car accident and surgery
- ✝ Earl Bellanger, health issues
- ✝ **Allen Henson, praise for a good doctor's report!**
- ✝ Emily Hingle, who leaves New Orleans for the Thailand mission trip on May 19th, and will return to New Orleans on July 6th
- ✝ The Mildred Dusenbury family; Mrs. Mildred passed away on April 25<sup>th</sup>; a memorial service will be later this year.

## Present Sermon Series

Pastor Hingle will continue to preach the sermon series on Paul's letter to the Ephesians entitled, "Ancient Instructions for the Modern Church". You are encouraged to read this letter in its entirety—only six chapters!—as he conducts the series. This is a wonderful part of Scripture which addresses such issues as the church, spiritual gifts, and marriage and family roles.



## Finally, a Time for Guys!

We have a new adult Sunday School class which is geared for men! Pastor Woody Hingle is leading this group that meets in the Library at 9:30 AM. All men are invited and encouraged to bring friends!

*With learning,  
laughter,  
and love!*



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### Mothers' Day Breakfast Celebration!



The men of the church are pleased to offer the ladies of the church a hot and delicious breakfast on Mothers' Day, Sunday, May 13<sup>th</sup> from 9:00-10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. There will be no Sunday School this morning, but a brief devotional will be given in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00 AM.

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### Skeptic's Corner:

We will meet on Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon to review what we saw in the debate between Sam Harris and William Lane Craig on Harris' book *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*. Please feel free to come even if you have not seen the debate (it is on youtube.com) and bring your lunch—and a friend! The church will provide cold water and soft drinks. Our next book will be Paul Copan's *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*; the meeting dates will be forthcoming.

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### Prayer Walk Around the Neighborhood

This month's prayer walk will be Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup> from 10:30-11:30 AM. Please join us for this wonderful ministry!

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### Small Group Offerings

Newcomers are welcome at all the gatherings below! **Wednesday SONrise; and Wonderful Wednesday Bible and book study**, where on May 9<sup>th</sup> we will go over John Wesley's sermon "Circumcision of the Heart", and then on May 16<sup>th</sup> we will begin meeting on Rob Ren free and **Walter Fenton's Are We Really Better Together? An Evangelical Perspective on the Division in The UMC**, a book just put out last month and which addresses the current controversy in The United Methodist Church over LGBT+ issues. The study will meet in the Parlor from 7:00-8:00 PM, and will be taught by the various members of the class.

**The S(tudy), P(ray), A(ct) Ladies** meet Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> from 9:00-10:00 AM at Cheryl Richard's house at 27 Warbler St., to study Lysa Terkeurst's *Finding I AM: How Jesus Fully Satisfies the Cry of Your Heart*. The final meeting for the Spring will be Tuesday, May 8<sup>th</sup> for **brunch at Mary Ellen Herbert's house**. All ladies are welcome to attend. Watch this space for a summer reading suggestion and meeting times to discuss the book.

**Sunday School classes for all ages** begin at 9:30 AM on Sunday mornings. Adult classes meet in the Parlor and library. Youth and children meet in the Education Building. *Please call Susan in the office (504-288-2242) if you have any questions about any of the above activities.*

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*A lighthouse for Christ in the heart of the lakefront.*

# Lake Vista

## United Methodist Church

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