



The Newsletter

"Celebrating Christ, Community and Communion Every Sunday"

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FEBRUARY 2016



**Week of Compassion Special
Offering will be received
Sundays, February 21 & 28, 2016**

The first of the Disciples Special Offerings for 2016 will be the **Week of Compassion**. Ruth's promise to Naomi defines what "solidarity" authentically entails; and it stands as a challenge for Christians to intentionally walk with refugees as they seek to build a new home in a strange land: *"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your GOD my GOD."* (Ruth 1:16)

Is this not the Gospel? Did not CHRIST, the Word of GOD who migrated and "moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14 *The Message*), accompany us in our alienation and displacement? Did we not receive the Holy Spirit in our hearts to be our "advocate" (John 16:7) who "intercedes (for us) with sighs too deep for words" (Romans 8:26)? Will we make Ruth's promise our own?

~AHCC Food Pantry Blog~

In every business and group, the New Year is a time of reflection and a time of future planning. In a recent sermon, Pastor T.D. Jakes urged members of his congregation to look back over their shoulders to see where God had brought them, then to look forward and to give thanks. "No matter what, you will never take me back to the bad place I was before. I have been through too much to let life whoop me again. My faith is stronger than it's ever been, my mind is more tenacious than it's ever been, and my soul is more absolute." Now, that's a man with a purpose and view for the future!

So, what is the view and purpose of the AHCC Food Pantry? Actually, I can think of a few. We envision a community in which everyone has access to sufficient nutritious food. We believe that access to nutritious food is a basic human right. We are committed to responding to

the needs of our community through food distribution and support services. The mission of the Alamo Heights Christian Church Food Pantry is to create access to good, healthy food in our community, for all in need.

Yet there are some who don't see the need for such a mission! Consider this statement: "An American Millennial feels more comfortable setting up a Kiva loan to a farmer in Kenya than bringing chicken soup to a neighbor." That provocative line is stolen straight from a Harvard Divinity School report by Angie Thurston and Casper ter Kuile called "How We Gather." It is really about social change, particularly as it relates to Millennials, community and God.

Enter the Food Bank.

How can we, or how should we do this work in a way that builds and strengthens the community – for both the giver and the receiver? And how do we think about and talk about the spiritual aspect of serving, of providing food in a way that resonates?

Our work – like much church work – "encourages friendship, promotes neighborhood welfare and spreads messages for the betterment of individuals and society," to borrow again from the report.

And where has the AHCC Food Pantry "come from" in the past 18 months? There was a column in SA Life which featured the Food Pantry in July, 2014. Interesting past for us, don't you think?

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/default/article/Alamo-Heights-food-pantry-helps-feed-those-in-need-5592774.php>

How do we think about developing a volunteer experience that provides a lasting community? We are actually bringing lots of chicken soup to lots of folks who need it. How do we build the human connection as work to build a better world? How do we talk about the spiritual aspect of this work? How do we think about the work in terms of personal and social transformation? These are all building questions asked by people with a view and goal for the future.

Every goal, every mission that you will ever pursue will require a plan of action. Whether you are pursuing your life's destiny or striving to obtain a particular goal, you must be able to see things as you desire them to be. Forward thinking, forward moving is a sort of internal mantra for all who work in the AHCC Food Pantry, from

the 5-6 years old grandchildren to the “youngish” senior citizen more than seven decades old. We can all look back and say: **“We Did It!” for 2015.** What will happen in 2016? God only knows! Sólo Dios sabe! In any language, we are secure in what we do. And because He knows, **WE** know that He will guide us in the Food Pantry Mission, as we care for those who are hungry and in need.



If someone says, “you complete me”, RUN!

I have to confess that I borrowed the title of my piece from a book that Whoopi Goldberg recently wrote (that I have not read and so have no recommendation on). It seemed appropriate for a Valentine’s Day topic especially as a follow-on to my recent sermon about who you are in Christ. If you are secure about who you are as a fully beloved child of God, then you are free to be the talented, beautiful human being that you are, without the need to compare yourself to others. You will be able to see the beauty in others without feeling “less than” or “more than” someone else. In other words, you will be a whole person in and of yourself. You will not need someone else to “complete you”.

People who need other people to “complete them” are looking for something that they will never find in another human being. No spouse/significant other will ever measure up. The relationship will always be contentious and doomed for failure. The needs of the incomplete person will shift constantly and the other will not know who they need to become in order to satisfy person and will not be free to be who they are in Christ either.

An ideal relationship is when two whole human beings, secure in who they are in Christ, come together consciously, preferably with Christ in the center of their relationship, and are able to give their love freely. When one is up, they can support the one who is down and vice versa and there is no recrimination for who takes or gives more. All give 110% without hesitation because that is how real love is.

Real love is humble in a relationship. The Biblical definition of humble does not mean that one is on their knees in humiliation to another. It means that from a standing position, knowing your worth, you *graciously and consciously* put someone else’s needs above your own.

For a real tutorial on love, go to I Corinthians 13:4-5 and 8, *Love endures long and is patient and kind; love is never envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not arrogant and inflated with pride; it is*

not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God’s love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it (it pays to attention to a suffered wrong)...Love never fails... (Amplified Bible)

God bless you all with true love,
Stephanie Blandford



Did any of you see the Christian movie “War Room”? It was in the theatres in the fall of 2015 and it was a wonderful, true to life depiction of life as we experience it and the power of prayer. If you did not see the movie, I encourage you to try to find it on DVD. I think you will come away with a new sense of empowerment in praying.

Last year, as Chair of Elders, I wrote on “Love”. This year I would like to write on “Prayer”.

We all pray. I cannot successfully get through a day without prayer. It is my communication with God and I prefer to stay in constant communication with Him. I have questioned myself many times in my life if I was praying correctly, if I was saying the “right words” or if God was hearing me. Many years ago, I went through a difficult time in my life and prayer became my lifeline. Literally it was during this time that I learned a lot about prayer. I learned that God does not require “certain words or phrases”. He just needs you to call on Him. Prayer can accomplish what a willing God can accomplish. There is nothing too difficult or impossible for God to handle. In the process of praying, we experience getting to know God more deeply. That has brought so much joy and comfort to me as time has gone on.

As the months go by, I would like to share ideas, resources and suggestions in hopes that we might have a deeper relationship and understanding of God through prayer. After having seen the movie, I stumbled upon a book written by the writers of the movie. The title of the book is “The Battle Plan for Prayer”. I will be using this book as a reference point. Hopefully, we will all grow in our relationship with God and create our own “war room” for prayer. Think about having a scheduled prayer time and a scheduled prayer place.

As for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord. (Ps.69:13)

God Bless You.

Linda Hawkins, Chair of Elders





A Note from the Deacon's Corner

"Serving by and in his Grace"

All of the Deacons were called or asked to fulfill the job of being a Deacon. Someone saw something special in you. Someone noticed how you attended to the details of worship in such an efficient, easy way, smoothing the process and soothing the people. Someone realized that when you say yes to a commitment in the life of the church, it is as good as done and done well. Someone figured out that you don't wait to be asked. You take the initiative and meet the need. No fanfare or thanks needed. Obviously this mysterious someone "*ratted you out*" to the church nominating committee, prompting their call inviting you to consider becoming a Deacon.

The office of Deacon is **NOT** a stepping stone to becoming an Elder. Nor should it be thought of in this manner. A Deacon's ministries are focused on a different dimension than Elders.

Instead, we should consider deaconing to be your next spiritual adventure, a chance to explore who you are before God and to serve a purpose beyond yourself. As you hold in your heart the possibility that God is up to something in your life, I invite you into a season of thoughtful discernment. We all need to carve out some intentional moments of reflection. It only takes 15 minutes of your day to ask God to help you become more than you are right now. This type of discernment is about holding your life up to God, offering your guidance, and listening as if your life depended on it – **IT JUST MIGHT!** Once you have started it becomes second nature. Who knows it just might help you sleep better!

Let's face it. You are called to be a Deacon because your life *already* bears the marks of willing service to Christ's kingdom. You *are* one! You are a devoted servant of the servant heart of Christ. This is your heartbeat. You are an enthusiastic, passionate follower of Christ, who *is* your life.

So as we all serve as Deacons through 2016 may we be aware of those around us that may need our helping hands, guidance and prayers. What a better way to begin the **Season of Lent!**

It is our calling to be servants for Christ, students of His Son, Jesus and Candles to those who are in the dark.

In His Name

Parts of this article have been taken from "Your Calling as a Deacon" by Gary Straub and James Trader, II.



HI NOTES

Each Wednesday night we have a devotional in choir practice. I have been using devotions from a book by Genevieve and Herman DeHoog called *Devotions for Choirs*. Last week, part of the devotion said this:

One of the problems choirs face everywhere is getting stuck in the "*music rut*." We tend to do the same music over and over because we think we can do it better than something new. If we get stuck with our music, our vision becomes blurred in our faith as well. It is important for us to always be open to the Holy Spirit's leading, in our faith and in our music.

I think the same is true of congregational singing. We all like the old and familiar, but every once in a while we need to get out of the rut and hear what contemporary Christian writers and composers are saying. One new anthem the choir sang during Advent was "Mary, Did You Know?" and it never fails to deeply inspire me. Other music composed in the last 20 years can also inspire.

I realize that our congregation is small, but I think we need to hear and sing some of the "new" hymns and choruses. KPAC, the classical music radio station, has a line that I really like: "Remember, all music was once new." Let's all expand our horizons. Like the psalmist, we can "sing to the Lord a new song."

Janis Erwin

Membership Information

At the beginning of each year, the Membership Committee asks everyone to update their contact and emergency information. This gives the Church Office and the Elders the most current information for each of the members. We want to include those who attend our Worship Services.

The season of Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016. As in previous years the Fellowship part of Membership will be having a "**Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper**" on Tuesday, February 9, 2016 beginning at 6:00p.m. through 8:30p.m. We will be serving Sausage, Bacon, Ham, Fruit and **PANCAKES**. We have been asked to have several varieties of pancakes so, come to see if we have included your favorite. There will be a love offering taken to help with the cost of this event. Please mark



your calendar to come and have a good time! You just might learn about something new like – What is Shrove Tuesday and why do we serve pancakes?



Don't forget to mark your Calendars – Tuesday, February 9, 2016 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm to attend the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper!

AHCC celebrates Birthdays and Anniversaries once a month. The celebrants have their picture taken so we know who they are and how much they have changed. The picture gallery begins below – the membership of AHCC seems to withstand the sands of time!



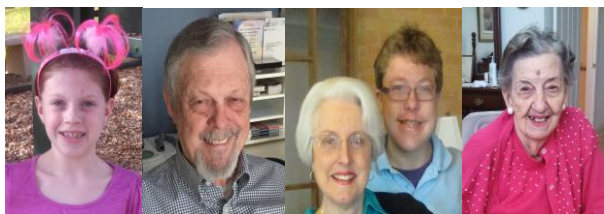
Anniversaries for January 2016



Joseph 'Jody' and Sarah Warren celebrated their Wedding Anniversary during January.



Birthdays for January 2016



Grace Brown, Bill Erwin, Jack Harden, Patty Peyton, and Mickey Tedford celebrated their birthdays during the month of January.



The Church Office needs to know when your Birthday or Wedding Anniversary is celebrated. Please call the Church Office 210-828-5728 and let Sarah know your information.

SPECIAL NOTE: Alamo Heights Christian Church "Annual Contribution Thank You Letter" with "Giving Statement" was put into the mail as of Wednesday, January 27, 2016.

Up Coming Events



Tuesday, February 9, 2016

6:00 pm – 8:30 pm – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper in Kirtley Hall

Wednesday, February 10, 2016

ASH WEDNESDAY – FIRST DAY OF LENT



Saturday, February 13, 2016

8:00 am – Elders Breakfast Meeting in Kirtley Hall

Sunday, February 14, 2016

VALENTINE'S DAY

12:15 pm – February's Birthday / Anniversary Celebration in Kirtley Hall

Thursday, February 18, 2016 – **DEADLINE to**

submit articles or information for March's Newsletter and Calendar****



Check the February's Calendar for additional events taking place at AHCC.

FINANCIAL SUCCESS

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it's the courage to continue that counts." – Winston Churchill

There is no such thing as a 100% financial security. Our financial lives will go through peaks and valleys and no matter what we do we cannot shelter ourselves from all financial challenges.

Remembering God's goodness and recognizing the source of our bounty, especially in the season of financial success is critical! If that's you right now, how about following these few steps on regular basis to keep you on a solid footing?

- Make generosity to others a priority
- Consider not increasing your lifestyle just because your income has increased
- Spend one day each week thanking God for His provision, recognizing Him as your sole provider and asking Him to direct your financial decisions