

From the Pastor's Desk

Friends and family at First Southern,

I pray that your Easter was a time filled with the blessings of family and togetherness. I have often remarked that the season just completed is my very favorite time of year. Every Easter season as I watch my children search for plastic eggs filled with goodies, I find myself recalling the sacrifice that Jesus made during this hallowed time. I pray that you, too, took a moment to get beyond the bunnies, eggs and chocolate, a moment time to contemplate the enormous implications of Christ's death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. I would encourage you to continue to live out the joy of that resurrection in your daily lives and in your dealings with families, friends and coworkers.

1 Peter 1:3 says "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."

What a blessing it is for us to carry that hope to those around us...those who are lost, those who are hurting, those who are in need of the power of the resurrection of Christ!

On that note, I must tell you that Shannon and I struggle to find the words to express to you how touched we have been by your many kind words, cards and letters, and especially your prayers as we have begun preparing for our transition. We are anxious to come and be with you in Larned, and ask that you would continue to join us in prayer for our family, for our current church, as well as for First Southern Baptist Larned as these changes begin to take place.

God bless you all,

Pastor Mark

VBS is going to be very different this year. We have some surprises in store and the kids are getting very excited. I have most of the lead teacher's positions filled. We still need a teacher for Kindergarten, and for 3rd and 4th grade, someone to lead the missions rotation, and lots of helpers. If you are interested in filling one of these positions, please call Cindy Walker at 804-1672. There were 7 people who went to the VBS training in Salina last month and it was great. We came home with several ideas and much excitement. I have scheduled a VBS meeting for anyone interested in helping on April 6th at 3:00 at the church. Hope to see many of you there. Team Kid Family Night will be Wednesday, April 30th. Join us for games, snacks, and fellowship as we get together for the last time this spring.

Children's Camp is June 2-6 at Camp Webster - Salina. Cost is \$110/camper, sponsor, or SIT. SIT must be at least 14years old and have completed the 9th

grade. Contact Cindi Smith 804-1673 for registration information. Registration forms are to be turned in to Cindi Smith no later than April 23.

Super Summer will be held this Year at Camp Webster in Salina the week of July 7-11. Cost for registration will be \$120.00. If you plan on going, you will need to plan on bringing additional funds for snacks, souvenirs, etc. Registration will begin in May, so we will keep you posted with all the details.

Calling all ladies A mini retreat will be held on May 2nd from 6PM to 12AM. We will be working through the Beth Moore Bible Study “Loving Well” And: supper, snacks, prayer, fun, (PJ fashion show).

Also for the Ladies this month is a Central Baptist Associational Women’s event, to be held on April 26th at First Southern Baptist Church in Great Bend. Music, lunch, Bible Study and leader training. For more information and to sign up, contact Effie Smith or look at the bulletin board in the church.

Sunday nights We are about to finish up the video series, “That the World May Know” produced by Focus on the Family. This series bring to life Jesus teachings and faith lessons as we experience the culture as it was in the day of Christ.

On Sunday night April 13th we will be showing a special video, “Rediscovering God in America” – 75 minute movie with Newt and Callista Gingrich.

Installation Service Pastor Mark Slattery’s first Sunday here will be on April 27th. There is a great amount of anticipation in the air as we look forward to this event. How will God use our new pastor in our church over the next 5 or 10 years? How will I grow as a Christian?

The installation service is a special time when we as a church will recommit ourselves to Christ and to the support of our new pastor. Pastor Mark will also make a commitment to us and to the Lord’s service. This will be a very meaningful service and all are encouraged to attend. The Sunday morning service will be followed by a pot-luck diner and all are welcome to attend.

Here is a copy of the covenant the Rev. Mark Slattery and we as a church will make to each other:

Led by the Spirit of God, the pastor agrees to the following.

- Seek the mind of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all things.
- Be a person of integrity in his family, the church, and the community.
- Be loving and gracious to all.
- Be diligent in work according to a work schedule shared with the church.
- Use his ministry gifts, knowledge, and wisdom to glorify Christ through the church.
- Provide spiritual leadership to the church.
- Lead the church in planning and implementing ministries that fulfill the Great Commission.
- Preach to instruct, inspire, and enable the church for ministry.
- Coordinate baptismal services, officiate weddings and funerals, or delegate these responsibilities.
- Mediate conflict to produce healthy, productive relationships in the church.

- Lead the church staff and delegate responsibilities to staff members or church officers.
- Lead the church leadership team (church council) in its tasks or delegate responsibility.
- Counsel other church leaders and ministry teams about their work.
- Evangelize the lost through preaching and personally as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Care for persons with special needs and lead others to be involved in caring ministries.
- Respect church members' ministry gifts and encourage members' growth and involvement in the life of the church.
- Represent the church in community and denominational activities.

Led by the Spirit of God, the church agrees to the following.

- Be loving and gracious to the pastor and his family.
- Pray for spiritual power in his life and work.
- Respectfully relate to him as God's anointed leader for this task.
- Support his leadership with active participation in the church's ministries.
- Talk with him about personal concerns instead of talking about him to others.
- Provide resources for doing the work to which he is committed.
- Provide a salary and benefits commensurate with the duties of his office.
- Free him to do the work to which he is called as other church leaders and members fulfill their responsibilities.
- Annually provide a fair, impartial, and constructive ministry review.

Where are all the... I have been thinking about a comment made at a deacons meeting this past winter. It was said, where are all the young couples and more specific young men in the church today. With that in mind I began to prayerfully seek the answer to that question. I started by asking God to reveal to me what my part would be in answering that call in our church. Why would young people ages, roughly 18 to 35 feel the need to come to church? I have always known within myself why I attend church and I believe many of us do. What I haven't been able to do is explain to someone the reason church attendance is so important to me. Maybe I have taken our church for granted and it has been a given that when you except Christ the next step is becoming a part of the local church. Life Way has done a recent study that goes right along with this concern. Let me share a few results they found from this survey.

1. Negative perception for many people, however, seems to be the church, not Jesus.
2. 64% of respondents think the Christian religion is a relevant and viable religion for today.
3. 79% Think Christianity is more about organized religion than about loving God and loving people.
4. 72% think the church is full of hypocrites, people who criticize others for doing the same things they do themselves.
5. 86% believe they can have a good relationship with God without being involved in church. The belief that church attendance isn't necessary for spiritual well being is just as common among adults who grew up in church as it is among those who attended church less often as children.

Here are some comments of interest.

Unchurched Americans turned off by church, but open to Christians. They believe Jesus makes a positive difference in a person's life and would enjoy an honest discussion with a friend about spiritual matters.

It's very much a generic 'big guy in the sky' view of God and 'you believe what you believe, I believe what I believe' viewpoint on theology.

People on the outside see the church as candles, pews and flowers, rather than people living out their love for God by loving others.

What is it about the faith we live that causes our culture to like Jesus but reject the church?

Ed Stetzer who put these findings together for Life Way had these comments. We think religion is a topic off limits in polite conversation, but unchurched people say they would enjoy conversations about spiritual matters.

Increasingly, the God Americans believe in looks less like the God described in the Bible.

In closing, these are some comments I read in the survey that really made me stop and prayerfully consider why I attend church and how I need to share what God has given me to share each week when we meet.

1. Young adults said they were bored with the lack of DEPTH and excellence in our churches. This led them to a perception that the church is irrelevant. They didn't see passion and excellence.
2. The key is perceived value. Young adults feel most people are hesitant to get on board with things they deem as not being valuable or beneficial.
3. Young adults desire these 4 things: community, depth, connection and social responsibility.

This leads me to say that more than ever I want God to guide us as a church, through all this and give us wisdom as we face a new challenge in our changing times. – Mike Limon