

## From Pastor Jim's Desk

### **"What Kind of Church does Jesus Want St. John to Be - Hospice or Trauma Church?"**

What a tremendous history St. John has! To be 150 plus years old is an unparalleled blessing of God. To be blessed with the forethought to sell an old antiquated building and build this wonderful facility is amazing. To be located right in the middle of a business district where countless numbers of people pass our front doors on a daily basis is absolutely fantastic. Our forefathers and many of our present members deserve thanks and praise for having allowed them to be used as servants of the Most High God.

St. John's people are a loving, caring and compassionate people, desirous to do the Lord's work in this part of His harvest field. As St. Paul writes to the Philippians "I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup>In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup>being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" [Philippians 1:3-6].

I also know and feel much of the fear people have in these end times, especially in the Church. Life in this man's world is very different even from the time I started in the ministry, some 34 years ago. What once worked, and worked very well for the Church, today, struggles at best, and sometimes completely fails at worst. Reaching this new wired generation with the Gospel's precious message is tough!

But as your Pastor, my job is to love you through Jesus Christ and your job is to love each other so that our world will be drawn to Jesus Christ. But how attracting is our love for each other? Is it, in fact attracting or is it repulsing? When I ask these kinds of questions, people often feel put on the spot and may get defensive. My purpose with these questions is **NOT** to hurt you, but to truly love you, so that together we can honestly address these issues. I truly want the very best for St. John and pray that God would bless her for another 150 years. Therefore, I must, as your Shepherd, address issues and concerns that I believe will hurt and harm our church in the long run.

Since I like telling stories, here is one scenario I would like you to consider. What if a person came to the hospital in cardiac arrest? Does the hospital page a plastic surgeon? Of course not! If the hospital did, chances are the hospital did not recognize the serious nature of the man's situation. I cannot accept the alternative: that the hospital recognized the seriousness of the man's condition and choose intentionally to call a plastic surgeon.

Does St. John have "heart problems?" During our recent Cottage Meetings, I made the statement, "We have no clue as to why Jesus put us here or what it is that Jesus wants us to do." I would say that is serious heart problems. Jesus talked about heart problems in Matthew 15:7-9 when He quoted Isaiah saying, "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: <sup>8</sup>'These people honor me with their lips, **but their hearts are far from me.** (heart problems, right?) <sup>9</sup>They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'" When we or any church group sets aside God's commandments in order to follow man's rules, I think that is pretty serious heart problems.

Let me give you a couple of examples. In our last congregation meeting we spend a couple of hours deciding our worship style, preaching style and whether to use a screen or not. Did Jesus ever command us to use a certain order our worship? Did Jesus ever teaching on the proper giving of sermons or whether we are to use an outline or not? The simple answer is: no He didn't!

But what Jesus has commanded us is very clear, saying “If you continue in My Word, then you are My disciples” [John 8:31]; or again Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” [John 6:53]. If we individually or as a group set aside these commands for other commands Jesus NEVER give us, are we not being the hypocrites Jesus spoke about in Matthew 15? Do we not have “heart problems?”

Our church is in need of some emergency heart care – we have some heart problems. But what I hear is that we need to cut back on our spending, save our moneys to be able to stay open for as long as possible. That sounds like hospice care to me. You know what hospice care is, right? Keep everyone comfortable, and don’t do anything radical (defined as anything out of the ordinary and different from the standard fair). So, here we are coming in God’s presence in cardiac arrest, but all we want done is some plastic surgery so that we look good on the outside. That sounds like my opening story.

As your spiritual physician, I have to ask, is that what Jesus wants for this place? Rather than ask what kind of church St. John wants to be, maybe we need to ask what kind of Church does Jesus want St. John to be – a trauma Church or a hospice Church?

What body parts or functions can you live without? Can you live without legs? Sure. Can you live without eyes, ears, or kidneys? Yeah. The quality of life may not be great, but you can live without these parts and functions, right?

What can St. John do without and still be a church? Can we offer only one type of service that will reach the classic generation, and not worry about younger people and still be a church? Yeah! Can we continue not offering air condition, even though every store and restaurant today has air condition and St. John still be a church? Sure! Can we continue cutting back on everything and anything and do the slow “death dance” until that inevitable day, when the last member dies and St. John ceases to be? Absolutely, and many churches are doing just that! People who study the modern Church scene estimate that a full 50% of today’s churches will not exist in 25 years. Could St. John be one of them?

I believe that St. John has about 15 years to live. I say that because I have observed a hospice mentality in the members of this congregation. Why do I say that? A couple of reasons:

1. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, a special congregational meeting was called to question whether the Family & Youth position has really accomplished what was hoped it would. Members complain that St. John has thrown lots of money at a family and youth ministry with little or nothing to show for it. But one person will never make a ministry, any more than shepherds can give birth to sheep. **Sheep give birth to sheep!** If family and youth ministry was not a priority of the congregation, it did not matter who we called to head it up. It was doomed to fail from the start.
2. The hire and fire mentality is rampant in churches today (hopefully not here). But the sad fact of the matter is that for many people “**Michael was hired** here to do family and youth ministry,” and since not much family and youth ministry has really happened maybe we need to..... (you can fill in your own answer).

How does a trauma church differ from a hospice church? Below are a few characteristics:

<b>Characteristics of a Trauma Church</b>	<b>Characteristics of a Hospice Church</b>
<b>Recognize</b> the serious nature of our Heart problems and get the paddles out – the paddles of God’s Word to shock in new life and vitality.	<b>Deny</b> the serious nature of our Heart problems and continue dealing with outward appearances – like arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.
<b>High Commitment</b> of members to following Jesus explicit commands and direction – Jesus has already given us our Marching Orders.	<b>Volunteer Association</b> of members to business as usual. Man-made rules and regulations are upheld while Jesus’ Marching Orders are abandoned.
This <b>church is essential</b> to one’s life and walk in Jesus Christ – it is the air we breathe which we could not ever live without. It is spirited.	This <b>church is irrelevant</b> to one’s life and walk in Jesus Christ – it is something we participate in if we have the time or maybe just nothing else to do.
Prayer is caring and passionate for brothers and sisters in Christ – <b>relationships are primary</b> and absolutely necessary.	Prayer is rote and strained for people we barely know and most often don’t care to get to know. <b>Relationships are unnecessary.</b>
<b>Care more for the lost</b> condition of friends and family members living without Jesus then one does for one’s own salvation.	<b>Care more for one’s own salvation</b> than for the lost condition of friends and family members living without Jesus.
Preaches great uplifting, inspiring and <b>evangelistic messages</b> about the love of God in Jesus Christ.	Preaches great and inspiring <b>funeral messages</b> about the comfort we have in Jesus Christ.

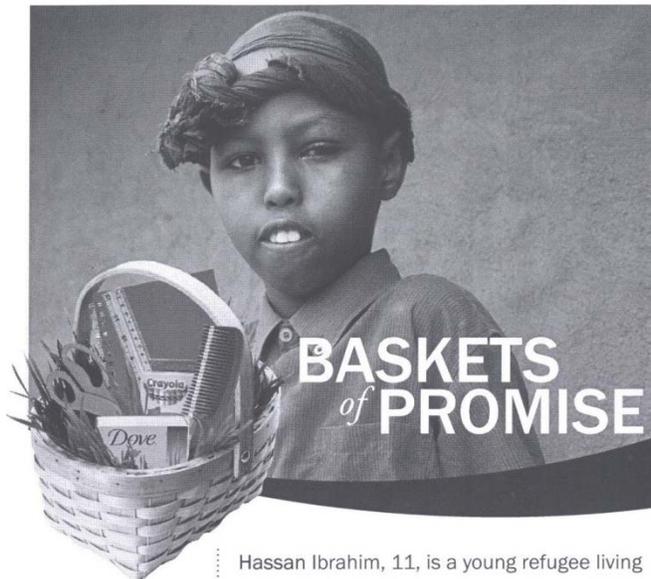
This is Jesus’ church; He died for her; and one day will take her to Heaven to be with Him forever. This is NOT my church or your church – it is Jesus’ church! I would beg each and every member of St. John to join me in that prayer – spending time reading the Bible, asking Jesus with hearts bowed in His presence, **“What do You, Jesus, want St. John Church to be?”**

Bible Passages you might consider reading during your prayer time, so that we can hear from Jesus:

1. Any of the passages listed in this article; or
2. Acts 4:23-31 – Prayer to speak God’s Word with boldness
3. Acts 6:2-7 – What are your Called leaders to be doing?
4. Romans 9:1-5 – Paul’s great concern for the lost of his day

Join me in prayer!

Pastor Jim



Hassan Ibrahim, 11, is a young refugee living in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. This year, thousands of people fled to Dadaab in search of relief from East Africa's devastating drought and famine. Hassan has been living in Dadaab for a year and he is studying English (his favorite subject), math and science.

#### HERE'S OUR COLLECTION SCHEDULE:

**FEBRUARY 26**  
Notebooks (70-sheet, wide- or college-ruled, approx. 8" x 10 1/2", no loose-leaf paper)



**MARCH 4**  
Backpacks (sturdy drawstring cloth bag approx. 14" x 17" with shoulder straps)



**MARCH 11**  
Pens (black or blue, no gel ink) and Pencils (unsharpened #2 with eraser)



**MARCH 18**  
Rulers (30-centimeter) and Erasers (2 1/2")



**MARCH 25**  
Crayons (box of 16 or 24) and Pencil Sharpeners



**APRIL 1 (Palm Sunday)**  
Scissors (blunt safety scissors)



For refugee children like Hassan, school provides stability, a sense of normalcy, and an opportunity to learn and strive for a better future. This Lenten season, as our congregation journeys toward the Cross let us be Christ's hands to children like Hassan by providing School Kits and paving the way for a "future with hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)



### Tuesday Bible Class – "Walk Through the Bible"

On the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, about 36 members with Pastor Jim, meet either at 1:30 to 3:00 pm or 7:00 to 8:30 pm to pour over one Book of the Bible. Right now we are studying the Book of Exodus, that great redemptive book of the Old Testament. For March the dates are Tuesday, March 13<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. Please put these dates into your personal calendars so you won't miss one.

### Coming Teaching Events for March and April

One Sunday evening each month, Pastor Jim puts on what he calls a "Teaching Event." The subject varies from month to month. Sometimes he shows a DVD and at other times he leads us in a timely subject and teaching.

**On Sunday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm**, Pastor Jim will teaching on "The Splendor of Herod's Temple." This was the temple that Jesus visited as a child, and then later taught in and finally was tried and convicted of death. Understand the passion account of Jesus Christ from a new perspective as together, we explore the Splendor of Herod's Temple.

**On Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 pm** and again on **Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm**, Pastor Jim will present "Holy Week in Pictures." Come and experience Holy Week as never before. Not only will you see the places Jesus walked during Holy Week, but you will be able to touch and smell various things that make our Holy Week celebration so special.