

NOWATA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

AUGUST 2021 NEWSLETTER



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Our church family had the joy of welcoming and worshipping with a visitor from a major American metropolitan area. He was the guest of one of our regular worshipers. Worship that day was pretty normal; no frills. We aren't the type of church to plan a lot of special worship things.

After worship, our church had our monthly potluck lunch. Our guest stayed to eat, and I got the joy of visiting with him over lunch. He was powerfully affected by his time with us. Though he has been a believer throughout his adult life, his involvement in local churches has been, well, skin-deep. By his own admission, the level of intimacy and affection our church casually shared with one another in our worship was foreign to him. He knew that it was a reflection of a biblical standard. He also uncomfortably said that such intimacy is in short supply in many churches he has known throughout his adult life.

Affirmations from a Visitor

Written by Pastor Jeffrey Rickman



This man has been a believer all his life. He had attended many churches. All of them have been big, most of them nondenominational. His own description of these churches is that they are impersonal and performative. People attend his church, not because they want to know and be known by Christ and his people, but because they want to have an emotional experience.

Part of our worship that touched him so profoundly was our simple act of raising prayer concerns together. Kody walked our microphone around to people who raised their hands, and each of them got to speak to what was on their hearts. At one point, my own daughter, Susanna, got the microphone and celebrated her friend Landree's birthday with everyone. Sitting over lunch, our guest spoke warmly of her simple joyful act, not knowing she was my daughter. I was so proud that my daughter got to validate our familial affection in front of a guest. The simple act of a community petitioning the Lord together, without any emotional background music, without any masterful production around it, spoke like a clarion call to this man's heart that something is deeply wrong in many churches today.

Local churches in America are struggling to recover the wind that was knocked out of them before Covid struck. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic began, Americans were waning in their commitment to voluntary associations, especially faith-based ones. Elite culture had long ago declared war on ordinary daily faithful connection to the church, consigning it to the past as part of the unnecessary superstitions of backwards dogmatic bigots. Worldly churches, obsessed with relevance and niceness, made the caricature of faithful, principled Christians all the more ridiculous.

The result is the decimation of a majority of our churches for the benefit of a few "megachurches," designed to profit from attendees who see themselves primarily as consumers rather than saints. Worship, rather than a covenant-renewal ceremony for believers, was transformed into an evangelistic appeal for prospective new believers. Over the course of a hundred years, denominations once based in fervent zeal for the Lord were co-opted into social activist organizations, light on biblical knowledge.

For a time, leaders in our mainline denominations advocated for all churches to adopt the approachable, attractional models that large city and suburban churches employed. It seemed to work, for a season. But then the freefall began. Some pastors and church leadership teams still go to conferences and listen to thought leaders aimed at helping churches adopt all the new trends that the elusive young people are picking up.

Meanwhile, there are a few churches, mostly small, mostly rural, that are returning to the roots of Christian faith and piety. Perhaps some never strayed. We focus on simple bible study and genuine community, earnest prayer and honest discipleship. When people from other settings step into our community worship, they realize we aren't trying to pander or condescend to them by adopting the consumerist models of megachurches, but that we naturally exercise a simple passion for Christ and his people.

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There was a sadness in our guest's eyes as he spoke about returning home to his church setting. He said he long ago stopped getting into the car to drive 30 minutes to sit in the sanctuary because he didn't really know anyone there, and he can just stay home and watch online. I was sad for him, too. I'm sad for a whole nation for whom humble, intimate worship settings are foreign, people for whom worship is a high quality rock band or a motivational feel-good sermon (light on scripture, of course). I feel sorry for the children who do not know a multigenerational body to model humble worship, to love them for who they are and make room for them to become one of the adult saints. I feel sorry for those adults who have no friends and no meaningful connections bringing them to the answers around the purpose and meaning of life, who do not even consider a local church body for knowledge because they learned long ago that local churches don't offer anything that they can't find somewhere else on their own terms.

I don't pray for revival anymore. I just pray for humble, faithful churches and disciples. God will build his Kingdom in his time. Yet when Christ returns, will he find any faithful? (Luke 18:8)

Coming Up in August

- August 7 from 7am-10am
Delaware Methodist Church
Breakfast
- August 10 at 6:30pm
Administrative Board
meeting
- August 17
Nona H.'s birthday
- August 22
Rob R.'s birthday
- August 24
Cyndi T.'s birthday
- August 29
Potluck after worship

Happening Every Week

Worship: Sundays at 11am

Women's Prayer Group:
Wednesdays at 10:30am

Bible Reading Hour:
Thursdays at 6:30pm

Office Hours: Monday-Friday
from 9am-Noon

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On the Same Page

Written by Sara Beth Rickman

In the last week, Jeffrey and I stumbled upon a Christian woman on YouTube that we had never heard of: Rachel Jankovic. She's well-spoken, smart, faithful, down-to-earth. We have watched video after video, and each time we finish one, we comment to each other how impressed we are with her faithfulness amidst trials and a culture that is trying desperately to distract and confuse believers. If you need encouragement in your faith, especially women, I would urge you to seek her out.

One of the videos that I watched dealt with reading the scriptures and the excuses that we often tell ourselves and use to avoid reading God's word. I was very familiar with these excuses, as I have struggled all of my Christian life to develop a love and longing to read the bible. Rachel's home church in Idaho developed a 'Bible Reading Challenge' for believers. Each summer they read through the New Testament (4 chapters a day), and during the school year they are able to accomplish the entire bible (6 chapters a day).

Since I have always struggled to consistently read the bible, I decided to try this challenge. This was an answer to prayer! God has given me a hunger for his Word like I have never experienced. Last night as I had trouble falling asleep, instead of getting up to watch YouTube videos or scroll through Facebook, I read scripture until Clementine cried out for me. While I eat lunch each day, I am reaching for my bible rather than my phone or the tv. This desire to know God through his word is new for me, but I am loving it!

The beauty of this 'challenge' is that you pick up where you are and go from there. If you miss a day, there are catch up days built into the plan. And eventually you will have read the entirety of the bible and can start over again. I pray that you will consider joining in this with me. Another way to engage the scriptures is to join Pastor Jeffrey on Thursday evenings at 6:30 for an hour of bible reading. Right now they are reading Matthew together. Let's all be "on the same page" together!



Visit
<https://biblereading.christkirk.com>
to learn more about the challenge
and to print the plan for yourself.
You are also welcome to stop by
the church office for a printed
plan.





New Bible Reading Hour

Join Pastor Jeffrey on **Thursdays at 6:30pm**
for an hour in the Word. No food, no
money, no discussion--just time in the
scriptures.

AUGUST

DATE

DAILY READING

MON	2	 Catch-Up Day or Galatians 1–6
TUE	3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 1–4
WED	4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 5–8
THU	5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 9–12
FRI	6	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 13–16
SAT	7	<input type="checkbox"/> James 1–5
MON	9	 Catch-Up Day or 2 John, 3 John
TUE	10	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Corinthians 1–4
WED	11	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Corinthians 5–8
THU	12	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Corinthians 9–13
FRI	13	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Timothy 1–4
SAT	14	 Catch-Up Day or 1 Peter 1–5
MON	16	<input type="checkbox"/> Philemon, Jude
TUE	17	<input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 1–5
WED	18	<input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 6–9
THU	19	<input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 10–13
FRI	20	 Catch-Up Day or 2 Peter 1–3
SAT	21	<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 1–4
MON	23	<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 5–8
TUE	24	<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 9–12
WED	25	<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 13–16
THU	26	<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 17–20
FRI	27	<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 21–22
SAT	28	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 119



CHRIST CHURCH

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christkirk.com

Join us year round for Bible reading!



BibleReading.christkirk.com



Women: CCLadiesFellowship Men: KerkersRead



[BibleReadingChallenge](https://www.instagram.com/BibleReadingChallenge)

