

Westgate Witness



October 2023

2235 Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601 -- 717-394-1071



MARK YOUR CALENDAR
October 5th - ABW Meeting
October 8th - Church Cookout
October 17th - AB Men's Breakfast
October 23rd - Board Meeting



Greetings in the Name of our Lord!

Go Therefore

Scripture: **Matthew 28:16-20** Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of that age.”*

The late, great Dr. Bruce Thielemann preached a sermon under the title: *“Two-Thirds of God is Go!”* The title intrigued me many years ago and it intrigues me now. Two-thirds of God is GO. That is straight out of the Bible. Look at the Old Testament. God says to **Abraham**: *“Go from your own country go a land I will show you.”* And God says to **Moses**: *“Go down to Egypt and say to Pharaoh, ‘Let my people go.’”* So, Moses went and said: *“Let my people go”* and the people of God have been on the go ever since. In fact, there is a sense in which the Old Testament can best be described as a travel diary of the Hebrew people—God’s people always on the move with God always leading the way.



Or look at the New Testament. The story begins with Mary and Joseph traveling first to Bethlehem, then down to Egypt, and ultimately back up to Nazareth. Jesus, in His service to God, was the first-century equivalent of a traveling evangelist, always on the road. In fact, at one point, it is noted that Jesus, the Son of Man had no place to lay His head. After His resurrection, He told His disciples to go to Galilee—later on He met them there and He told them that they were to **“go into all the world, making disciples of all nations.”** The Apostle Paul was the most on-the-go Christian of them all. The airlines today would refer to him as a **“frequent flier.”** He turned the last half of his life into an unending missionary journey for Jesus.

Sometimes people refer to Christianity as a movement—and that is not a bad description because that’s the way it is with God’s people: always on the go. And why not? After all, two-thirds of God is Go! Modern society understands that. Did you hear about the family who transferred to a new community? Their young teenage daughter on her first day at school was trying to make some new friends. One of her new acquaintances asked where her father worked. She answered: **“IBM.”** The other girl said: **“I’ve always wanted to know what those letters stand for.”** The girl answered: **“I’ve been moved!”** All too frequently the corporate ladder required it.

In the spiritual world. God often seems to be calling His people to go—sometimes it’s a literal going, sometimes it’s a figurative going, but the call is the same. Look at Abraham and Sarah. They were seventy-five years old, and God called them to pull up their roots and travel to a new place. Abraham and Sarah didn’t have a clue or a travel itinerary. The only thing they had was God’s assurance that He would guide and direct them. Or look at Matthew. He was a Jew working for the hated Romans and he was helping the Romans extract from his own people cruel and regressive taxes. Yet Jesus calls him to leave his tax tables and follow him. Abraham and Sarah were called by God to take a literal journey—and they responded. Matthew, the tax collector, was called by God to take a figurative journey, a journey of discipleship—and he responded. And in both cases, it was in going that they experienced **“growing.”**

That’s the way it always works. God calls people to go, literally or figuratively, and when they respond, they are blessed, and they become a blessing. I happen to believe that God is still in the business of calling His people to go, to embark upon journeys of faith. I happen to believe that the way Abraham and Sarah responded to that call provides a pattern for us all. And in the going (whether literal or figurative) we Trust God will use and equip us. We trust that God will sustain. We trust that God will bring a harvest. We trust God will match obedience with provision. We Trust God will GO with Us!

Pastor Robert Zimmerman

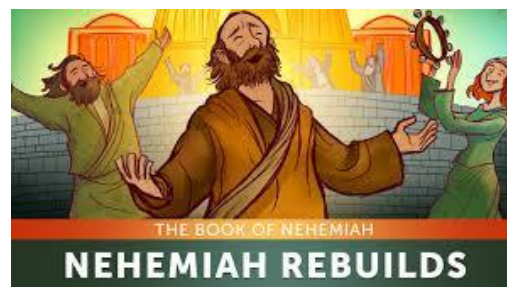


Women's Bible Study – Join us Tuesdays at 9:30 AM

There will be NO Bible Study on October 3rd or October 31st



Join us for coffee, fellowship, study, and prayer. We are working through Nehemiah - discovering how the lessons from this Old Testament story are still so very relevant for our world today. We have candid discussions, play fun games, and support one another as we study God's Word.



Adult Sunday School resumes at 9:30.

We gather for conversation and coffee and by 9:45 the class topic begins. The focus of our conversation in Sunday School will come from a curriculum entitled **Love in Chaos** developed by author and speaker Bob Goff.

The curriculum reminds us that there is Good News in the midst of a divided culture. We don't need to look far to see the divisions in our world. These divisions are creating confusion, anger, disillusionment, and chaos in the experience of the masses. How should Christians respond to the obvious chaos? What does it look like to live faithfully in these strange and challenging times? The curriculum by bestselling author Bob Goff seeks to address the turmoil and questions caused by such a divided world. Let's talk about what it looks like to follow Jesus and obey his commands even in times of chaos.



Next Board Meeting is scheduled for
Monday, October 23rd @ 6:30 PM



FACT: Only America Calls it Fall

The season was originally just called harvest and autumn came around much later in the 1300s, according to CNN. When English poets started using the phrase "the fall of leaves" it became very fashionable to call the season fall. But by the mid-1800s, after the split of the colonies from England led to language change, England reverted back to Autumn and the American upstarts retained fall.



COOKOUT!

Church Picnic
Sunday, October 8th at 5:00
Home of Richard and Nancy Cook
106 Fairland Road, Lititz - 717 665 0996



Roast Beef, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Baked Corn, Tossed Salad, Carrot Cake, Angel Food Ice Cream Roll, Coffee, Hot and Iced Tea



Cost: \$15.00 per person. Bring lawn chairs. Bring only your appetite but no food. Make reservations and cash payment to Reverend Cook or Nancy by **Sunday October 1.**



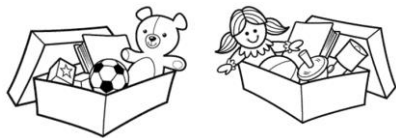
AB Men's Breakfast



Our next Men's Fellowship breakfast will be on October 17th at 9:00 am. We will meet at the Family Fare Restaurant, 5921 Main St., East Petersburg PA 17520 for a casual Christian Men's fellowship time.



ABW Meeting scheduled for October 5th @ 1:00pm



Will be discussing the upcoming bake school for November and Operation Christmas Child.



Boxes will be available mid-October. More details to follow in weekly bulletins.

FACT: Fall Leaf Colors are Caused by Sugar

Everyone loves those colorful leaf colors in the fall from vibrant reds to eye-popping bright oranges, but did you know that the color the leaves turn is based on how much sugar is in the leaves. That's why maple leaves are such a brilliant red color.





An **art competition** awarded a prize for the best expression of peace. One painting depicted a deer and a fawn grazing at the skirt of a mountain meadow rimmed with pines and cedars stretching heavenward. Another showed a cat curled up in a basket, resting with all its being, as only cats can do.



But the first prize went to the painting of a tumultuous waterfall. Torrents rushed downward, crashing on the rocks below, sending spray high above. A tree branch extended just above the mist, with a bird's nest in a fork. Safely within were the mother bird and two babies.

That's tranquility. The ability to relax in the most rushed circumstances. Serene surroundings don't produce peace. The absence of animosity doesn't. If peace depended on the setting, many could never find serenity.

Peace is being in harmony, allowing God to fit all the pieces of our lives together. As we cultivate the presence of the Holy Spirit deep down, he brings peace.

Article published by World Magazine



The rise of non-worshipping “evangelicals” Many of the dechurched still hold key Christian beliefs.

According to a recent survey, 40 million people have stopped going to church in the last 25 years. The authors of this new study, *The Great DeChurching*, which comprehensively polled 7,000 Americans, argue this is the largest religious shift in American history. There is much to lament in the decline in church attendance. It has and will continue to have a negative impact on human flourishing, polarization, and the vital social services churches provide.

And yet, there are some surprising details in the data, compiled by sociologist Ryan Burge and two evangelical pastors, Jim Davis and Michael Graham. For instance, the right is dechurching faster than the left. This is likely because left-leaning religious bodies, particularly the mainline Protestant denominations, started seeing erosion well before this current moment and have few people left to lose.

Of the 40 million leavers, 15 million have stopped attending evangelical churches, and this is where the research might both surprise and encourage pastors. The two biggest cohorts are what the authors label “cultural Christians”



and “mainstream evangelicals.” The former group comprises folks who identify as Christians and live in areas around the Bible Belt but who register low scores of belief in key Christian doctrines. There are around 8 million such people in our communities. Dean Inserra, a pastor in Florida, describes this cohort well in his book, *The Unsaved Christian*, “Self-proclaimed Christians who worship a god that requires no self-sacrifice, no obedience, no submission, and no surrender.” This group of folks leans right politically, and over half are open to returning to church if asked. There is a vast mission field here if we are willing to engage.



The second largest group of dechurched evangelicals are those who affirm orthodox Christian beliefs but who have stopped attending. It’s not surprising that mainstream evangelicals who no longer attend church still hold mostly right-of-center political views. What is interesting is how many—78 percent—have a high view of the evangelical church, and 100 percent would consider attending again. Many claim to stay home and watch church online. Imagine if churches invited these approximately two and a half million brothers and sisters to return home.

It could be that in our good and important work to evangelize and disciple the lost to our left, we should also consider ministry to those to our right, the blue-collar, perhaps right-wing people who also need Jesus.

Both cultural Christians and mainstream evangelicals share surprisingly pedestrian reasons for leaving. Most admit getting out of the habit, experiencing a major life change, or leaving due to disruptions like COVID. As writer Jake Meador says, “Dechurching for them is either not a big deal because church was never a huge part of their life to begin with or they leave very quietly because they’re actually kind of embarrassed and feel ashamed—not necessarily because of what churchgoers will say, but because some part of them knows they should be going to church—and they don’t want to talk to anyone about it.”

What’s missing in the largest group of leavers is the narrative that dominates mainstream conversations about evangelicals: dissatisfaction due to evangelical engagement with conservative politics. To be sure, there is a cohort mentioned in the study of “exvangelicals” who have stopped attending due to unhealthy church environments, abuse, or partisan politics. Evangelicals should take seriously the problem of abuse and corruption in our midst and should be wary of an idolatrous, all-consuming politics.

Still, it is clear that the simplistic thesis explaining a decline in American church attendance because of evangelical voting patterns is just not true, despite the resilience of this self-flagellating theme in progressive evangelical discourse and despite a thriving publishing genre nearly as prolific as Amish fiction. Day after day, self-hating would-be prophets take this message to media outlets only too eager to evangelize the deplorable nature of everyday followers of Christ.

Month after month, cut-and-paste jeremiads hit the bestseller list excoriating the church of one’s youth. We always need prophets, but



there are other more complicating social factors affecting America's great shift in religious activity. There are also opportunities, if only we'd seize them. One more uncomfortable data point from *The Great DeChurching* shows that folks without college degrees are leaving much faster than those with education. Put it all together and it could be that in our good and important work to evangelize and disciple the lost to our left, we should also consider ministry to those to our right, the blue-collar, perhaps right-wing people who also need Jesus. Our Savior's ministry reached all classes of society, from respected elites like Nicodemus to despised people whom most folks passed by, such as the man by the pool of Bethesda. The invitation into the family isn't restricted by ZIP code.



The large number of people not attending church is cause for lament but also a catalyst for action. Maybe it's time for us to stop imbibing the cynicism that has us not believing our own story. Maybe it's time to stop passing by the mission fields in front of us. Perhaps it's time to invite our neighbor to church.

Birthdays & Anniversaries- July & August



10/1	Barbara Adams
10/2	Kayla Bell
10/14	Janet Whitehead
10/15	Braxton Sollenberger
10/18	Wilson Joseph




10/1/2022	David & Jennifer Ryan
10/3/1987	Ron & Lynda Williams
10/11/1975	Paul & Sandy Dour
10/25/2020	Rev. Richard & Nancy Cook



School Supplies Collected

- Pens – 157/ Pencils - 606 / Erasers - 54
- Scissors – 40/ Pencil Sharpeners – 22
- Boxed Crayons – 38/ Colored Pencils - 173
- Paper Tablets – 28 /Rulers – 9/ Glue Sticks - 21
- Tooth Paste – 8 boxes/ Toothbrushes - 8
- Mouth wash – 8 small bottles/ Notepads – 9

Treasurer's Report

September 2023	\$9,432.00
Budget Income	\$8,387.00
Non-budget income	\$1,045.00

