



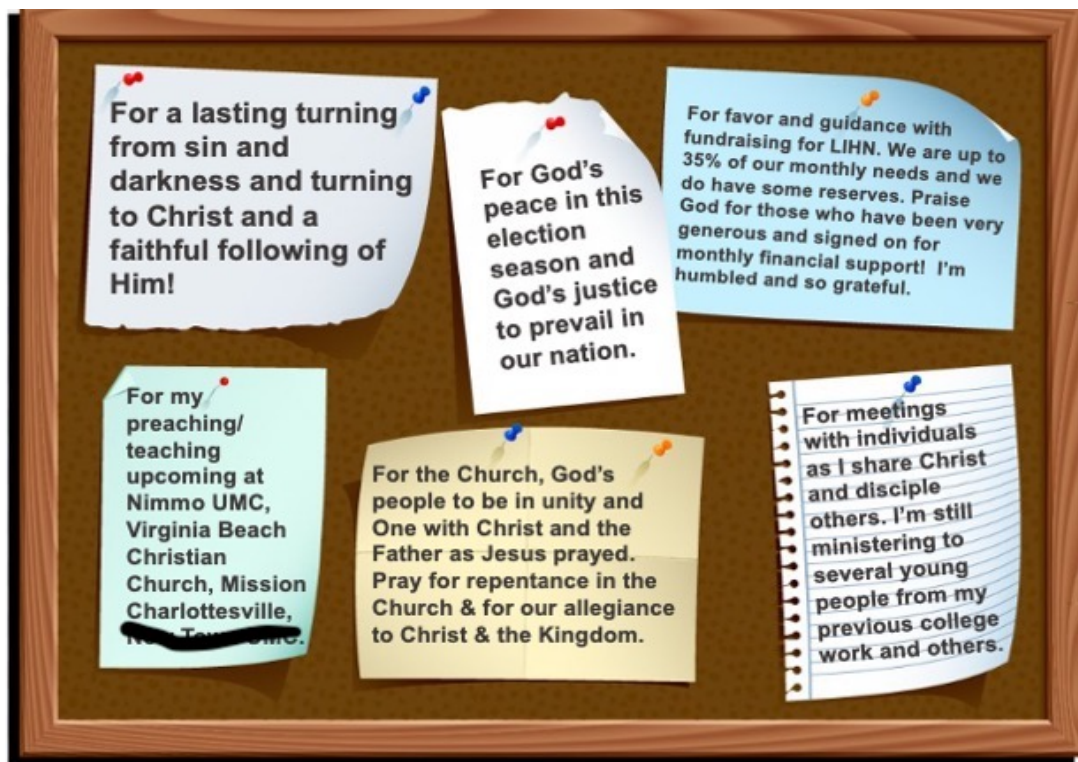
Upcoming Events

- Preaching at Nimmo UMC:
Sunday, Oct. 11
- Preaching at Virginia Beach Christian Church:
Sunday, Oct. 18
- Speaking at Mission Charlottesville:
Sunday, Oct. 25
- Preaching at Nimmo UMC:
Sunday, Nov. 22

Donate to LIHN today

We are beginning our 4th month in this new ministry! We are still in a time of raising financial support. If you are led to give, different donation options are available. All gifts are tax deductible. We are grateful for every gift and giver!

Prayers for our nation, the church, and this ministry



2020 make it stop: Seriously though, navigating these perilous times



We are in
incredibly
challenging
times. Our
nation is
divided.

God's Church
is divided. We
have failed to be
faithful to the
teachings of Christ.

There are great injustices and inequities in our land. Violence is ongoing with threats of more coming. The COVID-19 pandemic continues with worldwide deaths passing 1 million and more than 200,000 lives lost in our nation. The wildfires rage in the west and hurricanes have battered states on the Gulf of Mexico. We have bitter division in our politics as the election draws near. It seems the only thing both parties agree upon is that the apocalypse will happen if the other party is elected.

In the midst of this, there is no shortage of voices who claim to have the answers, they quickly tell us which ones God favors and which side to be on. Dig deeper, don't let others do your thinking for you. It is often more complex than some people make it out to be. In these times, we would do well to remember this story from the Bible.

"Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?' 'Neither,' he replied, 'but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.' Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, 'What message does my Lord have for his servant?' The commander of the Lord's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so." - Joshua 5:13-15

“
I am praying for peace
and justice as integral
parts of God's Kingdom
to be established here
and now on earth as they
are in heaven.

A friend told me this was the Biblical story that inspired President Abraham Lincoln's famous response to the question about whether God was on his side during the Civil War . . . "Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side, my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right." Lincoln was very familiar with the Bible and sought to lead with God's truth and wisdom. There's a very insightful article with wisdom for today written by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik on this topic, you can read it [HERE](#).

In our nation we have Christian leaders calling for violence or failing to denounce it. They misrepresent God's nature and tragically fail to understand how God's Kingdom comes. I do not want to be overly dramatic, but I have been thinking of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. At the time Rwanda was one of the most "Christian" nations in Africa. However, because of centuries old divisions, injustices and strife, the tribal identities of Hutu and Tutsi carried more weight than their identities as followers of Jesus. In less than four months between half a million and a million were murdered in Rwanda.

Again, I don't want to be an alarmist. I am praying for peace and justice as integral parts of God's Kingdom to be established here and now on earth as they are in heaven. In the U.S.A. we love stories of "good violence" overcoming "bad violence." From John Wayne and Clint Eastwood to James Bond and Marvel movies, we love it when the "good guy" crushes and destroys the bad guy. There is a time for this. World War II is a clear example. However, Jesus is radically different. Jesus overcomes evil not with force and violence, but with sacrificial love, laying down his life.

Friends let's be sure no matter what happens in these next few months that we seek to line up with Jesus on all things – being peacemakers, ministers of reconciliation, salt and light! And it's a good idea once in a while to take off our shoes and socks and remember it all belongs to Him. We're on God's ground, holy ground!

Small groups: Just a good idea or a divine strategy?



Peter attempts to walk on water and Jesus tells him to not be afraid.



Jesus drives demons out of Mary Magdalene

These mosaics found in Magadala in Israel beautifully portray the small-scale and personal nature of Jesus' ministry

Have you ever considered that when the Son of God came to earth, he did not start a mega-church, but rather a mini-church? If anyone could have started a mega-church it would have been Jesus. Imagine him announcing to the crowds, "Listen up! In 20 minutes, I'm going to heal the blind guy right here! Bring your friends, you don't want to miss this." Jesus actually did the complete opposite.

Often when he performed miracles, he told those who were healed to keep it quiet. His time was spent with the 12 disciples and a group of female followers who were constantly with him, a mini-church! So, when Jesus, risen from the dead, sends them out declaring, "Go make disciples of all nations . . ." he doesn't mention small groups. However, this is implied. Their understanding of how disciples are made would

have involved life together within a redemptive circle. It is a model of apprenticeship, not merely a classroom model.

I believe that small groups are a part of God's divine strategy to reach the world with the Good News. Even in this technological age of communication with Facechat, Snapbook, Instatweet and Toktik readily available (My college students used to love it when I'd get these wrong – they thought it proved I was out of touch with their world and reality), we still need small life-giving fellowship.

“

So, when Jesus, risen from the dead, sends them out declaring, 'Go make disciples of all nations . . .' he doesn't mention small groups. However, this is implied. Their understanding of how disciples are made would have involved life together within a redemptive circle. It is a model of apprenticeship, not merely a classroom model.

A good small group goes beyond a transfer of information. We must aim at transformation of the whole life. God's Word again and again calls us to holiness, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). Holiness = Christlikeness!

A good small group gives space for people to share the experience of growing in faith and its many joys, struggles, failures and advances. The atmosphere needed for this to happen is grace and truth, trust and confidentiality.

In partnership with a couple good friends and Lynnhaven UMC, I've recently started a small men's group. We would like to include some men who are not yet Christ followers, but are seeking. The group would be a means of both evangelism and discipleship.

****I am available to teach churches, face to face or via Zoom, about effective small group ministry and to help them launch.**

Sharing Christ: Simple steps

It's been said that the two most difficult things about evangelism for Christians are: #1) Starting and #2) Stopping! A lot of Christians keep their faith to themselves for various reasons. However, our calling and joy is to abide in Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit gives us courage and boldness to share (**John 15:5; Acts 4:31**). If you aren't active in sharing your faith with others, I encourage you to ask yourself, "Why?"

There are roots to hesitancy in sharing faith. If you can identify them, you can find the resources to overcome them. Remember, Jesus' invitation to his first disciples, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" (**Matthew 4:19 NLT**)! So, starting can be challenging, but God is with you and for you!

Then the stopping! You know what I mean. You've met people who share their faith and don't come up for air! At some point you feel trapped because they have shifted into sermon mode. Dialogue is so much more effective and fun! Have a few questions ready so that the other person is invited into the conversation. "I've shared about my faith and I'm grateful for you listening. I'm curious, are a person of faith? I'd love to hear some of your story." Then make sure you don't interrupt them. Ask clarifying questions or encourage them to expound on some aspect of their story. If they have different views, don't react negatively. Remember, the Holy Spirit goes ahead of us, is with us and goes after us. Don't try to force a change. Try to sense how open they are and follow the leading of God's Spirit. Remember, we are called to be witnesses, not prosecuting attorneys!

The Greatest Commandment is crucial in true faith sharing – Love God, love the person you're

sharing with. These two points are also crucial in effective faith sharing:

1. **Don't treat the person as a project! They are a unique human life created in God's image.**
2. **Don't reduce your witnessing to a formula or a technique.**

I'm not against having some specific points to share, but tune in to the relationship, where the person is hurting, broken or needy. Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit to share your own shortcomings and hurts in order to connect with them. Here are a few other questions I like

to ask to get to know people and understand where they are: "Do you have a faith background? What is it and has it been played a positive role in your life?" "Do you think God is active in the world and, if so, how?" "What do you make of Jesus? Do you know his teachings and what do you think of them? Do you think he is the Son of God? God revealed in human form? Why or why not?"

As I get to know people who are not Christians, at some point I share with them that I'm betting my whole life that the greatest truth at the center of the universe is this: "God loves you, and the clear evidence is seen in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ!"

****I am available to train churches in evangelism and basic apologetics face to face or via Zoom.**

