Happy New Year… still! I know the New Year isn’t very new anymore, but I hope and pray that it hasn’t gotten old or routine for you either. I pray that God continues to reveal fresh dreams and visions of new things in your life throughout this year.

As we began this New Year, I shared in both the Saltshaker and my Vision 2017 Sunday Message a word that I believe is a prophetic word for Living Springs for this coming year. It is New Things! The scripture the Lord laid on my heart is Isaiah 43; verses 18-19 specifically. “Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” Again, as a church we have a rich history that we need to remember and celebrate. However, as the text points out, we should not dwell, or get stuck in the past. As my old senior pastor used to say, “Traditionalism just looking back to what we have always done” is a rut that leads into a grave. We are in danger of missing out on all that God has done for us.

New Things Are Happening… or “springing up” as the prophet said, “do you not perceive it?” Perhaps you have noticed some new things already happening at Living Springs… some small; and some that are going to be done for us.

We are very intentionally trying to involve the next generation in our worship. We are also blessed to have some amazing students like Kate and Matt Meyricks and Sabrina Rodriguez, from Trinity College; adding their voices, instruments, and gifts to our worship. Sabrina has just begun an internship with our worship ministries (see breakout box). We are also hoping to establish some more internships with college and even high school students, to continue to raise up the next generation.

My name is Sabrina Rodriguez and I am a junior at Trinity Christian College, studying Church Ministry Leadership, with an emphasis on worship. From a young age, music has been a huge passion in my life; so much so that I sing and currently play 5 instruments: guitar, piano, ukulele, bass, and banjo. As I grew older, my passion for music grew into a passion for worship and for using the music talents I have been gifted with to glorify the King of Kings. At Living Springs, I am free to use my gifts to worship. From a young age, music has always been a passion in my life; so much so that I grew up singing in the church and using my love for music to lead others to Christ; and willing to fit the needs of the many types of gifts and people who attend it. This is the exact reason I wanted to be at Living Springs. No matter where I came from, who I am, what my gifts are, or any of the other things that may define me, the community was willing to accept me and help me flourish in my walk with God. I am extremely excited to be taking part in the diverse community at Living Springs this year.

(Continued on page 2)
2017: New Things Are “Springing” at Living Springs!
(continued from page 1)

Some really exciting things are in the works! If you have any interest in being a part of any of the following initiatives, let Randle Elmore (randle@livingspringscc.org) or myself (dizenbart@livingspringscc.org) know and we will get you plugged in!

#1: A Living Springs App

The sad reality is that nearly 1,000 children under the age of 5 die every day from not having clean drinking water. This is a solvable world problem, and we have the privilege of doing something about it! Living Springs is going to host a 6k walk/run for clean drinking water. For every $50 raised, one child is provided with clean water. For every $1,400 raised, a school is provided with a rain well filtration system! We will be partnering with our community for this event – raising awareness, funds, and making a difference! If you have a desire to be a part of the team (race logistics, marketing, fitness, after the race event, medical, etc.) contact Randle Elmore.

#2: New Strategy for Disciple-Making

The leadership at LSCC believes that our Mission: Becoming Disciples that Make Disciples – Our Journey with Christ and with others toward Christ (Grow, Gather, Go) is a good one. However, we feel like our strategy hasn’t worked very well. People have found it hard to connect, the pathway not very clear, and limited opportunities to grow. That is going to change! We are developing a new simple, accessible, and concrete plan to make disciples. The vision for Disciple Making is that every Living Springs person might grow in Christ, gather in community, and go make a difference (3G Christian Follow-er). You will hear much more about this in the year to come.

#3: Lobby Updates…

To visually help to make our discipleship process more accessible, and concrete plan to make disciples. The vision for Disciple Making is: that every Living Springs person might grow in Christ, gather in community, and go make a difference (3G Christian Follow-er). You will hear much more about this in the year to come.

#4: Lobby Updates…

Well, our “new” building is now 1.5 years old and it is time for some much needed updates to our facility. We have a design team working now to redesign our lobby and coffee house with some specific objectives in mind:

- To make the space more warm and welcoming for visitors and members
- To offer more areas in the church for comfortable conversation and connection
- To visually help to make our discipleship process more visible and accessible for visitors, new members, and longtime members. To help people very clearly make the next steps in their spiritual journey
- Space and colors need updating. The lobby/coffee house feels a little too sterile, like a hospital. We are hoping that the coffee house area can become a warmer and more inviting space, that people could use throughout the week, with free Wi-Fi and tasty coffee.

- To make our common spaces more appealing to the next generation

#5: Living Springs App

We are also in the midst of developing a Living Springs app that would include messages, connection information, and lots of ways to help folks grow, gather, and go… right at your fingertips. Should be very cool!

I would ask for each one of us to pray for God to continue to stir and lead us in the new year! Again, if any of these initiatives are interesting to you and you would like to be involved in their implementation, please let us know!

May the face of every good news and the back of every bad news be towards us.

-Irish Toast
I met Albert and Irene when I lived in an old town beside a great river. He was a big gentle man; she was small and lively, with laughter never far from her eyes. Even though they were childless and approaching middle age, they were so in love with each other that there was no apparent sense of loss. Albert was a retired furniture maker. Irene cared about wood as some men cared about music or paintings. Whenever Albert found a piece of walnut of unusual color and grain he put it aside, so that before long he had a modest stack, perfectly matched in hue and texture accumulated beside his workbench. I was surprised when the little furniture factory closed. Few people wanted to pay for such expensive furniture when for a fraction of the price they could get the kind tacked together on assembly lines. Albert sadly packed his tools and took them home to his garage. At the appointed month, Irene presented Albert with a tiny baby daughter. Albert in turn presented the child with a cradle, a wonderful cradle like none had ever seen before, made from the Royal Walnut. But it was a week or two before the baby was born that I met Albert on the street. I knew how anxious those last days of waiting could be, and I asked him if the time seemed to pass too slowly. He thought about this and said, “No, I’m glad the Lord planned it this way. You need a bit of time to get ready for a miracle.”

Ash Wednesday has special meaning for me as the anniversary of the day in 1974 that I said, “Yes, Lord” to an invitation to attend Coffee Break in South Holland; to observe and learn how to lead inductive Bible studies. As a result, last March I stood facing 50 women in Nairobi, Kenya and shared with them what I learned 45 years ago and through which I have been blessed ever since.

On March 2nd, Pastor Jason will be returning to Kenya, and Carolyn Ray will be providing the second year of teaching to these beautiful women. Please pray for them as they travel; pray for Carolyn as she shares and pray for these African women as they share this discovery method of Bible study with others in the villages of Kenya. You are invited to join us any Wednesday morning at 9:30 in room 145, to discover the “discovery method” of study for yourself. We’ll be digging into chapter 21 of Matthew’s gospel, on March 1st. For questions, call Connie Bultema @708-735-7025.
A story shared by Shelmith Njeri:

Tulia went to school in the neighboring village where she wasn’t known well. For three weeks, she came to school late and on each occasion, the teacher punished her. During the fourth week, Tulia didn’t attend school at all; many thought she had given up on school due to the everyday punishment.

However, in the fifth week, Tulia reported again and this time she came earlier than everybody. When the teacher came to class, Tulia was punished for not attending school the previous week. The teacher was also kind enough to commend her for coming early that day, stating that the punishments had finally yielded some results.

Tulia asked if she could say something and the teacher gave her permission. She started: “I’ve been raised up by a single mother without a brother or a sister. Five weeks ago, my mother got sick and was hospitalized. She was admitted her last Friday. Today I came early because I did not have to prepare anything or even pass by the hospital. Now that she is gone, I will always be here early.”

As Tulia sat down, no one in the class was able to hold their tears; the teacher not spared.

I wonder, how many times do we judge and punish others for lateness? How much stress do we pass on to others about finding a job, moving out, getting married? How often do we ask newlyweds, “When will you get pregnant?” The list goes on.

Do we attempt to understand their situations or do we just judge from what we think are the ‘best case scenarios’? We all have a story. What we think about someone else could be very far from the truth, unless we take the time to listen to them and care.

God bless you.

About those who shared:
Lawrence Mutugi comes from the mountains in Meru, Kenya. He is raised by a single, jobless mother, and depended on Matanya’s Hope sponsors to see him through his education. He is an IT graduate and is on fire for the Lord.

Shelmith Njeri witnessed so much tragedy in her young life. This resulted with her having no way to continue school until Matanya’s Hope took her into our academic scholarship program. Today, Shelmith is completing her final year in university. She has a heart for God and often inspires so many of our Matanya’s Hope students.

Matanya’s Hope is in need of donations to cover the cost of shipping items to those most in need. Shipping is $250 per box, and 41 boxes weighing approximately 100 pounds each will be shipped. The full cost of shipping and delivery is $10,500.

Donations can be sent to:
Matanya’s Hope
PO Box 562
Homewood, IL 60430

Or, donate to Matanya’s Hope through Living Springs. Donations are tax deductible, and any amount is a blessing.

See Your Name in Print!
Do you have news you’d like to share with the Living Springs family? Let us know! The purpose of the Saltshaker is to keep our growing church family connected and informed. Send your ministry updates, story ideas, or questions to the office: jennifer@livingspringscc.org. If you’re not sure whether or not something is a good fit for the Saltshaker, call Jennifer Crick to get her input: (708) 709-0100. The deadline for submitting articles for the April Saltshaker is March 15.

Messages from our Matanya’s Hope students - Kenya

Mark Maina
The same river that Peter spent the entire night without catching any fish, is the same river where they caught thousands of fish in the morning.

The issue is when Jesus came in the morning and said: "Do you have any fish?", they said "no". He did not advise them to change the river. Instead he advised them to cast their nets deeper.

When your life is going in an opposite direction of comfort, calm, and peace, it is not about changing your place of work, changing your church, changing your husband or wife, or giving up.

It is all about casting your faith deep in God; casting your fellowship with Jesus deep in believing that God will provide, heal, restore, uplift, deliver, revive, and bring blessings and favor your way.

May the Lord give you the grace to go deeper.

Amen

Fridah Karwitha:
A lady was driving along with her father. They came upon a storm and the young lady asked her father, "What should I do?" He said, "keep driving". Cars began to pull over to the side; the storm was getting worse. "What should I do", the young lady asked. "Keep driving", her father replied. A few more feet ahead, she noticed that eighteen wheelers were also pulling over. She told her dad, "I must pull over, I can barely see ahead. It is terrible and EVERYONE is pulling over!" Her father told her, "Don’t give up, just keep driving!"

Now the storm was terrible, but she never stopped driving. Soon she could see a little more clearly. After a couple of miles, she was again on dry land and the sun came out. Her father said, "Now you can pull over and get out." She said, "But why now?" He said, "When you get out, look back at all of the people that gave up and are still in the storm. Because you never gave up, your storm is now over."

This is a testimony for anyone who is going through hard times. Just because everyone else, even the strongest, give up, you don’t have to. If you keep going, soon your storm will be over and the sun will shine upon your face again.

Never give up because GOD will never give up on you.

Lunch & Laughter
A More Than A Widow Meetup

Saturday, March 4
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Come whenever you can & stay as long as you can
Raspberry’s Pancake House
3145 Chicago Rd., Steger

Questions? Laura Warfel
708-595-9088
laurawarfel@laurawarfel.com

Matanya’s Hope
Donations are tax deductible, and any amount is a blessing.
Some people live every day in a cookie cutter world. Each day is just about the same. This type of daily activity, often time is to protect the person’s heart. Keeping busy every day will construct an invisible wall designed for the protection of their hearts and emotions. This is a true attempt to prevent the warm feelings of the heart that occurs and grows when love tries to take up residence. This will involve their hearts, spirits, and emotions. Some people will try to wrap themselves up for seasons, in blankets of physical, emotional, and spiritual isolation that matures into a compound need to love someone or be loved.

The month of February, for some people, magnified a cal, emotional, and spiritual isolation that matures hearts, spirits, and emotions. Some people will try to keep busy every day will construct an invisible wall designed for the protection of their hearts and emotions. This is a true attempt to prevent the warm feelings of the heart that occurs and grows when love tries to take up residence. This will involve their hearts, spirits, and emotions. Some people will try to wrap themselves up for seasons, in blankets of physical, emotional, and spiritual isolation that matures into a compound need to love someone or be loved.

By Victoria Gillespie

7:00 p.m.

By Pastor Mark Prestridge

“A Simple Prayer

Author: Byron Pulsifer, © 2012

Dear Lord:

I ask you to always help me see the good in other people, and not to lay prejudice in front of my eyes Lord.

Help me to avoid seeing only the flaws of those around me including myself, so that I may also see my own potential especially in relation to how I can serve you better. Show me how I may continue to be a better servant, to appreciate all that you create, no matter where.

Give me the strength today to have peace within your light, to conquer all that seems stressful in my life, and to give my family continued love and support.

I have a need to trust you completely. I do not want to be a person who simply says, ‘I trust God’ but I want to believe in you, to place all my hopes in you, and a trust that brings me a peace like no other ever experienced on this earth.

I need to find my strength in you, Lord, for it is this strength that will protect me from sin and from those who try to lead me astray with worldly possessions.

Thank you for listening Lord, and for being there to share your righteousness and glory for all.

Amen.

Ash Wednesday

Service on March 1

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Living Springs offers opportunities for baptism and dedication every third Sunday. For more information, please contact the church office. (708) 709-0100

Reflections - January

Running Back To You

By Victoria Gillespie

Okay, maybe Chicken Little isn’t the best theologian, or prophet. But, we know the reality of living as broken people in this broken world. Sometimes, the sky does fall. Our marriages get fractured. Jobs are lost…or can’t be found. We have more month than money. The unexpected health crisis hits and there is overwhelming anguish, uncertainty, and even a “new normal.” Education gets busted. Our spiritual life dries up and God is on a space journey to the Star Wars galaxy. Or, someone in our family or dear to us passes away—whether it’s sudden or gradual doesn’t matter—our soul is shattered; we feel like life will never be the same again. Then there’s temptation and sin: will we ever be free from the continual onslaught of it and all the guilt, shame, and regret failures bring? I really do envy my fellow believers who go to Glory and now live in unspeakable ecstasy, while I sometimes feel “stuck” here.

When it comes to Bible books, the vast majority of believers through the centuries cite the book of Psalms, as their favorite. Why? About two-thirds of it is laments. David penned about half of the 150 psalms, but the other authors carry on his spirit. Psalm 31 is a good example. David seems to swing back and forth between praises and joy to weeping, despair, and perplexity.

David praises God for His love, His mercies, His deliverance from everything, from enemies to sickness. Then he flips into laments like, “Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in distress. Tears blur my eyes. My body and soul are withering away. I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within. I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbors—even my friends are afraid to come near me.”

You wonder if David had some kind of mental or emotional disorder at times. But, when you read the account of David’s life—from the highs of killing Goliath when he was 16, to being a fugitive from a crazed King Saul all over the deserts and mountains of Israel for near-ly 13 years, to having his adult children seek to over-turn him—you see why so many of his psalms have a bipolareffect.

Because life can be so hard, so distorting, and so perplexing…and because God can be so mysterious and so bewildering at times, it’s easy to get swept up in David’s chaos and break down with him. Unless. Unless we refuse to give up but fight and fight for hope, the Lord is there! He redeems. He heals. He makes new. He gives us a space journey to the Star Wars galaxy. Or, someone in our family or dear to us passes away—whether it’s sudden or gradual doesn’t matter—our soul is shattered; we feel like life will never be the same again. Then there’s temptation and sin: will we ever be free from the continual onslaught of it and all the guilt, shame, and regret failures bring? I really do envy my fellow believers who go to Glory and now live in unspeakable ecstasy, while I sometimes feel “stuck” here.

Remember

God fills all broken, vacant holes in our hearts.

Ugly

“Ugly

The sky is falling! The sky is falling!” –Chicken Little

By Pastor Mark Prestridge

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Because life can be so hard, so distorting, and so perplexing…and because God can be so mysterious and so bewildering at times, it’s easy to get swept up in David’s chaos and break down with him. Unless. Unless we refuse to give up but fight and fight for hope, the Lord is there! He redeems. He heals. He makes new. He delivers. He provides. He comforts.

Wherever you find yourself these days, remember, endings are coming. God will glorify Himself, and you and I will know His love, grace, and help. In the end, each of us wins. Every ugly becomes a thing of beauty. Our tears will turn to laughs. Our sorrows will turn to joy. And Chicken Little? He’ll find himself transformed into an amazing rooster, trumpetling to all, “The morning has come! The morning has come!”
Men’s Ministry Updates
By Larry Aguirre

Last month, we asked the men at Living Springs, “Are you ready to advance? Are you prepared to raise the bar to the next level? Are you prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you? Are you prepared to share the Gospel wherever your feet take you?” We challenged the men at Living Springs to ‘Rise up men of Living Springs! The time is now, be the Kingdom man that God is calling you to be.’

Well Praise GOD for the men at Living Springs! Not only do we have men rising up and getting involved with church ministries, we also have men preparing for the spiritual battle we all face once we walk out of the church building and into the world arena.

Wednesday evenings, we have about 40 men getting together doing a study on “Victory In Spiritual Warfare.” The study has been powerful week after week and is changing and empowering the men involved.

**Lent & The Water Project a Lifesaving Combination**
By Randle Elmore

Lent is a season in which we, as believers, choose to lay something down & pick something up. Committing to fasting or giving up certain types of luxuries, and dedicating ourselves to a particular practice, is a means of re-orientating our lives to the mission of Jesus. This season, we as a leadership team have felt God and the Holy Spirit pushing Living Springs to bring aspects of the Kingdom of Heaven to people in Africa who don’t have access to clean water. We are doing this in two ways. The 1st is partnering with World Vision as a hosting site for a 6k walk/run for clean water. The 2nd, is “The Water Project”, where we are teaming up with Matanya’s Hope in providing 10 rain water tanks for schools in Kenya, some of which will go to Kibera, the second largest slum in the world. Our hope is that every family, couple, and person at Living Springs will forgo one meal or drink (other than water) once a week and donate the money that would have been spent to The Water Project. We will be providing collection jars and holding a separate offering every week for the collection of the jars for The Water Project. For more information on both the 6k for Water & The Water Project, visit the table in the lobby or contact Randle Elmore at 708-709-0100.

By Randle Elmore

God is amazing. He is pushing us in Riverdale to think and serve outside the box. We are growing in our service, as we grow in our biblical study. We are stepping out in total faith. And yes, our faith in being challenged daily. During one of our congregational meetings, I shared the following mini message. Today, I want to share it with you.

God is faithful and will enable you to prosper during economic downturns. Jeremiah put it this way:

God’s Message: “Cursed is the strong one who depends on mere humans, Who thinks he can make it on muscle alone and sets God aside as dead weight. He’s like a tumbleweed on the prairie, out of touch with the good earth. He lives rootless and aimless in a land where nothing grows. “But blessed is the man who trusts in God, The woman who sticks with God. They’re like trees replanted in Eden, putting down roots near the rivers— Never a worry through the hottest of summers, never dropping a leaf, Serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season. Jeremiah 17:5-8

The Message Translation
You can be prosperous and advance, regardless of what is happening in the world, if you stick with God. Trust God. God is with YOU. I am loving you unconditionally and unending.

Shalom.

**Is Alpha For Me**
By Randle Elmore

Alpha is weekly gathering lasting 10 weeks built with 3 type of people in mind. The 1st is the person exploring the Christian faith. They simply want clear answers to their question about God, the Bible, and faith in the world. The 2nd is the person who is new to the Christian faith and looking to understand their faith better. They know Jesus as Lord and Savior, but might not be clear on other aspects like, “Who is the Holy Spirit and What does he do?”, or “Why and how should I read my Bible?” The 3rd person is someone who is helping someone else develop in their faith walk, or helping them discover Jesus. This person would use Alpha as an invitation, where they attend Alpha with the person they choose to engage with in development. Whichever person you are, Alpha is a great experience for all that attend.

This year, Alpha has a new look. We are gathering on Monday nights around the dinner table. Followed by new 25 minute teaching videos that are filmed in movie format; Which is very different from the teacher on the stage format that has been used for years. Finally, the one thing that will stay the same, is the small group discussions of the material presented in the video.

Alpha Spring Sessions will be starting Feb. 27th @ 6:30 – 8pm in room 145. Here’s what others are saying about Alpha.

"Alpha was the best thing I ever did. It helped answer some huge questions and to find a simple empowering faith in my life." Bear Grylls, TV Adventurer

"People consider the claims of Christ in fresh and stimulating ways through Alpha.” Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

"The miracle formula church leaders are hoping will reverse this religious decline ... many claim Alpha has changed their lives and appear genuinely happier for the experience.” Time Magazine

"Alpha is an unqualified triumph." The Daily Telegraph, London

"Alpha has succeeded in many cases in turning faithful churchgoers from an inward focus on church work to an outward focus on evangelistic outreach ... ‘ Christianity Today

"Alpha is a tool for mobilizing men and women to present the gospel of Jesus to the lost.” Joyce Meyer, Joyce Meyer Ministries

**PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION**
Summer Camp and 2017/2018 School Year

Living Springs Preschool offers a high quality, Christian education for 3 to 5 year olds. Our goal is to provide a positive first school experience that nurtures their academic, social, and spiritual development.

Register now for Summer Camp and Fall 2017. For information or to schedule a visit, please call Jeanne Benson at (708) 709-0100 x14, or by email at jbenson@livingspringscc.org.
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Words of Encouragement from Pastor W. Ann Bilbrew:

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"People consider the claims of Christ in fresh and stimulating ways through Alpha." Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

"The miracle formula church leaders are hoping will reverse this religious decline ... many claim Alpha has changed their lives and appear genuinely happier for the experience." Time Magazine

"Alpha is an unqualified triumph." The Daily Telegraph, London

"Alpha has succeeded in many cases in turning faithful churchgoers from an inward focus on church work to an outward focus on evangelistic outreach ... “ Christianity Today

"Alpha is a tool for mobilizing men and women to present the gospel of Jesus to the lost.” Joyce Meyer, Joyce Meyer Ministries
Some people live every day in a cookie cutter world. Each day is just about the same. This type of daily activity, often time is to protect the person’s heart. Keeping busy every day will construct an invisible wall designed for the protection of their hearts and emotions. This is a true attempt to prevent the warm feelings of the heart that occurs and grows when love tries to take up residence. This will involve their hearts, spirits, and emotions. Some people will try to wrap themselves up for seasons, in blankets of physical, emotional, and spiritual isolation that matures into a compounded need to love someone or be loved.

The month of February, for some people, magnified a need to be loved, by a special friend, family members, coworkers, church members, neighbors, or even your spouse, is magnified in a negative way by the enemy. This does not come from God, who is our first and pure love. His love covers everything in the present, past, and future. Keep your minds on Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:16 “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

1 John 4:13 “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”

1 John 4:19 “We love Him because He first loved us.”

1 John 4:21 “And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”

Remember
God fills all broken, vacant holes in our hearts.

A Simple Prayer
Author: Byron Pulsifer, © 2012

Dear Lord:
I ask you to always help me see the good in other people, and not to lay prejudice in front of my eyes Lord.

Help me to avoid seeing only the flaws of those around me including myself, so that I may also see my own potential especially in relation to how I can serve you better. Show me how I may continue to be a better servant, to appreciate all that you create, no matter where.

Give me the strength today to have peace within your light, to conquer all that seems stressful in my life, and to give my family continued love and support.

I have a need to trust you completely. I do not want to be a person who simply says, ‘I trust God’ but I want to believe in you, to place all my hopes in you, and a trust that brings me a peace like no other ever experienced on this earth.

I need to find my strength in you, Lord, for it is this strength that will protect me from sin and from those who try to lead me astray with worldly possessions.

Thank you for listening Lord, and for being there to share your righteousness and glory for all.

Amen.

Ugly
By Pastor Mark Prestridge

“The sky is falling! The sky is falling!” –Chicken Little

Okay, maybe Chicken Little isn’t the best theologian, or prophet. But, we know the reality of living as broken people in this broken world. Sometimes, the sky does fall. Our marriages get fractured. Jobs are lost…or can’t be found. We have more month than money. The unexpected health crisis hits and there is overwhelming anguish, uncertainty, and even a “new normal.” Education gets busted. Our spiritual life dries up and God is on a space journey to the Star Wars galaxy. Or, someone in our family or dear to us passes away—whether it’s sudden or gradual doesn’t matter—our soul is shattered; we feel like life will never be the same again. Then there’s temptation and sin: will we ever be free from the continual onslaught of it and all the guilt, shame, and regret failures bring? I really do envy my fellow believers who go to Glory and now live in unspeakable ecstasy, while I sometimes feel “stuck” here.

When it comes to Bible books, the vast majority of believers through the centuries cite the book of Psalms, as their favorite. Why? About two-thirds of it is laments. David penned about half of the 150 psalms, but the other authors carry on his spirit. Psalm 31 is a good example. David seems to swing back and forth between praises and joy to weeping, despair, and perplexity.

David praises God for His love, His mercies, His deliverance from everything, from enemies to sickness. Then he flips into laments like, “Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in distress. Tears blur my eyes. My body and soul are withering away. I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within. I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbors—even my friends are afraid to come near me.”

You wonder if David had some kind of mental or emotional disorder at times. But, when you read the account of David’s life—from the highs of killing Goliath when he was 16, to being a fugitive from a crazed King Saul all over the deserts and mountains of Israel for nearly 13 years, to having his adult children seek to overthrow him—you see why so many of his psalms have a bipolar mix.

Because life can be so hard, so distressing, and so perplexing…and because God can be so mysterious and so bewildering at times, it’s easy to get swept up in David’s chaos and break down with him. Unless. Unless we read the endings of most of his psalms.

We love good books and movies. We get swept up in all the action, the romance, the drama, and the twists and turns. But, if the book or movie ended somewhere in the middle with no ending sequence, where would that leave us? Confused. Angry. Uncertain. And jumping all over the place to write our own endings? Beginnings are great. But, without endings, all is futile and useless, depressing and unfulfilling.

That’s why Christians down through the centuries love the psalms, and certainly David’s: the endings make all the difference! The anguish, pain, fear, anxiety, and cries for God’s deliverance, mercy, help, and intervention find a rope to hang on to. David ends Psalm 31 with this, “Praise the Lord, for he has shown me the wonders of his unfailing love. He kept me safe when my enemies were many, and my foes were doing their worst. He has preserved my life from death, my feet from being trapped. He has prepared a table before me in the presence of my foes. He has anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Yes, life is ugly. It can be hard, cruel, and unfair. Terrible things happen. But, immersed in it, sustaining it, and sovereign above it is the living God Almighty.

There are “wonders in his unfailing love.” He hears cries for mercy and “answers calls for help.” “For the Lord protects those who are loyal to him, but he harshly punishes the arrogant. So, be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord!”

Skies sometimes fall, but they don’t fall forever, but stay fallen. Storms come, but storms pass. Darkness grips, but God’s light comes and frees. Eventually. Eventually, when we find our strength in the Lord, when we reach out for supernatural courage, when we refuse to give up but fight and fight for hope, the Lord is there! He Redeems. He heals. He makes new. He delivers. He provides. He comforts.

Wherever you find yourself these days, remember, endings are coming. God will glorify Himself, and you and I will know His love, grace, and help. In the end, each of us win. Every ugly becomes a thing of beauty. Our tears will turn to laughs. Our sorrows will turn to joy. And Chicken Little? He’ll find himself transformed into an amazing rooster, trumpeting to all, “The morning has come! The morning has come!”

Living Springs offers opportunities for baptism and dedication every third Sunday. For more information, please contact the church office. (708) 709-0100
Words to Consider by Lawrence Mutugi:
The deepest level of worship is praising God in spirit of pain, trusting Him during a trial, surrendering while suffering, and loving Him when He seems distant.

A story shared by Shelmith Njeri:
Tulia went to school in the neighboring village where she wasn’t known well. For three weeks, she came to school late and on each occasion, the teacher punished her. During the fourth week, Tulia didn’t attend school at all; many thought she had given up on school due to the everyday punishment.

However, in the fifth week, Tulia reported again and this time she came earlier than everybody. When the teacher came to class, Tulia was punished for not attending school the previous week. The teacher was also stating that the punishments had finally yielded some results.

Tulia asked if she could say something and the teacher gave her permission. She started: "I’ve been raised up by a single mother without a brother or a sister. Five weeks ago, my mother got sick and was hospitalized. The three weeks I came late, I had to prepare something for her and pass by the hospital to deliver the results. Unfortunately, my mother passed on last week and that is the reason I didn’t come to school. We buried her last Friday. Today I came early because I did not have to prepare anything or even pass by the hospital. Now that she is gone, I will always be here early."

As Tulia sat down, no one in the class was able to hold their tears; the teacher not spared.

I wonder, how many times do we judge and punish others for lateness? How much stress do we pass on to others about finding a job, moving out, getting married? How often do we ask newlyweds, “When will you get pregnant?” The list goes on.

Do we attempt to understand their situations or do we just judge from what we think are the ‘best case scenarios’? We all have a story. What we think about someone else could be very far from the truth, unless we take the time to listen to them and care.

God bless you.

About those who shared:
Lawrence Mutugi comes from the mountains in Meru, Kenya. He is raised by a single, jobless mother, and depended on Matanya’s Hope sponsors to see him through his education. He is an IT graduate and is on fire for the Lord.

Shelmith Njeri witnessed so much tragedy in her young life. This resulted with her having no way to continue school until Matanya’s Hope took her into our academic scholarship program. Today, Shelmith is completing her final year in university. She has a heart for God and often inspires so many of our Matanya’s Hope students.

Messages from our Matanya’s Hope students - Kenya

Mark Maina
The same river that Peter spent the entire night without catching any fish, is the same river where they caught thousands of fish in the morning.

The issue is when Jesus came in the morning and said: "Do you have any fish?" they said "no". He did not advise them to change the river. Instead he advised them to cast their nets deeper.

When your life is going in an opposite direction of comfort, calm, and peace, it is not about changing your place of work, changing your church, changing your husband or wife, or giving up.

It is all about casting your faith deep in God; casting your fellowship with Jesus deep in believing that God will provide, heal, restore, uplift, deliver, revive, and bring blessings and favor your way.

May the Lord give you the grace to go deeper.

Amen

Fridah Karwatha:
A lady was driving along with her father. They came upon a storm and the young lady asked her father, “What should I do?” He said, “keep driving”. Cars began to pull over to the side; the storm was getting worse. "What should I do", the young lady asked. “Keep driving”, her father replied. A few more feet ahead, she noticed that eighteen wheelers were also pulling over. She told her dad, "I must pull over, I can barely see ahead. It is terrible and EVERYONE is pulling over!" Her father told her, "Don’t give up, just keep driving!"

Now the storm was terrible, but she never stopped driving. Soon she could see a little more clearly. After a couple of miles, she was again on dry land and the sun came out. Her father said, "Now you can pull over and get out." She said, "But why now?" He said, "When you get out, look back at all of the people that gave up and are still in the storm. Because you never gave up, your storm is now over."

This is a testimony for anyone who is going through hard times. Just because everyone else, even the strongest, give up, you don’t have to. If you keep going, soon your storm will be over and the sun will shine upon your face again.

Never give up because GOD will never give up on you.

Matanya’s Hope is in need of donations to cover the cost of shipping items to those most in need. Shipping is $250 per box, and 41 boxes weighing approximately 100 pounds each will be shipped. The full cost of shipping and delivery is $10,500.
Donations can be sent to:

Matanya’s Hope
PO Box 562
Homewood, IL 60430

Or, donate to Matanya’s Hope through Living Springs.
Donations are tax deductible, and any amount is a blessing.

See Your Name in Print!
Do you have news you’d like to share with the Living Springs family? Let us know! The purpose of the Saltshaker is to keep our growing church family connected and informed. Send your ministry updates, story ideas, or questions to the office: jennifer@livingspringscc.org. If you’re not sure whether or not something is a good fit for the Saltshaker, call Jennifer Crick to get her input: (708) 709-6100. The deadline for submitting articles for the April Saltshaker is March 15.

Lunch & Laughter
A More Than A Widow Meetup

Saturday, March 4
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Come whenever you can & stay as long as you can
Raspberry’s
Pancake House
3145 Chicago Rd., Steger

Questions? Laura Warfel
708-595-9088
laurawarfel@laurawarfel.com
Do you ever ask God questions? Sure. We all do. But what do you ask yourself in the wrong direction.

When I throw my questions heavenward to God, sometimes I wonder if I’m rude, disrespectful, brash, even insulting to him. How dare I question the God of the universe?

But I often do. And I know he’s not surprised or baffled.

1) Why?

Probably the most frustrating question of all. God is in control and he already has the plan. The answer to this question may not be mine to know. In this life, or ever.

God created and is crafting the why. If he chooses to reveal that to me, okay. If not, okay. He’s got it, even when I don’t get it.

2) Do you see what’s happening here?

This is a pointless question that questions God’s character. Of course, he sees and knows and understands. He’s omniscient. He knows and sees everything. He has unlimited understanding, knowledge, awareness, and insight.

I’m not, and I don’t. This is where my faith comes in. He’s got it, even when I don’t get it.

3) When will this change/end/resolve?

God’s timing is perfect. My impatience is not. My trust in him is the key to living with uncertainty, with what seems like endless difficulty. The bigger question is: Do I really believe that he’s got it, even when I don’t get it?

4) How will you use me to work out your plan and purposes?

Okay, now we’re getting somewhere. This is a question of cooperation with what God is doing. God wants to reveal these answers to me. And he rejoices when I do seek to work with him, instead of against him. He’s got it and he’s going to help me get it.

As I ask these questions, I see a line I must be careful not to cross.

When I question who God is, his authority, his wisdom, that’s when I cross the line. God is God, beginning and end, eternal Lord. I must not question that.

When I question where I got off track, how I can make it and he’s going to help me get it.

Seek to work with him, instead of against him. He’s got it, even when I don’t get it.

Once I met Albert and Irene when I lived in an old town beside a great river. He was a gentle man; she was small and lively, with laughter near her eyes. Even though they were childless and approaching middle age, they were so in love with each other that there was no apparent sense of loss. Albert was a wood furniture maker. He cared about wood as some men cared about music or paintings. Whenever Albert found a piece of walnut of unusual color and grain he put it aside, so that before long he had a modest stack, perfectly matched in hue and texture accumulated beside his workbench.

No one was surprised when the little furniture factory closed. Few people wanted to pay for such expensive furniture when for a fraction of the price they could get the kind tacked together on assembly lines. Albert badly packed his tools and took them home to his garage. At the appointed month, Irene presented Albert with a tiny baby girl. They were so surprised, Irene beamed. Albert on the street. I knew how Albert and Irene were going to have a baby. As I was thinking about it, and someone asked him if he was saving it until he got an order to make a throne for the Queen of England. After that, everybody called it Albert’s “Royal Walnut.”

I really believe that he’s got it, even when I don’t get it?

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Seek to work with him, instead of against him. He’s got it, even when I don’t get it.

A Widow is for you. Learn more at LauraWarfel.com.

The Upper Room is a time away with Jesus for healing, worship, prayer, and reflection. There will also be prayer ministers available to pray with those needing prayer.

Coffee Break News

By Connie Bultema

March 3rd is Ash Wednesday. It marks the beginning of Lent and reminds believers that only with God’s help can we overcome our sin and suffering.

Lent has traditionally been a time for Christians to examine their lives in a very intentional way, in the hopes of becoming more like Christ. Imposition of ashes in the shape of a cross on the forehead of a person reminds them of their sinfulness and mortality and their need to repent and get right with God. The cross reminds each person of the good news that through Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, there is forgiveness for all sins, all guilt, and all punishment.

To initiate this season, let me share a Lenten Devotional I’ve always found thought provoking and meaningful from the February 7, 1975, Church Herald.

I met Albert and Irene when I lived in an old town beside a great river. He was a gentle man; she was small and lively, with laughter near her eyes. Even though they were childless and approaching middle age, they were so in love with each other that there was no apparent sense of loss. Albert was a wood furniture maker. He cared about wood as some men cared about music or paintings. Whenever Albert found a piece of walnut of unusual color and grain he put it aside, so that before long he had a modest stack, perfectly matched in hue and texture accumulated beside his workbench.

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When I question where I got off track, how I can make it and he’s going to help me get it.

Seek to work with him, instead of against him. He’s got it, even when I don’t get it.

And I know he’s not surprised or baffled.

I didn’t understand what he meant until I saw the cradle, and knew that Albert had been getting ready for a miracle. Think how differently we would feel about our children if they were born the day after they were conceived! It would still be a miracle, but it would seem to us no more than a happenstance.

How much God’s miracles touch us often depends on how we have been getting ready for them. Without Lent, Easter might be a mere happening: nothing more than a new dress, some candy for children, a crowded day at church. The forty days of Lent are the gift God added to Easter, a time when we can get ready for the miracle.

How do we get ready for our own personal Easter miracle? Much like Albert got ready for his. By keeping it in our mind, for which prayer and reading the scriptures help indispensably. By giving, if not our Royal Walnut then our time and our possessions, given to God’s use in a greater than usual measure. We get ready by building something beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful thing of all: a life so surrendered to the Lord that we become what God wants us to be.

Ash Wednesday has special meaning for me as the anniversary of the day in 1974 that I said, “Yes, Lord” to an invitation to attend Coffee Break in South Holland; to observe and learn how to lead inductive Bible studies. As a result, last March I stood facing 50 women in Nairobi, Kenya and shared with them what I learned 45 years ago and through which I have been blessed ever since.

On March 2nd Pastor Jason will be returning to Kenya, and Carolyn Ray will be providing the second year of training for these beautiful women. Please pray for them as they travel; pray for Carolyn as she shares and pray for these African women as they share this discovery method of Bible study with others in the villages of Kenya.

You are invited to join us any Wednesday morning at 9:30 in room 1405, to discover the “discovery method” of study for yourself. We’ll be digging into chapter 21 of Matthew’s gospel, on March 1st. For questions, call Connie Bultema @ 708-755-7025.

By Connie Bultema

March 3rd is Ash Wednesday. It marks the beginning of Lent and reminds believers that only with God’s help can we overcome our sin and suffering. Lent has traditionally been a time for Christians to examine their lives in a very intentional way, in the hopes of becoming more like Christ. Imposition of ashes in the shape of a cross on the forehead of a person reminds them of their sinfulness and mortality and their need to repent and get right with God. The cross reminds each person of the good news that through Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, there is forgiveness for all sins, all guilt, and all punishment.

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I really believe that he’s got it, even when I don’t get it?
### 2017: New Things Are “Springing” at Living Springs!

(continued from page 1)

Some really exciting things are in the works! If you have any interest in being a part of any of the following initiatives, let Randle Elmore (randle@livingspringscc.org) or myself (dizenbart@livingspringscc.org) know and we will get you plugged in!

**#1:** The sad reality is that nearly 1,000 children under the age of 5 die every day from not having clean drinking water. This is a solvable world problem, and we have the privilege of doing something about it! Living Springs is going to host a 6k walk/run for clean drinking water. For every $0.50 raised, one child is provided with clean water. For every $1,400 raised, a school is provided with a rain well filtration system! We will be providing clean water. For every $50 raised, one child is provided with clean water. For every $1,400 raised, a school is provided with a rain well filtration system! We will be providing clean water. For every $50 raised, one child is provided with clean water. For every $1,400 raised, a school is provided with a rain well filtration system! We will be providing clean water. For every $50 raised, one child is provided with clean water. For every $1,400 raised, a school is provided with a rain well filtration system! We will be providing clean water. For every $50 raised, one child is provided with clean water. For every $1,400 raised, a school is provided with a rain well filtration system! We will be providing
distributing clean water.

**#2:** New Strategy for Disciple-Making

The leadership at LSCC believes that our Mission: Becoming Disciples that Make Disciples – Our Journey with Christ and with others toward Christ and his Kingdom, is a good one. However, we feel like our strategy hasn’t worked very well. People have found it hard to connect, the pathway not very clear, and limited opportunities to grow. That is going to change! We are developing a new simple, accessible, and concrete plan to make disciples. The vision for Disciple Making is: that every Living Springs person might grow in Christ, gather in community, and go make a difference (3G Christian) follower. You will hear much more about this in the year to come.

**#3:** Living Springs U or University...

Nope, that symbol to the left doesn’t stand for Louisiana State University, it stands for Living Springs University. On Sunday mornings, and potentially at other times, we are going to be offering ongoing opportunities for adults to grow in their faith and gather in community, for life transformation. We have started with a first class going on now (Redeeming Work), and you will see many more in the future. We hope to have some core courses and some electives as the Spirit leads. Exciting Stuff!

**#4:** Lobby Updates...

Well, our “new” building is now 15 years old and it is time for some much needed updates to our facility. We have a design team working now to redesign our lobby and coffee house with some specific objectives in mind:

- To make the space more warm and welcoming for visitors and members
- To offer more areas in the church for comfortable conversation and connection
- To visually help to make our discipleship process (Grow, Gather, Go) more visible and accessible for visitors, new members, and longtime members.
- To help people very clearly make the next steps in their spiritual journey
- Space and colors need updating. The lobby/coffee house feels a little too sterile, like a hospital. We are hoping that the coffee house area can become a warmer and more inviting space, that people could use throughout the week, with free Wi-Fi and tasty coffee.

- To make our common spaces more appealing to the next generation

**#5:** Living Springs App

We are also in the midst of developing a Living Springs app that would include messages, connection information, and lots of ways to help folks grow, gather, and go... right at your fingertips. Should be very cool!

I would ask for each one of us to pray for God to continue to stir and lead us in the new year! Again, if any of these initiatives are interesting to you and you would like to be involved in their implementation, please let us know!

**To Living Springs Church,**

On behalf of the Jones’ family, I would like to thank everyone for their prayers. Continue to pray for us during this difficult time. I also would like to thank everyone who assisted me in the preparation of my brother (Eugene Jones’) funeral.

God bless,

Marie Jones

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**Notes and Quotes from The Church Mouse**

May the face of every good news and the back of every bad news be towards us.

-Irish Toast
Happy New Year... still! I know the New Year isn’t very new anymore, but I hope and pray that it hasn’t gotten old or routine for you either. I pray that God continues to reveal fresh dreams and visions of new things in your life throughout this year.

As we began this New Year, I shared in both the Saltshaker and my Vision 2017 Sunday Message a word that I believe is a prophetic word for Living Springs for this coming year. It is New Things! The scripture the Lord laid on my heart is Isaiah 43; verses 18-19 specifically. “Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” Again, as a church we have a rich history that we need to remember and celebrate. However, as the text points out, we should not dwell, or get stuck in the past. As my old senior pastor used to say, “Traditionalism (just looking back to what we have always done) is a rut that leads us to a grave.” If we just look back and don’t look ahead, we are in danger of missing out on all that God has done for us.

New Things are Happening… or “springing up” as the prophet said, “do you not perceive it?” Perhaps you have noticed some new things already happening at Living Springs… some small; and some that are going to be pretty big and exciting! You may have noticed the new look of our bulletins (way to go Jennifer!). The idea is to save some trees, focus our attention (we tend to read less these days), and highlight the most important stuff. (By the way – everything we used to have every week in the bulletin is found either on the website – or at the Welcome Center – e.g. the handouts for community services, e.g. the handouts for community groups, etc.). You may have noticed our new staff members! Keith Piepenbrink our new Director of Ministries and Administration; Randle Elmore, our new director of Outreach and Discipleship; and Tim Jansma, our new Custodian. All are doing an amazing job. You may have noticed some new ministries – like the new cancer support group, the new marriage ministry, and the new adult class. All are doing an amazing job. You may have also noticed some new younger faces on our stage.

As we begin to grow as a church, we have a rich history that we need to remember and celebrate. However, as the text points out, we should not dwell, or get stuck in the past. As my old senior pastor used to say, “Traditionalism (just looking back to what we have always done) is a rut that leads us to a grave.” If we just look back and don’t look ahead, we are in danger of missing out on all that God has done for us.

New Things are Happening… or “springing up” as the prophet said, “do you not perceive it?” Perhaps you have noticed some new things already happening at Living Springs… some small; and some that are going to be pretty big and exciting! You may have noticed the new look of our bulletins (way to go Jennifer!). The idea is to save some trees, focus our attention (we tend to read less these days), and highlight the most important stuff. (By the way – everything we used to have every week in the bulletin is found either on the website – or at the Welcome Center – e.g. the handouts for community groups, etc.). You may have noticed our new staff members! Keith Piepenbrink our new Director of Ministries and Administration; Randle Elmore, our new director of Outreach and Discipleship; and Tim Jansma, our new Custodian. All are doing an amazing job. You may have noticed some new ministries – like the new cancer support group, the new marriage ministry, and the new adult class – Redeeming Work. You may have also noticed some new younger faces on our stage.

We are very intentionally trying to involve the next generation in our worship. We are also blessed to have some amazing students like Kate and Matt Meyrick and Sabrina Rodriguez, from Trinity College; adding their voices, instruments, and gifts to our worship. Sabrina has just begun an internship with our worship ministries (see breakout box). We are also hoping to establish some more internships with college and even high school students, to continue to raise up the next generation.

My name is Sabrina Rodriguez and I am from Chicago, IL. I am a junior at Trinity Christian College, studying Church Ministry Leadership, with an emphasis on worship. From a young age, music has been a huge passion in my life; so much so that I sing and currently play 5 instruments: guitar, piano, ukulele, bass, and banjo. As I grew older, my passion for music grew into a passion for worship and for using the music talents I have been gifted with to glorify the Kingdom. At Living Springs, I am free to use my gifts and watch others use their gifts to glorify the one who gave them to us. The community I am serving is constantly uplifting and growing as a body of Christ; and willing to fit the needs of the many types of gifts and people who attend it. This is the exact reason I wanted to be at Living Springs. No matter where I came from, who I am, what my gifts are, or any of the other things that may define me, the community was willing to accept me and help me flourish in my walk with God. I am extremely excited to be taking part in the diverse community at Living Springs this year.

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