

I'll admit it right now.... I didn't watch the State of the Union Address. I know, shocking isn't it? And just to clear the air, I didn't skip it because of the speaker. I didn't skip it because of the controversies that might come up. I didn't skip it because I'm against politics or don't care about my country. Honestly, I missed it because I simply don't understand that world.

And what I mean by that is that politics overwhelm me. I don't understand bills and executive orders and, honestly, I just recently learned the President wasn't part of the legislative branch of our government! (I'm sure all you knew that!)

And I also skipped the President's speech because I really feel like there are more important elements to our world. I believe in democracy and I believe that there are those in power who can and do make a difference for us here, even in Astoria, IL. However, I also believe that politics and laws and executive decisions ultimately don't change what really matters....hearts.

I think we can agree that as long as hearts are hurting and angry and selfish, there will be problems in our world; problems that no form or power of government can solve. And I truly believe that we can't change our own hearts. I mean we can help the process and we can do things that will help us and others to change, but ultimately it is only through God's work in our life that hearts change.

And I know that for myself as well as for everyone around me. I know that for the CEO of a fortune 500 company as well as the single mother living paycheck to paycheck. I know that for the elderly widow in the nursing home as well as middle-class family of five. If God doesn't change our hearts, politics won't be worth anything. If we aren't open to change, then

change won't happen. But it's also true, that even if politics doesn't change our world, even if selfish men and women make foolish and hurtful laws, even if democracy falls and a dictator rises in its place, my heart will still rest in Jesus. I can still find hope and love and peace and joy in him. And my prayer is we can all rest in that hope, too. And that more and more, as we rest in that hope, we can be open to the heart-changes he wants for us to experience.

I also pray we can all still participate in our political system, both locally and nationally, but we always remember that real change only comes in the power of an open and humble heart.

Serving Him and you,
Matthew

Backpack Program

Several months ago we asked for interested parties to sign up to help pack meals for students in our school system to have meals to take home over the weekends. After a wonderful response by you all, we chose to pack in the month of March, which is coming very quickly. And since this program has been running for several months, the leaders learned that instead of packing every week, they could simply pack all the meals for that month the first week of each month. So, our packing day is Thursday, March 1st at 6:30 pm at the school. We will need 4-6 individuals to come help pack. If you can help, please let Matthew know as soon as possible. Thank you for your support of this meaningful program.

Sunday School

After the elders and others went through the discipleship Sunday School class this past year, we have decided to make some changes to what we're offering during that time for adults. We will still have a class for any adult interested in going through the Standard Publishing material as we have in the past but we will also offer a new class led by Michele Thiner just for ladies. This class will be going over 'The Emotionally Healthy Woman' study. If you are interested in participating in this ladies' group, please let Matthew or Michele know so we can have enough materials. New classes start March 4th.

Thank You

A note from Clause and Joanne Miller: "Thank you all for the Christmas cards hand delivered by Joe and Melba. They were a special treat and we cherish them. Our doors are open for visitors."

Kid's Conference

This is the last call for any 1st through 5th grade students interested in attending the March 3rd Kid's Conference in Washington, IL. Registration forms need to be turned in by February 14th to Matthew along with the \$23 fee.



Prayer List

Greg Beach – throat cancer (1-21)
Denny Belville – no insurance, in need of surgery (8-6)
Mary Belville – fell and broke wrist (1-7)
Pat Bultermeier and family - hospice (8-10)
Cory Chockley – health issues (1-21)
Shelly Claxton – cancer (Pam K's friend) (12-24)
Harold Cox – hospitalized (1-21)
Peggie Elliott (Bill Palmer's sister) – stroke (12-24)
Bob Fawcett- done with treatments, PET scan in February (1-28)
Todd Hamm - cancer treatments (7-30)
Frankie Jones - health issues (5-14)
Rita Jones – surgery went well, therapy (1-21)
Leonard Kaufman - cancer (10-16)
Alice Kimler (Sharon Jone's sister) – quadruple bypass surgery (1-28)
Anthony Klinebough & Margaret – work & financial (12-17)
Gloria Lapping – serious health issues (Pam Carlock's mother) (12-24)
Shirley Lawver – stroke (12-31)
Sharon Musson - cancer treatment (7-30)
Judy Moose – stroke (1-21)
Dan Palmer - recovery (10-15)
Marissa – cancer (Letha Stambaugh's friend) (11-5)
Melissa Shaw – personal concerns (1-21)

Condolences:

Dwayne Workman family
Bill Downin family
Delbert Fairburn family
Scott Fairburn family

Praise:

Baptism of Mitchell Hamm