

[Fellowship, continued]

Communication takes effort. Our circumstances make it more difficult. Quarantines and social distancing promote isolation and self focus and raise barriers to fellowship. Remember, we need each other. Speak up. Reach out. It will be worth the effort.

In Christ,

Pastor Rich Riley (First Baptist Church, Lake Benton)

Officers Added to the MBA Board at the 2020 Annual Meeting:

- Pastor Tim Riley, Berean Baptist Church, Detroit Lakes (Class of 2021)
- Pastor Loren Bjokne, Lighthouse Baptist Church, Cottage Grove (2023)

Thank You for Faithful Service as MBA State Missionary & Board Member

- Dr. Robert Fuller, Jr., Fourth Baptist Church, Plymouth

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The responsibilities of the association's trustees are divided into the following:

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Fellowship: A Worthy Effort *by Rich Riley*

What a year 2020 has been! The summer has continued the craziness from the covid virus, civil unrest and divisive politics. Has your church returned to normal services and activities? What is normal? Everything seems topsy turvy and attempts to disrupt our faith. Thankfully, our God hasn't changed. Jesus Christ is still the same, yesterday,

today and forever. His expectations for us haven't changed either. Our Lord expects us to be faithful to Him and to His work no matter what else around us changes.

Perhaps you have been quarantined or have people connected to your ministry that are quarantined. That isolation hurts both the individual and the church. Some of us could be quite comfortable alone. TV and the internet fill the silence and online services are convenient. We might not want to invest the effort into getting up and getting out to church even when it is open. We must guard ourselves from thinking that "church" is something that can be listened to or watched. We need each other. We need to be together when possible. Our churches have always ministered to "shut-ins" who couldn't attend the regular services. Our current situation may also prevent some of us from being together, but we must still be involved in each other's lives. We might need to be creative in our efforts, but we must talk to each other and see each other. We must know what is going on in each other's lives. Even if it is difficult, we must communicate.

Fellowship within a local church has become difficult, but the fellowship between churches has become even more difficult. We struggle to keep up with the people we used to interact with every day or every week. How do we keep in touch with those we only saw occasionally? How do we fellowship with sister churches when our major gatherings are all canceled? We pray for better in the future, but we must do what we can in the present. Our telephones work across town and across the state. The postal service still carries letters and cards to each other's doorsteps. Our social media and online meetings allow us to interact with brothers and sisters no matter the physical distance.

[Continued]



More Than a Walk in the Neighborhood

By Mike Verway

Among the many strange and curious practices of these COVID-19 days is the myriad of people walking through my neighborhood, maybe yours too. I've seen people I've never seen

before, and I've seen some people I do know do things I've never seen them do before.

In my neighborhood a few days ago, I saw a husband and wife on an evening stroll which would not be unusual except for the fact that I've never seen the two of them walk together anywhere in our neighborhood, and I have never seen either of them walk farther than the mailbox at the end of their driveway.

Maybe you've taken up the spend time in nature vibe by walking the streets near your home. Good for you, and keep it up when the imperial forces allow us to regain our former way of life (sarcasm detected). In addition to stretching your legs and easing boredom, there is a way to make good use of your six-foot-separation parade down Main Street. Pray.



Research suggests physical activity boosts the immune system, a helpful reminder in a world confronted by a wide array of viruses.

Why You Live Where You Live

Christians believe God has us where he has us to serve him for the time he has us there. You live in your residence at this time in human history for a divine reason. A significant part of your presence in your neighborhood is for gospel influence. You are not likely to have occasion to give the gospel to every house you pass on your morning run or after dinner calorie burn, but you can pray for the occupants of every house you pass whether you know them or not. As you walk, pray,

O Lord, would you save the people who live in that house? I don't know them, but you do. Would you bring the gospel to them? Would you open their minds to understand and believe the good news about Jesus? Lord, if that is a house where believers live, would you bless them?

Then pray again for the next house you pass. By the end of your walk, you will have prayed for dozens, if not hundreds of people who live near you.

Why Your Church Exists Where It Exists

Somewhere in the past a group of people gathered to form your church. They settled on a location they thought would best serve the community. Maybe they acquired or built a building. The point is the church and the church building have a geographic setting for a reason. God put us where we are to impact the community where we live and worship.

I've never experienced a runner's high, but I do like to eat...a lot. So, I run. When I run the neighborhoods around my home or in the communities near our church building, I pray for the whole neighborhood. If there are church families in the neighborhood, I pray for their influence. If there are no families from our church in the neighborhood, I ask God to bring people to our church from the neighborhood. Maybe there is a recently relocated Christian family who needs a church. Maybe there is a household that is trying to find a more biblically faithful pulpit. While there may not be any believing families in that particular neighborhood in our church, there may be believing families in that neighborhood. I pray for their godly influence with their neighbors.



Beyond the benefit to you is the benefit to your neighborhood and community when you go on a prayer walk.

Most of us have considered how to make the best use of the reality of our coronavirus situation. I think praying for the salvation of people in your neighborhood and for the strengthening of your church in your community is a great use of your time. So put one foot in front of the other and pray as you go.

Mike Verway has served as the Senior Pastor at First Calvary Baptist Church in Inver Grove Heights since December, 2000. He and Brenda have four children. Mike loves preaching and interacting with people. He is an avid fisherman, coaches youth sports, plays nearly every sport, and enjoys traveling. Mike came to faith in Christ at a young age and is the product of a Christian home and a great local church. Read more at medium.com/@mikeverway