

“THE BELL”



BANGOR LIBERTY
FRIENDS
NEWSLETTER

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NEWSLETTER OF BANGOR LIBERTY FRIENDS—APRIL 2019

“Father, Forgive Them”

If there was ever a person who had good reason to withhold forgiveness from his enemies, it was Jesus Christ. He is the only person who has ever walked the face of the earth who could say he was completely innocent of doing wrong. Repeatedly, in scripture he is described as having never sinned, whether in actions, words or thoughts. Not even temptation could cause him to waver. (1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15, 7:26) No person was ever less worthy of death than our Lord. Even Pontius Pilate testified before the very crowds screaming for Jesus’ blood that he was without guilt. (Luke 23:4; John 19:4)

However, in response to a large crowd being whipped into a frenzy of hatred and irrational contempt, Pilate shamefully conspired with other evil men to condemn Jesus to death and killed him in the most brutal way imaginable. (Mark 15:11-14)

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus told the disciples, “The Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” (Luke 9:56) He demonstrated just that when he was led as a lamb to slaughter. Willingly He submitted to their injustice and surrendered His life without threat, or retaliation. What can easily be described as a humiliating death was an act of love. Jesus went to the cross with a heart filled with forgiveness, not condemnation, rage or vengeance.

Have you noticed that you don’t even wince when the crucifixion of Christ is mentioned. We just take it for granted. In some ways we cheapen it. It is easy for us to imagine it was easy for Christ to be forgiving at that time. After all, He knew what the plan was. He had a mission to fulfill and it just happened to involve His death. Jesus knew what the plan was from the beginning. Surely we can’t be expected to suffer such wrongs in the same way. I mean, Jesus was God and He knew how everything would end. You and I are not God and we should not be expected to act or endure like Him.

Unfortunately, God and Scripture don’t let us off that easy. In 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 21-23, the Apostle writes, “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.”

We should all see the glory in His example. Even though, Jesus is the eternal, omnipotent God, He did not threaten, or condemn, or even pronounce doom on His crucifiers. Instead of screaming, raging and returning evil for evil, Jesus prayed for them.

A major part of the Incarnation was forgiveness. Jesus came to die for that very thing. Not only is it what he prayed for it

is what he exemplified in His death. This is the example we all would like to run away from, but it is an example we are called to follow.

Without fail it is at this point that some will ask, “Who was Jesus praying for?” Was He praying for the Jewish leaders who had conspired to falsely accuse Him? Was it the Roman soldiers, who were responsible for pounding the nails through His hands and feet and then gambled for His clothing? Maybe it was the gathered crowd at the foot of the cross who continued to mock Him?

The answer to the above questions is simply, “Yes, all of the above and many more as well.” The scope of that prayer from the cross easily encompasses the people who were there that day, and every person who has ever trusted Christ and so received His forgiveness. Remember, all of our sins are the reason He was there. You and I are every bit as responsible for the events of that day as are the men who actually drove the nails through His sinless hands and feet.

Don’t, however, go away thinking that “Father, forgive them,” was a prayer asking for the immediate and universal forgiveness of everyone who took part in Christ’s death. We should see that prayer as a plea on behalf of those who would repent and trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. His hope was that when we all come to the realization of what we have done and who we are that God would not hold our condition against us, but would instead give the forgiveness that we all would seek. Forgiveness does not go to those who continue in their unbelief, sin and rebellion. Forgiveness is due those who are repentant and approach God with a contrite heart.

We should see every forgiven sinner who has ever lived as an answer to Christ’s prayer from the cross that day. Since it was our actions, our guilt, our sin that put Him on the tree we bear responsibility for His death as equally with the Jewish Leaders, the Roman soldiers and Pontius Pilate. The unmerited forgiveness that Jesus extended to His enemies is the same forgiveness he extends to each of us today. For those of us who have experienced that forgiveness it becomes our responsibility, our duty to extend the same type of mercy to people in our lives. (Ephesians 4:32)

This all presents us with a pretty high standard to emulate. Jesus’ refusal to retaliate, His willing acceptance of others evil directed against Him, His prayer of forgiveness, the eagerness to forgive—all of these set an example for us to follow that most would rather not acknowledge.

When we suffer the wrongdoings of others it becomes very easy to plot our revenge and difficult to follow Jesus Christ’s example. It is in those time when we must do exactly as Christ did and trust the one “who judges righteously.” (1 Peter 2:23)

A Hymn Story

I've been reading through the Bible chronologically along with a podcast called "The Bible Recap". We spent quite a bit of time in the book of Genesis and one thing I noticed that I hadn't before was, when God speaks, the listener almost always responds with, "Here I am." The angel of God spoke to Jacob and he responded with, "Here I am." God spoke to Abraham and got the same response. God spoke again to

Jacob and Jacob said, "Here I am." I know Samuel is instructed by Eli to say this to God in 1 Samuel too.

When we commit to follow the Lord He will call on us to carry out His will. It's not always easy. God doesn't usually say, "Go to a place where everyone knows and loves Me already and it's 78 degrees year round and the ocean is at your doorstep and there hasn't been any wars or shark sightings in 300 years. Go in peace."

In 1936 two friends were attending a conference in Alabama, having lunch, and sharing what God was doing in their lives. One of these men was a missionary to Brazil. He was home on furlough and discovered that he had a health condition that would mean he couldn't return to the country he had fallen in love with. This was heartbreaking news for the man. His friend (who happened to be hymn writer B.B. McKinney) asked him, "What will you do?"

The missionary, R.S. Jones said, "Wherever He leads, I'll go." McKinney wrote the hymn that afternoon and sang it that night at the conference. Sometimes we are hoping to be in some remote location sharing the Gospel with strangers in a different culture but God calls us to serve him where we are at. That doesn't necessarily mean we'll have an easier time. I think it's harder to remember our task when we're comfortable and busy with the things life throws at us. But if we are committed to following Christ we need to take up our cross and follow Him, wherever He may lead us. Amber S

LIBRARY LEDGE – EASTER

The Children's Library has many Easter books for them to enjoy. Take a few minutes to let them check one out.

Check out the library to see what you want to read this week. There are many books & videos to enjoy, as well as encourage & enlighten. Visit our library today.

Somewhere Safe with Somebody Good by Jan Karon.

The Incredible Power of Prayer advises us not to rush off to do God's work before we have properly prepared with adequate prayer support.

Miracles Happen When You Pray True stories that illustrate the power of prayer and the power of God. "To pray is to work in concert with God, not to use Him as we wish."

The Mystery Friend

The Mystery Friend for April says their birth certificate reads they were born on the farm near Maxwell, IA. However, the parents said they were born near Collins, IA. The farm was near Iowa Center which had no post office. They are not sure there was a doctor in attendance, so the birth certificate was filed later. By then, they were not sure of the date of birth!

So the Mystery Friend is not sure when or where they were born! But they do know they were born.

He/She attended country school all 12 years. They have 1 sister and 7 brothers. They had 1 daughter and 3 sons.

He/She has been a member of a Friends Church all their life. They have served on the IA Yearly Meeting Peace & Social Concerns Committee, IYM Stewardship Committee, and IYM Nominating Committee.

He/She spent several years as a "cabin parent" at Camp Quaker Heights and has served on our Ministry & Counsel.

He/She has been a 4H leader, worked with FFA, the Iowa State Fair, Iowa State Plowing Matches, and Marshall County boards.

A favorite Bible verse is Luke 23:34. This was Jesus' prayer as He was being crucified. So often in life, we and others do things not realizing the consequences of our actions.

Favorite foods include pork chops, bread pudding, ice cream, all of it!

Our Mystery Friend enjoys grandchildren in activities, Monday morning breakfast in New Providence, coffee with friends, Sunday School, and traveling.

The identity of the mystery friend will be in next month's Bell.

Mission Focus

Our mission focus for this quarter is Palestine, specifically Ramallah Friends school and the Amari Play Center for kids.

From Mac and Bernie at Mesquakie Friends

Friendly Kidz & Youth:

On Wednesday nights you will find Mac & Berny picking up 30-60 Children for 2 hours of fun, food and Jesus.

This evening is at the core of the ministry of Mesquakie friends. One visit and you will find that your heart has been stolen and you will begin planning your next chance to come back. All are welcome!

Announcements

- The next Christian Education Committee meeting will be on April 14th at 8:30am.
- An Easter Celebration will be held on Saturday, April 20th from 10am to 12 noon. Children up to 5th grade are invited along with their families. There will be an egg hunt, games, crafts and lunch.
- Camp Quaker Heights 2019 Camp Dates:

Little Fry	June 21-23	Grades K-2
Elementary	June 18-21	Grades 3-5
Middle School	June 13-17	Grades 6-8
High School	June 13-18	Grades 9-12
- Christian Ed will be available to help get your child registered. Cost per child is \$25 before the early registration deadline. There will be someone to help you register for camp starting April 14 here at the church after worship.
- Christian Ed is looking for volunteers to lead Vacation Bible School, if you are interested please talk to Dani J.
- On April 24th we will have a fundraiser/ Meet and greet for Nikki Holland who is the new director for Belize Friends Ministries. We will serve a meal at 6:15, then Nikki will have a chance to speak about where she has been and of her new opportunity in Belize.

Ushers

April

- 7 Reg M & Larry J
- 14 Joe F & Rick H
- 21 Paul H & Kellen B
- 28 Chris E & Brayden E

May

- 5 Bob D & Heath N
- 12 Larry J & Bill P
- 19 Clarke M & Bob D
- 26 Reg M & Kellen B

Anniversaries

April

- 12 James and Sharon Johnson

May

- 15 Charles and Ann Nichols
- 18 John and Margaret Good
- 20 Rick and Sue Hoover

Birthdays

April

- 9 Emmitt Krough
- 13 Barb Evertsen
- 14 Weston Box
- 18 Jenessa Peters
- 22 Lisa Young
- 26 Mike Evertsen
- 27 Rick Hoover
- Diane Rogers
- 29 Scott Davis

May

- 3 Leah Woiwood
- 7 Avery Evertsen
- 8 Charles Nichols
- 12 Alexander Smitherman
- 15 Rick Bachman
- 18 Kellen Bishop
- 20 Emma Chase
- 21 Savannah Peters
- 29 Tom Gilmore
- 30 Blake Matney
- 31 Aidan Davis

A living church is one that: remembers the past, lives in the present and works for the future!

Going Forward!

The Bell will be published monthly, the first week following a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. If you wish to contribute an article ,devotional, joke, recipe, thought, picture, or anything else, please have it turned into the church office email no later than the 25th of the month.

You do not have to be clerk of a committee to contribute. This is open to anyone who wishes to participate. You may also contribute as small or as large of an article as you wish. The size of the online , or electronic version is essentially unlimited.

You may send you submissions by email to the church at office@blfchurch.org or matt@blfchurch.org.

Thanks,
Matt