

## *Freedom and Liberty...continued*

I Corinthians 13 teaches that the greatest gift is love. It is even greater than faith and hope. Why, because true love, the willingness to put our neighbor's needs above our own, transforms the relationships around us. Liberty becomes the choice to use your gifts to improve the world around you. Ultimately, Christians, this is what it means to be Christ-like—placing the lives of others above our own. We hope that our lives would reflect the restorative relationship that God desires to have with everyone. This transformative understanding of freedom and liberty would actually free us from the destructive influences of selfishness and fear. I know it is more than can be expected, but it starts with each of us responding first to our own interpretation of freedom by laying down our own lives.

Ephesians 4:32-5:3 “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” NIV



## **OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER DURING THE WEEK:**

- Sunday** 9:00 am, All Church Family Bible Experience  
10:00 am, Worship Celebration
- Monday** 9:00 am, Monday Morning Prayer
- Monday** 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, MRF Food Pantry
- Tuesday** 1:00 pm, Prayer Shawl Ministry, ON HOLD until September at St. Elizabeth Eaton Church
- 11:30 am, Sojourners, ON HOLD, until Sept or Oct
- Wednesday** 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, MRF Food Pantry
- Wednesday** 6:00 pm, Worship Team Practice, ON HOLD
- Wednesday** 7:00 pm, USFW EVE, 4<sup>th</sup> Wed., July 22
- Thursday** 6:00 am, Men's Community Bible Study, weekly  
MRF Fellowship Hall, no cooking food at this time.
- Saturday** 8:00 – 9:30 am, Free Community Breakfast  
First Saturday of each month ON HOLD for now

## **PRAYER CHAIN:**

Contact Barb Rupe  
(call 515-710-3794 or email [bjrupe@q.com](mailto:bjrupe@q.com)) to begin the prayer chain with praises and/or concerns.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS / ARTICLES:**

Contact Jacque Wilbur  
(call 515-205-0692 or email [jacwilbur@gmail.com](mailto:jacwilbur@gmail.com)) with announcements to include in our weekly bulletin or submit articles for our Country Friend newsletter.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Monthly Meeting

**JULY**  
**07/12/2020**

**11:30 am**

**Fellowship Hall**

**Social Distancing**

**No meals for now**

## Sojourners

**First Tuesday**  
**11:30 am**

## ON HOLD

**HOPE** to have a meeting  
**in September or October.**  
**In the meantime**



**Blessed.**



## IAYM - CQH

**Jr High / High School**  
**Weekender**  
**Grades 7-12**  
**07/31 - 08/02**

**Elementary**  
**Weekender**  
**Grades 3-6**  
**08/07 - 08/09**

**Register by 07/10 (\$140)**

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Exalting Jesus ~ Making Disciples

# COUNTRY FRIEND

MIDDLE RIVER FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

July 2020

4057 S23 Hwy, Carlisle, IA 50047  
www.MiddleRiverFriends.org

## Freedom and Liberty

Matthew W. Smith, Pastor

Freedom is something that is rarely understood. I have worked with those, young and old, who view freedom through the lens of the ability to say and do whatever they want. There is a “yes,” which is followed by a “but”... We are not free to yell, “fire” in a public building or take revenge on those who have hurt us. So, freedom is always a tricky concept. I believe God’s Word still offers the best solutions to the natural tension in understanding individual liberty and community. We can start with the greatest commandment. Scripture repeats this phrase “love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and spirit,” which is immediately followed by Jesus summing up the law with “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Of course, we need to have a healthy love for ourselves. We must start by recognizing that each one has been made unique and have a unique purpose in our family, community, and work. No one person can do all things. We need those who are good with their hands, good with numbers, encouragers, caregivers, creators, protectors, teachers, and administrators. This is true in any community, especially a community which follows God’s rule of “love your neighbor as yourself.” It is normal to have hopes and dreams that someday we will be more than we are today. However, who you are now matters to the world around you. This leads me back to my conversation about freedom. What if freedom wasn’t being free to do whatever we want? Instead, freedom is being free to use our gifts to love others.

*Continued inside...*

*Missions – Belize continued...*

Most of the young people who come to church are in high school or junior college. They were, until this crisis, highly involved in the communities. The father of three of these young people is in prison. I have a contract with them that they will ensure that they finish a week without getting into trouble. I check in with them on that every week, then we celebrate that they have achieved their goal. They have kept their contract, week by week, for over two years now.

Several young people have told me that staying indoors for a week is like being in prison. So, getting out of the house at least once a week, to talk to someone standing even 1 meter away, is a great relief. This crisis has made all of us prisoners. Some of us, or people we know or love, are sick. Jesus in Mathew 25:34-36, teaches us what the Kingdom of God looks like. It is like visiting or supporting the sick, the prisoner, the most vulnerable.

Penny Shenk, Chair  
Missions Committee

### **IAYM 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY OFFERING:**

Because of COVID-19 and churches not meeting in the spring of this year, the Easter offering planned for Belize Friends School has been changed by IAYM Missions to become a **July 4th Offering for Belize Friends School**.

If you feel led, please drop an envelope marked Belize, or a check with Belize in the memo section, in the offering box. We will gather up donations and forward to Iowa Yearly Meeting.

The school and our missionaries will be blessed through your generosity.

## **MISSIONS - BELIZE**

*Excerpts from the April newsletter from Oscar Siema Mmbali – Belize*

### **What the Kingdom of God looks like: community care during the COVID-19 crisis in Belize**

After being a licensed driver for quite a while, the COVID-19 crisis has given me a new job: a delivery guy/care giver! It is the best a pastor can be at this time. Nikki has also become a delivery person. You see, one of the best things about working with FUM is the opportunity and encouragement to be creative, to innovate, to adapt...When the first COVID-19 case was reported in Belize and the government responded with restrictions to public places and gatherings, a new opportunity opened. We notified the Ministry of Health that FUM is also involved humanitarian assistance. Therefore, while we have suspended our regular Sunday services and the School, a few of us will from time to time come to the Center and organize deliveries according to the government regulations at the time.

Every day, I check in with our church members through apps like Facebook, Messenger or WhatsApp. I identify some of those who are in critical need of essential household things...On Sunday, I go to the supermarket, purchase these items, drive into the community to deliver them, listen and encourage. On Monday, I take Maggie to the store to buy food and household items. Niki, Chris, and two youths from the church or school prepare the packages for distribution. On Tuesday, Chris, Nikki and I deliver them to families connected to our church, school and community. My truck is large, I mean American-large! You don't feel the potholes when you drive through the back streets of the city... On Tuesday we drive through the city for delivery. Then we reach a home. I stop the truck; Nikki gets out to deliver the package to a family member. Sometimes she also collects school assignments from students. There is brief conversation, encouragement and then I drive on to the next home.

*Missions – Belize cont'd...*

### Prayer Chain Requests

To initiate a prayer chain request, contact Jacque via cell at 515-205-0692; or email at [jacwilbur@gmail.com](mailto:jacwilbur@gmail.com); or FB messenger.

Jacque will contact Pastor Matt and Barb Rupe.

Barb will call those who do not have email or text messages.

Jacque will contact those who wish to receive prayer requests via email or text message.

If you would like to be included for prayer notifications, please contact Jacque, indicating if you prefer to receive a phone call, a text message, or an email.

Any time or in an emergency, please feel free to contact Pastor Matt directly at 515-518-7504, or email to [pastormatt@middleriverfriends.org](mailto:pastormatt@middleriverfriends.org)



## Food For Thought

### 4<sup>th</sup> of July Pancake Breakfast

Unfortunately due to COVID-189, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festivities in Carlisle have been canceled this year. This includes our annual Pancake Breakfast. This has been our major fundraiser for bolstering our Dollars for Scholarship Endowment.

However, we have been given an opportunity this fall to provide food service at a huge community auction which would help in our fundraising endeavors.

Look for more info to come soon. We will need volunteers.

### Pastor's Vacation

Pastor Matt and family will be on vacation from July 7 through July 24. Please contact M&C (Kay Huffman, Cathie Zeliadt, Roberta Reed, Carol Brandow) or Meeting Clerks (Laura Nunez, Jacque Wilbur) if you have a need arise while they are gone.

We are excited to welcome Mac and Berny McDonald from Mesquakie Friends Mission as our guest speakers for Sunday, July 12; and Kenneth and Lila Smith from Motor Friends on July 19. These will be in-person services only and not live streamed on FaceBook.