TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch /Opening Prayer by: Don Taylor

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#869 We're Marching to Zion
#784 Far and Near

Scripture Reading by: Parker Balch
#286 Wonderful Story of Love
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#3 Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah
Sermon: "***Gamaliel's Wager*** "
Acts 5:12-42

#945 Kneel at the Cross
#851 I'll Fly Away

Closing Prayer by: Reiko Walker

Tonight is our 2nd
Sunday Evening
Service Project

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

March 13, 2022

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

The Theology of Potluck

As someone pointed out recently, we eat together as a church a lot! We have been intentional about doing that more and more since we began to emerge from COVID restrictions. This week, Wes McAdams, the preacher at the McDermott Road Church of Christ, published this article that I thought spoke really well to the deeper meaning of these gatherings. I commend it to your attention, and urge you again to check out his blog, "Radically Christian," for more deeply edifying material. BP

The word "potluck" means exactly what it seems to mean, a meal of chance. You reach into the "pot" to retrieve some food, not really knowing what you may find, because the dish was prepared by someone else. Personally, I think the best potlucks are church potlucks; table after table filled with casserole dishes, crockpots, and pie plates. Not only are potlucks incredibly enjoyable, they actually reflect good theology. Here are some lessons the church can learn from a potluck.

Potlucks Reflect the Mutual Generosity of the Church
We have probably all experienced a poor potluck. A poor potluck is one to which multiple families simply bring a 2-liter of Coke or a bag of chips (when they have the means to bring much more). At a poor potluck, the older ladies are typically wringing their hands and whispering to their husbands, "You may need to go to the store for more food."

Let's not focus on poor potlucks, but on ideal potlucks. An ideal potluck is one to which most families bring more than enough food to feed their entire family. These families show up not to be fed, but to feed others. When everyone shows up with selfless generosity no one goes away hungry, even those who can't afford to bring much food.

This is precisely the way the church should function; not just at a potluck meal, but day in and day out. Our attitude should be that of Jesus. Christians should *look not only to [our] own interests but also to the interests of others* **(Phil 2:4).** We should desire *not to be served but to serve* **(Mark 10:45).** We should generously offer as much as we can possibly afford to share.

When the whole church lives this way, we experience the same phenomenon the early church experienced, *There was not a needy person among them* **(Acts 4:34**). The abundance of the wealthy supplies the needs of the poor, *that there might be fairness* **(2 Cor 8:14)** and no one goes away hungry.

Potlucks Reflect the Hospitable Nature of the Church
The Greek word that we translate "hospitality" (see **Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2)** is *philoxenia.* It is a combination of the words, *phileo* (love) and *xenos* (stranger). Real hospitality is about taking care of strangers. Notice that *philoxenia* shares a root word with xenophobia (fear of strangers). Hospitality is the exact opposite of xenophobia.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Joe Edd Stifflemire is taking chemo treatments.

Joe & Silvia Leal are recovering from covid.

Hector Cantu, Oscar Cantu's brother is in ICU in Beaumont with covid.

Gayle Coleman was released from the hospital last week.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Ka'Leisha Jones, Gary Nielsen, Virginia Cole, Susan McCain

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting this Monday, Mar. 14th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a fellowship meal Wednesday, March 16th at 5:30 p.m.

We have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, March 17th at 8:00 a.m.

Primetimers will be going to Iguana Joe's on Tuesday, Mar. 22nd at 6:00 p.m. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Kyle Jones and his family on the death of his mother, Gwen Pettit. She passed away Wednesday.

New Movers Program

We are starting a new movers program. We will have a list of people that have moved into the area. If you are interested in helping with this, see Bryant Perkins.

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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Good potlucks leave everyone feeling like family (even if they wandered in from the street). Each member prepares a dish, *hoping* it will be shared with a complete stranger. Strangers, of course, bring nothing to the table and don't even know they are going to be invited; but they leave as well-fed as anyone else. Every stranger should leave overwhelmed by the "hospitality" of the potluck table.

This generosity towards strangers should not be limited to potlucks, but should our practice every day. Followers of Jesus should be looking for opportunities to do good to people who cannot return the favor. Here is what Jesus says about this sort of hospitality:

> *When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just* **(Lk 14:12-14)**

Potlucks Reflect the Diverse Nature of the Church

Next to running out of food, one of the worst things that can happen at a potluck is that everyone brings exactly the same thing. It's not much of a meal when everyone brings fried chicken and no one brings side dishes. Good meals consist of a variety of foods.

Isn't it wonderful when a potluck is multiethnic? Don't you love when families of different ethnicities bring dishes that reflect their unique background, culture, and heritage? Everyone present has the opportunity to expand their palate by trying foods they haven't tried before. You really get to know someone when you eat the food their mother used to make.

I have never met someone who thinks a potluck would be better if there was only one type of food. No one ever dumps all the food into one large pot and mixes it together before serving. And we do not look at the potluck table and say, "We're going to try to overlook all of the differences here today and focus on what this food has in common." No, we all understand that diversity is one of the greatest highlights of a potluck meal.

The same is true in every aspect of the church, diversity is one of the greatest highlights. Rather than being a "melting pot," the church should focus on being like a potluck. We should recognize and celebrate the ethnic diversity of the people Jesus has brought to his table, people *from every tribe and language and people and nation* (**Rev 5:9**). The diversity of people at Jesus' table is a source of his glory and honor.

Conclusion

Let's strive to not only *have* potluck, but to *be like* a potluck. The church should be a gathering of diverse people, submitting all of their uniqueness to the "common good" (**1 Cor12:7**). Everyone should have a burning desire to serve our brothers and sisters, but also a desire to serve the outsider and the stranger (**Gal 6:10**). We should all make room for one another, just as Jesus made room for us (**Rom 15:7**).