



LOVE

**Our
Spiritual Renewal Journey**

**York First Church
of the Brethren**

Our Scriptural Foundation:

The Parable of the Lost Son - Luke 15:11-32

Revelation 2: 1-7

John, the author of Revelation, wrote the letter to the church at Ephesus.

The Love Chapter - 1 Corinthians 13

Paul's letter to the church at Corinth

1 Corinthians 13:13

"But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is **LOVE." (The Message)**

Forward

The purpose of this book is to provide a readily available and easily accessible resource to sermons recently preached that relate to Spiritual Renewal.

In 2014, the Leadership Team supported Pastor Don Hubbell's dream of a Spiritual Renewal in our congregation. Since then, a handful of volunteers has been working with him to develop a spiritual renewal vision and process for this congregation. The book, ***"Springs of Living Waters"*** by David A. Young is the foundation of this journey.

In October, 2015, this congregation formally began the Spiritual Renewal journey. Sermons were preached and a "Positivity Sunday" was held on October 18, 2015, followed by up a "Spirituality" Sunday on February 21. A third sermon series, "Servanthood" was preached in April and May.

This booklet offers a brief summary of all of the sermon conclusions addressing these three areas. Also included are the sermon texts, and a keyword.

Additions will continue to be made to this pamphlet as we've proceeded into the succeeding steps.

The goal is that each person in our congregation refers to this booklet frequently to continue to strengthen our spiritual lives, both individually and as a congregation.

Larry Gible
June 22, 2016

On behalf of the Spiritual Renewal Team; Jon Beuschlein, Arden Kile, Vivian and Don Hubbell, Carol and Ken Gordon, and Pat and Larry Gible

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Positivity

October 4, 2015 **"The Waiting Father"** **Text: Luke 15:11-31**
Self Examination

<http://yorkfirst.org/october-4-2015-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: All of us are challenged to **examine our faith journeys and make peace** with all that hurtful there. Forgive those who need forgiveness and receive forgiveness where we need to receive it.

October 11, 2015 **"The Lost Son"** **Text: Luke 15:11-32**
A blessed congregation

<http://yorkfirst.org/october-11-2015-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: But wait there is more to the story! How can we apply this story to ourselves and the York First Church of the Brethren? Of the two brothers in the story, we do not relate to the younger brother as well as we do to the older brother in the opinion of the renewal team who is suggesting this story as a guiding story for our efforts in the area of renewal. Yet there is meat here for us to consider in our journey. We have been a blessed congregation in many ways and at many times down through our history. We have had tremendous wealth and resources through out our long history. Today, with a dwindling, aging congregation those resources aren't as plentiful as they once were and yet there is still life!

Look at the outreach we have done in just the past year in regards to the crisis in Nigeria, in regards to the medical needs in Haiti, in regards to the recent disaster relief auction that raised close to half a million dollars. On and on the list goes of the story of our ongoing faithfulness.

October 18, 2015 **"God's love for the lost"** **Text: Luke 15:11-32**
Positivity

<http://yorkfirst.org/october-18-2015-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: The Father's love for the lost is beyond our understanding. Our response of love to the father is limited only by the narrowness of our understanding. Any legal code, any hurt that may have been generated by ourselves or by others toward us, anything in all of creations that would come between us and God the father, is over powered by love.

If the church has a message to proclaim to the world, and I believe it does, it is just this, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Today we are talking about the positive things that we see happening in the life of this church today. In this moment, by each of us as members of the body of Christ in this place. My prayer is that it will be covered by love, God's love. The most powerful force in all of creation. Amen.

Positivity Sunday Luncheon – October 18, 2016

A tabulation of positive things happening at First Church as shared by ___ attendees, meeting in __ groups. 159 positive statements were made. They are categorized by the number of statements made.

votes:

12 Service & Out Reach to Community: Easter Egg Hunt, Christmas Party, VBS, Trick or Trunk, BVS & Beyond (Camp Eder, Disaster Relief)

10 Music Program: Variety, Bells, Choir, Praise Singers

8 each check this one out where's the split? CDC and Church & Youth Ministry: Supportive of each other/Youth Director/ Emerging/ Involvement

6 each Prayer Shawl Ministry, Deacon Ministry-Tapes to Shut-ins, Visitation, Women's Bible Study, Facility Use & Availability-Handicap Accessible, and Making People feel Welcome-Friendly.

4 each Dedicated (Core) Commitment, Enews & other communications-Website, Diverse Talents, Fellowship-Love & Support, Food Pantry, and A.V./Improved Technology & WIFI Equipment

3 each Ideas Accepted & Input OK, Variety of Choices for Sunday School, Variety of Programs - Small Groups - & Support, Group Development within S.S. Classes, Deep Rooted History, Hospitality/Refreshments - Greeters/Visitors, Sensitivity to Needs, Spiritual Growth, Soup Kitchen, Out Reach to Chapel Users - Christ Assembly, and Good Balance in Worship Music & Rest of Service.

2 each Decor Livens up Church - Inside and Grounds, Prayer Chain, Men's Prayer Breakfast, OWLS, Spiritual Renewal Team, Camp Eder Activities, Love Feast, and Sermon Material.

1 each Staff, Behind the Scenes People - ie. Secretary & Custodian, Location - Open Feel, Nursery, Treasurers, Properties Chair, Publicity, Creative People, Library, Good Parental Upbringing, Golf Team, Assimilating New People, Potential For Marriage Enrichment, W. E. Gather, Workdays at New Windsor, Advent & Lenten Services, Children's Church, and Christmas Tree Lights Celebration.

--End of Positivity Sunday Statements--

**October 25, 2015 "The lost son and the dutiful son" Luke 15:11-32
Church: "I Go" vs "I Am"**

<http://yorkfirst.org/october-25-2015-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: A Facebook post this week contrasted the Consumer Church mentality that is basically selfish and self-centered. It sees the church as the dispenser of religious goods and services. With the missional church that see itself as having a purpose to share God's love with the world. **The consumer church says, "I go to church." The missional church says, "I am the church."** Very subtle but very important differences in the way we look at faith and our

approach to be a community of believers with a purpose and a mission.

November 1, 2015 "He cried in a loud voice" John 11:32-44
God is a holy and loving God

<http://yorkfirst.org/november-1-2015-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: **Our God is a holy and loving God** who wants nothing but the best for all of his children. I believe God accepts us as we are and pours his love into us and in so doing brings about the changes we need to fully be his children. Let us walk in this understanding today and always. Amen.

November 8, 2015 "Watching the Crowd" Text: Mark 12:38-44
Faith

<http://yorkfirst.org/november-8-2015-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: The challenge I take away from this powerful story is just this, **faith**. Who and what do we choose to put our faith and trust in?

November 22, 2015 "What is truth?" Text: John 18:33-38
Truth

<http://yorkfirst.org/november-22-2015-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: The question, **"What is truth?"** that Pilate struggled with, is the same question that all humanity struggles with. You have struggled with it and so have I. Maybe not in the same exact words, but we have struggled with it and perhaps we are struggling with it today! We must settle in our own hearts and minds the answer to this question. We must make peace with the answer before we can know real happiness and joy. When we do answer it we will be able to experience real thanksgiving in our lives.

Spirituality

January 3, 2016 "What's on God's heart?" Nehemiah 1:1-2:10
God is calling you and me.

<http://yorkfirst.org/january-3-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: The most important thing for us right now as we begin to seek a fresh vision of renewal from God, is for each of us to understand that it is **God calling us to this work. We need to think in terms of strategies instead of a series of special events.**

When God calls us to a task he gives us the time we need to see it through, the authority to get the job done, and the resources we need. God is calling us to move out of our fortress mentality and to take on a new mindset, that of ministry to our world beginning right here in Haines Acres and moving around the world. It could be the most exciting time in the long, 130 year history of York First or. . .well I don't even want to consider the alternative!

January 10, 2016 "Rebuilding the Wall" Nehemiah 2:11-4:23
Keep our focus on God

<http://yorkfirst.org/january-10-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: We have to **keep our focus on God and God's vision for us** and not on all the rubble. Does that mean we don't see the rubble and seek to do something about it? Of course not that is our vision, our ministry of reconciliation! We don't tire out when our vision is on God. We have the power for the long run but we have to keep our focus on the "great and awesome God!"

We must take the time, as we begin work on a vision for renewal of ministry, and dreaming new dreams of what God has in mind for us, to be sure that our focus is centered on God and his plan, his goal for us and that periodically we take a check to be sure that the focus is right where it should be!

As a way of saying that this is where our commitment is, I think it was appropriate that we celebrated the Lord's Table last Sunday with the bread and the cup. This is a way of refocusing ourselves and keeping our ministry together, centered in Christ Jesus.

**January 17, 2016 "Living a Life that Counts" Nehemiah 5:14-19
Servanthood**

<http://yorkfirst.org/january-17-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: Would we be here today talking about a man named Nehemiah, who lived 2400 years ago had he acted like every other governor the people had ever had? Of course not! We would not even remember his name except as a footnote somewhere. You see Nehemiah and many, many other people down through history achieved greatness, not by brute force and political power but by following Godly direction and being a servant to others. You might say that Nehemiah had wealth and power to begin with and you would be right. But he didn't have to use it to help others! He could have sat back in the lap of luxury and enjoyed life and took it easy as many want to do today, but God wouldn't let that happen. He put a burden on Nehemiah's heart to serve others and Nehemiah was faithful!

What burden is God trying to put on our hearts today? Who is God calling us to help rebuild the wall of their life? We are the rich and powerful in our world today and we will be held accountable for what we have done with God's blessings to us!

**January 31, 2016 "Finishing the Task" Nehemiah 5&6
Relevance**

<http://yorkfirst.org/january-31-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: Verses 15 & 16 bring us to our objective with Nehemiah, the completion of the wall.

There's an analogy here for the church. The Israelites sit among the ruins for over 100 years; the wall is rebuilt in 52 days! We may not change the direction of this church that fast but we must remember

Nehemiah was working with stone and we're working with people.
We must be a ministry force or else we will slip into irrelevancy and eventually disappear.

**February 7, 2016 "The Wonder of the Word" Nehemiah 8: 1-12
Relevance**

<http://yorkfirst.org/february-7-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: **If we want to have a church that our community realizes is here and relevant then these things must be who we are and what we are about!**

Things like the importance of prayer, a willingness to risk everything for the sake of God's kingdom, confidence in God to supply everything needed, having hearts that are broken over the things that break God's heart and as talked about last week, everybody involved in the work, in the ministry.

**February 14, 2016 "The Father's Love - Extreme Love" Luke 15:11-31
Extreme Love**

<http://yorkfirst.org/february-14-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: **Extreme love** waits, encourages, is always there, and is willing to risk everything! Where in your life today and where in the life of this congregation do we need extreme love right now?

**February 21, 2016 "The Joy in the Story" Luke 15:11-31
Encouragement**

<http://yorkfirst.org/february-21-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: Perhaps for some of you within the sound of my voice you are in that place of being dead or lost even now. God, our heavenly father, waits and watches, is **encouraging you** right now, is waiting and willing to risk everything to bring you back to life and help you find your way home again to his loving presence. Amen.

February 28, 2016

"The Second Chance"

Luke 13:1-9

Renewal

<http://yorkfirst.org/february-28-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: To say that this parable is full of deep meaning, and difficult to understand images, would be an understatement. I believe the message is powerful and clear. Our God, is the God of the second chance. As God's people, we must be a people of the second chance as well. This morning I want to extend the invitation to anyone who desires to come forward for prayer, anointing, re-dedication of your life, for whatever reason God is speaking to you. ***You are invited to come and be renewed*** as we sing a song that may not be very familiar to us. I want us to focus on the words and take them to heart as we sing, "O love, that will not let us go."

**March 6, 2016 "A lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son" Luke 15
God's Love for us.**

<http://yorkfirst.org/march-6-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to the message: As we consider these important powerful lessons today may we be found. May we have our eyes opened to God and **the love God has for us and not ever take it for granted**. It is such a precious gift that we must hold it gently and share it liberally with anyone and everyone who is lost. Amen.

Servanthood

April 10, 2016

“Do you love me?”

Isaiah 42:1-6; 53:4-5,

John 21:1-19

Servant Leadership

<http://yorkfirst.org/april-10-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to message: Servant leadership is what we are called and equipped or strengthened for. God’s spirit within us, centers us and reveals to us all that we are to be about as God’s people. Are we willing to fulfill all that God has for us? Amen.

April 17, 2016

“I and the Father are One”

John 10:22-30

Servant Leader Examples

<http://yorkfirst.org/april-17-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to message: We want to be servant leaders, we need to know what one looks like in order to figure out how to be one. We can of course follow the example of Jesus. We can also look at the lives of our sisters and brothers. We can listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to us.

Listen, take the time, give yourself permission to be still in the presence of God. Hear the voice of God when a sister or brother speaks to you a word that you need to hear.

Pay attention the manner of love that share through your life. It is above all else the greatest gift you have to offer. Amen.

April 24, 2016

“Living it”

John 13:31-35

Theme:

<http://yorkfirst.org/april-24-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to message: We have a mission to faithfully serve God and each other with a love that is greater than any power this world has ever or will ever know. We are called to the mission of sharing that love with all of creation. With every creature on the face of planet earth and beyond. We have got to open our eyes and ears both physically and spiritually so we can see and hear all that God has for us.

The expectations are high for the body of Christ to fulfill all that God has for us to do. Being a servant leader is not an easy task and yet it is the very thing we said when we were baptized that we were willing to do. I think from time to time we ought to be asked these questions again. And then answer them again and perhaps even be baptized again. There is another symbol that is just as powerful for us and I think can help us in the same way baptism does. That is anointing. If you are willing this morning to re-dedicate your life to Jesus Christ and his church, which means being willing to serve the cause of kingdom building. Of being a servant leader, then you are invited to respond by coming for and being anointed as sign of renewal and strengthen of your faith.

May 1, 2016 – “Servant’s Heart” – Sermon Provided by Garrett Page for Youth Sunday. There is presently no text available.

May 8th 2016 **“What happens next?”** **Luke 24:44-53**
Mothers

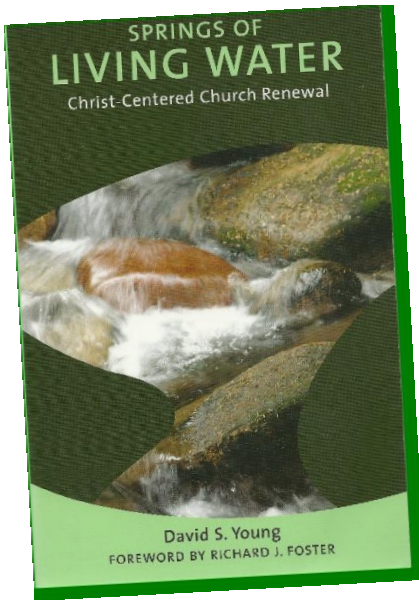
<http://yorkfirst.org/may-8-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to message: It is Mother’s Day and we are here to give glory and honor to God. We are here to show the outcome of lives that have been shared with us and that have impacted our lives. It brings great joy to God and to our mother’s when we seek to be faithful to the mission of sharing Christ Jesus with the world. Amen.

May 15, 2016 **“Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing”** **Acts 2:1-21**
Music

<http://yorkfirst.org/may-15-2016-sermon/>

Conclusion to message: Praise God if you can say that everyone you know is someone whose hands and feet you would be willing to wash. Prepare yourself to sing, Oh for a thousand tongues to sing my great redeemers praise!



Our Study Guide is the book “Springs of Living Water” written by David S. Young, a Church of the Brethren ordained minister and now a member of our congregation.

Its introduction is entitled, “Jesus Shows Us the Way.” On page 19 near the bottom we read, *“Looking at this old, old story, we find four dynamics of renewal: thirst, encounter, transformation, and mission. Dynamics are life-giving, vibrant forces of the gospel.”*

David A. Young –Author