

A Verse to Live by

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

May Prayer Focus

This month please pray for our church as we face several challenges. Firstly, pray for Randy and Wanda as they near retiring and face a new chapter. Secondly, pray for the pulpit committee as they start the process of finding a new pastor. And finally, pray that God reveals to you what gifts you have that could be used to bless your family, church, and community. You are needed and valued.

Life Application Challenge

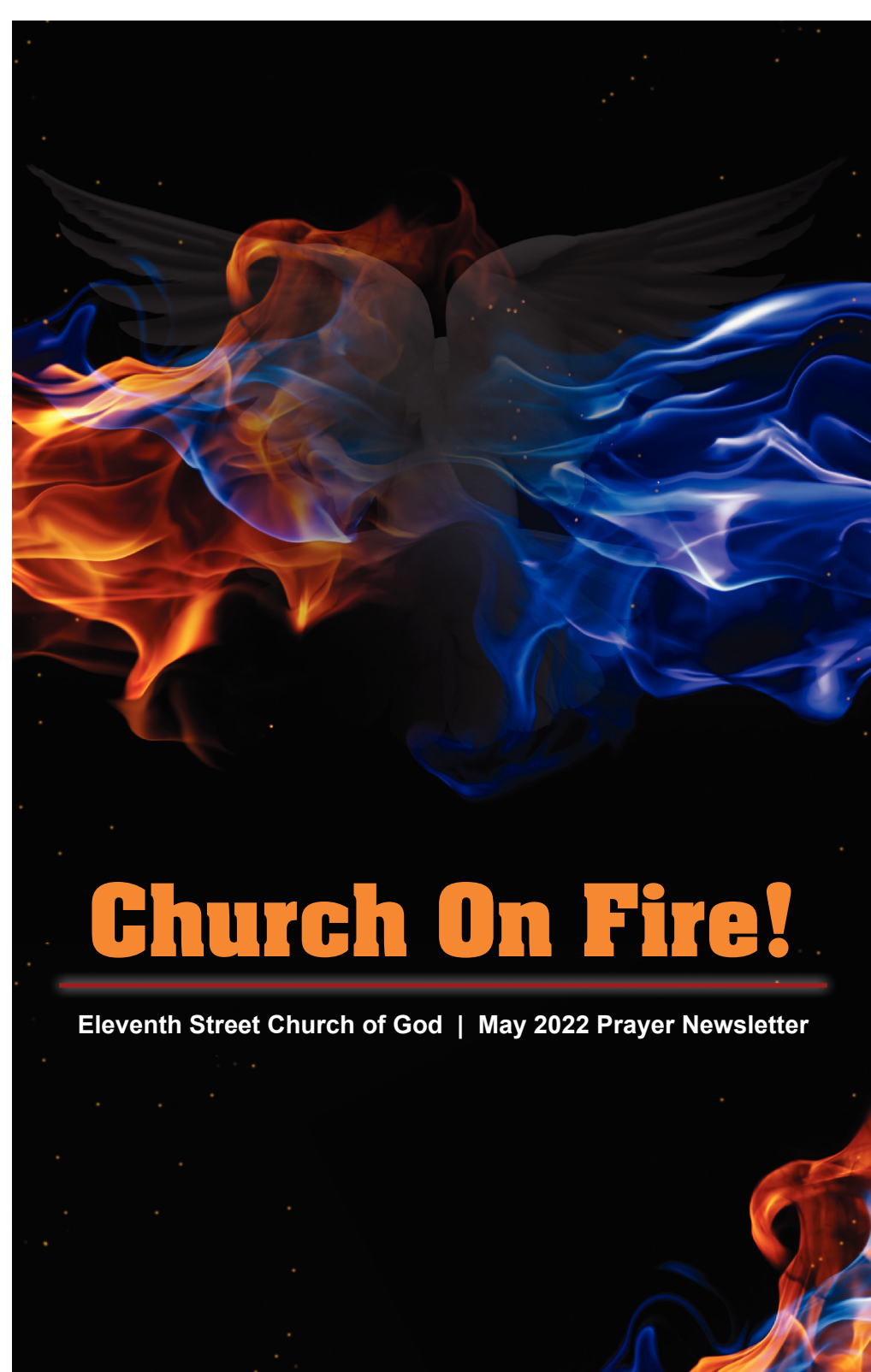
Take some time this month to study about spiritual gifts and identify yours. Think about where your strengths are. It may be helpful to make a list of the things you are good at and the things

you enjoy doing. Take some time to consider these words by A.W. Tozer, an American pastor and author, “God is looking for people through whom he can do the impossible -- what a pity that we plan only the things we can do by ourselves.”

Recommended Scripture Reading

Romans 12 - a good chapter to remind us to treat each other with respect and love regardless of their position.

1 Corinthians 12 - this is a very good chapter about types of spiritual gifts and how important each gift is.



Ministry Looks Good on You

It has been far too long since I have written a newsletter. Sorry for the long break; my life unexpectedly got very full for a while. So let me start by telling you, if you haven't heard anyone say it to you lately; I love you and think you are pretty awesome.

As I prayed about what God wanted me to write, I kept thinking of our church and the many transitions we are facing. That led me to think of my purpose in all of it; what does God want me to do to support our church through the changes? I imagine I'm not the only one asking myself that question.

I am sure most of you have noticed our congregation has gotten smaller during the last 2 ½ years. And I am sure many of you have concerns about what this may mean for the future of our church. Let me encourage you. We serve a mighty God and I truly believe He will provide all we need to grow and prosper if we "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt. 6:33 NIV) I don't want to only hear stories about when God did a mighty move in other churches; I want to see that myself. I want to see and experience a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit in Eleventh Street Church of God! I pray for that! I hope you will join me in that. Small doesn't mean dead. We have a job to do and it will take all of us being committed members to build up a strong, praying, Spirit-led church of God. Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-39, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" If we build our church and each other up on these commands, we will see miraculous things happen.

You were created by God with a purpose. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10 ESV) You have spiritual gifts and talents that God gave you just so you can be a blessing to others and glorify Him, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Cor. 4-7 ESV) We are equipped with these gifts to help the church function at its optimum so we can be a healthy, prospering body of believers. **You** were created to do something in this world, for the people of this world. How amazing is that!

When it comes to ministry, we tend to hold back or avoid leading or volunteering because we are afraid we won't be good enough. We see ministry as belonging to those that are "called"; but all of us that are saved have been called to serve, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (1 Pet. 4:10 NIV). So many

of us don't live out our potential and never do what we know God has put on our hearts. Why? I think fear is mostly to blame. It is scary to put ourselves out there isn't it? We regularly recite the "what if" questions: what if I teach something wrong, what if everyone hates what I do, what if I mess up, what if I bomb it? We often "what if" ourselves right out of doing anything at all. Paralyzed by fears of things that haven't happened and probably never will.

After we go through the "what ifs," basically talking ourselves out of serving or leading, we often start making excuses, embarrassed to tell others our real reasons: fear and insecurity. We say things like, "Oh I would love to, but I don't have time." Sound familiar? And of course that is true sometimes. But if fear is why you are avoiding things, remember fear is a liar! Excuses, unlike valid reasons, are often untruths. If we are honest, we have all made excuses to get out of something. But as Christians, we need to remember, "Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin." (Jm. 4:17 NRSV) This is not meant to be judgmental or to shame you, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,..." (Ro. 3:23 ESV) I write these words with love for you, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Eph. 4:15-16 ESV) You do not want to excuse your life away and end with a heart full of regrets. You have something wonderful in you our church needs. I write also with love for our church and our community. Life is too short and the world too broken for you to not do what God has purposed you to do.

So, just how does a person overcome their fears? It starts by bringing those fears out into the light, "...But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." In the light is where our secrets, our sins, our weaknesses, our excuses are visible. Sounds pretty terrifying doesn't it? But that is where the healing and fellowship is found my friend. When we open up about our fears to a trusted friend, pastor or fellow believer, we can get the prayer, love and support we need. And often after we open up, that fear no longer seems so big. "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Tim. 1:6-7 NIV)

You have a wonderful gift to offer your family, your church, your community and the world. I ask that you share that with us! You can do all things through Jesus, who strengthens you. (see Phil. 4:13)

Watching God Work,
Carolyn Abel