CORNERSTONE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FRONTLINES

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Renewing our families, our communities, and our world by bringing faith and life together in Christ.

PERSECUTION IN THE UNITED STATES?

BY CARTER SANGER

At General Assembly this year Dr. Andrew Brunson spoke on a couple of occasions. If you're unfamiliar, Dr. Brunson was the pastor imprisoned in Turkey on false charges for two years. We spent months praying for him in worship as did many churches around the world.

Although convicted at his trial, he was released to travel last October, which opened a window for the US State Department to fly him back to North Carolina. A day later he was in the Oval Office, laying his hands on and praying for President Trump. It was a grand sight to see him walk to the podium this past week. He was greeted with an enthusiastic standing ovation which extended for several minutes.

He spoke about his time in the Turkish prison. It wasn't filled with hymn singing and joy in suffering. It was filled with anxiety and a feeling of abandonment. He broke down at least once as he attempted to walk us through a brief picture of what he experienced and has written a book about the experience that will be available in October.

He spoke about how his romanticized view of suffering under persecution was shattered and how his first year broke him badly. Even with his vows to endure whatever persecution might come and his reading of other persecuted Christians, he realized he was unprepared for what he faced.

All of this led him to extend a warning to us, the Church in the United States. He is convinced that persecution is coming. In some ways it's already here. For example, there is pressure in many universities and other work settings to support and embrace the LGBT agenda already. If proposed legislation is passed, it will be considered a hate crime to

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ROAR VBS 2019 RECAP

BY CAROL KUTZER

When life is unfair, scary, changing, sad and good….God is Good!

What a great week! So much great music, dancing, worship and learning about God. God's love was everywhere as we served the children God brought to VBS and as we served each other.

The total number of children who attended was probably the fewest we've had in my tenure here at Cornerstone. I believe we finished the week with 48 children. But what wonderful, amazing, bright, and enthusiastic children they were! Honestly, I think we only had 1 child who spoke little to no English, so there were no struggles with communication. Which was such a blessing as this allowed our Cornerstone kids to make lots of new friends. They were such great "hosts" this week to our visitors.

Our Cornerstone volunteers were also great "hosts" to all the Cosecha de Vida volunteers. Most of whom

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- A Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, June 30, to elect two representatives from the congregation to the Officer Nominating Committee.
- Please remember to pray for our Guatemala team while they are gone, July 27-August 3.
- We will have members of our church preaching in July while Carter is on vacation.

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SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

BY TOM LOTT

Videos recordings of all the EPC General Assembly talks (including Andrew Brunson's) are available on the EPC website at: *https://epc.org/ga/ga2019recordings/*.

All of them were good!

- The meeting was fairly abbreviated since we are in the summer months.
- Carter reviewed his trip to General Assembly in Colorado. By God's grace there were no controversial issues this year. The highlight was probably the attendance of Andrew Brunson, the EPC pastor/missionary who was imprisoned in Turkey for approximately two years. He was finally released last October. He talked about his experience in Turkey and his felt absence of God.

  As a reminder, David sensed the absence of God many times, as well as many other of God's saints in history. Pastor Brunson probably had more believers praying for him than anyone in the church over the last thousand years. Hopefully this will be the forerunner of God's doing a great work in Turkey and possibly the 10/40 window of evangelism.
- As reported last month, Miflin Dove has been working on assuring that Cornerstone's finances are in good order. Please take a moment to thank Miflin for the wonderful job that he's done. On another note, a member has offered to pay for a new sound system in the sanctuary.
- The Elders and Deacons took some time to gather in groups of three to pray for each other.
- Carter will be on vacation from sometime near the end of July through early August. During that period it is probable that Jonathan Shumate and Kenney Wrubel will be preaching. Sam Downing will also be preaching again in the future.
- A Congregational meeting will be held after the worship service on June 30th in order to choose 2-3 members to serve on the Officer Nominating Committee. Don Russell and Tom Lott are the Ruling Elders on the committee.
- As always, the Session concluded with prayers for the needs at Cornerstone.

Cornerstone helps support several of the organizations that will now share a facility. Stop by for a look at their new building.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETS IN DENVER

BY GENE COVER

Carter and Ellie Sanger and Gene and Linda Cover had the privilege of attending the 39th EPC General Assembly at Cherry Creek Presbyterian, just south of Denver, Colorado, on June 18-21. As usual the worship services were great as was the music. Gene was particularly impressed with the jazz quartet that led the music on Friday morning. This quartet leads the music at their Saturday night worship service.

Andrew Brunson addressed the assembly

We had the great fortune to hear missionary Andrew Brunson speak to us twice: once describing his two years of imprisonment in Turkey, and again giving the sermon at Thursday night's worship service. Andrew's wife, Noreen, spoke of her particular challenges at the Pastors' Wives luncheon.

In his sermon, he stressed the need for the American church to prepare for persecution. He said that we need a greater fear of God, a greater love for God, and a greater perseverance in the face of struggles. He has written a book about his experience in prison, *God's Hostage,* which will come out in October. It can be ordered in advance at *www.epc.org/godshostage.*

Assembly business

As far as church business was concerned, there was nothing controversial that came before the commissioners. This made for the swift completion of our work.

One motion should help in future meetings: the Rules of the General Assembly may be amended or suspended by a three-fourths vote of the commissioners **present and voting**. The change was made to insure that important business can be conducted, even late in the Assembly when many registered commissioners have already left for home. The rules before required a two-thirds majority of those registered for the meeting.

One of our Presbytery's churches in Monroe, LA, won the Bart Hess Award for this year. The Bartlett L. Hess Award for church vitality is given annually to the EPC church that has demonstrated the most innovative approach to church growth or revitalization.

Our stated clerk, Jeff Jeremiah, will be retiring in two years and so a search committee is being formed to find a new stated clerk.

Connecting with old friends

It is always good to see old friends at General Assembly. We greeted many from Central South Presbytery as well as one of Cornerstone's previous youth directors, Rob Hock, and his wife Kimmy. Cornerstone supported Rob's attendance at seminary, and he is now lead pastor of Southport church in Indianapolis. Italo, Allison, and baby Betsy Furieri were there for their first GA and send their greetings to the church in Katy.

A moving moment

One particularly moving moment at GA on Thursday was when Cherry Hills lead pastor Brad Strait gave us an update. At GA last year Brad and his wife had to leave GA early to return to Denver to be there for their 3 month-old granddaughter's emergency surgery.

The delicate and dangerous microscopic surgery was to remove growths on her spinal cord by pulling the end of the spinal cord out of the end of the vertebrae and cutting the growths off. Without surgery, her prognosis was an early death. After surgery they wouldn't know for some time whether the little girl would ever walk or have control of body functions. Jeff Jeremiah, stated clerk of GA, had led the GA in prayer for the little girl.

On Wednesday Brad introduced the now 15 month-old child to GA. Her mother carried her up on the stage, placed her down on the floor, and she RAN across the stage to greet her grandmother. As they say, the crowd went wild. God answers prayer, surprise, surprise.

Next year's assembly

GA next year will be back at Hope Cordova near Memphis, which is the church that Rufus Smith pastors.

[ANDREW BRUNSON] HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE IN PRISON, *GOD'S HOSTAGE,* WHICH WILL COME OUT IN OCTOBER.

Andrew Brunson warned the church in the United Sates to prepare for persecution.

WHAT CHURCH LEADERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NEW GIVING TRENDS

"FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE NOT OUR MISSION, BUT THEY ARE THE FUEL THAT PROPELS THE MISSION."

The following article is reprinted from the website Horizons Stewardship by Clif Christopher.

Ten years ago, in Not Your Parents' Offering Plate, I voiced my concern that giving to religion, as a share of overall giving, had fallen significantly over the last several decades and was half of what it once was. At the time, the giving trends indicated that if we did not change the way we do overall stewardship in the church, the decline in giving would continue. Well, now it has happened!

For the first time ever, giving to religion as a percent of overall charitable donations has dropped below 30%.

For 2018, Giving USA reports gifts to religious organizations are down 1.5% to just 29% of total charitable giving. Total giving to charity rose to 427 billion dollars, but this came more from foundations and corporations and not from individuals–the church's primary revenue source. On average, Americans gave away only 1.9% of their disposable income.

These giving trends are as alarming to me today as they were back in 2008 when I first rang the bell of concern. Financial resources are not our mission, but they are the fuel that propels the mission.

Without money, there can be no mission and no ministry in these days when the faith is struggling around the world.

What caused the latest decline? Some will blame the last tax law changes that significantly increased the standard deduction and thus reduced the number of people who itemize. Others will say that it just reflects that fewer people are in church and the world is more secular.

I do not buy into the theory that the causes are all external and thus any solution must be external. I still hold to the conviction that the solution is within the church to save the church, but we have avoided the hard work necessary to make the cultural adjustment to get it done. In the strongest

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NEWS FROM NICK & AMANDA

Dear church partner,
First and foremost, we want to thank you for your continued support, both financially and prayerfully. We very much felt loved and supported over the past 3 years in Lebanon. This fall, we will celebrate 5 years of living in the Middle East, and we thank you for not only being a part of God's work among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, but also a part of our lives.

As you know, the past year or so has been somewhat difficult for us. Just this year, Amanda had a seizure and pulmonary embolism after giving birth to Everett; then Everett was in the NICU for 10 days because he was born almost 6 weeks early; Nick's visa was denied, and we waited for over a year to get it overturned; Amanda's dad died; and we went through major changes in team and team leadership. These are just some of the biggest things. Needless to say, it took a toll on us.

Our hope is that this summer will be a restful time, as well as a time of prayer and discernment for our future. As new team leaders, we are praying that God would give us clear vision for our family and our team as we move forward. Please pray with us and for us that He would direct us in the way He wants us to go, and that we will be able to return to Lebanon ready to serve and to lead.

Thanks again for your continued support! We couldn't have made it through this last year with you! As Paul said in Philippians 4, *"How [we] praise the Lord that you are concerned about [us] again. [We] know you have always been concerned for [us.]"*
In Him,
Nick, Amanda

BY CAROL KUTZER

God is Good! This was our take-away at VBS. God's goodness was everywhere. Just one example is the way He provided enough money through the VBS mission drive to purchase 100 Spanish Bibles to take to Guatemala. Our goal was 60 Bibles.

The Guatemala mission team will begin meeting soon to prepare for the trip. We will review our VBS music and lessons and begin packing donations.

You can begin bringing donations to the church that you would like to send with us. These items include:

- Gently used baby and children's clothing – cleaned
- Deflated soccer balls
- Toiletry items (small/ sample size)
- New underwear and socks (all sizes)
- Baseball hats – gently used or new
- Used luggage – large enough to carry 50 lbs – on wheels please

Our departure date is fast approaching. Please commit to praying for the team every day beginning now, while we prepare and continue until we are safely home. If you have any questions, please contact Carol at *info@CornerstoneKaty.org*.

We still need suitcases with wheels to transport the items we've collected to Guatemala.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

BY CAROL KUTZER

☺ **And the winner is**…The Starburst game will be counted next month.

☺ **Get to know our Childcare Workers:** Question of the month: What's one career you wish you could have?

- Ms. Ann Alcorn: Movie star
- Ms. Carol Rutar: President
- Ms. Kinsey Spain: Primatologist
- Ms. Laura Garay: Professional ballerina for the New York City ballet

Kenny and Lauren Torregano's baby Christian was baptized during worship in June.

Pictures from VBS

PERSECUTION: ARE WE READY TO FACE IT?

(Continued from page 1)

teach, even from the pulpit, that certain lifestyles are wrong. These are simply the tip of the iceberg. Christians already are labeled as bigots, haters, simpletons, etc and increasingly blamed for deep divisions that many in our society experience. We have become a targeted group and it will likely get worse as the next generation emerges. And we aren't ready for it.

What do we do? As we're called to give thanks for all things we can start there. It is time to decide where your true allegiance aligns. Does it align with Christ? Persecution could be the great revealer of our hearts' affections. In what will you take refuge when difficulty comes? What will you endure for the sake of Christ? What will you suffer for the sake of Christ. Time may soon tell.

As we look back through Church history, it is easy to see that we would not be the first generation to face persecution. It is a common theme. In the early centuries after Christ, it was notably costly to align yourself with Christ. It meant associating yourself with a fringe group of often ostracized people. It meant being misunderstood, at best, often limited in rights, and persecuted in horrific ways at worst. In much of US history, being "Christian" has been beneficial to societal approval. It has put you in helpful business networks. Ulterior motives are uncovered with persecution.

> "PERSECUTION COULD BE THE GREAT REVEALER OF OUR HEARTS' AFFECTIONS."

When I look at the broad evangelical Church in the United States today, I see people who flit from one local church to another. They climb the Christian social ladder, as it were, convinced of their commitment to Christ even though their commitment to his bride and his teaching is negligible at best. Persecution will change that.

How do we get ready? We appreciate the suffering of Christ on our behalf. We commit ourselves to Christ and the church. We abide in him; draw our life from him; drink of the means of grace according to his schedule (practice the Sabbath). And we trust Him to carry us through the fire knowing that our fire will never be the fire that Jesus faced for us.

As the writer of Hebrews says, "*let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*"
Hebrews 10:24-25

Christians are more and more viewed in a negative light.

GIVING TRENDS

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possible way, I am encouraging you to re-examine how you are teaching and preaching financial steward ship. How are you moving your church away from the stewardship methods of the 20th century and responding to a new 21st century culture?

How will you respond to the latest giving trends?

You do not need the new 2019 annual campaign in a box. You may not even need a capital campaign. What you do need is a systematic long-term culture shift that creates not just funds for the budget but generous hearts and minds….

You may not be able to change America's giving to religion, but you sure can do something to change your congregation to be generous followers of Christ.

> "WHAT YOU DO NEED IS A SYSTEMATIC LONG-TERM CULTURE SHIFT THAT CREATES NOT JUST FUNDS FOR THE BUDGET BUT GENEROUS HEARTS AND MINDS."

VBS Roared

(Continued from page 1)

were teenagers, but there were plenty of them. It was great to work side-by-side and build new relationships with Cosecha de Vida members.

For now, the "after glow" is bright and shining. I'm sure this spiritual high will continue for a few days. Which is nice, as my body is about to drop. It is a powerful thing to serve God with everything you have.....and then some. Thank you to all the volunteers who did this every day this week.

The Closing Celebration will begin in about an hour. And while I write this, there are volunteers here getting ready to feed the families who attend. I'm looking forward to celebrating a great week! Thank you, Lord. God is Good! ¡Dios es Bueno!

Celebrate the 4th at the Yuvancics

By Becky Yuvancic

Join us at the Church Pool Picnic at the Yuvancic's house, 3418 Wellspring Lake Dr., Fulshear, TX on Thursday, July 4th, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

We will provide the house/yard/pool and one grill; also basic condiments, onions, soda and water, ice.; and plates, napkins, cups, utensils.

Guests should bring their own meat to grill and any fixings (buns, etc.), other drinks they might want, side dish to share, swim suits, lawn chairs if you want. (We have a lot of chairs).

Please be sure to RSVP- we need to have your name on our list for the gate. And please do NOT use your GPS to our address- it takes you to a gate you cannot go through. Use the

Weston Lakes main gate address of 32611 FM 1093 Road, Fulshear, TX 77441

You can use my email and/or phone number for RSVP:
281-300-1377 or
beckyyuvancic@gmail.com.

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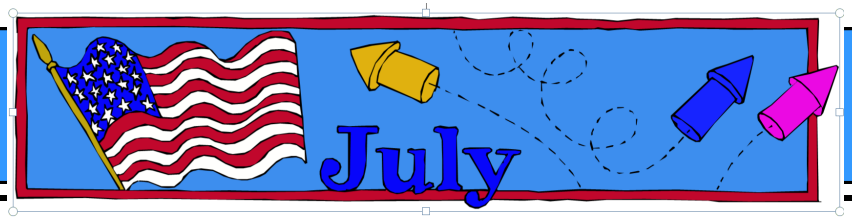
Seeking to renew our families, our communities, and our world by bringing faith and life together in Christ.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30 *10:30 Worship &* ***Congregational meeting*** 	*1*	*2* *6:00 VBS clean-up*	*3*	*4* **Church office closed** ***4:00 Pool Party at the Yuvancic's***	*5* *6:00 Men's Prayer breakfast*	*6*
7 *10:30 Worship*	*8s*	*9* *9:30 Presbytery Planning meeting*	*10*	*11*	*12* *6:00 Men's Prayer breakfast*	*13* *6:00 Men's TWC at Lott's*
14 *10:30 Worship*	*15*	*16* *6:30 Session/Deacons meeting*	*17*	*18*	*19* *6:00 Men's Prayer breakfast*	*20*
21 *10:30 Worship*	*22*	*23*	*24*	*25*	*26* *6:00 Men's Prayer breakfast*	*27* Guatemala Mission Trip begins
28 *10:30 Worship*	*29*	*30*	*31*	*1*	*2* *6:00 Men's Prayer breakfast*	*3*

Guatemala Mission Trip

Tito Cogliandro	1	Evi Colston	8	Jack Shumate	16	Haylee Nesbit	19
Mercer Sanger	2	Rikke Jedig	8	Mark Williams	16	Susie Kolesar	21
Don Russell	3	Adika Colston	10	Colton Nesbit	17	Jim Kolesar	29
Jean Freedman	5	Aaron Nesbit	13	Evie Shumate	18		
Sandy Nesbit	5	Vicky Morgan	14	Sol Shumate	18		