

FRONTLINES

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

MY SABBATICAL

BY CARTER SANGER

Thank you, Cornerstone family, for giving me these summer months to rest. The rest was much needed and the Lord indeed blessed me through it.

What did I do over these past few months? I stopped and smelled the roses. And I discovered something: they smell wonderful. Did you know that? This old adage often refers to the busyness of life. We rush from one important task to another. What's the point of roses? Their frivolous, right? Something pretty but unimportant to real life. At least, that's the measure of value we tend to give something like that.

A luxury, nothing more. The adage hints at something more.

What did I do? For the first several weeks I was fixing things, buying things, and building things. I worked hard with my hands. I sweat, bled (sometimes), and went to bed exhausted. There is great satisfaction in building things and seeing the fruits of your labor. It is often hard to see that when your work is with people's souls. The results are often invisible until you see them in eternity.

This was my plan during my Sabbatical—to build stuff. I had planned to build a large shed/cabin on the back of

my family's property in Michigan. That didn't happen due to some unforeseen complications. Instead, I worked on some of my dad's dreams. He passed away in March but had big dreams for the property. I built a large deck on the back of the cabin and converted an attic into a bathroom on the 2nd floor. Because they were Dad's dreams, they brought a few happy tears. Works is good and is important for a healthy soul.

With projects finished, time slowed down. I focused more on prayer, family, and friends. One of

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- We are happy to have Carter and Rhonda back from their sabbatical! Thanks to the men who filled in while they were gone.
- Details on resumption of Sunday School have not been made yet. Stay tuned!
- The Session will meet on Tuesday, September 8.

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PRESBYTERY TO MEET IN BATON ROUGE

The Presbytery of the Gulf South will hold its fall meeting in Baton Rouge, LA, on Friday, September 25. The meeting was moved from Lake Jackson, TX, so that those attending would be able to drive and not have to fly. It will be the first to include an on-line option for

those "attending" as well as in-person.

This will be a one-day meeting, so the schedule is packed. The mask requirement and sanitizing stations will be in effect. Our own Jonathan Tucker will be the moderator.

Several candidates for the ministry will be examined. New members of the various presbytery committees will also be approved; each will serve 3 years. Cornerstone currently has several men and women serving on these committees.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The Session and Deacons will meet on Tuesday, September 8.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

"LOOK FOR [WEEKLY CHILDREN'S BULLETINS] IN THE WEEKLY ENEWS AND ON FACEBOOK."



Voting on Election Day, Tuesday, November 3, in the fall election will be held in our gym.

Early voting will be held at another location.

Whether you vote early or on Election Day, be sure to vote!

BY CAROL KUTZER

☺ **Sunday School this Fall:** At the time of printing, no decision has been made on when we will return to children's Sunday school or providing childcare. Let us all pray this will be soon.

For now, we will begin doing a few Catechism Chant Question & Answers during worship service. Be sure your kids are staying on top of their Catechism. Here is a link where you can find it:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/i8adlnmra7rpkz/New%20Catechism%20MIX%202%20Moved%20Perc.mp3?dl=0>

☺ **Kids' Bulletins:** We understand that not every family is ready or able to return to gathered worship. And that is OK!!

However, if the issue is not health related, I urge you to attend worship. Your covenant family needs you. We will continue to live stream our services and post weekly liturgy (bulletins) online. I have begun posting weekly children's bulletins as well. Look for

them in the weekly eNews and on Facebook. Or you can find these on the website under Get Involved and then News & Events.

☺ **Get to know our Childcare Workers:** What are your three favorite foods?

- Ms. Ann Alcorn: Lobster, chocolate, pizza.
- Ms. Carol Rutar: Tacos, NJ pizza, rice pudding
- Ms. Kinsey Spain: Anything Italian, red pepper humus, & strawberry shortcake

We received a nice note from Family Life Assembly of God. Cornerstone folks picked up all the props and decorations for VBS, which we will host in 2021.

We were blown away and blessed by the offering you sent with the Thank You card. That was totally unexpected and very much appreciated.

We have given our VBS sets away for the past 15 years and this is the first time for a thank you card and offering.

Thank you for your generosity.

I will call you in a week or two and make arrangements to bring you the preschool box train as well as a few bags of Imagination Station Gizmo's that we opened but didn't use. They are intact. Group just won't take anything back that is opened.

God bless you, Cornerstone Church, and your ministry to kids.

*With Jesus love,
Debbie Kammerlohr*

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY TO BEGIN THURSDAY, SEPT. 17

BY BEVERLY TUCKER

Are you content? Do you grumble and complain? I know I do, and lately about almost everything. What is biblical contentment – “the inward gracious spirit that joyfully rests in God’s providence”, and how do we learn it?

All Cornerstone women are invited to join us on Thursday mornings beginning September 17 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. The study will end on Thursday, December 3.

This fall we will be reading Chasing Contentment, Trusting God in a Discontented Age, by Erik Raymond. Books are available for purchase or you may order your own on Kindle.

IMPORTANT DETAILS:

- 1) At this time, we can not offer childcare for attendees. We will, however, offer each meeting via Zoom for those women with children at home, or those that do not feel comfortable gathering in person.
- 2) We will meet outside on the patio each week if weather permits. Chairs will be spaced six feet apart. If the weather is bad, we will meet in the sanctuary. We will follow Harris County protocols for wearing masks.
- 3) There will not be a time of fellowship/refreshments prior to the start of the discussion due to COVID-19.

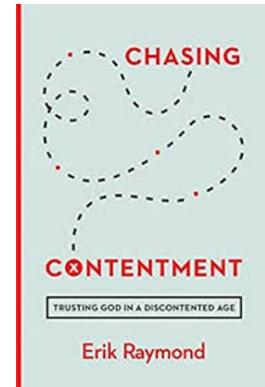
The discussion will begin at 9:30 a.m. and end by 11:00 a.m.

We will re-visit these changes as the COVID-19 situation evolves throughout the semester. Thank you for your understanding and patience.

Contact Beverly Tucker if you have questions.

The **Tuesday evening** Bible study will continue to meet via ZOOM from 7:00 p.m. till 8:00 p.m., looking at the books of Ruth and Judges.

Contact Jennifer Magee if you have any question.



The Thursday morning Bible study group will study Erik Raymond’s book Chasing Contentment.

“CORNERSTONE IS MEETING ALL ITS OBLIGATIONS AND COMMITMENTS, INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR MISSIONS...”

WHAT RESEARCH HAS REVEALED ABOUT THE NEW SUNDAY MORNING

This article was published by George Barna, whose organization focuses on church life:

Since March of this year, Barna has been researching digital church trends that have surfaced (or simply been emphasized) as a result of COVID-19. As part of our State of the Church 2020 project, we'd already uncovered new data on what we called "worship shifting" and considered some of the uncertain digital and physical realities facing churches.

Now, three months into America's fight against COVID-19, with some churches continuing to social distance and others now beginning to welcome members back into their physical buildings for worship services, we're curious how engagement with services—both online and in-person—continues to evolve. Here are some key things we've learned during this unique period in our nation's history and our worship gatherings.

Half of Churched Adults Have Not Streamed a Church Service in the Past Four Weeks

The majority of pastors (96%) reports their churches have been streaming their worship services online

during the pandemic. But that may not matter for nearly half of churched adults—that is, those who say they have attended church in the past six months; 48% of this group report they have *not* streamed an online service in the last month.

Even looking at a more consistent segment—practicing Christians, who are typically characterized by at least monthly attendance—one in three (32%) admits they have not streamed an online service during this time. Researchers were surprised to see this seeming dip among regular attenders, particularly considering that a plurality of Protestant pastors (40%) has reported an increase in virtual attendance since the pandemic pushed services online.

Additionally, weekend schedules during the crisis have likely looked more open, and many churches now offer on-demand streaming after an initial service or upload; 29% of practicing Christians and 20% of non-practicing Christians say they take advantage of this option on a day other than Sunday. These are all reasons virtual attendance could have been boosted, but it's possible that enthusiasm for *only* online service options has dwindled as the weeks have passed.

Churched adults logging in for services usually opt for their regular church home (40%), though 23% have streamed services from a different church, essentially "church-hopping" online. One-third of practicing Christians has also virtually attended a church other than their own in the past month; indeed, we see one-quarter of practicing Christians notes that, during the pandemic, this has become typical of their online attendance. Not only do some churched adults see online worship as an opportunity to try other services themselves, some also see it as a chance to invite friends—whether Christian (22%) or non-Christian (14%)—to "visit" their churches online.

15% of Practicing Christians Multitask While Streaming Worship Services

What does the new Sunday morning look like for Christian households who continue to tune in to virtual worship services? Does the level of attentiveness change when a household is streaming the message in a living room or bedroom, as opposed to following the motions of a group of people gathered in a physical building?

Practicing and non-practicing Christians have

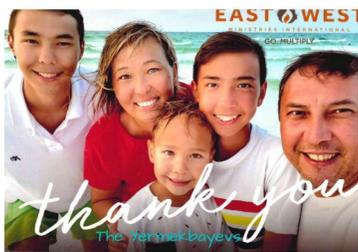
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Cornerstone is using both in-person and on-line attendance.

“,,SOMETHING THAT IS IMPACTING THE RELATIONAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF BOTH PASTORS AND THEIR PEOPLE—THE LEVEL OF CONNECTION AMONG CHURCHED ADULTS MIGHT BE SUFFERING.”

A NOTE FROM THE YARMEKBAYEVS



Dear Cornerstone Church!
 We hope you are staying safe and healthy through this unusual time! We want to express our appreciation for your generosity in support of our family and ministry. Your investment in us will multiply by investing in the lives of people around us. We will continue making disciples and raising local laborers for the Harvest. Your personal commitment is incredibly helpful and allows us to move forward in reaching our goal.
 Blessings to you!
 Aidar, Aliya and the boys.

LOUISIANA HARD-HIT BY HURRICANE LAURA

While we are grateful that Hurricane Laura took a turn to the east, we want to remember our EPC churches that were in the path of this storm.

As western Louisiana and East Texas face Hurricane Rita II (Hurricane Laura, following Rita's 2005 path and Frederick's in 1979), it appeared that all our congregations and pastors were preparing as best they could.

The following were in the storm's path:
 In Louisiana:

- Grace, Alexandria
- Minden

And, though they are well away from Laura's path, they are in extremely low areas:

- First, Houma
- First, Thibodaux



BARNA: WE NEED TO KEEP IN TOUCH

(Continued from page 4)
 different routines during online services. For example, while three in five practicing Christians (64%) say they still pray along with prayers, only two in five non-practicing Christians (41%) say the same. This trend is similar for other practices, such as households watching services together at the same time (42% practicing Christians vs. 21% non-practicing Christians) or singing along with worship (40% vs. 23%).

A number of churchgoers also admit that attending online

services offers opportunity for them to multitask while the service is streaming. Although, as Barna has previously noted, distraction is reportedly a common part of in-person attendance too, regardless of age and device usage.

Just 3 in 10 Churchgoers Have Had Contact with a Church Leader in the Last Month

In a time of social distancing and isolation—something that is impacting the relational, emotional and mental health of both pastors and their peo-

ple—the level of connection among churched adults might be suffering. For example, while it may be the norm to have a quick chat with your pastor on a Sunday morning, only 30% of practicing Christians and 4% of non-practicing Christians say they've had contact with their church leader within the last month.

Additionally, only 15% of practicing Christians (and just 3% of non-practicing Christians) have joined a prayer meeting online in the past four weeks, and even lower numbers met with a small group or Bible study.



SABBATICAL: A TIME OF RENEWAL

“YOU HEAR THE
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(Continued from page 1)
my friends you saw in a Sunday morning video as he played his Rav vast and sang a hymn. He’s working on his master’s in Sacred Music at Notre Dame and taking steps to become a monk. We’ve often talked in the past couple of years about the Divine Office (the practice of praying throughout the day at set times). This year he started practicing them with the use of the Psalter and I joined him. We practiced morning and evening prayer most days. At first I just listened as he beautifully sang/chanted through the Psalms in prayer.

After a couple of weeks, Rhonda and I joined the chanting and have been practicing still. There is something about chanting the Psalms that lets you hear them, I think, in a way they were meant to be heard. You hear the emotion behind the words a little bit more and they invite you into time with God that is more than supplication. We need that.

Perhaps a big reason why we have so much anxiety in life is because we don’t really experience the presence of God. Many of the Psalms don’t make a lot of sense unless you’ve experienced his presence. For example, in Psalm 27 we find the Psalmists desire is “to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.” (Ps 27:4). And in Psalm 34 he invites us to “taste and see that the Lord is good!” Practicing daily the presence of God is healing.

Something else that I found healing was time with friends. We call the people we know at the lake “Michigan cousins.” Our families have grown up together. It’s been that way for more than 100 years. While we ordinarily might see these Michigan cousins once a year and only for a few days, the friendships perpetuate and pick up right where they left off.

Only this summer was unique. Because of the shutdown in so many places, many of these friends retreat-

ed to the lake, and so we enjoyed them most of the summer. Everyday around 5:00 or 6:00 in the afternoon you find a large group gathered for drinks and talking about life. There is no agenda. We simply share life together. We learn about needs and help each other out. We learn about pranks and share a laugh. We learn about places to see and things to do. That fellowship, that life in community, was perhaps the most healing of all. And I wasn’t looking for it.

But now I’m back. Though I loved my Sabbatical time away, I missed you. Cornerstone has a variety of personalities, opinions, experiences, and perspectives. And while that variety can sometimes invite a bit of anxiety, they are a treasure that I look forward to savoring.

UPDATE FROM DAKA

Dear family in Christ,

Hope you are well and staying healthy during this pandemic.

As we are starting a new school year, we realize that this is going to be a very different and unique semester, unlike we have ever seen before. Since the travel is still restricted and many embassies around the world are closed we won't be expecting many new international students this Fall.

However, the Lord has provided for us opportunities to even more deeply connect with the students who are already here or transferring between the schools. Many of our students are still scared

for their health and the health of their families back home. At the same time, this is the best time to share hope and the Good News of the Gospel. We definitely see more openness. Praise the Lord

Please pray for the Lord to give us wisdom to serve our students in these uncertain times.

Lastly, I wanted to ask you to pray for Abdul (name changed). We wrote about him back in November. He has trusted Christ, but has been having a lot of doubts about his new faith. On top of that, he was supposed to go home back in May, however he started receiving death threats from his brother for

showing interest in Christianity. The long story short, his family runs an NGO back home which promotes Islamic faith through service. Basically they are Muslim missionaries there. Currently Abul is needing a host family to live with temporarily. I'm helping him with that.

Pray for the Lord to provide a host family for him. Pray for me and another brother in Christ who are helping Abdul spiritually to continue walking by faith even if life is very hard now. Pray for the Lord to strengthen him and comfort him as he might not see his family for a long time. Thank you!

Blessings,
Daka Dyussekov



“...THE LORD HAS PROVIDED FOR US OPPORTUNITIES TO EVEN MORE DEEPLY CONNECT WITH THE STUDENTS WHO ARE ALREADY HERE..”

SETECA CONTINUES TO SERVE IN LATIN AMERICA

BY PAUL BRANCH

As a region, Latin America now leads the world in coronavirus cases. Mexico and Brazil have been particularly hard hit by COVID-19, but all of the countries in the region have been dramatically and tragically impacted. We are healthy and have been taking all of the government mandated precautions over the past

four months: masks in public, shelter in place, curfew restrictions and work from home. As is the case in the US and other parts of the world, the pandemic has had massive health, spiritual, social, and economic implications in Guatemala.

Elizabeth's ministry with visiting teams through our local church has been put on hold

for the foreseeable future, as all mission trips scheduled for 2020 were cancelled. In 2021 (or as the Lord allows), we look forward to hosting a River Oaks Community Church team and others who wish to come serve with us.

At SETECA, the seminary where Paul teaches, suspen-

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“...THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD MASSIVE HEALTH, SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS IN GUATEMALA.”

Dear Cornerstone EPC,

I want to thank you so much for supporting our ministry with CrossLife. You are making some **REALLY COOL THINGS!** happen in the lives of families all around the world. 2020 may be in turmoil but God is still at work!

In Christ,
Jonathan S.

SETECA: MAKING DO IN THE PANDEMIC

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tion of all campus-based activities due to the pandemic has made painful budget cuts necessary. Due to lack of funds, the jobs of 20 employees who worked on campus were terminated. Another 21 have been laid off,.... Also due to lack of financial resources, courses previously

assigned to adjunct professors have been reassigned to full-time faculty and missionaries, keeping all of us extremely busy! Some of the adjuncts have generously volunteered to teach for free.

In the midst of all of this, God continues to use SE-

TECA in amazing ways to prepare men and women from all across the world for gospel ministry and mission. More than sixty students from [all around the world] are enrolled this term in Paul's Christology and Ecclesiology courses.

At the same time, we know that many of our supporters and supporting churches are struggling. We ask you to please continue to pray for us and support in whatever way you are able. We pray for you as well, and trust God to meet your needs and ours, and those of the ministries we serve.



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*Seeking to renew our families,
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