



<p style="text-align: center;">January</p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>Th</td><td>F</td><td>Sa</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td></tr> <tr><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td></tr> <tr><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31							<p style="text-align: center;">February</p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>Th</td><td>F</td><td>Sa</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td></tr> <tr><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td></tr> <tr><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td></tr> <tr><td>28</td><td>29</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29						<p style="text-align: center;">March</p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>Th</td><td>F</td><td>Sa</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31									
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2016-2017 Usher and Health and Wellness Ministries Guide

Usher and Health and Wellness Ministries 2016

Greetings in the name of our Risen Savior fellow ushers and health and wellness champions! We thank God for fifteen years of the Federation *Usher Ministry Guide!* The first guide in 2001 had only 17 pages and was 8 ½ by 11. There were no sections on health and wellness but it was filled with very practical useable information for our different usher ministries. This 2016 eleventh edition is 28 pages in a compact size packed full of helpful ministry tips including extended sections on health and wellness and spiritual enrichment. The Federation was honored last year to have our guide serve as the basis for the Mississippi Affordable Care Act #GetCovered/StayCovered Guide.

This Fifteenth Edition continues our current emphasis on expanding our health and wellness activities. Ushering is the backbone of our worship experience. Ushers keep the house in order maintaining a proper environment for the worship experience. From greeting members and visitors at the entrances to providing Sunday bulletins to everyone, ushers are the MVPs of morning worship. Ironically, we only get noticed when something goes wrong. Yet, that's our ministry – to serve without notice. We know our God notices everything we do.

An usher can serve as a representative for Christ either drawing people to Him or driving them away. We must continue to be faithful. Can the other ushers count on us? Despite world circumstances, we must continue to be joy-filled. Joy is not dependent on outward circumstances but an inward relationship with the Lord.

In all we do, let's continue to strive to be the **best-trained ushers in North Mississippi, highly motivated, and most of all ushers that are in touch with the Lord!**

Yours for the cause of Christ,

Michael O. Minor, EdD
Editor and Director of Training
Rising Sun Usher Federation
c/o Oak Hill Baptist Church
Po Box 994
Hernando, MS 38632
(901) 826-8355
mom@faithmonet.org
www.faimonnet.org/rsuf

6. What is the signal from the floor ushers to the pastor for distress such as a fire?

The floor Ushers turn to the pulpit and brush both hands backward over the sides of their head. The pastor would then give the appropriate instructions.

7. What is the signal from the Usher in the aisle to the Usher in charge to request bulletins or other literature needed?

The aisle Usher places the first two fingers of his/her right hand straight across the breast.

8. What is the signal from the Usher in the aisle or side wall that allows the Usher in charge to know that offering envelopes are needed?

The aisle Usher places the first three fingers of his/her right hand straight across his/her breast.

9. What is the signal from the front Usher, which informs the Usher in the rear of the sanctuary to seat a visitor?

The front Usher extends his/her hand politely while keeping the elbows close to the body.

10. What is the signal from the Usher in the aisle or on the side wall which informs the Usher in charge to send relief at once?

The aisle Usher gets the attention of the Usher in charge and then places the first finger of his/her right hand straight across the breast.

11. What is the signal from the Usher in charge, which says to the Ushers who are serving that they should exit their assigned areas?

The Usher in charge will take the fingers of his/her left hand and make a quick brush across the forehead to the right.

Signs Commonly Used in Worship (Revised 1/2008)

1. What is the signal from an Usher to get the attention of another Usher before a signal of request is made?

The Usher presses together the fingers of his/her right hand together at the base of his/her neck.

2. What is the signal from the Usher in charge, which informs other Ushers when they are to go on the floor?

The Usher in charge will take the fingers of his/her right hand and brush his/her forehead to the left.

3. What is the signal from the Usher in the aisle or at the side wall which informs the Usher in charge that seats are available?

The aisle Usher raises his/her right hand to the level of his/her face and extends the palm of the right hand out if there are more than three seats. Otherwise, the Usher designates the number of seats, which are available by using the fingers. If no seats are available, the Usher raises his/her right hand with a closed fist.

4. What is the signal from the Usher in the aisle or on the side wall to the Usher in charge which allows him or her to know that they are to send a message?

The aisle Usher holds up the first four fingers of his/her hand to the level of the face until the attention of the Usher in charge has been obtained. The Usher who is to send the message should then deliver it to the person who is to receive it. Messages on paper are permissible from each Usher until it reaches the person who is to receive the message.

5. What is the signal from the Usher in the aisle or on the side wall which alerts the Usher in charge that he or she should send someone to help in time of distress?

The aisle Usher places his/her right hand at the upper chest area and does not remove it until someone comes to where he/she is standing.

2016-2017 Rising Sun Usher Federation Usher and Health and Wellness Guide

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NKJV – New King James Version NIV – New International Version

The **National Faith-Based Mobilization Network** is a coalition of clergy, lay leaders, congregation members, health and wellness partners, and concerned citizens committed to creating health equity through promoting wholeness (mind, body, and spirit), advocating for sustainable change, and remedying the effects of concentrated poverty. For more information, go to www.faimonet.org or e-mail info@faimonet.org.

What Is the Role of Ushers in the Church?

The ministry of ushering is a crucial part of worship because it is one of the most visible ministries in the church. In Christ, you have received God's unconditional love, and, in Christ, you are called to extend that same unconditional love to others. Although an usher's love is no stronger than the love found in the whole congregation of the body of Christ, nevertheless the usher performs a major role in ensuring that people see and experience that love.

The church usher duties can be summed up in a few words – making people feel welcome at church, assisting Pastors and teachers with people management, assisting with seating, collecting offering, and maintaining a safe environment. A church usher is a person who helps ensure a smoothly running church service and who ministers to people in a variety of practical ways. The specific responsibilities of an usher vary with the church, but his duties usually include greeting people as they arrive for the service, assisting people with special needs, and collecting the offering. Some churches provide a pin or name tag of some kind to easily identify their ushers.

Before the church service starts, the ushers will often have the responsibility to check the thermostat, check the restrooms, make sure the hymnals are placed correctly, and prepare the bulletins for distribution. As the churchgoers arrive, the ushers will act as doorkeepers, greeting each person with a smile, shaking hands, and handing out bulletins. They are also available to answer visitors' questions and extend extra help in seating those who need the assistance. Often, the ushers will escort people to the proper nursery or Sunday school classroom, especially if the church building is a large one.

During the church service, the ushers usually take part in some way. They are responsible to take up the church offering and make sure it is put in the proper place. In some churches, ushers also help with the Lord's Table. Ushers have a goal of minimizing distractions during the music and sermon. Ushers stand ready to assist anyone in the congregation who might need help, to aid latecomers in finding a seat, and to inform those in the sanctuary of any urgent matters. Some churches appoint an usher or two to monitor the facility, including the parking lot, to prevent vandalism, theft, or other wrongdoing.

Article 9. This Federation shall represent in the North Mississippi Baptist Education Convention as a permanent body with whatever the body deems best.

Article 10. Any church may become a member of the Federation. Faithfully submitted by your Constitution Committee on this day, Saturday, February 14, 1998, at Second Eudora Baptist Church, Eudora, Mississippi
Pastor Michael O. Minor, Chairperson
Sister Joanne Wright, Secretary Minister Emma Hardiman

Brief History

The Rising Sun Usher Federation was originally founded in 1944 at the Rising Sun Baptist Church, Pastor C. C. Cathey, by Pastor R. L. Jones and Sister Vernice Williams. The purpose of the Federation was to foster the Kingdom of Christ on earth and to train young people. Pastor T. H. Hibler was chosen as the first president and provided dynamic leadership for the first nine years of the Federation. The Federation lay dormant for a number of years until 1997.

- April 19, 1997: Pastor Minor looks through the *North Mississippi Baptist Education 1992 History Book* and takes an interest. The following day, while eating dinner Pastor Minor, speaks with his mother-in-law Earnestine Bennett, former secretary, about the Usher Federation.
- May 26, 1997: Pastor Minor and Pastor Montgomery discuss the possibility of re-constituting the Federation.
- February 14, 1998: At Second Eudora, the constitution was adopted and officers elected: President – Pastor Bernard Montgomery; Vice – President – Vacant; Secretary – Sis. Joanne Wright; Lady Chief – Sis. Pearl Wilson; Man Chief – Vacant; and Education Department Chair - Pastor Michael O. Minor.
- May 9, 1998: First official meeting at St. Mary. Pastor Curtis White, Second Eudora delivered the first message
- November 8, 1998: Pastor Montgomery's first annual address
- April 24, 1999: First Federation-wide call for churches to sponsor an annual health fair
- January 27, 2001: First Federation *Usher Guide* published
- April 20, 2001: First Health and Wellness only educational period
- April 27, 2002: First Federation-wide health observance calendar distributed
- January 25, 2003: First Federation *Usher Guide* including expanded health and wellness information published
- February 2012: 2010 Usher Guide cited in the Let's Move! Anniversary edition of *Childhood Obesity Journal*
- February 2015: 2010 Usher Guide adapted for use by Get Covered Mississippi for Affordable Care Act Outreach

Report of the Constitution Committee

Brother President, we your committee on the constitution wish to make the following report. We present the following document as the working constitution for the Rising Sun Usher Federation.

Constitution

Article 1. Resolve that this Federation be known as the Northwest Mississippi Usher's Federation of Rising Sun, commonly known as the Rising Sun Usher Federation.

Article 2. The object of this federation shall be to foster the Kingdom of Christ on earth and to train the young people.

Article 3. The officers of the federation shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and Treasurer, Chaplain, Man Chief, and Lady Chief. All officers shall be elected annually by a majority of the body present on the day of the election.

Article 4. It shall be the duty of the President to preside through the session of the Federation, but in his absence or at his request the Vice President may preside. The president shall appoint standing committees as needed.

Article 5. This Federation shall not adopt rules and regulations that infringe upon the rights of churches, but the constitution together with its by-laws and amendments will constitute the rule of government for this Federation.

Article 6. (a) The officers of this Federation shall constitute the Board of Control and shall be paid annually. Salaries shall be set annually by the body.

(b) This Federation shall hold its rally between each session of the Federation. Each Board shall represent with \$25.00, or whatever it is financially able to do, and the money raised in each rally shall be used for ways and means.

Article 7. (a) The Federation shall have three regular meetings and one annual session each year at whatever church and time chosen by the body, except that the annual meeting of this Federation shall be held on the last Saturday in October.

(b) Resolve that each Usher register with \$3.00.

Article 8. This constitution may be altered or amended at any annual meeting with two-thirds of the members present with proper notice

What Is the Health Insurance Marketplace?

Health Insurance Marketplaces are organizations set up to create more organized and competitive markets for buying health insurance. They offer a choice of different health plans, certifying plans that participate and providing information to help consumers better understand their options. Through the Marketplace, individuals and families will be able to shop for coverage if they need to buy health insurance on their own.

Premium and cost sharing subsidies will be available through the Marketplace to reduce the cost of coverage for individuals and families, based on their income. Individuals and families with very low incomes will also be able to find out at the Marketplace if they are eligible for coverage through Medicaid and children's health insurance program (CHIP).

Source: <http://kff.org/health-reform/faq/health-reform-frequently-asked-questions/>

How Does the Marketplace Work?

How does the Marketplace work? Consumers may access the Marketplace in one of three ways:

1. During open enrollment periods;
2. Anytime for Medicaid and CHIP; and
3. Through special enrollment periods (SEP).

Here are the steps in the enrollment process:

1. **Create an account.** Provide some basic information. Then, choose a user name, password, and security questions for added protection.
2. **Apply.** You'll enter information about you and your family including your income, household size, and more. Visit HealthCare.gov to get a checklist to help you gather the information you'll need.
3. **Pick a plan.** Next you'll see all the plans and programs you're eligible for and compare them side-by-side. You'll also find out if you can get lower costs on monthly premiums and out-of-pocket costs.
4. **Enroll.** Choose a plan that meets your needs and enroll!

2017 Open Enrollment Dates:

November 1, 2016: Open Enrollment starts — first day you can enroll in a 2016 Marketplace plan

December 15, 2016: 2017 Open Enrollment ends

January 31, 2017: First date 2017 coverage can start

For more information, call (662-298-3584 or e-mail info@getcoveredms.org).

Source: Healthcare.gov How the Marketplace Works brochure

Ten Awesome Tips for Church Greeters

Greeting visitors at church is such an important part of the hospitality ministry of the church. Church greeters are part of the ministry team and form part of the first impression that a visitor receives.

Here is a sampling of the failures of church greeters.

- † One couple quit going to church for 40 years because no one said, “Hello!”
- † A greeter at a church slipped visitor a note with his number on it. I guess I have to be polite, call, and let him down easy.
- † There’s a greeter at a church that doesn’t like people.
- † Another greeter made a terrible first impression. There’s nothing like being having shaken hands with a greeter who tells you about his/her hospitalization for an intestinal bug.

Here’s one glowing success:

- † One person’s tutor told him her story of welcome in a church — the welcome that she received changed her life. She found Christ because people accepted her.

So, we see that church greeters have a major impact in the church. Greeting people as they enter the sanctuary is more than a handshake and a smile. It is an opportunity to express God’s love through Christ and help set the tone of the upcoming worship experience.

Church greeters have more impact than they think. Here are ten awesome tips for church greeters. Remember it’s more than a handshake.

1. Smile.
2. Fresh breath.
3. Make eye contact
4. Take initiative and greet.
5. Don’t ask “Are you new?”
6. Don’t ask “Is this your first time?”
7. Offer a bulletin if your church uses them.
8. Personal warmth — look like you enjoy welcoming people.
9. Say “I don’t think I’ve met you yet, I’m {insert your name here}”
10. If they are new, offer to show them where the restrooms are and offer information about childcare if necessary.

Finally, greet them like you’re greeting an angel. You never know!

“What makes you think it is bad news?” asked the Chinese gentleman. “Maybe it’s good news.” One week later, war broke out with Mongolia, and a Chinese general came through, drafting all the young men. All later perished, except for the young man who couldn’t go because his leg was broken. The man said to his friends, “You see, the things you thought were bad turned out good; and the things you thought were good turned out bad.”

And thus it is with us. We don’t know if the things we want will really be good for us, or bad. We can’t see the future. That’s why James tells to us to pray, saying, “If it be thy will. . . .” But God *does* know the future. He is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. He knows the end from the beginning, and He knows how all things will turn out. Verse 26 says that the Holy Spirit prays for us according to the will of God with intensity, with groanings that words cannot express. And God answers the Holy Spirit’s pleas on our behalf. The result is Romans 8.28!

As the Holy Spirit prays for us, God answers His prayers, therefore all the things turn out for our good in the unfolding providence of the Lord. Hudson Taylor once said:

Ill that God blesses is our good

And unblest good is ill.

And all is right that seems most wrong

If it be his sweet will.

As this process unfolds, Romans 8.29 tells us that God is fashioning us into the likeness of His Son. A sculptor once carved a magnificent lion out of a solid block of stone. When asked how he had accomplished such a marvelous masterpiece, he had a simple answer. “That’s easy,” he said. “All I did was to chip away everything that didn’t look like a lion.” Through the pressures of life, the Lord chips away those things in our lives that don’t look like Jesus Christ.

Romans 8.28 thus really serves as the basis for biblical thanksgiving. Many people espouse the importance of positive thinking or possibility thinking. Much research has been done on the power of optimism. But positive thinking and optimism are empty clouds unless you have an Almighty God who controls the universe in His sovereignty and who is willing to make such a promise to His people. We do have such a God, and we do have such a promise. It provides a solid theological foundation for genuine, biblical, positive thinking.

Everyday Thanksgiving (Romans 8.28 and Ephesians 5.20).

On Sunday Morning, if we had time to take a roving microphone from pew to pew and from person to person, asking for your favorite verse of Scripture, many of you would give John 3.16, Psalm 23.1, or Proverbs 3.5–6. But some of you would cite Romans 8.28, a verse that has provided more comfort for God’s people in times of disappointment and distress than perhaps any other. This is a promise we can never exhaust or wear out. Because of the truth of this verse, we can be thankful every day regardless of circumstances.

As wonderful as Romans 8.28 is, it’s even more wonderful when you see its context. Romans 8 tells us about the Holy Spirit, who takes the work of Christ and applies it to our lives. According to verse 26, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. What kind of weakness? We are weak in many ways, but in this passage the apostle Paul is specific about the particular weakness he is addressing—our prayer lives. We are weak when it comes to prayer. In what way? Well, we are weak in many ways, but here again Paul has something specific in mind.

We are weak in our ability to know what we should ask. Many times we really don’t know what we should specifically pray for. We are not omniscient. We don’t know everything, nor can we see into the future. So we don’t know whether the things we’re asking for will turn out good or bad for us.

An old story illustrates the point. A Chinese gentleman lived on the border of China and Mongolia. In those days, there was constant conflict and strife along the perimeter. The man had a beautiful horse. One day, she leaped over the corral, raced down the road, crossed the border, and was captured by the Mongolians. His friends came to comfort him. “That’s bad news,” they said sadly. “What makes you think it’s bad news?” asked the Chinese gentleman. “Maybe it’s good news.” A few days later the mare came bolting into his corral, bringing with it a massive stallion. His friends crowded around. “That’s good news!” they cried. “What makes you think it’s good news?” he asked. “Maybe it is bad news.”

Later, his son, while riding the stallion and trying to break it, was thrown off and broke his leg. “That’s bad news,” cried the friends.

Ushering Best Practices

Concentrate on the people. Seat the people as near the front pews as it seem appropriate. The back seats can then be filled with latecomers. If people insist on seating in certain places let them be.

Be alert to available seats and be ready to lead worshippers to the vacant seats. Approach with the phrase “May I show you to a seat?” with a smile. Never usher worshippers to their seats by waving your hands.

Do not allow worshippers to enter the church sanctuary when prayers are being said from the pulpit. Politely tell them to wait at the entrance until after the prayers are over.

Humility is key in an usher. Ushers are required to be punctual and time conscious as they are required to be at church far earlier than the rest of the congregation.

We should always offer to seat people, and while you are doing this, introduce new guests to someone and hopefully they will offer to come and sit with them. Don’t just offer them a seat, but find someone that can sit with.

Once service begins, especially when Pastor is teaching, it does not matter who it is, ushers need to seat everyone. People come in and look for their friends and wander around and it is horribly distracting. Seat them. Tell them that in order to help cut down on distractions, you want to help them be seated.

Please ask guests that have children if they would like to see our nursery and take them and introduce them to the nursery staff. Let the decision to leave their children in the nursery be theirs.

DO NOT...

Chew gum in church

Force a hug when greeting

Separate families when seating them

Point when seating guests

Raise your voice at anyone including children

Source: <http://www.freechurchforms.com/usher-job-description.html>

What Does It Mean to Be an Usher?

Too often, in our congregations, our efforts in promoting our usher and greeter ministries focus on “having the numbers” – quantity of ushers versus “having true Christians” – quality.

- † Yours is the first of Christ’s faces to greet God’s people as they assemble in prayer.
- † Your greeting is the word that welcomes the stranger to be at home, or the silence that makes of our congregation a foreign land.
- † Yours is the task of discretion; knowing how to welcome; and when and where to seat the latecomer.
- † Yours may be the last word that ushers the community to its week of work in the Lord’s vineyard.
- † Yours is the Lord’s face and voice for those who enter and depart the holy ground of prayer.
- † Come to your work and your post from your personal prayer; be as ready as the Lord to meet his people.
- † Let your welcome and your smile be for all who enter; remember that you have time to see your close friends later in the week.
- † Seek out the lost and confused; do not wait for them to come to you.
- † When appropriate, lend a hand and an arm to the disabled, remembering your own infirmities.
- † Greet each person as the Lord, for that is precisely whom you meet.
- † When taking up the Offertory, remember that it is for the work of God’s people, especially among the poor; remember too, that many who make an offering are themselves poor.
- † Remember that you stand at the temple gates: some will come rejoicing and others in fear; some will come healed, and others to seek healing.
- † Be sensitive and welcome all as best as you can.
- † Some will rush by and ignore you; let go of your disappointment and pray for the Lord’s gentle touch on their heavy hurried hearts.
- † Some may fall ill while at prayer; see to their needs, as you would have them see to yours.

3. God’s Grace Results in Abounding Grace (2 Corinthians 9.6–11).

God’s grace should motivate each Christian to be a gracious giver. Just as the grace of God caused Him to give us His own Son at Christmas, it motivates us to give of ourselves, as well. Giving should be the result of an inward resolve resulting in an outward expression. Therefore, when we give we do so cheerfully, knowing that we are giving as an extension of God’s grace to us. The supply of God’s riches will never run dry. It is always abounding. Perhaps this Christmas season, there is a special need you can meet in someone’s life. Perhaps God will lead you to take on a special project, to find a family or individual to care for.

4. God’s Grace is a Conquering Grace (2 Corinthians 10.3–5).

If we want to be full of God’s grace we cannot be full of self. Grace is not to be used as an excuse for sin. Instead grace is to be used as a divine weapon to tear down strongholds and set us free! We fight spiritual battles constantly, and by exercising God’s grace we can be more than conquerors.

5. God’s Grace is Enough Grace (2 Corinthians 12.7–10).

The word sufficient in this setting means “more than enough.” God told Paul that His power was made perfect in weakness. The more a Christian acknowledges his or her weaknesses the more evident the power of God’s grace becomes. The grace of God is enough. It is all we need.

Grace through Faith

Ephesians 2.8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

The theme of the verses above is salvation by grace through faith. In church language, we say, “I got saved on such and such a date.” The word means, “to rescue from danger, to deliver.” Some years ago, there was a flash flood in Tennessee. A woman recovering from hip surgery was confined to bed. The flood occurred at night, and the waters swept into her house. Unable to save herself, she was in danger of drowning in her own bed until the paramedics arrived and rescued her. We are sinners; we can’t save ourselves. We need a divine paramedic to rescue us from drowning in the floodtides of God’s wrath. When we trust Jesus Christ as our personal Savior we are saved.

2016-2017 Spiritual Enrichment Section

Excerpts from *Understanding God's Amazing Grace*

Pastor Dennis Folds

Tokyo Baptist Church

Preached Sunday, March 14-15, 2009

The Advent of Grace. John 1.14–18 *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me. And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”*

Grace is a five-letter word that can also be spelled J-E-S-U-S. December marks the season of Advent, it sets the tone for our Christmas celebration. The Word—God Himself—became flesh and dwelt among us. That’s not a popular message in a day when nativity scenes are being ousted from parks and Christmas carols from schools. But it’s the theme of our lives, and nothing is stopping you and me from keeping Christ central to our celebration, even as we pray for others to find Him too. Thomas Brooks wrote, “Saving grace makes a man willing to leave his lusts as a slave is willing to leave his galley, or a prisoner his dungeon, or a thief his bolts, or a beggar his rags.” Grace is the key, and while it appears in human form in Bethlehem, it is explained theologically in the epistles.

1. **God’s Grace Is Our Grace (2 Corinthians 6.1–2).**

The church in Corinth was in trouble, morally and doctrinally confused, and divided. Writing to them, Paul pleaded with them not to waste God’s grace. Christ came to earth that grace be given to us. This is not our grace. It is a gift from God to be treasured and experienced every day.

2. **God’s Grace Is Relational Grace (2 Corinthians 8.8–9).**

Paul realized the church in Corinth was on the verge of becoming selfish with the grace God had given them. But, just as God had freely given grace to the Corinthians, they were to freely express the grace of God to others. The sincerity of our grace will be tested time and time again in the way we lavish God’s grace on others. It makes us reach out to others in tangible ways that meet their needs. We become not just recipients but conduits of God’s grace.

What Does It Mean to Be an Usher? (con’t)

- + Be slow to judge those who leave early; be glad that they have shared in our prayer and recall that only the Lord knows the reasons of the heart.
- + When your brothers and sisters thank and praise you for your work, take delight in the welcome they have found and rejoice in the work the Lord has accomplished through you.
- + Be faithful in the work you do, for through it the Lord saves his people.

10 Questions Every Usher Should Ask

Below is a list of ten questions every usher should ask and answer before, during, and after worship.

Before anyone arrives:

1. Has the parking area been inspected for hazards (such as cracks, debris, ice/snow, clear aisles, loiterers)?
2. Have entry areas been inspected for hazards (such as steps in disrepair, loose railings, wetness, loose or torn entry pads, inadequate lighting)?
3. Have the halls and worship areas been inspected for hazards (loose or wrinkled carpet, wet floors, debris, electrical concerns)?

As people arrive:

4. Am I alert for people who may be there to do harm rather than to worship?
5. Do I have a way to communicate, in case of emergency, with other ushers or people in other places in the church?
6. Do I know where to find fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, defibrillators, and have access to a phone?
7. Have I been trained to administer CPR?

Once worship begins:

8. Is someone walking the entire building looking for security issues?
9. In case of violence or emergency, do I know how to respond and assist others to safety?

When worship is over:

10. Have I made sure everyone exits safely and the facility is inspected for hazards?

Source: *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2007, Volume XXVIII, No. 2, Page 73, Copyright © 2007 by the author or *Christianity Today International/Leadership Journal*.

2016-17 Suggested Monthly Health & Wellness Observances

In helping us create a culture of health, we offer this list of suggested health and wellness observances. Promoting these observances leads to the sustainability of health ministries and health councils. For more information, planning guides, and helpful web links, go to

www.faithmonet.org/resources or the Get Covered Mississippi!

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/getcoveredms.

MARCH 2016

FaithMoNet/American Kidney Fund Kidney Sunday (March 6) observes the importance of kidney health and promotes World Kidney Day. On **World Kidney Day (March 13)**, the American Kidney Fund urges the public to Take Six Steps that Count to Fight Kidney Disease:

- Know your numbers
- Identify your risks for kidney disease
- Donate to help kidney patients with treatment-related expenses
- Notify your family of your wish to be an organ donor
- Eat healthy, exercise, and don't smoke
- Your doctor is a resource—ask about your eGFR!

Taste Test Sunday (March 20) promotes healthy desserts at congregational fellowship functions by having desserts prepared in accordance with guidelines for diabetics. Invite the congregation to sample them after worship. Promote a contest among congregants to collect recipes with healthy substitutions for a healthy cookbook.

American Diabetes Association Diabetes Alert Day (March 22) is a one-day, wake-up call asking the American public to take the Diabetes Risk Test to find out if they are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Colorectal cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the United States and the second leading cause of death from cancer.

APRIL 2016

Minority Health Month held annually the month of April promotes health issues especially relevant to minority communities.

The **World Health Day (April 7)** is celebrated to create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization.

Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Sexual violence is a very serious public health problem that affects millions of women and men. In the United States, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 59 men have been raped in their lifetime.

National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated H.O.P.E. HHS Partnership Initiatives

The 9-5-2-1-0 VBS Health Curriculum

The 9-5-2-1-0 VBS Health Curriculum is a pilot project that provides a health and wellness addendum for existing Sunday School Publishing Board Vacation Bible School curriculum.

The What's Cooking? Initiative

The What's Cooking? Initiative, a collaborative effort with the American Diabetes Association, promotes healthy ingredients in and preparation of the meals served in our churches and homes. Demonstrations of healthy food preparation are also highlighted. NBC churches are asked to observe Taste Test Sunday each Third Sunday in March when members will sample diabetic safe desserts followed by observance of Diabetes Alert Day, the Fourth Tuesday of March.

The Church and Community Garden Project

The Church and Community Garden Project promotes the development of gardens to encourage increased access to and consumption of fruits and vegetables and to assist congregational members in being physically active. These gardens provide fresh, healthy produce, and opportunities for building community activity.

NBCUSA First Ladies for the First Lady Initiative

This effort is identifying local church first ladies to be advocates for First Lady's Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* Initiative. We need our NBCUSA First Ladies to do the following:

- † Help establish or work with existing H.O.P.E. Health Ministry in their churches;
- † Help recruit Health Ambassadors
- † Get children, youth, and young adults involved H.O.P.E./Let's Move! Clubs.

My Brother's Keeper

Joining President Barack Obama's call for a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to build ladders of opportunity and unlock the full potential of boys and young men of color, we are calling on NBCUSA men to understand the problem, take action, and share their stories.

For more information about these initiatives, e-mail hope@nationalbaptist.com.

How Do You Start a Health Ministry/Health Council?

If your congregation or community is starting a health ministry or health council, you are in good company! Growing numbers of houses of worship are reclaiming the call they have not only to preach and to teach, but also to heal. Also, more and more communities across the nations are promoting coordinated healthy living activities.

Faith communities started most of the hospitals, nursing schools, and medical schools around the world. The healing ministry of congregations has often been limited to praying for and visiting the sick for the last few decades. There is nothing wrong with those activities, but there is much more that a house of worship can do! Health ministry can be life-transforming for those who participate when the load is shared.

When neighbors rally together around a cause, they can become a powerful cause for good. There's nothing like the synergy of the grassroots mobilizing. Unfortunately, such mobilization often fizzles out soon after starting or after an initial activity. Well, how do you get started?

A good way to begin is to start is to take the Faith MoNet Health Ministry/Health Council Training. This training is focused not only on starting but sustaining health ministries/health councils. See page 18 for course descriptions.

Then, get started! Here are three ways to start:

1. Launch a user-friendly, easy to implement exercise or wellness program. There are many faith-based models including a North Mississippi example *Walking with the Wilkinsons*.
2. Using the suggested health and wellness observances on pages 7-10 and 13, put a health tip in the worship bulletin, community e-newsletter, or on your Facebook page or Twitter feed. Most hospitals will provide blurbs, posters, or articles on many topics of interest. There are a host of national health organizations who will give you material (much is web-based).
3. Call on the experts in your congregation and community. Most hospitals and other health organizations have speakers' bureaus, and can send someone to speak with your faith or community group for a modest fee (or for free). Don't delay! There's work to be done.

Adapted from Deborah Patterson (2011). Ask Deborah: Starting a Health Ministry. Retrieved from http://chreader.org/contentPage.aspx?resource_id=623

MAY 2016

American Stroke Association American Stroke Month. Stroke is the No. 4 cause of death and a leading cause of severe, long-term disability in America. Yet, only 2 percent of those recently surveyed consider stroke the leading health issue and only 7 percent think of stroke as a major health concern. Make stroke awareness a priority in your life and enlighten those in your congregation on **Power Sunday - May 15**.

Spearheaded by the Arthritis Foundation, **Arthritis Awareness Month** aims to make people more aware of arthritis and the issues involved. Arthritis Awareness Month is a time to motivate Americans to get up and moving, whilst raising funds for arthritis research, support and advocacy.

National Mental Health Month focuses on raising awareness about mental health by reaching millions of people through the media, local events and screenings.

Faith MoNet Bells for Remembrance (Mother's Day 2016-May 8) focuses on breast health awareness. The goal of the Bells for Remembrance campaign is to encourage all women age 40 and older to get annual screening mammograms.

JUNE 2016

Cataract Awareness Month, Prevent Blindness America. Unlike many eye diseases, vision loss due to cataract can be restored. Cataract surgery is one of the most commonly performed procedures in the United States and has a 95 percent success rate.

Faith MoNet Summer of Health and Wellness Vacation Bible School. Integrate the 9-5-2-1-0 health and wellness curriculum into your congregation's VBS. Go to www.faithmonet.org/vbs to download the 9-5-2-1-0 guide.

Fireworks Safety Month (through July 4) (See July observances.)

Men's Health Month is celebrated across the country with screenings, health fairs, media appearances, and other health education and outreach activities.

The First Sunday (June 5) is **National Cancer Survivor's Day**®, an annual, worldwide Celebration of Life. Communities host events to honor cancer survivors and show that life after a cancer diagnosis can be meaningful, fulfilling, and even inspiring.

JULY 2016

Faith MoNet Summer of Health and Wellness Vacation Bible School. (See June observances.)

Fireworks Safety Month (through July 4). During the months of June and July, Americans nationwide are encouraged to observe fireworks safety.

July is **National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month**. The month offers organizations of all types and sizes a wonderful opportunity to create mental health awareness in diverse communities.

AUGUST 2016

National Immunization Awareness Month provides an opportunity to highlight the value of immunization across the lifespan. Activities focus on encouraging all people to protect their health by being immunized against infectious diseases.

August is **National Breastfeeding Awareness Month**. The breastfeeding campaign, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, hopes to empower women to commit to breastfeeding by highlighting new research showing that babies who are exclusively breastfed for six months are less likely to develop ear infections, diarrhea and respiratory illnesses, and may be less likely to develop childhood obesity.

National Minority Donor Awareness Day is celebrated **August 1** as a time to educate minorities on the need for organ, blood, and tissue donation.

Make the First Five Count Sunday, August 7 **Easter Seals** has partnered with Faith MoNet in an effort to spread the word about the importance of early intervention and developmental delays in a child's first five years.

SEPTEMBER 2016

National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. More than 23 million children and teenagers in the U.S. are obese or overweight, a statistic that health and medical experts consider an epidemic. While obesity rates have soared among all age groups in this country, obesity is a particularly grave concern for children.

Faith MoNet Senior Recognition Sunday-Sunday, September 11, in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association highlights a major health and wellness issue for persons 55 and older.

Member Churches' Usher Day Schedule

Enon Springs _____

New Bethany _____

New Fellowship _____

New Hope-Walls _____

Oak Hill _____

Rising Sun _____

St. Paul _____

Second Baptist-Hernando _____

Second Eudora _____

Other _____

Other _____

Notes

2016-17 Meetings and Training Opportunities

2016

April 28-30 Unity Conference, Mt. Zion-Taska (training)

June 20-24 National Baptist Congress

July 18-22 Hammond Hill Congress, Brown-Swinnea Campus (training)

October 22 Rising Sun Usher Federation, TBA

July 20-23 Brown Baptist Church – Southaven, MS

2017

January 28 Rising Sun Usher Federation, TBA

DECEMBER 2016

National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month encourages safe and sober driving.

1 World AIDS Day is dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection. Health Ministries are asked to wear red ribbons, provide information, and a time for quiet reflection in recognition of all those stricken with HIV/AIDS.

Sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 4-10)** is a national observance that was established to highlight the importance of continuing influenza vaccination.

JANUARY 2017

National Volunteer Blood Donor Month. Sponsor a “Post-Holiday Blood Drive” at your house of worship in partnership with your local blood donation center.

GCMS! Mental Wellness Month focuses on mental health issues in communities of color.

Affordable Care Act Open Enrollment Ends (January 31)

FEBRUARY 2017

American Heart Month/Wear Red Sunday. On Sunday, February 12 everyone is encouraged to wear something red to bring awareness to the number 1 killer of women – heart disease. Also, congregants may wish to participate in **Go Red Day** – Friday, February 3.

Faith MoNet National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Sunday (February 5) promotes greater and education about HIV/AIDS in African American congregations. **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** is **February 7.**

MARCH 2017

FaithMoNet/American Kidney Fund Kidney Sunday (March 5).

World Kidney Day (March 13),

Taste Test Sunday (March 19)

American Diabetes Association Diabetes Alert Day (March 19)

Faith MoNet/H.O.P.E./Let’s Move Weekend (September 16-18).

Get your congregation and community moving on this weekend.

Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Month promotes a call to conduct sickle cell awareness and education activities highlighted by **Sickle Sabbath Sunday (September 18).**

OCTOBER 2016

National Houses of Worship Safety and Security Month.

Congregations are asked to perform a top down safety and security inspection of their houses of worship and grounds including fire evacuation and tornado drills.

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month observances have been at the forefront of promoting awareness of breast cancer issues and have evolved along with the national dialogue on breast cancer.

National Bullying Prevention Month. Every October, schools and organizations across the country join STOMP Out Bullying™ in observing National Bullying Prevention Month. The goal: encourage communities to work together to stop bullying and cyberbullying by increasing awareness of the prevalence and impact of bullying on all children of all ages.

NOVEMBER 2016

Affordable Care Act Open Enrollment Begins (November 1)

The **American Diabetes Association** sponsors **Diabetes Awareness Month.** It takes place each November and is a time to come together as a community to Stop Diabetes®!

Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month highlights the work of the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network.

National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month and National Caregiver Month. In the United States, there are nearly 15 million Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers.

Diabetes ID (I Decide) Day (November 11) is a national day of action and a simple call - decide to get tested for diabetes.

During the **American Cancer Society Great American Smoke Out Thursday, November 17**, congregations can promote tobacco cessation activities throughout the month. Contact your local Tobacco Free coalition.

Call to Worship Guide

The Usher's Psalm

The Lord is my light. He is the joy of my salvation, of whom then shall I be afraid.

I am a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord. Yea though I meet with unpleasant conditions, I must keep smiling, for I must enter into His presence with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.

Yea, though I walk through the shadow of unkindness, I must smile, for the beauty of the Lord is upon me; my countenance is filled with light, the light of love, patience and endurance. I shall strive to give joy to the sorrowful, hope to the lost, sunshine to the darkness, and I shall remain a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, as long as I live.

Church Usher's Prayer

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, bless O Lord, this your servant as You did bless the sons of Levi who ministered in Your Holy Temple. Grant me devoutly to minister in Your house. Your name be hallowed. Your Kingdom come and Your will be done through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Healthy Living Goal: **Personal Responsibility**: "...do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6.19, NKJV)

Usher's Platform

Preamble: **Doorkeeper**: "*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" (Psalm 84.10)

Aim: **Service**: To serve the Lord Jesus, through the service we render to humanity.

Motto: **Ready to serve**: "*Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*" (Colossians 3.24)

Watchword: **Study**: "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" (2 Timothy 2.15)

Usher's Pledge (*place right hand over heart*)

I pledge by the help of God to do my best to serve my church with a pure heart, clean hands, and a breath that will not be offensive to those I welcome into the house of the Lord.

I further pledge to abide by the rules and regulations of the ministry and my superior officers; to attend my meetings and serve when called upon, unless I can give a reasonable excuse; and to keep my financial obligations of the ministry as near as possible.