



Welcome to West Side!

WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

2021 IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

Article by Tim Tripp

I look back over this past year with many mixed emotions. I feel like we turned a corner on the pandemic which is a good thing but the waves of it still keep coming making it feel as if we take several steps back each time. While there are differing viewpoints, I feel that the vaccination has helped. I plan to get them as they become available and encourage others to do so as well.

The pandemic has had its impact on nearly everything. Some has been bad and some perhaps less so but very little has seemed to stay the same. Churches have not escaped the impact. Most churches have experienced a third to a half of its former attendees not yet back to church since March of 2020 and many will not be back at all. I'm sure there will be a great deal of discussion around the reasons why so many are leaving but here is my guess. I think "church" as we have defined it, is just not that interesting. Before you respond to that last statement, note that I said church not Christianity. I think that Jesus still captures the hearts, minds and imaginations of believers and unbelievers alike. However, I am concerned that the church tends to boil all that goes into being a Christian down to a few rules and a once-a-week worship experience. That is what has failed to continually capture the fascination of both believers and unbelievers. I believe that Christianity when defined and observed as a real relationship with God and authentic discipleship is exciting. I believe that when churches make real, measurable differences in the community around them, that is appealing. I believe that when success is measured more by the number of disciples made and the impact in the community and less by attendance at services and dollars collected, then things get interesting. When 'church' is less of a place you go and more of a movement you join, people take notice.

We observe from the pandemic era that a lot of people view church services as events they attend to obtain some kind of intellectual and/or emotional benefit rather than a gathering of disciples where they resource, pray with and encourage each other for taking the light of Jesus into the world. Without a doubt, there are many benefits from regular gatherings with a church family. But church gatherings can never be the point of what we are about. Christianity without a relationship with the creator, without authentic relationships between Christians, without discipleship, changed hearts and changed lives is not Christianity at all.

When a church family exists to perpetuate the brand but with little else in terms of mission, the family members turn on each other. We've seen it happen again and again. Some choose different churches; some just stop with church altogether.

In this new, post-pandemic, post-Christian culture churches can no longer stay put like institutions preserving the ancient faith and inviting others in to "have a look." Churches must be on the move. They must impact the community with the love of Jesus. They must stand for the way of Jesus and invite people to join the movement.

Churches must be less about buildings and more about people who are passionately following the risen Lord.

This is what we are called to be about in 2022.

MOVEMENT

NEWS AND UPDATES IN THIS ISSUE

- *Gulf Coast Getaway*
- *WSYM important dates*
- *KFC 2022*

ONLINE CONNECT CARD

We would love to connect with you! Please fill out our Online Connect Card at...

westsidear.org/connect



Congratulations to Elijah Brooks on his decision to put on Christ in baptism!!
Way to go Elijah!

It's a Boy!

Congratulations to David and Melanie Cooke and big sister Rae on the arrival of Isaac David Cooke born Dec. 29th
Mother and baby are doing great!

Prayer Requests

- Lynn Donnell is doing well following recent wrist surgery. Please pray for a rapid recovery with reduced pain.
- Joshy Stansbury, 17 yr old great nephew of Jim Betterton, is currently in hospice care at home as a result of a rare neurodegenerative condition. He is in extreme pain and has not been responding well to medication. Please pray for his mother Cheryl as she makes decisions regarding the best next steps for him.
- Please continue to pray for the Lutrell family in the loss of Don Lutrell on Dec. 23rd. May they be comforted in this time of loss with peace that only God can provide.
- Krista Magness, great niece of Trish Bailey, has been suffering with seizures. Tests are being done to determine the cause. Please keep Krista and her family in your prayers.

Ongoing Concerns:

- Tami Robinson
- Sid Womack
- Sofia Juarez
- Jesse Boshears

News for 2022

WSYM upcoming events

- Jan. 21-22 Y.O.U. Conference in Conway - \$20
- CHRIS Teens will be here soon! Feb. 25-27th

RENEW upcoming events

- Jan. 10th - classes start back
- Jan. 12th - Noon Meal and Midweek return
- Jan. 14-17 Gulf Coast Getaway - \$150

Kids For Christ

KFC will return this week with the theme "Cruisin thru the Bible"

- Ages 3yr-3rd grade in the KFC room
- 1 & 2yr olds in the Nursery

Friendship Cafe

Friendship Cafe returns this week at 8:45 am with coffee & Conversational Christianity in the lobby

Bible Study

- Bible classes for all ages at 9am
- Teens (6th - 12th) meet in the Cornerstone
- Wednesday Evening Class for Adults and Teens meet at 6:30
- Adults in Room 3 | Teens in the Cornerstone

Due to the uptick in local Covid cases, mask wearing is strongly recommended in our assemblies. Thank you for your cooperation!

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