

Noah was told by God to build for himself an ark of gopher wood, but then told he should enter the ark with his wife, his sons, and their wives. Since we all descended not just from Adam and Eve, but from Noah's family, I'm glad he took them with him. With all the animals on board, I'm not sure they all enjoyed the cruise, but were glad they were invited.

Obviously I'm not Noah, but I too have invited my family to join me on a cruise. It won't last over a year, but only seven days. And while we may be a tad crowded in small cabins, we won't be sharing quarters with all the animals on earth. However, we will have a chance to hug a sloth. No, not a lazy old man, but the three-toed variety.

Yes, I'm taking my family, including a new grandson-in-law and future grandson-in-law, on a Caribbean cruise. We'll be leaving New Orleans on July 28th, and returning to port on August 4th. After a couple of days at sea, we'll hug a sloth, soar over the jungle on ziplines, and spend a little time on a beach in Roatan, Honduras. The next day we'll visit a Mayan ruin and go tubing on a river through caves in Belize. Then, after seeing sights, shopping, or snorkeling in Cozumel, we'll spend a final day on the ship heading home.

I tell you all of this because I can't think of anything else to write, and because I really want to thank you for making all this possible.

When Marilyn and I went on a cruise for our 25th anniversary, I met an older gentleman who brought all his kids and grandkids on the cruise with him. I loved the idea, and hoped I could do the same someday. Over a year ago I decided I could, and booked the cruise.

You have generously supported me for over fifty years, and even sent Marilyn and me to the Holy Land several months ago. Your love and support is very much appreciated.

God Bless, Rick



## THE CHATHAM MESSENGER

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# Marriage is What Brings Us Together Vows Keep Us Together

A communion meditation by Casey Blakley

Yesterday was a joyful day. We had the pleasure of witnessing Grace, whom many of us have seen grow into a beautiful woman, marry Zack, a man we are just starting to get to know. Next week we will celebrate another union with Kate, a beautiful young woman whom we've also witnessed grow up here in our church, and Bryce, whom we are also just now getting to know. A few weeks ago, Nicole and David made that commitment as well. All three of these couples are beginning journeys together that will bring both rewards and challenges—some expected and many unforeseen.

Watching a young couple commit to each other often takes me back to my own wedding. I vividly remember seeing Erica begin her walk down the aisle toward me—the first time I saw her that day. I recall the excitement and anticipation. Most importantly, I remember the vows we made to each other, which were the same vows Grace and Zack exchanged yesterday, as we were married by the same preacher.

I'd like to stand here and tell you that the last 16 years of marriage to Erica have been filled with sunshine and cool breezes. Indeed, there has been an abundance of joy and pleasant moments over the years. However, as those of you who are married can attest, there have also been challenging times. Yet, it is during these moments that our vows become especially important.

Marriage is easy when times are better, richer, and healthier. But when it's not, sometimes vows are the only thing that can hold it together. The covenant formed during a marriage ceremony is intended to be permanent, which is why in Ephesians we read, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." It is more than just romance; it is a commitment that no matter what, we will remain as one. This understanding is vital when considering the preceding verses in Ephesians.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church."

(Continued inside)

STATISTICS		
	7/7	
Worship		119
Offering		\$5,676.22
	7/14	
Worship		120
Offering		\$7,333.20
	7/21	
Worship		130
Offering		\$6,637.36

## News from Jamaica

Theo & Rose Miller, Missionaries

After being unable to talk with Theo or Rose for nearly six months, we managed to connect the day before Beryl was expected to pass over Jamaica. Everyone was making preparations for a direct hit, and it did come. Fortunately, the damage in Claremont and Grierfield where Theo ministers was minimal, and the Millers only lost a couple of trees.

The church did, however, suffer an unexpected loss when Sister Suzie was diagnosed with cancer one day, and went to be with the Lord the next. Besides the joy of being with her Lord, we know she's overjoyed that her passing resulted in her daughter being drawn back into fellow with Christ and the church.

We've had the opportunity to assist in the work in Jamaica for over 30 years, and need to regularly keep Rose and Theo in our prayers.

### *Kent A. Paris Ministry*

We've supported Kent Paris in his work with homosexuals and those who suffer from sexual confusion for a number of years. His newsletters are regularly posted in the hallway, but we want to call special attention to the July issue. In it he presents a study on homosexuality and the New Testament, examining passages that relate to the sin of homosexual behavior.

Copies of the newsletter are available in the church office.

## Marriage Meditation

(Continued)

In marriage, we see a picture of Christ's love for the church. This picture demonstrates just how far Christ's commitment to us goes. It is a permanent bond that Christ will never abandon. This is made shockingly clear in the book of Hosea, where God shows His commitment to His people even in the face of our unfaithfulness. Hosea 2:19-20 reads, "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD."

As part of the Hebrew betrothal ceremony, the groom would offer the bride a cup of wine. Drinking from the same cup symbolized the bride's acceptance of the marriage proposal and the covenant being established between them. It is no coincidence that this ceremony is reflected at the communion table before us. As we read in Luke: "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'"

It is at this table where we accept and affirm our commitment to Christ's proposal to be united with us in His Church forever. Just as Grace and Zack, and Kate and Bryce, and Nicole and David begin their marriages with vows of commitment, we too are reminded of the profound covenant we have with Christ. As we partake in communion today, let us remember that this is more than an emotional experience or a romantic gesture. It is a sacred covenant that promises eternal rewards and a deep, abiding relationship with our Savior. Let us joyfully embrace our marriage to Christ at this table this morning, fully committed to the journey ahead.



### Kindergarten-5th grade

Tuesday, July 30th will be a water fun day for you here at the church! We will have at least one inflatable slide, a slip and slide, a few small pools, hundreds of water balloons, squirt guns and anything else water related I can put my hands on. Let's meet from 1:00-3:00 and finish our afternoon off with some ice cream!



### Junior High School

Since we were rained out in July, we are rescheduling this trip for Tuesday, August 6th from noon to 6:00pm. I'd like to go out for a quick burger or something around 5:00pm after Knights so we can talk about the day and upcoming youth group topics. Please feel free to invite your friends and let members of our group know who don't attend on Sunday morning!



### High School

For some, it is the only time we get out and eat fair food! Let's plan on attending Powerlight together. We'll leave at 3:30 and return to the church around 9:30.



### CIY MOVE Review High School

In case you missed Sunday morning, we had an excellent trip to Warrensburg, Missouri for the MOVE HS camp. The group bonded which lead to some good discussions and study time together. I was extremely proud of our group all week long.

It was a week of firsts. It was the first time we had two of our students (Nate Estell and Amelia Sperry) publicly express their desire to serve the Lord full-time someday as their vocation. Praise God! Also, it was the first time I saw one of our students (to remain nameless) eat a banana with the peel still on it. Was it worth \$5.00? He thought so...

Our focus was on resting in the Lord. Among other Scriptures, we studied Psalm 23 all week. Here was a breakdown:

**Monday:** (Pause) Within the concept of rest, we learned the necessity to Pause and sideline the distractions of life for quiet time with the Lord.

**Tuesday:** (Posture) We have to maintain a Posture of trust as the Lord leads us to green pastures, quiet waters and right paths.

**Wednesday:** (Presence) The Lord is with us! His Presence lives inside of us and His rod and staff will comfort us.

**Thursday:** ((Purpose) Jesus has set us apart for a purpose. He has prepared a table before us in the presence of our enemies, invite others to the table.

**Friday:** (Pace) It is important to live life at Jesus' pace, not drag Him along at the pace of the world.

Thank you all for your prayers and financial support to make this happen for our HS students. It truly was a blessed week.