

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the "landscape" we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we're learning and doing.

ElderTalk Go through the doors of service God opens

ERIC BYROM

During my seminary days, I worked a lot of odd jobs to make ends meet. One job that I did was to be a security guard for Nyack College. I thought it would be a good chance to have a job where I could just sit around and do my homework and get paid for it. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Part of my job was to check a long list of doors around campus. It was my job to check that they were locked, and sometimes to look around the building and make sure there were no intruders. I had a huge ring of keys and had to remember which keys were for which doors. There was also the matter that many of the buildings were quite old and some of the door frames had shifted along with foundations. This made opening certain doors quite a trick. I learned to jiggle the knobs, lean up on some doors, pull up on others, and declare others a lost cause to open.

This month we will be starting a new school year and with that new year, a new theme for us to explore. We will be taking the next year to delve into the core value of service here at Grace Fellowship. More specifically, we will be challenging each other to go through the doors of service that God has opened for us. The verse that encapsulates this theme is Revelation 3:7b-8a which says,

"The words of the Holy One, the True One,

who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut."

This passage points out that if God *opens* a door, it *stays* open and if He *shuts* it, it *stays shut*. As we look at our lives prayerfully, we can often see doors of service that God has opened. He encourages us to go through those doors and to take advantage of the period of time that door is open. Going through a door is our choice and involves faith. An open door is no *guarantee*, but it is an *opportunity*. We will be looking at the open door of evangelism, the open door of missions, and the open door of service.

When I think of this idea of going through doors God has opened, I am reminded of the opportunity I have had to minister in Nepal. In the past year the government there has enacted the anti-proselytism laws. There is the real possibility that the door to ministry there may be closing.

What if we actually had the faith to go through open doors and to take advantage of the opportunities He has placed in our paths? It is my hope that we will all be challenged to go through many such open doors *boldly* and have great testimonies of the faithfulness of God.



"The Open Door" by James Nesbit, 2013

SEPTEMBER 2018

- 2** Presiding Elder Eric Byrom preaching on Ps. 139. Harvest Party planning meeting. 6:30-8:00 pm.
- 5** Kids Connect planning meeting. 6:30-8:00 pm.
- 8** **Community Celebration** 5:30 pm: doors open, 6:00: dinner, 8:00 pm: ending.
- 9** Eric Byrom preaching on Rev.3: 7-13: "Open Doors." Baptismal service during service.  Contact elders if you would like to be baptized. Begin collection of Coins for Kids for CEF. Circle Church leaders meeting 6:30-8:00 pm in Multipurpose Room.
- 16** Elder Jadae Fox preaching on Mark 4:26-29.
- 20** TrailNotes deadline: to bucytalent@aol.com
- 23** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on John 4:1-26.  Circle Church leaders meeting 6:30-8:00 pm in Mutipurpose Room.
- 30** Celebration Sunday: 5th Sunday.
Coming Events: Oct. 19: Harvest Party, Nov. 3. Men's Retreat with Harvest Church and GFC men. Dec.19: GCF Christmas Party 6:00-8:00 pm.

95 people + 1 dog...

were served Sunday, Aug. 26, in the "Circle on the Square" meal downtown. Another Here's the group picture:



1st row: Al Roggio, Becky Roggio, Cindy Falls, Charlotte Linger, Karen Gates, Dan Gates. 2nd row: Brian Judd, John Falls, Deb McKee, Penny Foster, Kathy Barth, Suzy Linger, Fred Linger. The Adalems and the Millers were there also but missed the picture. Steve McKee and Susan Judd were absent.

The menu was mac n' cheese, green beans, dinner rolls, fruit, cookies and cupcakes—homemade! Household items and toiletries were also given away.

Brian Judd gave a devotional and prayed a blessing. Dan Gates played his guitar. The group is investigating a way to provide needed amplification. Any ideas?

Yes, they were ready for the one dog present: Penny Foster brought dog treats and also pencils for the children's "back to school" sacks. Nov. 11 is the next meal.

Hey, kids...this is for you: BUGS

NICOLE MOORE, our teacher in Japan

If you're a Japanese child, "bugs" is everybody's favorite topic. Collecting bugs is a thing here. In the summer, my first and second graders occasionally come in with plastic cases containing various living creatures that they've collected. Last year, it was crickets, which made for a disruptive class when some of them started chirping. This year one of my students had a lizard. And the beetle..always the beetles.

I suppose in parts of the United States, they probably have giant bugs, but in the cold winter climate where I come from, our bugs and living creatures stay a reasonable size. Here, though, some of the spiders and beetles are much bigger than what I'm used to, and some of the large creatures are what the students like to tote around in their carrying cases.

Take a few weeks ago, for instance. Before classes had started, I heard some shrieking coming from one of my classrooms. I went in to investigate and saw that several of my second grade boys had taken their beetles out of their cases. One of the boys, who was either afraid of the beetles or was pretending to be, was a few feet away, making loud noises. Then I looked down and found he had put a beetle on my sleeve!



The next week the students brought in the same kind of beetles but they were the granddaddy version—HUGE!

If you want to raise your own beetles, check out "How to Care for Your Beetle" at <https://www.tofugu.com/japan/pet-beetles-in-japan/>



Lessons from Northern Europe

MATTHEW GODSIL

When I became a born-again believer in 1987, following a blessed youth of being raised in a loving Roman Catholic home, I became enamored in all things New Testament. I regarded the Old Testament as a secondary set of Sunday School stories among a sea of obscure genealogies and unpronounceable names and places. I thought it was fairly detached from what Jesus was doing in the Gospels. I later discovered through reading through the Old Testament, that all of it pointed to Jesus, and God was passionately loving and forgiving as He was tested over and over again by humanity. Reading the Old Testament in this way gave me an even greater appreciation for the story of Jesus and His Church in the New Testament.

This is how I felt about European history prior to the American Revolution. I considered the start of our nation in the late 18th century really the beginning of our heritage. So when my wife, Karen and I had the opportunity to explore northern Europe, I realized that I was fairly ignorant about what had led to the mass immigration that took place from Europe to this land called America.

I did some research into the places that we were going to visit. We began in London and southern England, including the village of my ancestral namesake, Godshill, on the Isle of Wight. We then embarked on a cruise that included Bruges, Belgium, Copenhagen, Denmark, Stockholm, Sweden, Tallin Estonia, St. Petersburg, Russia, and Berlin, Germany. After returning to England, we headed to Edinburgh and travelled through the highlands of Scotland, and then proceeded to Dublin, through Northern Ireland to Galway. A 5-week journey of a lifetime.

I want to share one of my “take aways” from this trip, as it relates to the New and Old Testament theme I shared previously. As I was to discover, the Old Testament is intrinsically tied to the New in that God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. In a similar way, the things I saw in Europe this summer, the history to which I was exposed, connected the stark realities of why our ancestors would leave their home and families to venture



Nave and altar area in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, Ireland

to an obscure land of opportunity. The high point of this might have been in the dungeons of Edinburgh Castle, where on the back of a thick oaken cell door, a prisoner of war had carved a flag of stars and stripes—yes, an American prisoner of war from the Revolution. Our European trip also presented to Karen and me a glimpse into our own futures back at home.

It was in the context of this historic panorama that we took in many great churches and cathedrals. These were magnificent structures and architectural marvels that stretched far into the sky. They were filled with craftsmanship and artwork of an unprecedented nature. Many of these structures took generations to complete. I wondered what would cause communities to pour so much treasure and time into a house of worship when the early Christians and many of the Asian churches today meet underground in dark basements and seem to thrive.

As we entered each town or village, we would look to the highest topographical point and there we would see a castle and a cathedral, usually side by side. These were beacons of power—the power of the Lord God Almighty and the power of the ruling aristocracy. Inside the churches you could determine which local family was most affluent by the placement and the size of their family crest upon the walls of the church. We saw the placement and craftsmanship of the many sarcophagi found around the floor of the church. It was in Christ Church in Dublin, once the foremost cathedral of all of Catholic Ireland, I came to the realization, that while I still was standing

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Lessons from Northern Europe (cont.)

on holy ground, these magnificent structures had become mausoleums, museums, and gifts shops. What was once a bastion against the agents of evil, plague, and sin was now a tourist attraction where one could pay 5 euros, get a headset tour guide, and wander around. Perhaps the unhealthy intertwining of worldly power and church leadership was what the framers of our American constitution had in mind when they sought the separation of church and state. “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and unto God that which is God’s.”

While in Copenhagen, we had a tour guide who was a 30 year-old Danish man. He was very pleasant and a staunch supporter of his lifestyle as a Danish citizen. He said over 65% of the working population worked for the government; health care was completely covered by the government, and those who wanted to go to college were paid by the government to do so. He did agree that the cost of living and taxation were excessive and burdensome. The main goal was to be happy and comfortable.

He also promoted the existentialist philosophy that was so dominant in Scandinavia over the last century: there is no teleology, the notion that God made the universe, or our world, or us with any particular purpose in mind. Since there is no reason for any of this, there are also no absolutes to abide by. There is no cosmic justice, no fairness, no order, no rules. These ideas are partly the result of enduring the horrors of two world wars.

The existentialists said that we are free to choose our own purpose and code of morality to live by. The theme of our young tour guide’s approach to life was to throw your hands up to the absurdity of life, and choose to be happy. He seemed content to go to school part time, lead tours, and play in a fringe rock band at night.



Town Center, Copenhagen, Denmark

I admit, this lifestyle is not without its charm. But a vital relationship with the triune God was not on his radar, except for passing by the archaic buildings that were once houses of Christian worship. These were only briefly noted on his tour of the city.

I look at church life in the United States, even here in Richland County, Ohio, and wonder if we may be heading to a similar fate of empty churches and a population which has little or no relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As we ultimately seek our own comfort first, create our own meaning and purpose, and place our trust in other institutions such as government, technology, and wealth, we will continue to drift further away from our Heavenly Father and each other.

I suggest that we each examine ourselves and our European counterparts. I suggest we seek purpose, identity, and meaning from our Creator God and His infinite love for us through His Son Jesus, and His Word to each one of us. This is the path to hope, eternal joy, and a meaningful relationship with God and with each other.



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Angel Vega	Dance
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