



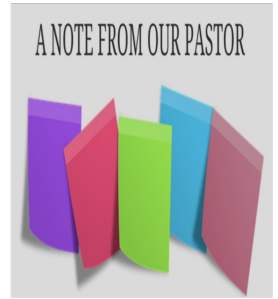
# The Shepherd's Staff

(vol. 1 issue 4 - April, 2024)

Greetings,

Did you know that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon, which is the first full moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox (March 21st). If the full moon falls on a Sunday, Easter is celebrated the following Sunday. As a result, Easter can fall on any Sunday between March 22nd and April 25th. Easter was on the early side this year and will be on the later side next year

(April 20th, 2024).



Well, what a meaningful season of Lent and Holy Week we experienced at Good Shepherd. I am grateful to all who contributed to the Lenten Devotional. What a joy it was to read the variety of wonderful messages as the season of Lent went on; they deepened my Lenten journey. A thank you is also due to the Worship Team for handling the Palms and Easter Lilies in such a skilled way as usual and for livestreaming services. We all sure appreciated the choir singing to the Lord to our benefit throughout Lent and especially on Good Friday. The message of that final hymn hung in my head the rest of the evening. Of course, we owe a tasty debt of joy to the Congregational Outreach Team for that fantastic Easter breakfast. I know that they all had many things that they could be doing on Easter morning besides serving in a kitchen, but their servant's hearts are valued. The Easter Egg hunt was enjoyed by the children. There were many others who stepped up, sometimes on the spur of the moment to pitch in and help (setting up and tearing down tables/chairs, volunteers at worship, among other things). Thank you all, it truly takes a congregation pulling together to make things work.

On a completely different note, neighbors of ours have a sign in their yard that proudly proclaims, "We believe in science." I chuckle as I walk by it. It is like saying, "I believe in accounting" or "I believe in football." Saying you believe in science is in some ways akin to stating I believe the sky is blue. Like science, both accounting and football exist, but there is such a thing as proper accounting and then there is improper accounting, just as the executives from Enron who were sentenced to prison for their roles in the accounting fraud that led to the company's collapse will attest. We all also know that there is good football and bad football. We've seen more than our fair share of the bad kind in recent years! (But there is always next season!). In any event, just as there is good football and bad football, there is good science and bad science. Maybe the neighbor's sign should read, "We believe in good science!" But even that can be problematic.

## The Problem of Science as Authority

"I believe in science" often serves as shorthand for trusting the consensus of scientific experts. To an extent this is necessary, when we agree to a treatment plan with our physician, we are trusting the consensus of medical researchers and providers as of that day. However, state-of-the-art treatments change, sometimes drastically over time. History has shown that scientific consensus can be and is often wrong or influenced by external factors like politics, money, or biases. Critical thinking, questioning, and skepticism are part and parcel of legitimate scientific literacy. Even supersmart people like Einstein blundered on occasion. Einstein for years argued that the universe was static and infinite, neither expanding nor contracting. He later referred to this as his "biggest blunder" after Hubble's discovery of the expanding universe.

## The False Choice

The phrase, "I believe in science" tries to back. It's people into a false choice: you either believe in "science," or you are backwards and do not, as if science were a singular entity with a clear set of beliefs. This oversimplification ignores the nuanced nature of scientific inquiry and the reality that one can understand and accept scientific evidence on some topics while having legitimate questions or skepticism about others.

### What about “I believe in God?”

This sign in the neighbor’s yard got me to thinking, what if I put up a sign in my yard that read, “I believe in God.” Well, the problem is that it could have many meanings too. It may mean belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, **Exodus 3:15** “*God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ “This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.”* But to another person, it might mean belief in simply a “higher power” not the personal God of the Holy Bible. I suppose just as someone who has a sign in their yard that reads, “I believe in science,” ought to be able to explain what on earth that means, someone who says, “I believe in God,” ought to be able to explain what they mean.

### Be ready to Give an Account?

*“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” - 1 Peter 3:15*

When I say, "I believe in God," what do I mean? Well, I mean that I embrace a relationship with the Creator of the universe, as revealed in the Holy Bible. This belief isn't simply in a generic “higher power,” but a profound trust in a personal God with character and integrity, who makes and keeps promises. It is also to embrace the grace and redemptive work of Jesus Christ, His Son. It is to rejoice in the Holy Spirit whom God sent as our Advocate and who helps us pray as we ought.

Believing in God shapes my understanding of the world and my place within it. It influences my values, guiding me to live as a follower of Jesus that reflects God’s love and teachings. This belief brings a sense of purpose and hope, anchoring me during times of uncertainty and challenge.

Belief in God also connects me with a community of believers who share these convictions. Together, we seek to grow in our faith with the help of the Holy Spirit, support one another, live generously, and make a positive impact in the world around us in the name of our Lord Jesus.

### **What would you say if asked what do you mean you believe in God?**



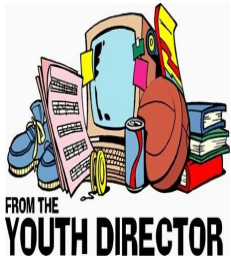
**The Faith in Action Team invites you to join us in a HYGIENE DRIVE to support the Lincoln Hygiene Network during the month of April.**

Lincoln Hygiene Network, formally known to us as Poverty Impact Network, continues to provide hygiene/personal care products to those who are experiencing financial hardship, distributing products at no cost to at least 25 direct service programs and organizations, such as Eastridge Food Pantry, Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach, Friendship Home, Center Pointe, and LPS. **New in**

**2024, LHN has added a Sr. Hygiene Closet Program** providing hygiene products to individuals 55+ at four partner agencies: Asian Community & Cultural Center, Barnabas Community, Good Neighbor Community Center, and Ponca Tribe Nebraska.

**A collection bin has been placed in the Sanctuary by the Hospitality Center to collect donations of new, unopened basic hygiene and personal care products of all sizes.** The most requested items are Shampoo, Deodorant, and Lotion, but they also accept donations of Toothpaste, Bar/Liquid Soap, Disposable Razors/ Shaving Cream, Finger/Toenail Clippers, Chapstick, Conditioner and Feminine Hygiene Products, Laundry Detergent Sheets, and Washcloths.

**Please support our HYGIENE DRIVE** if able, and help make a difference to people in need in our Lincoln/Lancaster County area.



I am super excited and super sad about our May high school graduates. I am very excited, proud, and happy for Alayna Bailey, Carson Pierce, and Mia Rikli, I just don't want to see them go!

Carson was in Confirmation when I first met him. A young man with a lot of questions and a solid foundation in his faith. Mia and Alayna have been active participants in our youth group, Sunday School, worship, and let's just say it, the church's many events and forms of worship. There will be a hole left when these young people spread their wings and soar into the next chapters of their lives. There will always be a place at Good Shepherd for them and a great big welcome whenever we are blessed with their presence. We prayerfully wish them our very best.

As I prepared to read this quarter's "These Days" devotional, I read an introductory article titled, "These Moments: Claiming Time for Spiritual Growth - Listening" by Gina Struensee. She brings up a valid point after stating her 'go to' definition of prayer. To quote her, "...prayer is to have a conversation with God. Conversation implies a two-way communication involving both speaking *and* listening." How often does your prayer time include quietly and patiently listening for God's response? Gina even goes so far as to suggest writing down how many of your prayers are you *speaking* to God and how many of your prayers are you *listening* to God. I'm confident my lists would be very imbalanced. I pray to God, praising, asking, intercessory prayer, . . . seldom do I quietly and patiently listen for God to speak. It's time for me to make a change. I want to listen for God more often than I presently do. How about you? I would also like to share a couple other valuable points that she makes. Please give them some thought and see what you think.

1. "We pray, and prayer changes us."
2. "Prayer changes people, and people create change."

How do these statements hit home for you? I found both declarations to be quite powerful. If you are wondering how you can get your hands on one of the devotionals where I encountered these wise words, you are in luck. Our church provides them. They are available on the small table below the nametags in the hallway next to the grandfather clock that Clarence Meister made.

I came across some additional prayer insights while looking at some highlights from recordings from the Drive Thru Prayer Conference hosted at the end of March. I heard a couple more thought-provoking quotes about prayer:

1. "Prayer doesn't inform God, it involves God."
2. "Prayer introduces our problems to God's Power."

As I reflected on these quotes, I found them to be valuable ways to look at the importance of prayer. How do they impact you?

Some upcoming events for April include (more detailed information will be included in the Shepherd's Plans):

- Ripple Sunday School, Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>
- The Sight and Sound Theater's "**Jonah**", **Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> at 2:00**
- **Macrame** with Rona for our kids, **Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup> following worship**
- The first meeting of our brand-new Moms Group, hosted by Alicia Schuller (Thank you, Alicia!!)

May God richly bless you through your prayers.

Dee Hughes  
Director of Student Ministries