



First Church of God
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Pastor Paul J Rutledge

**SEPTEMBER 2024
NEWSLETTER**

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Pastor's Meditation September 2024

A happy September. School is back in session, college football is starting, Major League Baseball is getting closer to the postseason, and our God is on the throne. Praise Jesus and hallelujah.

For our meditation this month, I want to talk about a toy that every parent and grandparent is familiar with, Legos.

The Lego Group began in the workshop of Ole Kirk Christiansen (1891–1958), a carpenter from Billund, Denmark, who began making wooden toys in 1932. In 1934, his company came to be called "Lego", derived from the Danish phrase "leg godt" which means "play well". In 1947, Lego expanded to begin producing plastic toys.

Approximately ten Lego pieces are sold for every person on earth each year—more than seventy-five billion of the little plastic bricks. But if it wasn't for the perseverance of Ole Kirk Christiansen, there wouldn't be any Legos to snap together.

Christiansen toiled away in Denmark, for decades before creating Leg Godt. His workshop was destroyed by fire twice. He endured bankruptcy and a world war that caused a shortage of materials. Finally, in the late 1940s, he landed on the idea for self-locking plastic bricks. By the time Ole Kirk died in 1958, Legos was on the verge of becoming a household word.

Persevering in the challenges of life can be difficult. This is true in our spiritual life as we strive to be more like Jesus. Trouble hits us, and we need God's strength to persevere. James wrote in 1:2, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial." Sometimes the trials we face are setbacks in relationships or finances or health. Sometimes they're temptations that slow us down in our goal of honoring God with our lives.

Even though we face trials, God promises wisdom for such times (James 1:5), God asks us to trust Him as He provides what we need (James 1:6). Through it all, when we allow God to help us persevere in honoring Him with our lives, we find true blessing (James 1:12). Whenever you face trials of any kind, trust God for his wisdom and provision to get you through.

If you have an item to put in the newsletter, please submit it to Susie Hoffman by the 3rd. Sunday of the month. Susie's email address is fcogrisingsun@gmail.com

Safety Team

The 4th Quater Safety Team Schedule will be out in the 1st week of September. Keep your eyes open for it. It will be sent on our texts threads and posted in our locker as always.

The KFC Safety Schedule will be sent at the same time. It has already been sent out and is complete through January 2025.

Thanks to everyone who volunteered to help with this important duty!

Annual Congregational meeting

FCOG Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, October 20th immediately following the 2nd service. A light lunch will be served.

PLEASE plan to attend this important meeting which will review the past year's business of the church and plans for the future.

The annual Ministries Review Questionnaire

is now out and in your Sunday bulletin.

PLEASE take the time to fill this out and turn it in.

Your feedback is VERY important. Your guidance is important and necessary for your elected church leadership to help them make decisions.

Yacht Club/Men's Group

The next men's breakfast will be on Saturday Sept 21st at Tim James' house at 8:30am.

Men, please come and enjoy good food and good fellowship. Our main order of business will be to make sure everything is in order for the combined Church Service/picnic which is the very next day Sunday September 22.

Combined Service/Picnic



Sunday Sept. 22nd we will be having one combined service for 1st & 2nd service. Church service will be at 10:00am in the Sanctuary we will have Sunday School at 9:00am After church, we will have a cook-

out with Hamburgers Hotdogs and Brats provided. Sign up sheets are on the clipboards for sides and deserts.

There will be cornhole and other games for families to enjoy and enjoy the fellowship of our church family after the picnic.

Kids For Christ

Kids for Christ will begin on Wednesday, September 11, 5:30-7pm. KFC is for Kids 4 years old through 12th Grade. Staff & students enjoy dinner at 5:30-6pm. Class time begins at 6pm where students discover God's truths in the Bible and how they can apply it in their own lives. Please register your youth online.

CARE BAGS!!

During the month of October, the Women's Breakfast Club will be assembling "care bags" to distribute to homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, pregnancy centers, etc. Please notice sheets on the clipboards that list items needed for the bags. Your donations are needed and appreciated to make this project work! Last year, we were able to deliver a total of approximately 40 gallon Ziplock bags to two facilities and larger sized items to a third facility. You all made that possible!! There will be a clearly marked bin in the overflow room to place your donations! Thank you so much in advance!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU SO MUCH!!

What a wonderful Pay-To-Eat breakfast we all enjoyed on Sunday, 8/25!! So much delicious food provided by The Women's Breakfast Club, serving 85-90 people!! Many thanks to Dolly Harmon for the beautiful fall table decor! The very cool thing was seeing so many of our newer family faces enjoying the festivities! What a blessing it is to have those families become such an integral part of our church family as we all come to know one another better!

Thank you, Tim James and team, for the safety refresher course!

Is there a more productive way to spend a Sunday morning than with great food, greater fellowship and a meaningful sermon?! And, your generous donations of \$514 will benefit the start-up Lakota LifeWise program, as well as the women's group as they continue plans for the November men's appreciation dinner! God certainly knows what he's doing!!!

ATTENTION: YACHT CLUB
and

WOMEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB!!

The men and women's groups are planning a combined social function on Sunday, 10/6! We will be enjoying a delicious lunch and fellowship at Ole Zim's Wagon Shed following the second church service! Tentatively speaking, at this point, a reservation will be made for 12:30pm. Please refer to the clipboards for a sign-up sheet and please respond to those sheets by 9/22, if possible!

This event will take the place of our December combined breakfast since that month has proven to be very busy for a lot of folks! Hopefully it will be a much simpler and relaxing get-together...and, Ladies (or Gentlemen!), no cooking!!

Questions? Check with Tim James and/or Sherry Adams.

Women's Breakfast Club dates-

September breakfast/crafting-9/28, 9am,
at the church; any questions, ask Wanda
Goris, Brenda Creeger, Sherry Adams

October breakfast/care bag assembly-10/26,
at the church (may need to change this
date, so stay tuned!)

November 16-Men's Appreciation Meal
Tailgate 2.0; time TBD!

All ladies are invited to join us each month!!

Mark your calendars!

Saturday, November 2, is our annual craft show.
More details coming soon.

Believe Women's Conference

Saturday, November 2, 9:00 am—2:00pm
at Mt. Tabor Church of God, 9744 U.S. 127
North, Celina, OH Our guest speaker, Wendy Bender,
is founder of Inspire Ministries, a non-profit women's
ministry. Their purpose is to help women on their faith
journey, to encourage them to love God with their
whole heart, and challenge them to go deeper with
Him. \$20 per registration, \$90 table of 6
taborreach.org 419.363.3653

MOVIE DAY

We will have a movie day after church on Oct. 13. We
are having pizza, pop, popcorn, and a prayer movie.
The movie War Room will be shown and it is a compel-
ling drama with humor and heart that explores the
power that prayer can have on marriages, parenting,
careers, friendships, and every other area of our lives.
Please sign up on the clipboards if you are planning on
attending. If you have any questions please contact
Michele Stevenson.

The Forge— September 13, September 14. At Camp
Otyokwah. 3380 Tugend Road, Butler, OH 44822. A
weekend of brotherhood, growth, and adventure.
Where men gather to refresh their spirits and embark
on a transformative time of digging into God's
Word. For more information and to register go to
glc.cggc.org

Songs of the Seasons!

Presented by Good Shepherd's Hooked-on-Singing
Choir, Wednesday, September 4th, 2pm at the lower
level of Good Shepherd Home, Fostoria.

Letter from Jessi

Hello everyone!

The end of our 6 month Immersion journey became
very busy and we were determined to make the most
of our last month of the trip the best we could. So this
update is being put together after I have safely re-
turned back to the states at the end of June. I went
back and forth about sending this final reflection, but I
felt it on my heart to send this in case I may not have
the opportunity to personally answer the golden ques-
tion: "How was Africa?"

It really is hard for me to summarize the final month of
our time in Africa but I will try my best to keep it short
so I can get to the real meat of what I learned through
this journey. Where I last left off, we had just settled
into our final community of Swakopmund, Namibia
and our motivation is to immerse ourselves into the
community through getting involved with our partners
at Shofar Church, spending time with the vendors at a
local art market, and volunteering at an orphanage
across town called Ruach Elohim. Although each of
these partnerships are vastly different people groups,
we learned a lot and we were able to build authentic
relationships quickly. I learned a lot from our friends at
the market about their tribes, where the goods they
sell at the market are from, and what their hopes and
dreams are. I learned more about the tragedies of ba-
by dumping in Namibia. I learned how to care for the
babies that are in that transition of being abandoned
by their birth parents and hopefully soon God will send
along the right people to become their adoptive par-
ents.

One of the highlights in Namibia for me was the
amount of time our team was able to sit around and
share traditional meals with the locals. Namibian hos-
pitality is truly unmatched. We were treated to a tradi-
tional German, Afrikaans, Bushman, and .a Braai.
Each meal was so unique. To me, it was more about
the way they share food than it was about the food it-
self. It was the beloved people around the table to-
gether. We may be from different parts of the world,
each holding our own unique story, traditions, and cul-
tural perspective. Yet at that current moment in time,
we were all one in the same. We were all eating the
same food. And that tears away all differences in Na-
mibia. We had so many life changing discussions
around the table together. To the people of southern

Africa, food is a big deal. It isn't a luxury. So to them, preparing all this food to share is a sacrifice sometimes. A sacrifice they see so worth it. And for us, receiving their sacrifice and hospitality is a huge blessing. We should embrace that blessing with a genuine heart.

Ever since being back in the states for over a month now, I have been trying to come up with a response to "how was Africa?" that will truly do this experience justice. In all honesty, I just can't. What I can come up with is a very important lesson that everyone should know. When I was in our second community serving at the Batho Pele school, a woman shared some wisdom with me that I will never forget. As I was nervous to lead the middle school kids in some English nursery rhymes, I told her that I could not remember them very well since it had been far too long. She was so confident in me because unlike herself and the students, English is my first language. However, I did not have that confidence and I told her to pardon me if I mess up. She told me that it would be a good thing if I mess up in front of the youth. She told me that it would show them that no matter what you are doing, nobody is perfect and they shouldn't hold back because of the fear of messing up. She told me that whatever expectation I have on myself is a lie and that I should take courage against that. Leading up to that moment, there had been more that I hoped to be perfect in than just singing nursery rhymes with a bunch of South African middle schoolers. I wanted to be the perfect leader for this team. The perfect role model to those that I shared the love of Jesus to. The perfect friend, perfect student, perfect daughter, perfect employee and perfect Christian. When I wasn't perfect, I struggled to find the courage to let it go. So this woman's encouragement to me was a ring of freedom to my ears. And I hope to carry this lesson with me everywhere I go and share it with everyone I meet.

My journey through southern Africa was not perfect. I was not the perfect leader for the team. I did not make every decision perfectly. I was not the perfect ambassador for Jesus in every interaction we had. But God in all His mercy is sufficient in our imperfections. He offers that same grace to me as an imperfect human being that he does for the next imperfect human being. God has never asked for perfect since the fall, He only asks that we do what we can.

That is what I have seen here in each community we entered in Africa. We were able to witness in a very imperfect way that God is always reaching out to us and we just need to reach back. He has a perfect will for our lives and we should trust Him with that instead of taking it into our own hands. We should spend more

time imperfectly giving our yes to Jesus than worrying about whether this yes will pan out perfectly to our expectations.

Since being back home, I have sort of taken a deep dive into the story of Joseph, son of Jacob (Genesis 37-50). You know, Joseph's story is full of challenges and imperfections just like any mission journey has too. I have read this story a few times before, but this time I was able to notice more clearly the parallels between this story and events leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I could go into a whole 10 page thesis of what all the parallels are but to save you the hassle, I will sum up the part that stuck out the most and you can study the scripture yourself for further details.

One of the key turning points in this story happens in Genesis 43-45. Twenty years after Joseph's brothers sold him into Egyptian slavery, there is a famine in the land. Long story short, the only place with rations left to eat is Egypt. And the person in charge of these rations is Joseph. All of Jacob's sons traveled to Egypt except for the youngest son. Joseph recognized they were his brothers, and sent them back to bring their youngest brother. All the while his brothers never recognized that it was Joseph. The brothers had to somehow convince Jacob, their father, to allow Benjamin, the youngest, to go along with them back to Egypt in order to buy more grain during the famine. Long story short, they are able to return with Benjamin and Joseph decides to treat them to a big meal where he decides Benjamin's portions will be 5 times the size of the rest. The next morning as they loaded up the donkeys, Joseph tells a servant to place a silver cup in Benjamin's sack without the brothers knowing. Then later Joseph had his brothers stopped by one of his servants and accused for stealing the cup. Their sacks were searched and that is when the cup is found in Benjamin's sack. He does this to allow space for his brothers to come back to Egypt and explain that although they are not guilty of this stealing, the brothers have guilt between themselves and their father. They plead with Joseph because they think that Benjamin is the last decedent left between Jacob and Rachel. Judah specifically pleads that Joseph should pass the cup from Benjamin to himself. That Judah would take the blame for this like he promised his father if anything happens to Benjamin. The brothers surely had a change of heart because unlike last time when they wanted to get rid of Joseph, they did not care about how the loss of his beloved son would affect their father.

It finally got to the point that Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers and reconciled with them. Instead

of lingering on the tragic details of life in slavery, being wrongfully accused for adultery, and being forgotten in the pit, Joseph expresses how God called him to preserve life through all of this. This all happened to save many people from the famine. God's will prevails. It is no longer something that the evil intentions of his brothers could change.

As I pondered this scenario, Joseph's call to "preserve life" in Egypt means physical preservation where Jesus came to "preserve life" spiritually. Now the detail that I have been trying to wrap my mind around in all of this part of the story is the fact that out of all things they could have hid in the sack, they hid a silver cup. This story was written many many years before God's only son Jesus is praying in the garden of Gethsemane to "let this cup pass from me" so I think this could be an interesting connection. Why did Judah plead for the cup to pass? Because of the suffering his father would face. Why did Jesus ask for the cup to be passed? Because of the suffering his father would face. The moral of Joseph's story is summed up in Genesis 50:20 "what you intended against me for evil, God intended for good, in order to accomplish a day like this - to preserve the lives of many people." This is Joseph describing God's will. In Matthew 26:39 Jesus prays "My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

My point in explaining this connection is for one, God is so insanely detailed. He is detailed in the way the Bible makes connections like this. And to think this is only one out of over 60,000 cross references within the Bible. Tell me that scripture is not God breathed and full of truth after learning this. You can't. The holy trinity is intertwined in each story throughout the old and new testament of the Bible. I also believe that Jesus is evident in our lives as well if we accept and allow him to be. And two, I think we need to have a little more faith in the midst of the unknown. To me, this screams that God's will is always going to prevail so trust the journey. Especially in a world full of tragedy, controversy, and evil intentions around us. Every piece of each journey may not turn out how we expect but take heart because God has a purpose. Sometimes it is a chance to learn from past mistakes, to let go of shame and guilt, and to experience true reconciliation. This cup of suffering is exactly that. It is not pain free and easy. That is why we need to trust God, His word, and our salvation through His only son more than anything else.

And lastly, God's mercy is so big and wide that he allowed for imperfect things to happen in order to fulfill His perfect will. We see each event that took place in Joseph's story filled with jealousy, greed, deception,

and lying. Yet Joseph honors God by saying it led to God's purpose being fulfilled. He even allowed imperfect people in this story to be the lineage of his perfect son. Jesus was born from the line of Judah. Judah is not the oldest son or the youngest. He is not born of Jacob's most favored wife. Judah fell short in being a brother, husband, father, and father in law. Yet Judah did what he could and softened his heart. He showed true repentance. That is what God is really seeking after from us. And the rest is history.

I hope you find this encouraging in whatever stage of life you are in or this makes you want to take a deep dive into reading the story yourself. I also wanted to share this to remind you all that it is possible to have God moments here in the states too. I am so grateful for the uncomfortable and uncertain journey that I had the chance to walk through this past year and all the imperfections that deepened my trust in Jesus.

Thank you for reading along with my journey in Africa and allowing me to share what God is doing through global missions. If you haven't heard, I have the opportunity to lead another team for 3 months in Costa Rica beginning August 25th. I am so excited to return to Costa Rica and pour into the communities we will be coming alongside to serve. Both learning more about God from them and sharing the love of Jesus with them. Please, feel free to reach out if you have more specific questions about my journey in Africa or my upcoming journey to Costa Rica and I would love to share! Thank you for all of the prayer and support.

-Jessica Davies



First Church of God September 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship	2 LABOR DAY	3	4 8:30-9:30 walking group 6pm Bible study	5 9am Bible Study	6 8:30-9:30 walking group	7
8 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship	9 8:30-9:30 walking group 6:30 Council meeting	10	11 8:30-9:30 walking group 5:30-7 Kids For Christ 7pm Bible study	12 9am Bible Study	13 8:30-9:30 walking group	14
15 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship 4pm 4-H meeting	16 8:30-9:30 walking group 6:30 Congregational prayer	17	18 8:30-9:30 walking group 5:30-7 Kids For Christ 7pm Bible study	19 9am Bible Study	20 8:30-9:30 walking group	21 Men's breakfast at Tim James house
22 9am Sunday School 10AM ONE WORSHIP SERVICE Picnic and games after Worship service	23 8:30-9:30 walking group 6:30 Congregational prayer	24	25 8:30-9:30 walking group 5:30-7 Kids For Christ 7pm Bible study	26 9am Bible Study	27 8:30-9:30 walking group	28 9am Women's breakfast/crafting at the church
29 8:15am Worship 9:30am donuts/coffee 9:45am Sunday school 10:45am Worship	30 8:30-9:30 walking group 6:30 Congregational prayer					



9-1	Brad & Jim D.	Randy & Justin
9-8	Scott & Tim J.	Nicole & Jeff A.
9-15	Dean & Susan	Tracy & Sandy S.
9-22	Chris C. & TJ	Steve E & Tim W.
9-29	Tim J. & Kent	John K. & Pam