

Cross CURRENTS

THE CHOICE IS GOD'S

It's starting to be the season of choices. As your personal garden and the farmers' fields begin to yield their first fruits, you have choices. Will you swing by the local farmer's stand or patronize Pick 'n Save? Then, you have to choose what kind of produce you want to purchase. Will you roast corn or steam green beans? Then comes the final—and most important—decision.

You make the decision only after you carefully inspect each fruit or vegetable. If the green beans look a little floppy, you forgo them. If the ear of corn looks too small, you skip it. If the strawberry is mushy, you be buying it. When it comes to produce, you get choosy according to your standards because you know it makes or breaks the dish—and perhaps the whole meal.

The Scriptures teach us that God got choosy. The Bible makes clear that God chose people to come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Sometimes this teaching is called predestination; sometimes it's known as election. At the end of the day, those terms refer to the same thing, namely, God

choosing people to come to faith. If you believe in Jesus, it's because God chose you to believe.

But because we are so used to making choices in our lives according to our standards, we get the wrong idea of how God went about his choice. I begin to think of God as some shopper who stops at a farmer's stand on a country road, investigates each piece of produce, and only picks the ones that meet his standards of quality. I begin to think that God chose me for faith because he saw that I was better than all the other options around me. I begin to think that I met God's standards.

Not so. St. Paul wrote, "He chose us in [Jesus] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." This implies that I wasn't always holy and blameless. To be honest, I never was, not even at conception. Nor were you, not even at your conception. God didn't choose us because we were the best options on the spiritual produce stand. God chose us because of his grace—undeserved love for imperfect sinners. Imagine that! Imagine paying

[God] chose us in [our Lord Jesus Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

—Ephesians 1:4 (NIV)



good money for produce
you plainly can tell is
imperfect!

That's exactly what God has done for you in Jesus Christ. In his great love and before time began, God planned to pay for your soul with the blood of his Son Jesus Christ. In his great love and before time began, God planned to bring you to faith in Jesus during your life here on earth. And then, in his perfect timing and power, God made that happen. He made the gospel known to you. He gave you a living hope in Christ. He put his Holy Spirit in your heart. Now, because of Christ, God the Father sees you as something even better than finest ear of corn at the county fair. Now, because of Christ, God sees you as "holy and blameless in his sight."

Your heavenly Father chose you to be his simply because he loves you, not because you've worked so hard to earn it. So, go spend the rest of your summer in carefree joy, knowing that fruits from the farmer stand are just a foretaste of the good things God has prepared for us in heaven because of Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

Pastor Voss



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING RECAP

After worship on July 9, Living Water held its first Open Forum & Voters' Meeting of 2023. Each of the congregation's ministry leaders—Elders, Education, Outreach, and Trustees—gave reports about their ministry areas. Additionally, financial updates were given by our treasurer and financial secretary. The overall theme of the reports was joyfulness and thankfulness for the ways that God continues to bless Living Water. We continue to welcome new members into our spiritual family. Congregational giving is generous. We praise and thank God for these blessings and for your participation in congregational life here at Living Water!

Most of the open forum's conversation discussed the report from the Steering Committee's chairman, Bill Walter. The Steering Committee was authorized by a December 2022 resolution to suggest what—if any—future repairs, renovations, or additions we should do to our current facility. The Steering Committee has suggested a budget of about \$2.2 million and approached Anderson Ashton, the firm which designed and built our current facility, to produce initial plans in that budget's ballpark.

Anderson Ashton's first drawings addressed issues with the fellowship hall, bathrooms, narthex gathering area, and sanctuary. The plans also designed a new entry on the east side of the building and four new classrooms.

The assembly reviewed these initial plans and offered comments, concerns, and questions. After a lengthy discussion, the voters passed resolutions to continue the Steering Committee, to have the Steering Committee make a recommendation to the Council and Voters on which architectural firm, and to investigate financing options in detail.

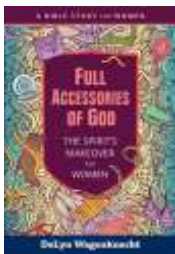
Mike Graffenius says, "Working first with the Site Committee and now with the Steering Committee, I am excited about the energy and input by our congregation regarding the prospect of expansion here at Living Water. May God continue to move our congregation towards the end he desires us to reach."

Keep an eye out for future updates from our congregation's ministry teams and the Steering Committee. Your comments and questions are always welcomed by members of Council and Pastor Voss.

LADIES BIBLE STUDY

Belts. Jewelry. High heels. Hats. Scarves. Handbags. The fall session of Ladies Bible Study will compare six fashion accessories with six spiritual accessories.

This Bible study will take a different format than in the past. We will be using a book “The Full Accessories of God” as the basis for the study. The week consists of five short daily readings and personal reflection questions. The study will meet on Thursday evenings, beginning



September 14, to discuss day six's reading and questions.

If you cannot attend every week, you can still participate in the study—come the weeks that you are able.

The book is needed for participation in the Bible study. Envelopes are available in the gathering space to order a book for a suggested donation of \$16. Orders are due Monday, August 14. If you have any questions, please contact Janeen Roska at jsroska@gmail.com or 414-745-6385.

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 13—Church Picnic

August 20—Freewill Offering for Central Africa Medical Mission

August 16—Christian Education Night

September 4—NO Monday Evening Worship (Labor Day)

September 10—Sunday School begins

*But God beheld my wretched state before the world's foundation,
and, mindful of his mercies great, he planned for my salvation.
A father's heart he turned to me, sought my redemption fervently;
he gave his dearest treasure.*

—CW 557 st. 4

PRAYER

As God the Father's adopted sons and daughters, we pray for:

- Our fellow Christians who are going through major life events—Pam Brown as she mourns the death of her husband Al and awaits reunion in heaven; Brock Pautz as he marries Jewel St. Germaine on August 5.
- Living Water's Steering Committee, that God give those committee members dedication to the work the congregation has asked them to do, wisdom in organizing all the moving parts, and ears to listen to members' questions and comments about possible future building projects.
- Our local weather, that God would grant a mixture of sun and rain to bring about an abundant end to the growing season and that our Creator would guard and protect the elderly during heat waves.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday - 9:00 am

Monday - 7:00 pm