

Continue Steadfastly in Prayer

February 23, 2024 - April 2, 2024



**“But as for you, be strong and do not give up,
for your work will be rewarded.”**

2 Chronicles 15:7

As we begin this season of prayer, we may not know where we are in the process of receiving God's man as our new pastor but here is what we do know – God has a plan. When we accept that, believe that, and let our faith guide us, we will find comfort in God's promises. Deuteronomy 4:7 reads, "...the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him."

God will provide just as He promised, "Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding." (Jeremiah 3:15). Jesus tells us not to worry about the needs that God promises to supply. Pray for a God honoring shepherd who will be a good example and bring us God's wisdom.

Continue praying for our team. As anxious as we may be about filling the senior pastor position, they are being deliberate and disciplined in their work to follow the path the Lord has them on. The devotion they are showing in following God's direction is encouraging. Our team members are Jonmichael Atkinson, Doug Ezzell, Regina Green, Curtis Horne, Verneil Lewis, Meredith Mitchell, Donna Robinett, Peyton Roughton, Chris Vester, and Ed Joyner, Ex-officio. Thanks to the team for their commitment.

Friday, February 23, 2024 - We're at a great point to be reminded of one of God's great promises in the Bible. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13). It's impossible for us to see the future, but there is no seeing into the future for God. He is the future. He knows the future, and his plans for us are good and full of hope. It sounds so simple, but unless we put our trust, hope and faith in Him, anything we undertake looks like a steady uphill climb. That's where that proverbial mole hill becomes a mountain. God encourages us to put our faith in Him. When we do that, we can have hope that can't be contained in measured space. Our hope is boundless. Hey, we know that God knows who our next pastor is. The man has been born, the search team has been formed and God established this place we know as Englewood in 1965. All the pieces are in place. He will mesh all this together. But there's one thing we must keep in mind as we pray. Ask that our God will bring all this together in His time. God says we will seek him and "find" him when we seek Him with "all your heart." We don't know where we are in the process as this is written, but we can't forget or move on to something else because of the time that has passed. We (Englewood) must continue to call upon the One who knows. Jeremiah 29:11-13 is the assurance we can have in God's goodness towards us. Don't give up!

Saturday, February 24, 2024 - As Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew Chapter 6, he told them to pray, "...your will be done..." When we pray that, we're not resigning ourselves to fate, but praying that God's perfect purpose, His perfect will, will be accomplished. Let's continue to pray that God's perfect will is accomplished with the identification of our new pastor. Not on a timeline or by appearance, or resume, but by God's will. Continue to pray that the search team (remember that's all of us) will "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." (Proverbs 16:3). Let's be a people of purpose in our prayer. We can't just commit any need to the Lord and then not put forth any effort. It's not a plan to say, "we need a pastor." That's the need. The church put the plan to fill the need in place with the commissioning of the search team. The plan started with prayer. The plan progresses with prayer. The plan is fulfilled through prayer. Without an individual, personal commitment to pray, we're not a part of the team helping the plan proceed. Then a person begins to wonder why the plan is failing. It's one of Satan's tools to separate us, to pick us off one at the time. Don't fall for it! "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and he will do this." (Psalm 37:5). The Lord can care for us better than we can for ourselves. Psalm 37:7 says, "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him..." Let's be willing to "...wait patiently for him..." For His will to be done. That's what's best for us.

Sunday, February 25, 2024 - ASK. Jesus tells us to persist in pursuing God. "Ask and it will be given; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7). ASK is what we must do if our new pastor hasn't been revealed by God at this point in the journey. We might still be at a critical point in the search. It's easy to give up after a few "we need" prayers over time. Some might conclude that God's not listening or can't hear us. Here's some encouragement. The Bible uses this phrase "He remembered." Now that's not saying He forgot anything because we know God is omniscient. "But God remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1), "...He remembered Abraham..." (Genesis 19:29), and "Then God remembered Rachel..." (Genesis 30:22). It's not that He failed to remember them, it implies timing. So, in each of these instances we know that prayers were persistent, and we know the time was right for God to act. Wherever we are in the process, God is hearing and remembering our prayers. We know that because He gave us these examples in the Bible. Knowing God takes faith and focus. There's one other thing it takes as well – follow through. As we continue to ASK Him for more direction, patience and wisdom during this process, Jesus reminds us that we will be rewarded with our persistence. "For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." (Matthew 7:8). Continue praying for God to show us His man in His time. In the meantime, keep ASKING!

Monday, February 26, 2024 - There's a song on Christian radio titled "Counting My Blessings" by Seph Schlueter. Some of the lyrics of the song go like this, "And I know that seasons never last forever. So, God I will remember all the reasons my heart has to be grateful. All the time You've been faithful to me. But I will keep counting my blessings, knowing I can't count that high. One, two, three up to infinity. I'd run out of numbers, before I could thank you for everything." Paul reminds us, "...pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18). If we were to make a list of everything God has done for us personally, and corporately, the list would be endless. We can get so caught up in what we don't have that we forget to thank the Lord for what He has given (or done) for us. In Psalm 146 – 150, the first verse in all five Psalms is "Praise the Lord." These Psalms show us where, why, and how to praise God. Praise takes our minds off problems and shortcomings and focuses them on God. Praise lifts our perspective from the earthly to the heavenly. "The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love." (Psalm 147:11). Lord, we are putting our hope in Your unfailing love to provide our next senior pastor. In the meantime, let's continue to count our blessings and do as the Psalmist did in the last verse of each of the Psalms 146 – 150. They end like they began, "Praise the Lord."

Tuesday, February 27, 2024 - Oswald Chambers said, "Prayer does not fit us for the greater work, prayer is the greater work." Persistent prayer is an example of our faith. Here's the truth. We can't speed up time. In the physical world time marches in one direction – forward. Some of you will go to the internet and look this up, but the reality is, time is the same for everybody. If you watch a clock it seems to move very slowly, but if you're doing something time goes by quickly. That's why we need to be praying during this time of waiting. When our minds are not focused on something or if we have an expectation that is not being met according to our timeline, we get discouraged or we try to help it along. Did you know every one of us can be helping in this search for our pastor? We're all part of the team. In Daniel's vision of a Man in the tenth chapter of the Book of Daniel, there is a really encouraging exchange between the Man and Daniel. He said, "...Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before God, your words were heard and I have come in response to them." (Daniel 10:12) From the first day, God hears our prayers. Now, that's an encouraging word. Let's do like Daniel - humble ourselves and persist in our conversations with the Lord. It is hard to pray in waiting but remember the words of Mr. Chambers while we wait, "...prayer is the greater work." Don't give up. God is hearing.

Wednesday, February 28, 2024 - Many of those reading this today will remember when we received a Sears catalog that displayed all the Christmas toys (now we're going way back). It arrived in the mail around Thanksgiving Day. We would look at it and mark the toys we wanted. The pages would be ragged by Christmas Day. Can you remember how the days seemed to drag on and a 24-hour period seemed more like forty-eight? Fast forward to today. For many of us it seems like the months, not days, just fly by. By the time you take down the Christmas tree it's time to put it back up again. Remember COVID, "What a year this month has been." That's what anything we're waiting for can begin to feel like. Will whatever it is ever get here? The answer is "Yes." The Bible tells many stories about people waiting. Noah waited to leave the ark, Joseph waited in prison, Moses waited in the wilderness, Job waited for God's healing, David waited to be King, Daniel waited in the Lion's den. Solomon wrote, "There is a time for everything..." (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Throughout our life, time has seemed to move either slowly or at what seems like exceptional speed. Same amount of time, but when we wait it always seems to slow down. But at just the right time on just the right day (remember Christmas morning) with perfect timing, God will reveal our next pastor. Here's what we do while we're waiting – "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you." (Psalm 22:22). Let's praise Him, as one body, in this time of waiting.

Thursday, February 29, 2024 - Praise the Lord for an extra day of prayer this year. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:2,3). Dr. Danny Akin spoke on the first three verses of Hebrews back in January of 2024. When you think about the passage noted, it reminds us of a couple of things. As Dr. Akin said, we are not in a sprint, we are in a marathon. He was speaking about a lifetime of serving the Lord. Let's take a few minutes to think about the process we are in for a new senior pastor. Here's what we need to do first, "fix our eyes on Jesus." Jesus is not going to carry us off the road into ditches and fields when we're focused on Him. He'll keep us moving forward. When we take our eyes off Him, that's when we start to waver and are tempted to start murmuring and grumbling about the process and no senior pastor, yet. Operative word, "yet." An incredibly wise lady in our church was overheard saying, "No one man can be responsible for my spiritual growth. As individuals, we are responsible for our own spiritual growth." What a revelation. That doesn't mean we don't need a senior pastor, but it does mean we shouldn't be hindered in our walk, in our service or in our desire to get close to the Lord just because a position is open. There is great comfort in the passages of scripture starting today's prayer point. It can stand for any situation or circumstance we might face. Stayed focused on Jesus, "...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Friday, March 1, 2024 - In David Jeremiah's book, "The Great Disappearance," he writes, "All Christians understand prayer to be a necessary part of loving God and living as a member of His kingdom. The question is this: Do we pray? Are we people of prayer? If not, we won't be people of progress." Dr. Jeremiah goes on to say, "Believers were never meant to seek progress on our own. We're part of a community. A Kingdom. A church." The way to make progress is through prayer. We love our church, and we love our team. The greatest thing we can do right now is to pray for the progress of the team (remember we are also a part of the team). Ask God to reveal our next senior pastor in His timing. Pray that we don't get hasty during our time of waiting. Remember how the Israelites grumbled at so many points in their journey out of Egypt? At one point Moses told Aaron to say to the entire Israelite community, "...Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling." (Exodus 16:9). Let's cry out to the Lord in a spirit of faithfulness and trust rather than grumbling. "...but those who wait in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:31). Let the Lord be pleased to hear the prayers of the community of Englewood.

Saturday, March 2, 2024 - God is eternal, He experiences time differently than we do. Our human perspective on time is different from God's perspective. The Psalmist wrote, "A thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4). Now, we don't want to wait a thousand years for a new senior pastor, but we would be wise to pray for our new pastor to be revealed in God's time. Moses reminded us in this verse that a thousand years are like a day to the Lord.

God is not limited or rushed by time. He doesn't get anxious about anything. So, pray that we, the people of Englewood, will thank the Lord for the leadership of our pastoral staff, the provision of interim pastors from Southeastern who have brought powerful messages from God's Word and the work of the search team. "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:34). Praise the Lord, He's got this!

Sunday, March 3, 2024 - Remember when you were a child and you would draw a line in the dirt, everyone would get behind the line and someone would shout, "Ready, set, go!" It was a race. There was anticipation waiting for the word to start the race. Can you remember how just about every time, one kid would always jump across the line before the starter gave the command to "Go"? We see it during the Olympics, especially in the sprint races. Every little advantage helps. It was the anticipation of the start. The process our team is in is not a sprint race. It is more like a marathon, but without a timer attached to it. We know in our heart and head, that God has this moving at the right speed. "Your word, O Lord, is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens." (Psalm 119:89). Now that doesn't say that on this day, God is going to identify the man for Englewood. It does say his word is eternal and that it stands firm. And the Scripture says He, "...works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will..." (Ephesians 1:11). Ready, set, go! It's a phrase we all remember, but that phrase was built on the anticipation of a speedy race; being hasty. Anticipation can create impatience and we jump too quick. Pray that we don't create an expectation for our team that would cause them to jump too quick. It's been said, "One minute of patience, ten years of peace."

Monday, March 4, 2024 - Haste is described as acting with excessive speed without sufficient consideration. It can also be defined as being done in a hurried cursory way without due deliberation, prayerfulness, or forethought. The Common English Bible translates Proverbs 14:29 this way, "Patience leads to abundant understanding, but impatience leads to stupid mistakes." WOW, most of us wouldn't say it that way, but we all know it's a true statement. We hear a lot about "root causes" in the news cycles. Impatience (which is often rooted in fear or stress over a situation) can make us move too quickly. So, fear that we're not going fast enough, or stress over the need to act, may both be feelings our team has at this point. Let's encourage them to take the time they need in prayer, in research and in vetting those who may have interest in serving as senior pastor at Englewood. They know, just like we know, that the right man is out there, and God is doing His work to put them all together. Asaph said in Psalm 73:23-24, "...I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel ..." Asaph is declaring his confidence in God's presence and guidance. It's a decision he made after first feeling that all was lost in verses thirteen and fourteen. Pray during this time of waiting, that we speak and act with the same confidence Asaph displayed after he had time to think through the goodness of God. It's the same God we're asking to show us our next pastor. Let's show that we really mean it when we say, "God's got this."

Tuesday, March 5, 2024 - The spirit of haste can diminish the effectiveness of our spiritual armor. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (Ephesians 6:10). Satan is a vicious fighter. The forces he leads are powerful and evil and will stop at nothing to disrupt our search for a pastor. This spirit of haste is one of those tools he uses to discourage the deliberate, prayerful approach our team is taking to consider the man who will be our next shepherd. We must depend on God's strength and use every piece of His armor. The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with readiness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Paul is writing this to the church, but it's meant for every individual within the church. In other words, ALL of us, not just the team. And after ALL of us get suited up, Paul closed out his admonition about the armor with these words, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayer and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep praying for all the saints." (Ephesians 6:18). Lord, maintain our unity and give us the strength to do as you have commanded us to do. "Be still and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10).

Wednesday, March 6, 2024 - "...put your hope in the Lord, both now and forevermore." (NIV). "...put your hope in the Lord – now and always" (NLT). "...wait with hope. Hope now; hope always" (MSG). No matter which translation you pick, the word "hope" is in each one of them. Whatever phase our search team may be in at the writing of this day's prayer, remember to pray for them as they continue the work to bring a new senior pastor to Englewood. Thank them for the work they are doing. Certainly, they feel the pressure to "get something done." We would all like to know who our next earthly shepherd will be, but remember we have a Heavenly Shepherd who will guide us through the leadership He has placed here at EBC for such a time as this. So, rather than asking our team to rush, let's join with our team and support them the best way we can, by praying and asking God to reveal His man in His time. The three translations for the verses this day starts with come from Psalm 131:3. In addition to hope, the NIV and NLT translations tell us where to put our hope, "in the Lord."

Thursday, March 7, 2024 - Thank the Lord for our team. The fasting and prayer, the research, the meetings, all the reading and seeking God through His Word they have committed to is encouraging. Their ability to maintain patience and humility as they go about their work has been incredible and honoring to God. And mind you it is work. The pressure of time weighs on them. The "want to," to get it right can create a burden as well. Not in a sense of the way we think of right in our minds but hearing the right message from God. This may sound a little different, so be patient as we get to the point. When God called Ezekiel, he equipped him for his ministry. He told him not to be afraid. He told Ezekiel that he would be working among his own people. And he told him to do his work whether the people listened or not. At this point, let's stop for just a minute and pray for those very things for our team. Why would we pray for them to do their work whether the people listened or not? Naturally, we have questions about the process and where we are in it. Our team has been commissioned to do this work on our behalf and we are grateful for their work. Pray that they would not be distracted by our need to know who and when and that they would remain deliberate in this journey. One last thing. The Lord told Ezekiel, "I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint" (Ezekiel 3:9a). Pray the Lord will make the heads of our team members like that so they can tune out all the noise that Satan will throw at them so they can remain focused on the Lord's business.

Friday, March 8, 2024 - It took many of us a good while to get used to those blinking caution lights at intersections. We were used to red, yellow, and green lights. But in their wisdom, those engineer types decided that being a people on the move that we could make our own judgment about when it is safe to go, if they gave us a blinking caution light. Every time we go through a green light or a yellow blinking caution light, we trust that the other driver will heed their red light. Pray that our team will proceed with caution when they sense a blinking yellow light and that they come to a full stop when they feel a check in their spirit. Pray they won't feel rushed (like we do when we're using our judgment to be still at the light and the driver behind us wants us to go through the blinking yellow). As hard as it is to wait, pray that our team will be cautious in every move. "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." (Colossians 2:8).

Saturday, March 9, 2024 - Homemade biscuits (not the kind in a bag that says "Homemade"). Some of us can remember when our mama would stand over a pan of flour and shortening and buttermilk and mix all that stuff into a ball of dough. They'd pinch off some of that dough and roll it around in their floured hands and place it on the pan and maybe take the back of her fingers and press it into the top of the biscuit to make some ridges. Then they'd pop the pan into the oven and about twenty minutes later out of that dough came some of the best eating we did as a child. And some of them did that for every meal. What's making biscuits got to do with finding a pastor? Well, anybody that's ever made a biscuit knows it takes time. So it is with finding the right man to lead God's flock. When Paul wrote to Timothy he said, "...if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15).

Our pastor may be delayed, but we know how to conduct ourselves. Mama knew what to do with all the ingredients, she knew the right temperature for the oven, and the right amount of time (even without an oven timer) to bake a fine biscuit. So, God in using all the ingredients: our prayers, our team, our pastor, and his family – at just the right time, will provide us with a fine pastor. Just like Mama pulling that pan out of the oven. Can you see God working?

Sunday, March 10, 2024 - Hurry, hurry, hurry. Instant potatoes. Canned biscuits. Microwavable pizza. All those things have one thing in common - convenience and speed. We forget the taste of a real potato and the biscuit. We give up the taste for convenience. Not saying that's bad, but those tendencies begin to leak over into all parts of our lives with every convenience maker we get. The process our team is going through to search for our new pastor does not need to be one of convenience and speed on their part. We should pray for the pace of the process to be moving according to God's timing and not our own. The team is leaning on the Word of God, our prayers and, yes, considering our recommendations, but it is critical that we all wait on the perfect timing of a perfect God. Too many times we let convenience control our perspective and decisions. Pray this will not be one of those times. He is never early, never late, but always on time. Hey, our God is never in a hurry, always in control. "...the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." (Daniel 4:32)

Monday, March 11, 2024 - As our team continues their task, let's look at how a person in the Bible responded to a job he was given by Abraham in Genesis Chapter 24. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. The servant had lots of questions (as we do now). The Bible says, "So, the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter." (Genesis 24:9). Now, we didn't ask our team to swear an oath, but we did bless the team in their mission of finding our next senior pastor. Abraham's servant put together things for the journey in anticipation of what he might find - the right person for Isaac. Hey, our team has put together a list of things they are looking for in hopes of finding the right man for Englewood. Guess what the servant did. He went scurrying around in a tizzy trying to find someone and finish his mission. NO!! After gathering the stuff and taking the journey, the Bible says in Genesis 24:12, "Then he prayed, 'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham'. Notice how specific the servant's prayer request was? Give success and show kindness. Englewood, pray that the Lord would give us success in finding a new pastor. Pray for the success of our team as they work through all the information they will gather.

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 - The servant was true to the task that Abraham had given him. In Genesis 24:13, the servant says, "See, I am standing beside this spring..." He wasn't running all over the countryside looking for someone. He was standing. He was waiting. Just like our team, they are gathering, they are getting into position, through prayer and seeking God's direction, and they are waiting for our Lord to show them the man of God that is right for Englewood. Psalm 24:1 reminds us, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." So, we can be assured by Psalm 24:1 that the Lord is stirring in the heart of this man and his family as well as the family of Englewood. Just like Isaac would do later in the story, a new person would be welcomed into the family and their hearts would be knit together. Pray for God, the owner of everything to make this so with our new pastor and his family.

Wednesday, March 13, 2024 - What did the servant do after his prayer in Genesis 24:12-13? He got even more specific in his prayers in verse fourteen. He prayed that a girl would give him a drink of water and that she would offer to water his camels. From the teaching we have received over the years, we know that it was not the custom for women to approach men, so right by itself that was a huge prayer request. Near the end of verse fourteen, the servant utters eight little words, "...let her be the one you have chosen." The servant prayed about the main thing. He wanted her to be the one God had chosen, not him – the servant. That's it!! Let's pray for that eight-word phrase with our team today and in the days to come (with a slight change).

Let's pray, "let him be the one You have chosen." That's right, we want the man the Lord has chosen, not someone we have selected from the crowd. In Philippians 4:6, where Paul tells the Philippians to present their request to God, one translation reads, "...Tell God what you need...." We know he knows, but he enjoys hearing from us. Let's join our team in telling God what we need. Not just someone to fill the pulpit, not just a preacher, not just a teacher, but a man after God's own heart. And be reminded to do like Paul said at the end of verse six, "...and thank Him (God) for all He has done."

Thursday, March 14, 2024 - He's too short. He's too tall. He has a beard. He doesn't wear a coat and tie. He wears a coat and tie. He wears those skinny jeans. His hair is too long. He doesn't have any hair. Can you imagine knowing no one and stepping on a stage to share a message from God's Word, knowing that you are being evaluated (the word judged seems a little harsh), by every individual looking at you. And it begins before you speak the first word. If our eyes were cameras, we'd hear a bunch of shutter flashes all around us. Pray that we will not get caught up in the pettiness of, well, what we can get hung up on sometime. Pettiness takes our eyes off what God wants us to hear. It makes us forget about the bigger picture. It's really about wisdom. "A fool (it's a harsh word) vents all his emotions, but a wise person calmly restrains them" (Proverbs 29:11). Wisdom marks a person who will not make a big deal out of every little thing. Wisdom gives us cause for restraint. We all know that God has an ultimate plan. And it may come with a bald head, a beard, wearing skinny jeans and a sport coat, and carrying an i-pad. Instead of making a mountain out of a mole hill, let's exercise that faith that God says can move mountains. Jesus said, "...I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20).

Friday, March 15, 2024 - If you turn on the news today, you will most likely hear a story about citizens of one state fleeing to another state because of their former state's high taxes, low performing schools or out of control crime. They're moving to get away from something. Pray that our pastor is not a person trying to get away from something, but one who knows it is God releasing him from his current assignment to come to Englewood; one who is pure and blameless. Pray that the search team has followed the Lord in reviewing the pastor's previous service history and when it comes time for an interview all relevant, and yes, tough questions are asked to ensure this man is God's man for Englewood. God wants a man who wants to do the work, not a man who simply does it out of some sort of duty or self-satisfaction. It's been written, "God grabs pastors by the heart, He doesn't twist them by the arm." Peter said it most powerfully. Christ wants a pastor to shepherd his flock. "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers -not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be..." (1 Peter 5:2).

Saturday, March 16, 2024 - As we've prayed through this time, we've prayed for our church family, our individual families, our search team and for the man that God has chosen to shepherd us during this next season at Englewood. Let's spend a few days praying specifically for our Senior Pastor. Let's begin by praying for wisdom of our next pastor. Solomon, in all his wisdom, speaking to his son in Proverbs Chapter 2 spoke of the moral benefits of wisdom. He used words and terms in verses one through four like accept/welcome, store up, listen, apply, call out, cry aloud, and search for understanding as if it were a hidden treasure. In verse five Solomon tells his son why he should do all these things, "...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Pray that our senior pastor (whether he's present at this time or not) is actively doing all those things that Solomon told his son to do. Pray that our pastor would be crying out as David did in Psalm 57:2, "I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me."

Sunday, March 17, 2024 - So where does this wisdom come from that Solomon is telling his son about? Makes perfect sense that Solomon would point us to the actual source of this wisdom he is instructing his son about. Solomon says in verse six that the Lord gives wisdom, "...and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." It's not coming through someone else or from a surrogate, it's coming directly from His (the Lord's) mouth. Let's pray that our next pastor is seeking and listening for the words from the

Lord's mouth and not all the busyness of the world. Pray he "...will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2). Pray that his relationship with God is so intimate that a simple whisper from the Lord would be like the sound of a roaring lion, but as gentle as a baby's breath.

Monday, March 18, 2024 - Why would Solomon tell his son all these things? Because he loved him, and as we'll see, there are benefits to seeking the wisdom, knowledge and understanding of the Lord. After telling his son how to find wisdom, Solomon reveals the benefits of seeking the Lord's wisdom in Proverbs 2:7-8, "He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones." Look at those words – victory, shield, guards and protects. It's the promise of God's protection for those "...whose walk is blameless..." Pray our pastor will seek this blameless life in a moral sense as David did in Psalm 19:13, "Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression."

Tuesday, March 19, 2024 - Solomon reminds us that God is our protection against moral failure. Remember Chapter 2 speaks of the moral benefits of wisdom. It's God's promises and protection that we all lean on. Don't you like how Solomon is taking this moment to share his wisdom with his son? It's also God speaking directly to us through His word. Solomon gives qualifiers all throughout this chapter. Remember back in verse five he said, "then." After his son listened and cried out, "then" he would understand. After he tells his son the benefits of understanding the fear of the Lord, Solomon uses that word "then" again. "Then you will understand what is right and just and fair- every good path." (Proverbs 2:9). In ancient days, wagon wheels made ruts in the ground. To make the ride easier, folks would steer their wagon or carts into those ruts. So, to get out of the rut, or off the path would make the ride exceedingly difficult. Pray against anything that would tempt or cause our pastor to get out of the rut. Pray that he would remain on the "good path."

Wednesday, March 20, 2024 - Pray that our pastor is in a constant process of growing as he seeks the Lord. Pray that he is honoring and trusting God in this season of life. Pray that his trust in God will be strengthened even during this time of determining where he should be serving (completing one assignment and beginning another). Pray that he is marinating in God's Word and seeking God's wisdom. Pray that he will make the right choices. Satan will be on the attack as our pastor begins praying through these decisions. Satan may even use that line he used on Eve, "...Did God really say..." (Genesis 3:1) you should leave where you are and move your family to Englewood? Ask God to give our pastor clarity in this decision. Remind him that God speaks to us through His Word and through others. Pray that he would seek wise counsel and that he would be open to the Spirit's leading. Solomon told his son in Proverbs 2:10-11, "For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you." Ask the Lord to make this decision pleasant for our pastor and his family.

Thursday, March 21, 2024 - The entire congregation of Englewood wants a joyful, Spirit-filled shepherd, who will confidently lead us into a deeper relationship with Christ. A man of God who demonstrates a passion for revival and reaching the lost beginning here and extending around the world. We get that by praying for him daily, even though he may remain nameless at this point. Pray this for him today as Paul prayed for the Ephesians, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, in the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints..." (Ephesians 1:17-18). At this point, remember to pray for our current group of staff pastors as well. They have been faithful to carry on the mission of EBC without a senior pastor. They are all men of God who have been seeking the Lord throughout this journey. These men have assumed additional responsibilities which has taken precious time from their families. Let them know you are praying for them as well. It's a wonderful way to encourage them.

Friday, March 22, 2024 - "Use to." That's a phrase that most of us use when we reminisce. We normally use that phrase when we're comparing something from the past to the present. Gasoline "use to" be twenty-five cents a gallon. Bread "use to" be fifty cents a loaf. A gallon of ice cream "use to" be a gallon of ice cream. It's mostly used to say the thing from the past is better than what we have now or what we will experience in the future. Solomon wrote, "Do not say, 'Why were the old days better than these? For it is not wise to ask such questions.'" (Ecclesiastes 7:10). We can get hung up on what was and not see the benefit of what is as we walk this time together. It's because we can look back on the past with certainty. We know what happened. We can't do that with today or the future because there are too many unknowns. The Bible says, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24). Each new day is a gift from the Lord. Each new day brings new things. A fresh opportunity to experience joy and gladness. No matter what "use to" be, today is a chance to start again. As we pray for our new pastor, pray that his arrival begins a new day for Englewood that will be a blessing to him, and us and our community.

Saturday, March 23, 2024 - Here might be a good place to remember that we "use to" have to go out and chop wood to get our heat or go down to the river to wash our clothes, but today we can just set a thermostat and push a button to start a washing cycle (we do have to put the clothes in the washer). Those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior, "...were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you use to (emphasizes added) live...but because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you were saved." (Ephesians 2:4,5). Praise the Lord for that "use to." Pray for a man who is looking to God for direction. Pray for a man who is not living in the past. Pray that we don't live in the "use to" by expecting our new pastor to be like _____ (you fill in the blank). Pray for our next senior pastor to be a "...man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does." (James 1: 25). And before we leave this "use to" thing, there aren't many clothes lines left in the neighborhoods today. Remember when the clothes would be frozen hanging out on the line? Oh, the good ole days.

Sunday, March 24, 2024 - Let's take a few moments today to pray that we will be loving to our new pastor in every way. Now, our new pastor will not be like any other pastor we have had in the history of Englewood. When the thought of comparison starts to creep in, we must recognize those thoughts as lies and an attack from the enemy. Those thoughts are not from God. Here's a truth – our new pastor will not be like _____ (you can fill in the blank). Our new pastor is a one-of-a-kind creation. God created him to be set apart and to stand out. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good work, which God has prepared in advance for us to do." If God considers us his works of art, we shouldn't be treating His man with disrespect or as an inferior work by comparing him to those from the past. It's good to recognize the wonderful men of God who have served at Englewood, but to compare is not a reasonable or fair thing to do. "This is what the Lord says...Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! (Isaiah 43:1618-19) Look how that verse ends – exclamation mark. Pray for this new man, who God is sending to do "a new thing!"

Monday, March 25, 2024 - Comparison can be hurtful and dangerous. Remember Cain and Abel? How about what Joseph's brothers did to him? Saul was thrown into a frenzy when he heard the women singing, "...Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). In today's environment we hear stories about our young people comparing themselves against how many "likes" or followers they have on social media and the consequences that go with that. Have you ever took over a leadership position from a well-liked, respected leader? It's inevitable that comparisons will be made, but until given a chance, no one has the foresight to tell what a person will or will not do, or how an individual's initial thoughts about a person will change. Pray that we will give our new pastor the grace of not comparing him with others. Pray that his focus and ours will be on the preaching and receiving of God's Word. "...in humility receive the word implanted..." (James 1:21).

Tuesday, March 26, 2024 - Pray for God to reveal the humility of our new pastor to our team. Philippians 2:3 reads, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." Pray that he will be a man of humility and compassion. A man who cares about the needs of others. Genuine humility can build a church, but selfish ambition can ruin it. Pray that we will be people of humility. A body that will lay aside selfishness and treat each other with respect and common courtesy. When as a body we consider the interest of others as more important than our own, that type of behavior links us with our Lord and Savior.

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 - Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:1, "...If anyone sets his heart on becoming an overseer, he desires a noble task." Paul goes on to list some of the qualifications in the verses that follow. This list shows that living a blameless and pure life requires effort and self-discipline. The standards are high. We expect our pastor to have lived up to these standards and we will expect him to continue to walk in the ways that Paul has described when he arrives at Englewood. Pray that the standards our pastor has set in his past (through his pastorates and his home life) will be evident to the team when they conduct their research through all means available to them. "But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." (John 3:21). Here's a good place for a little reminder to all of us too; we should strive to follow these guidelines as well because they are consistent with what God says is true and right.

Thursday, March 28, 2024 - Pray that our pastor will form an immediate bond with the congregation at Englewood. Many pastors feel alone in the midst of their churches. Pray that we understand his needs and the needs of his family. He may feel he can't share a need because we think if he's a pastor he should have everything together. Here's the reality – he's a man who has prayer needs like the rest of us. His family is just like ours. Pray that we will be open, and he would be comfortable enough with us to share any prayer need he has. Pray that we would be as responsive to his request for prayer as we would expect him to be of ours. The pastor and his family need us to lift them up daily, so the enemy won't have an opportunity to do damage. There was a sign on the monitors in the Narthex at one time that asked this simple question, "Have you prayed for your pastor today?" Let's make that commitment to pray continuously for our pastor and his family. "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in it various forms." (1 Peter 4:8-10)

Friday, March 29, 2024 - "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up." (James 4:10). James listed five ways to come near to God in Chapter 4, beginning in verse seven. Submit to God, resist the devil, purify your hearts, grieve and mourn over your sin and finally, humble yourself. Pray that the Lord would help our pastor humble himself before an almighty God. Pray that he would submit under the mighty hand of the Lord, so that God will lift him up in his ministry. Peter said it like this, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." (1 Peter 5:6). We can often get hung up in position or status, hoping to get whatever we consider proper recognition for what we do. Peter reminds us that God's recognition counts more than praise from others. May we come to know our pastor's wisdom and knowledge through his deeds done in humility. "This is what the Lord says...This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word..." (Isaiah 66:1,2). May our pastor be such a man.

Saturday, March 30, 2024 - No one man has all the gifts necessary to build up the church. There is wisdom to be found in a multitude of counselors. "Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory." (Proverbs 11:14). Pray for the Lord to provide a pastor who understands and is convinced of the New Testament practice of having a plurality of elders - the practice of raising up godly men to share the load. It sets an example for the men of our church that the work of the ministry is not set for a select few. Caring for the church can be a burden and the Lord did not intend for one man to bear it alone. When Paul was saying his farewells to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28 he

said, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood." Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders (with an "s") in every town. "May You, the God of peace..., equip our pastor(s) with everything good for doing Your will, and may You work in them what is pleasing to You, through Jesus Christ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20,21)

Sunday, March 31, 2024 - We may not know the name of our pastor as of this writing, but we can pray for him and his family. The man we call will have a tremendous responsibility placed on him almost immediately. There will be a brief honeymoon period, but then comes the daily grind of ministry. "...They keep watch over you as men who must give account..." (Hebrews 13:17) He will not be able to take off the weight of ministry when he gets in his vehicle to go home. In addition to all the responsibility of leading the congregation at Englewood, he will serve as the leader of his home. If he is married, he has joined in a union that merges a man and a woman in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. This marriage covenant was instituted by God (Genesis 2:24) and referred to by Jesus (Matthew 19:4-6). A man and woman promise themselves to each other, they take responsibility for each other's welfare, they love each other above all others, and they share in an intimacy that is reserved for marriage. Pray that this move to Englewood would be accompanied by a strengthening of their marriage, as they work through the move, opening a new home, settling in, and getting to know new people in their new role. Pray for peace to rule abundantly in their marriage and their home.

Monday, April 1, 2024 - Cindi McManamin writes, "A pastor's wife is often seen as the female equivalent of the pastor, wherein the congregation expects just as much from her as they do the pastor. Even if she isn't on the church payroll, doesn't have seminary training, isn't ordained, has children to care for, and a career job to help with her husband's income, as well. That's a pretty heavy load of expectation on a person who may feel she is disappointing others more than helping." Pray that our pastor's wife will not feel the pressures that Cindi is speaking of. Pray that she will love the Lord with all her heart, mind, soul, and strength. Pray for her personal walk with the Lord. Pray that she will be nourished and strengthened during her times with the Lord. Pray that her testimony will be genuine and that she will guard her heart. King Solomon said, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." (Proverbs 4:23).

Tuesday, April 2, 2024 - PK's. Preacher's kids, Police Officer's kids, Physicians Kids, Privileged kids – PK's. Whether we like to admit it or not, we tend to look at these kids a little differently. We think because of who their daddies and mamas are, they're supposed to act and respond to the world differently. But they don't. The impact of sin on their lives is as real as it is in ours. We may or may not know at this point if our new pastor has any children or not. If he does, we don't know what stage of life they're in. They could be infants, teenagers, or adults with children. At this writing we just don't know. But let's begin praying for them now. Pray that their hearts are receptive to the Word of God. Pray that they will have a heart for Jesus. All our children get their foundation from us. "Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." (Deuteronomy 4:9). We all have a story to tell of God's great acts of faithfulness. Moses reminded us to tell our children, the PK's kids, our extended family, and our friends of the great acts of God in our own life. Help our pastor strike a balance of instruction, discipline and teaching that helps his children want to love and live for Jesus. Pray that he will "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6).



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