

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
149 Main Street
Madison Heights, VA 24572

MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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George B. Harris, Minister
Email: bernerdharris@yahoo.com
mhcc16@yahoo.com
Church Telephone: (434) 845-3855
Minister's Telephone: (434) 215-4846

Pam Hubbard
Music Director

Brenda Harris
Administrative Assistant

Longevity and Success

As you know, the coronavirus pandemic has been hard on all of us. It has been hard on us as individuals and as a church. First we wrestled with ways of conducting ministry and worshiping God safely. Then as the pandemic began to ease up we were excited and eager to get back together with fellowship activities and singing. However, the delta variant set us back and we were forced to focus once again on safety and reconsider fellowship events and singing.

As the 117th birthday of the church arrives I can't help but marvel at your tremendous longevity and success. I often reflect on what makes us different. Along with the other mainline Protestant churches in America we have experienced a natural decline in membership due to an aging populous with fewer new members coming in to replace them. This is because we live in a society that is complacent in regards to faith, religion, and worship. As a consequence, many churches struggle to survive and some of the closest churches to us have been forced to close. Yet throughout all of this, you have maintained stability and fortitude.

I think the reason for your stability and fortitude during hard times is due primarily to your devotion and commitment to sound theological doctrine. Our contemporary society does not place a lot of emphasis on doctrine but it is probably the most important issue that we can be faced with. I will explain my position on this by referring your biblical knowledge. As you know, in the Old Testament God sent prophets to remind the people of the will of God, warn them of the consequences of transgressing from the will of God, and appeal to them to repent. In the Bible the battle has always been between the will of God and the will of humans. The problem is when the people of God stray from the word of God.

In the New Testament we see that the biggest challenge that confronted Jesus was not the forces of evil. They recognized his divinity status right away and they were easily defeated by his word alone. The biggest problem that Jesus faced was the same problem as in the Old Testament; the people of God strayed from the word of God. The Bible points out the necessity for correct theological doctrine much better than I can. There are two places within the scriptures that come to my attention. **Mark 7:6** This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines. You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition (NRSV). The other is **2nd Timothy 4:3** For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires (NRSV).

The sin that the Old Testament prophets addressed was when the people of God failed to obey the word of God. The sin that Jesus addressed was that the people who were supposed to be following and teaching the word of God were instead following and teaching human doctrine while claiming to be righteous with God. In today's contemporary society we are faced with this very same sin. This is because it is a matter of the will of God vs. human will and human nature does not change. Instead of being enlightened by the word of God, the opponents of Jesus rejected logic because their doctrine was based on emotions. As a consequence they resorted to arguing instead of reasoning. Jesus was able to bypass the obstruction of the self-righteous by using metaphors. Instead of changing their selves to fit the will of God, they changed their interpretation of the word of God to suit their selves. This is why correct biblical doctrine is so very important.

George