

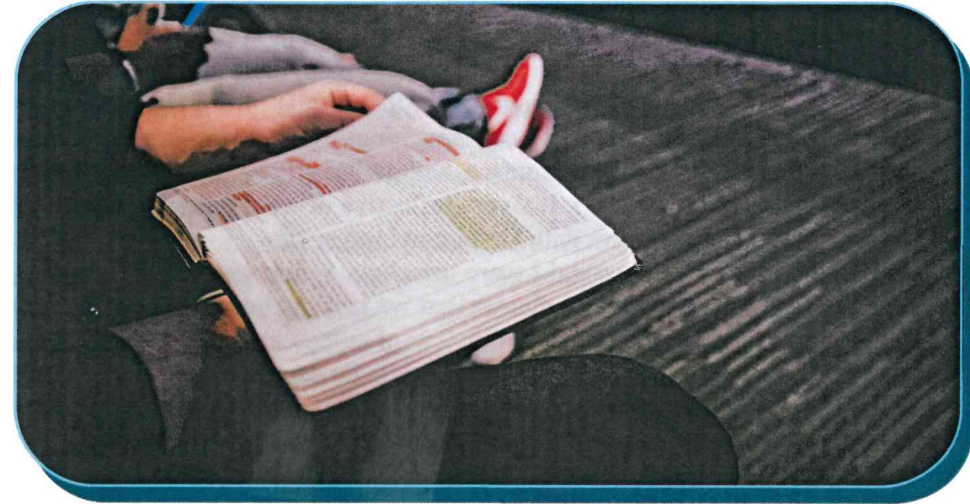


The Fountain  
1023 N Chinowth St.  
Visalia, CA 93291



The  
**FOUNTAIN**  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

*Intentionally Growing, and #LivingSENT for Jesus*



The  
*Fountain*  
Christian Church

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# I Had a Nightmare About the Church

By Pastor Sam Sears

When I say “the church,” what do you think of? I think that, for most of us, we picture our local congregation, or perhaps the building itself. We know that the building isn’t the church, but because of strong associations, it takes some conscious effort to really picture us, the people, as the church and the body of Christ. Think broader still. How do we as one local church relate to other churches? Are we not all the church? As in the body of Christ? All of those who believe and follow our Lord and Savior? So when I say I had a dream about the church, I should probably be more specific: the dream, the nightmare, was about the American Church, the believers who make up Christ’s body here in the U.S. and are tasked with being salt and light in our nation.

Before describing my dream, I must assure you, this was a real dream. I experienced it and woke up after having it in the middle of the night. I awoke with instant understanding of what was happening in the dream. I won’t confidently claim that the dream, or nightmare, had divine origins, but I won’t rule it out, either (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17). It’s very reflective of what I already feel to be true and of the concerns I share with God in my prayer life.

In the dream, Heather and I were traveling. While we were on our trip, we were excited to go and visit a church that we had not been to in some time. This is true to life, as whenever I possibly can, I enjoy catching up with Christians with whom I use to fellowship. I do not understand, not going to church while away from home. If it is possible to go to a church that you know is doctrinally sound, even on vacation, I want to do so. Church isn’t something that “takes” my time, in a negative sense, but instead energizes me for the rest of the week, so even if I’m not here, I hope to be assembled with fellow believers on Sundays (Hebrews 10:25).

In the dream, we arrived in a parking lot that was massive. It reminded me of the parking lot for a church outside of Birmingham Alabama, Briarwood Presbyterian Church. We had attended two different youth-oriented apologetics conferences there. It was clear that this wasn’t just a church building and a parking lot, but it had a true campus with multiple buildings. Briarwood Presbyterian, the real world one, had its own youth “Barn” that was far bigger than our entire church, and while I didn’t see that exact layout in the dream, it had the same immense feel.

After we pulled into the massive church, we walked our way to the entrance, and as we entered, we weren’t greeted by anyone. People were around, but no one spoke to us. We made our way to the second floor, looking for our favorite Sunday School small group. We were disappointed to discover that it wasn’t meeting and went to the cafeteria.

In the cafeteria, we spotted people we recognized, and they were from

multiple past churches we had attended; some we had never seen in real life, to my knowledge at least, but we knew them in the dream. A friend motioned us over, and we sat on a foldout, kid’s style cafeteria table, with little round seats. It was exactly the type of situation I had in my own elementary and high school experience, as well as those I had seen in churches that had rented from schools. It was one of many in large rows all over the giant cafeteria; there was loud chatter everywhere, but none of it was discernable.

I asked about our old small group, and someone told me that they didn’t do that anymore. The material was too hard, and instead, they met in the cafeteria. It was more “popular.” So, we stayed with them to catch up. The “class” began with someone handing out materials.

To my astonishment, class was just a few rounds of Uno, followed by a kid’s craft. There was yarn and a cardboard cut-out, that we were supposed to “sew” a pattern in with the yarn. I can’t recall the pattern. While we did that, some elderly lady I had never seen, with her hair up in a bun, and wearing an incredibly old-fashioned dress, droned on in a low mumble that I could not comprehend. I did hear those sitting next to me extol the teaching method. “So easy to understand,” my friend stated while someone else joyously shared, “I feel so blessed.”

After the Sunday school “class,” we were set to go to the auditorium and hear the sermon. For some reason, rather than follow the crowds, we got lost. I found myself in an arcade. No joke — the church had an arcade. I was amazed at how many shinny new arcade cabinets were there, all flashing bright demos and sounding off laser sounds and casino machine-like metal clinks to simulate the sound of money clinking together.

Despite the distraction, I was trying to find my way to the sanctuary. I wanted to get in my seat and was looking forward to hearing a sermon. No matter which way I looked, I couldn’t find my way. I somehow got separated from Heather, and then I found myself by some sort of carnival game that involved a Jetski on a small track, and large foam building blocks that were built up and surrounded the track. It was unlike anything I had ever seen, and while it looked somewhat fun, it did not look stable.

I found myself drawn to a crack between two large foam pieces that were supporting the track. At first, it was just a desire to investigate the space, to see if there was something on the other side. I put my hand towards the opening, as it seemed to widen. As I inched closer, I was suddenly, violently sucked inside, and the thing closed around me.

I found myself suffocating and thrashing wildly. I managed to force myself out the other side, only to find people waiting there. “Oh, he got stuck,” they said. It sounded like they were dismissive of me. I didn’t feel helped.

I continued my journey and went from room to room, but I never  
*(Continued on page 4)*



could find the sanctuary. The name of the room, the location of the room, didn't matter. I just wanted to find people assembled to hear God's Word taught.

I met up with Heather in the lobby, and other folks were nearby smiling and happy, walking around and talking with one another. The service had apparently ended quickly, before I could even find it. Heather couldn't find it either. We left, still unsure where the sanctuary even was, and couldn't recall hearing a single thing about God or the Bible while there.

The meaning was obvious. The American church has become focused on amusement. I use that word carefully and with the intent to remind you of its origin: a-muse-ment, a (without) muse (thought.) Entertainment, in and of itself, isn't sinful; after all, being more boring doesn't mean being more holy. We don't want our church to be boring. In fact, we should have passion and excitement about God, Who He is, and what He has done for us. To quote a friend of mine, reflecting on the goodness of God, "If that doesn't light your fire, then your wood is wet." That's why I don't mind if our churches entertain a bit. We should strive to make the most impact during our time with those new to our church services (Colossians 4:5), but we shouldn't be thoughtless.

Deep lessons were too hard for the church in my dream. Feelings and fun were the focus. After waking up, I felt — and still feel — that it is, sadly, a perfectly accurate reflection of much of the American church.

Having spent two years as a full time apologist (who is one who engages in apologetics), case making and critical thinking for the cause of Jesus, I am painfully aware of why young people leave the church. When those who have doubts ask hard questions, many whom they ask fail to follow the command of 1 Peter 3:15 and are not ready to give an answer to those hard questions and explain why they believe what they do. Many doubters are given pat answers like "just have faith." The world doesn't even define faith — a continued trust based on evidence — the same way the Bible does, and instead paints it as "blind" or pretending to know something we don't. It's automatically a negative in today's culture.

The dream church might really be a "dream church" to some. They were wealthy; they had plenty of people present. But how long would that last when prosperity was gone? When they need to be soldiers for Christ in a cultural battleground and train their young people to survive in a hostile world? If individuals were only there to see one another, feel good and have fun, what would happen to that place when something more fun came along?

I passionately believe in the phrase, "Ideas have consequences, and bad ideas have victims." Recognizing the consequences of that truth play out in society over and over again, I plan for my next several newsletter articles to address the bad ideas that have lead the American church, the church of the Western world, to resemble what I think is a nightmare. Our churches are often shallow. We often do not love God with our mind (Matthew 22:37). We often feed the enemies within, and I think it can have disastrous consequences.

In the meantime, I pray that you find DEPTH at the Fountain.

## Cherished

Our own Danny Frigulti has published a new book. This one is titled *Cherished... with Love from Above* and the first printed copies just arrived at his home a few days ago.

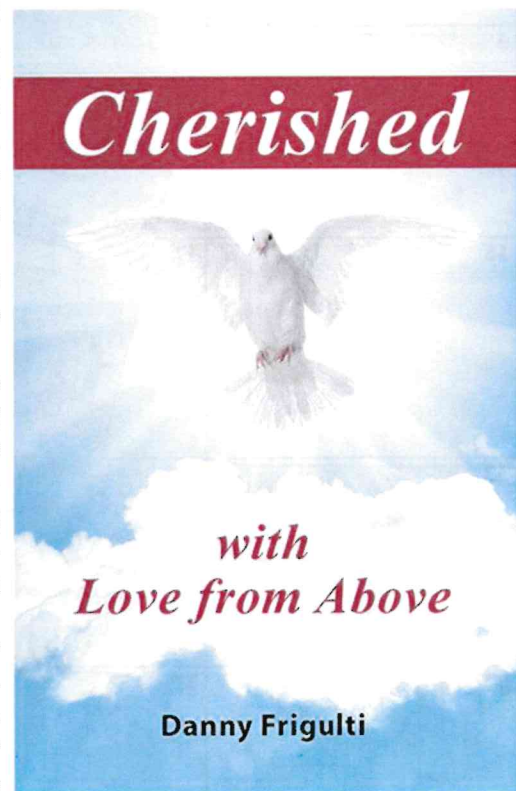
In the opening pages of the book, Danny writes, "While listening to music on my computer, a song I had not heard for years captivated my attention. That song is titled *Cherish* and was recorded in 1966 by *The Association*. The melody and words display truth and beauty. As I listened to it repeatedly, the idea for this book began forming in my mind. Take time to listen to *Cherish*, and you will realize that we do not cherish one another in friendships and marriage as often as we should."

Danny continued, "Since *cherish* is the focus of this book, it is a must to present a common definition of this precious word... To cherish someone is to: *hold dear, treat tenderly with care and affection, keep in mind, and cling to in thought.*"

Earlier this year, Danny met Nathan, a Christian young man involved in national TV media who was passing through Visalia. After a brief conversation, they exchanged information and Danny sent him copies of several of his books.

Nathan wrote back, "It was great meeting you at the chocolate store (in Visalia) back in January... Thank you for the work you are doing in writing books, speaking truth and being a witness to the Lord. I pray to have as much courage as yourself in approaching friends and strangers with the message of the gospel... you are an inspiration."

As you read Danny's new book *Cherished*, you will be surprised how often historical evidence lays out a "cherish pattern" that "the eternal Lord of love" has destined for each of us.





# August 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 8:30 AM Outside Worship 10 AM Streaming Worship 11:30 AM Streaming Worship	3					8
9						15
16	17					22
23	24					29
30	31					

**Watch your email and  
our website  
<https://thefountaincc.org/>  
for events that we will be  
hosting as we continue  
to adjust to the  
changing times.**



# Nudge Calls

By Chuck Romer

I had a minor nosebleed on Tuesday afternoon, July 7.

On Wednesday, it came back... a little stronger and it lasted longer.

Late Thursday morning, it was bleeding again. It was almost noon, so rather than trying to see our family doctor, I asked Donna to take me to Urgent Care. They inserted a small balloon to stop the bleeding, cauterized one small cut that they could see, and we were on our way back home in about an hour.

That might have been the end of the story, but sometime after supper the balloon came loose. By 11 p.m., the blood was flowing again, and I got Donna up to take me to Kaweah Delta ER. Because of COVID, I had to check in by myself, and I sent Donna back home to sleep. One blessing of walking into the hospital with visible bleeding is that I got served in the express lane... and I was in my ER room in just a few minutes meeting with two doctors and a nurse.

Meanwhile Donna had gone back home... and even though it was late, she decided to post on Facebook for some prayer support. She wrote, "For friends who are still up at 1 a.m., please pray for Chuck. Just took him to ER for a nosebleed that won't stop. We were already at urgent care today where his nose was cauterized and packed."

Back at the ER, they had inserted a new balloon in my nose to stop the bleeding, and kept me under observation. I took a taxi home about 3:30 a.m.

By the time I woke up late Friday morning, there were dozens of responses to Donna's Facebook post... and we could sense the love and concern from our friends and church community.

Mid-morning the phone rang... and our phone didn't recognize the caller. I decided to answer anyway, and the joyful voice on the line was someone who I hadn't talked with since he moved away from Visalia 15 years ago... "Hi, Chuck... this is Art. How are you doing?"

Art and I played on a worship team together for several years... he was a trumpet player and he loved Latin percussion instruments... always playing with excellence and sensitivity to the music... and he's a joyful Jesus follower.

This particular morning he had been working with his crew to clean up a large mold issue in a home. When break time came, the other workers had stepped out of the house and Art was inside by himself. He said he felt a *nudge* in his heart to call and pray with me. So he stopped and called... and we talked for a few moments... and then he prayed. I could sense his love and concern – and God's love, too, in that moment... and I was so thankful.

After we said goodbye, I started thinking back over recent months, thinking about times where I had felt a *nudge* to call someone... or go visit someone... and I found an excuse NOT to do it right then –telling myself I'd do it later. Sometimes "later" never came... and in the case of one dear friend, he passed

away before I got to visit with him one last time. I paused to pray again... this time asking God's forgiveness for the times I hadn't obeyed His gentle nudge in my heart.

After this experience, I wanted to change. Over the next few days I stopped three times to call someone I felt God prompting me to call... people I cared about, but somehow I just hadn't stopped long enough in previous weeks to pick up the phone and make the call.

I even stopped writing this article two paragraphs ago to make a "nudge" call to Fred Wilder, one of the newer members of our church family. Fred doesn't have any internet access, so he hasn't been able to keep in touch through Facebook or our live stream services on Youtube. Besides taking a moment just to catch up on life, I discovered that his birthday is tomorrow, and I got to wish him a happy 86<sup>th</sup> birthday. We had to cut the call short, as two of his daughters were there and his dinner was ready.

I want to be more sensitive to these "God nudges" in my life this year. I want to (1) **SENSE** when God prompts me to contact someone... (2) **STOP** what I'm doing as quickly as I can... and then (3) **ACT** on what my heart is inviting me to do.

Will you join me in responding to the nudges God gives each of us, inviting us to care for our family, friends and neighbors? I think we'll all be better disciples if we do!

And Fred... I hope you had a *wonderful* birthday!!! (He's pictured with 3 of his 4 daughters.)





## Missionary News

By Sam Sears

I got to meet our Missionary Jeff Kirsch while at Calvary Chapel Cincinnati and his oldest son got baptized while I was there!

Covid-19 and shut downs have severely impacted their ability to minister in Alaska, but they hope to return later this year.

Please, keep the Kirsch family as well as our other missionaries in prayer!



## Attendance & Giving

July 2020

Date	Attendance	Giving
July 5 .....	43 .....	\$4,477.00
July 12 .....	41 .....	\$2,721.85
July 19 .....	50 .....	\$7,244.20
July 26 .....	67 .....	\$2,502.00
Online Giving .....		<u>\$3,320.00</u>
Total .....		\$20,265.05



## Prayer Concerns

August 2020

Pray for the desire and opportunity to effectively share your faith!  
Our Nation and Leaders  
Teachers & Students in Visalia

### Health

Ana Morales, Ashley Banuelos, Barbara Grant, Cindy Marks, Donna Eastin, Frank Henley, Jean Lamb, Kevin Guy, Lisa Barns, Lynette Johnson, Pam Shattuck, Pauline Gurule, Rick Hamilton, Fred Wilder, Sandy Zinger

### Cancer

Charles Douglass, Hazel Bahrenburg, Jiggy Greene, Jim Ramsey, Joe Grant, Joe Ryan, Michael Elder, Mike Brazil, Olly Ajluni, Shannan Ajluni

### Other Needs

Debbie Englebrecht (back surgery recovery), Mary Cosmey Family (loss of son John), Nina Suttles (Vision), Sheila Wharton (Heart attack)

### Military

Andie Richwine - Marine, Brett Boland - Virginia, Jason Mariel - Afghanistan, Matthew Calhoun - Fort Knox, Michael Reid - Fort Worth, TX  
Preston Correa - Marines, RJ Ajluni - Navy

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

August 2020

Joseph Ajluni .....	3
Hoku King .....	3
Carol Stone .....	3
Traci Yale .....	4
Heather Ritter .....	6
Charles Southard .....	7
Preston Correa .....	12
Richard Findley .....	12
Jessica Parker .....	13
Laura Gunning .....	21
Patrick Hogan .....	22
Charles Romer .....	27
Neoma Cowing .....	30

*Happy Anniversary!*

Russell & Lisa Barnes .....	4
Kevin & Valerie Ronk .....	8
Brian & Chelsea Peter .....	11
Buz & Donna Southard .....	11
Wayne & Sue Geis .....	30