

HAZEL LEAF

Hazelwood Baptist Church

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"To express the love of God through worship, caring, sharing, and reaching out to others with the good news of Jesus Christ."

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Reflections.....

As I write this to you, the days (and nights) of winter are starting to pass and the signs of spring are starting to remind us that change is coming! I am always amazed at the changing of the seasons and the rhythm of nature. Creator God continues to remind us that He, and He alone, is the orchestrator and director of life and all of its details. As we trust in Him and follow Him closely with our lives individually and collectively as a church family, we once again are reminded that all we have and all that we are is a direct result of God's blessings in our lives.

As we head into a new season, I am reminded that we are indeed in a new season within the life of HBC. At little over 700 days ago (March 14, 2020) we entered into an unprecedented time of isolation, social distancing, masking and a curtailing of life as we had always known it to be. The pandemic brought lots of challenges and changes. It caused us to move into new ways of doing and being church. From the very beginning of the pandemic, HBC rose to the challenge and did so many things that pushed us forward in meeting the needs of our congregation. As your pastor, I am so very proud of the manner in which many engaged and helped to continue the ministry and mission that God gave to our church. Your prayers, financial support and involvement have been such a reminder that God remains in control.

As we move into the spring and as the pandemic seems to be making a marked drop in cases, I believe that the time has finally come for us to fully come back together as a church family. We have many that we have not been able to see due to the pandemic. I want to ask you (and myself) to pray and renew your commitment to HBC in these days. We need you and we want to see you. Of course, we will continue to remain cautious and practice all social distancing measures, but we need to move forward with renewed zeal and passion to reach our community with the life-changing message of the Gospel! In the coming weeks leading up to Easter, we will be intensifying our in-reach to our HBC family and our outreach to our community. We will be even more intentional in re-gathering the HBC family together and infusing it with new faces and new opportunities. I love the church. I always have, and I always will. And I know that you love it, too. Here's why.

First, it is the body of Christ. Any reasonable understanding of that term and the way it is described in the New Testament makes clear the fact we cannot be part of Christ unless we are part of the body. The fact we are a part of Christ body should be a sober realization on our part. We need each other. Period.

Second, the church is the bride of Christ. Every husband wants his bride treated with gentleness, respect, and loving care. Throughout Scripture the people of God are referred to as the bride. Our loving care of the bride -- building it up, treating it with respect -- shows our love for the bride. If Christ loved the church, we should love it as well.

Third, the church belongs to Christ. He described it as "my church." He built it. He cares for it, and he nurtures it.

Fourth, the church is the hope of the world. Nothing in the world can bring about as much positive good as the church. I am well aware that the church has plenty of "spots and blemishes," but I am also aware that it has the potential to serve God and to make him known throughout the world. The church can make a huge difference. It certainly did in my life. It gave me loving relationships and a picture of people who were unwavering in their faith and fully devoted to God. More than anything else, the church provided a place for me to hear the call of God. It still does.

May God bless Hazelwood -- His church. Let's dream, Hazelwood. And pray.