

# Sterling Wood *Connection*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF STERLING WOOD CHURCH

APRIL 2018– VOLUME 19



## Disciple Now 2018

This month RISE youth ministry held our annual Disciple Now Weekend. This is a weekend where we invite our students to come together and enjoy time in the word while we have fun! We had 20 students come together and learn about the difference between just surviving this world and being revived in their spiritual walk. Our students also completed a local mission project and cleaned up the underpasses at Woodforest and Wallisville. They were able to minister to some people in need while serving the community.



We are very thankful to the following families and groups for stepping up and helping make our weekend a success: The Gray's, The Hopper's, The Holder's, The Watts', The Palacio's, The Shelly's, The Griffith's, Ms. Nancy Young, The Men's Breakfast Crew, The Spanish Ministry. The weekend would not have been as successful without you all stepping up and meeting our needs.



## CHURCH EVENTS

*April 1*

Easter Services  
Egg Hunt at 12:30PM

*April 8*

Newcomers' Class

*April 12*

Mom to Mom

*April 22*

Children's Choir  
Practice

*April 29*

Baby Blessing Class  
Qtr. Business Mtg.

Our ministry's new identity was born out of a very difficult year. We lost a youth pastor and pulled together as a ministry to move forward, even though none of us knew quite how. We helped to support and rebuild a community devastated by hurricane Harvey. We were forced to tear down and rebuild our space with the help of a gracious and supportive congregation. The youth leader team could have quit with the mountain of work required to keep the ministry going. The students could have quit due to lack of consistent leadership and the loss of the youth room. Everyone that had the opportunity to make an impact, both internally and externally, chose to rise and meet the need. We wanted to make sure that our ministry aligned with the mission and direction of the church. Sterling Wood's mission is to G.R.O.W. **G**lorify God through worship (Worship), **R**each others in His name (Evangelism), **O**bey His commands (Discipleship), and **W**ork in ministry (Service). While each letter lays out a portion of our mission at church, the word GROW inspires us to reach for something more. It is a call to action.

RISE intends to match the church's mission by:

**R** – Reaching others in His name (Evangelism)

**I** – Inspiring disciples (Discipleship)

**S** – Serving others (Services)

**E** – Extol His name (Worship)

RISE is also a call to action. It is indicative of who we are striving to become because we have a God that empowers us to be the best kind of different.

We chose to rebrand our ministry to ensure that our name represents our challenge, our calling. We learned that when the odds seem overwhelming, trusting in God, and working to align with His will and direction, is how we get through. Our key verse is Proverbs 24:16:

*For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity.*



The bible assures us that there will be hard times; the fallen world that we live in will test our faith. There will be times that we will fail to do what we know is right, we will fall. Without God's grace and strength, that fall would be permanent and we would be doomed to eternal calamity. The righteous choose to lean on God in the good times and the bad so that they can rise out of the calamity that this world promises.

RISE youth ministry will teach our students about the power they have when they trust God. It is a call to set aside their own will so that they will RISE above what is possible on their own.





**Relay for Life** is May 4-5, 2018. This event helps the American Cancer Society fund groundbreaking research, crucial patient care programs, and education and prevention information. This year, SWC will have a prayer booth and will hand out waters at the event. See Melanie Ayers for more info.

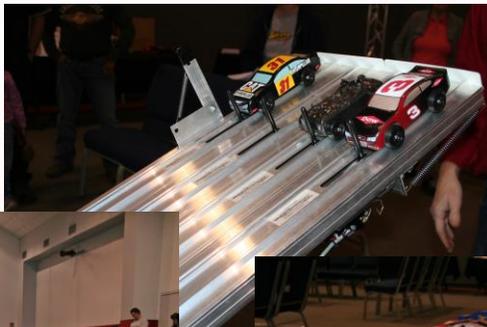
**The Baby Blessing Class** will be held on April 29 and May 6 at 9:30 AM. The class is being taught by Nick and Adriana Olivas. This class will lead to the Baby Blessing and Dedication held on Mother's Day, May 13, at 11 am.

Please see Nick and Adriana Olivas for more info.



**This year's Awana Grand Prix** took place on March 7, 2018. Clubbers submitted 49 cars to be judged for design and speed. As always, our kids had tons of fun at this much anticipated race. Thank you to everyone who participated and to all of our volunteers who made it possible.

Awanas continues to meet every Wednesday from 6:15-8PM for children ages 3 years-6<sup>th</sup> grade.



# *Pastor's Notes*

## *Our Call to Carry the Cross*



The most enduring symbol of the modern Church is the cross. We decorate our churches and homes with it. We buy jewelry and clothing with its image on it. And during the Easter season, we recount the great suffering of Jesus on it. Most, if not all of us, will never have to endure anything so physically or spiritually agonizing.

So then why does Jesus ask us to be ready to take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23)? To answer this question, I want to take a look at a verse that I have found misused a lot over my years in churches. Romans 8:28 says: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." So how do we marry together these two verses? How is taking up a cross for my "good?" It sounds pretty awful. But as our Interim Pastor, Dr. Steel, is fond of saying, "A text without context is a pretext."

The root of the misuse of this verse involves a mindset that says that hardship and struggle are to be avoided at all costs. Whether we admit it to ourselves, we can get angry at God for discomfort or challenges He allows to be put in our path. The problem with just quoting Romans 8:28 is that we miss what "good" actually looks like for a Christian. More often than not, I have heard it quoted to mean a removal of difficult circumstances and a return to comfortable living. But is that really what it means to be a disciple of Christ who is taking up the cross daily?

Romans 8:29 is the key to understanding what "good" looks like in the Christian life and how to help us develop the "obedience" mindset, instead of maintaining the "comfort" mindset. Verse 29 says, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."

This verse may seem a little more unclear than verse 28, but essentially, what verse 29 is saying is that the "good" that God promises to believers is to be transformed more and more to look like Jesus! Jesus was just the first, but we are to follow in His footsteps. This is how Jesus can say in John 14 that believers in Him will be able to do things even greater than He did!

At this point, you might be asking yourself, why such a downer of an article? Isn't Easter supposed to be a time of celebration? To that I would say absolutely! While we reflect on what Jesus did for us, it helps to remember what He asks of us as His people. While hard times and difficulties don't sound fun at all, we have to remember that if the goal is to be more like Jesus, we have to share in what He experienced. Hebrews 12:8 says that if we are not disciplined through hardship by God, we can't be true sons and daughters of God.

A mindset of comfort demands that things work together for my definition of good at all times. When circumstances are bad, happiness leaves and my relationship with God suffers. A mindset of obedience is one that can find joy in any circumstance, even on the days when the cross gets heavy and the discipline seems severe.

As we take the time to remember the cross this Easter season, let us celebrate that through every trial and every storm, we get to increase our Kingdom impact by becoming more and more like the One who died for us.

Happy Easter,  
Kyle and the Staff of Sterling Wood Church