



## Stretching - Luke 5:37-38

By Randy Shepley

I have really enjoyed seeing many of you over the past two Sundays. During these two weeks, many of you came to in person worship for the first time in over a year. It was so good to see you. We still have many persons attending online as well. As a preacher, it is fun to interact with an in person and online congregation at the same time! I admit, it is challenging and has caused me to stretch. Stretching, however, is good for me. In fact, stretching is good for any follower of Jesus.

Luke 5:37-38 is one place where Jesus teaches his disciples and the crowd about stretching one's faith. He tells the crowd that new wine cannot be poured into old wineskins, or else both the old skin and new wine are ruined. New wine must be poured into new wine skins so the skins can stretch in the midst of the new way and work at hand. Jesus, of course, is referring to people stretching themselves to open their hearts to the new way of the Kingdom of God.

What does this mean for our church family? Simply this: ***God is inviting us to stretch. As we are starting our move into a post-pandemic world, we have two choices: return to our pre-covid past or embrace a fresh vision from God to minister to a broken world*** (many thanks to Chuck Harrison from the Peninsula Baptist Association for this analogy).

We are not called to merely resume our pre-pandemic activities and schedule. Instead, we are called to follow God's Kingdom vision to love this broken, post-modern, post-pandemic world. We are called to stretch. We are called to change. What does this mean, specifically?

- 1. We will invest as much energy and effort in digital ministry as we do in person ministry:** There are persons in our city, region, and nation that we will reach first through digital ministry. In fact, there are some we will reach only through digital ministry. We must use our digital ministry as an invitation to walk with Jesus and participate in in-person community.
- 2. We will invest as much energy and effort in developing Fresh Expressions of church outside the walls as we do building ministry within the church walls:** Before the pandemic, between 50-55% of Americans did not want to step foot inside church buildings for any reason, regardless of how good our programs were. Now, in a post-pandemic world, even fewer Americans want to attend church activities inside the building. If we are going to connect people to Jesus who are not Jesus followers, we will have to do so in the neighborhood, rather than in the church building. A Fresh Expression of church "is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church" (Travis Collins). During the pandemic, many persons in our church, including our Vision Team and Extending Good News Invitations Lead Team have talked about and even experimented with Fresh Expressions. Their goal: to meet people outside the church building and form new expressions of Jesus followers. You will hear much more about how we move outside our walls through Fresh Expression in the days ahead.
- 3. We will not run from the hard conversations and questions asked by our culture regarding the Bible and following Jesus:** This explains why our Racial Justice group that meets with Ivy Baptist Church happens every Monday night. In all of the racial division in our

culture, both churches believe that honest conversation and listening, rooted in the Kingdom of God, is the only way forward for our culture regarding racial injustice. Whatever the topic, we want to engage and listen to the real conversations persons in our culture are having with the love and grace of Jesus.

4. **We will call all persons who are members and participants at FBCNN to the renewal of a “Just Jesus” discipleship ethic:** Sometimes, we forget that our Sunday Morning Bible Study classes, committee meetings, and serving opportunities all have one purpose at their core: to make us more like Jesus in every area of life. If we are not growing over the years in Christ-likeness, then we are missing the point in our church activities. We will encourage one another to grow in Christ-likeness, because really, as a church, and as individual Christ-followers, we only have one purpose: Just Jesus.

As we continue moving forward into the post-pandemic world, I pray that all of us are ready to stretch in becoming like Jesus for the sake of our culture and one another. Jesus does not call us to immerse ourselves in seeking religious and personal comfort. He calls us to stretch and grow. May this next season be our greatest season of growth yet as we all stretch in following Just Jesus.

Stretching with You!

*Pastor Randy*

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## Celebration of Spring

**Church Picnic**

**THIS SUNDAY APRIL 18!**

**5-7PM**

**(Rain Date: April 25)**



Have you missed seeing your church family during this pandemic? We have! Come join us for a picnic so we can see each other and catch up!

Please bring a picnic dinner & a blanket or camping chairs for your family, and feel free to bring your corn hole set too! We will have ice cream sandwiches for dessert, YUM! We will also have bottles of water if you need extra drinks.

Please remember to wear your mask unless eating or drinking, and please practice social distancing. Each family is asked to dispose of their own trash in the outside dumpster. The building will be closed, but there will be limited access to restrooms if needed. Children and youth must be accompanied by their parent/responsible adult if entering the building to use the restroom.

We are thrilled to announce the Playground will be open with the following guidelines:

- Parents/responsible adult must accompany children in the fenced playground area
- Everyone 2 years old and older must wear a mask
- Please use hand sanitizer gel when entering and exiting the playground area
- Mask and water breaks may be taken if your child gets hot and winded; please have your child sit more than 6 feet from others when taking a mask or water break.

Join us for a fun evening of gathering together, catching up on life, and spending time with our church family. We are so excited to be able to gather again!



### **FBCNN Youth Parking Lot Praise**

will be held **tonight** outside near the Youth/Preschool entrance. This will be a time of songs, worship, and fun! Youth and parents are asked to bring a blanket or chairs. **If weather is inclement, Parking Lot Praise will be held inside the sanctuary.**

### **Red Cross Blood Drive Tomorrow**

**Thursday, April 15, 1:30-6PM  
Payne Fellowship Hall**

Help the Red Cross help others by supporting in one of three ways:

**1-Donate blood.** You can sign up online by clicking [here](#) or calling 1-800-Red-Cross and let them know you would like to donate at First Baptist Church Newport News on April 15. All donors will receive a COVID antibody test and the results will be emailed to them within 2 days.

### **Weekly Worship Opportunities**

Join us for worship in person or online Sunday April 18 at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.! Randy Shepley will be preaching.

If you have any technical difficulties watching the service on Facebook Live, please send us a direct message on Facebook so we can help troubleshoot the issue.

The following is a list of weekly events that can be accessed on the First Baptist Church of Newport News Facebook page, youth events that can be accessed on their Instagram page-@fbcnn youth, and young adult events that meet using Zoom. The 8:30 and 10:30 Sunday worship services are uploaded to our [website](#) each Monday, and can be accessed by clicking on the Resources tab.

#### **Sundays**

8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship  
9:30 a.m. Youth Sunday Bible Study  
9:30 a.m. Children's Sunday School  
10:00 a.m. Pre-K & Kindergarten S.S.  
10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship  
12:30 p.m. Hispanic Worship

#### **Mondays**

7:00 p.m. Young Single Adults

#### **Tuesdays**

7:30 p.m. Young Adult Couples

#### **[FBCNN Facebook Live Videos](#)**

If you missed Sunday's service and do not have a Facebook account, you can click [here for 8:30](#) or [here for 10:30](#) to watch it on our Vimeo page.

**2-Be one of two volunteers** needed from our church to sign in and register donors as they arrive. You can sign up to volunteer by clicking the link above or calling 1-800-Red-Cross.

**3-Pray** for those volunteering, donating, and receiving.

Their goal is to receive 30 successful collections. Let's help them reach that goal!

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**DONATE**

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## **Donation Opportunity for Those with IRA Required Minimum Distributions (RMD)**

Congress has approved a permanent charitable giving tax break, known as the "IRA charitable rollover". The rollover is available for those who are 70 1/2, though if your 70th birthday is July 1, 2019 or later, you do not have to take withdrawals until you reach age 72. You can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA of up to \$100,000 to a charity, such as First Baptist Church. The donation will count toward your IRA required minimum distribution.

The distribution is not recognized as income on your tax return. As such, you do not take a donation deduction either. With the change in the recent Tax Legislation, the Standard Deduction has doubled thus itemized charitable deductions will no longer be needed to be kept track of. By donating all or part of your IRA RMD to the church, you receive the benefit of a reduced Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) in that the RMD to charity is not taxed, which helps the opportunity of obtaining lower cost for your Medicare Part B and Prescription Drug premiums.

The distribution must come directly from the IRA account to the church not through the owner of the account. Let our Financial Services Coordinator, Monica Garcia, know how you want the contribution designated, such as the General Fund.

*Rick Elofson*, Treasurer FBCNN

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### **Staff Contact Info**

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