



Contemplating the Word "Abide"

After spending 'Jesus time' one early morning, I shared later in the day with a friend touching on the subject of abiding. We had a good conversation. Zoe and I talked about how we abide, and how to explain abiding with Christ to another. Then she popped the question: 'Would you write a page for *The Bellwether* on how you abide?' I humbly and truthfully told her that even though undiagnosed, I believe I have some sort of delay with processing words to paper. Our eyes met; we chuckled. I asked how many words? (Watch out for her, people!) Immediately, I started thinking about my "go to" resources. The internal Q&A – What is abiding? and How do I abide? – began.

During the next morning's time with Jesus, the internal inquiry reignited. Then came a "STOP IT, Lisa!" I inhaled, then exhaled, lit my candle, asked Jesus to enter. As I enjoyed the warmth of my coffee, I became relaxed and calm. I watched the sun rise as I listened to the cooing of the turtle dove and delighted in the fragrance of the burning candle. I reflected on yesterday's goodness with long-time beloved friends. It was quiet. I was filled with peace and gratitude – and I knew – Christ with me and I with Him. I do not need to fill my head with all my 'go-to's' and 'how to's'. Christ engaged MY mind, emotions, senses, – my being – and I responded.

This is one personal example of abiding with Christ. Although it was comforting and moving, in my opinion, abiding is not about being calm and quiet; it is about accepting, believing and knowing the One who is within me is bringing me within Him. Abiding with Christ is a forever experience. The way I abide is to be aware, to allow, to invite, to want, to explore, to be still, to engage, to sense, to listen, to be open, to believe, to know. I find myself positioning and repositioning in the comings and goings of everyday life. Therefore, abiding looks and feels differently. It's the knowing that never changes. And as I do life, the abiding awareness ebbs and flows – relationally – between me and Christ. Again, it's the knowing: He is within me and I am within Him. My distractions take me away. He is always there, through and through. This brings manifestations of a constant nuanced intermingling presence.

According to Oswald Chambers, with continual determined effort, abiding becomes so much a part of one's life, we will abide in Him without any conscious effort. What is your experience and/or belief about abiding with Christ? Let's continue to study, share, and be together as we abide in unison with one another with and in our Christ.

Lisa Rhodes-Strickler

Member of COTL Sunday Prayer Team

"[Abiding] is about believing and knowing the One who is within me is bringing me within Him."

Abiding
as Disciples of Christ

A Study Group that meets in the barn Sundays at 11 am through July

tag team led by CJ Goeller, Ben Sharpe, and Scott Hansen

A Conversation with Catechesis Assistant Bernard McDaniel



Bernard and his wife Martha were interviewed about their experience as CGS volunteers by Children's Ministry Director Renee Velker (see Martha's interview in the June 2023 edition of the Bellwether). To find out how you too can get involved, email renee@churchofthelamb.org. Visit our website for more information about Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

[My time serving in the children's atrium] blesses me. I can't see what is going on [Bernard is legally blind] but I listen. It makes me so happy the way the children are learning at such an early age. They are learning how to set up for communion. They know how to set up and what to do. I can tell how the catechist is in one area sharing with them about the love of Jesus: his birth, resurrection, the empty tomb, Jesus as the Good Shepherd watching over his sheep. When the question was asked, "Who are the sheep?", one child cried out, "The people!" It blesses me to hear what they are learning. I am learning too.

I hear no instructions when the children come in. The children come in and know what to do and independently come. They happily find a quiet work. Each child participates during the prayer table. When children are young sometimes they don't want to talk. These children are happy to thank the Lord and look to Jesus as the Light and Jesus as the Shepherd. Their prayers are always thankful. It amazes me and makes me so happy how these children experience Jesus at such an early age. My prayer is that these works will continue in the children's hearts for the rest of their lives. The children are the church of tomorrow.

At first I thought I would only be praying. I would have this main job. But it is truly a blessing for the adults who are here. We are blessed to be a part of it. I would encourage anyone to feel free to help. I am sure you will get the same feeling—blessed by being with children participating in this Christian atmosphere.

I was born in 1938 and have been involved in church almost all my life. It has been a part of us. I have never seen anything like this method.

The children connect to us in the atrium. They seek me out in church because they have known me in the atria. Lord willing Martha and I will be back next year!

The Women's Ministry Has Launched

The COTL women and their friends (about 40 of us) gathered for the first time as a group on June 7 to share desserts and be inspired by our guest speaker, Pat Hancock, from Holy Cross Presbyterian church in Staunton. Pat shared the incredible way that the Lord found her in a life filled with sorrow and pain, and raised her up to be a powerful vessel for his kingdom.

This is the essence of why we gather as women: *to be encouraged in our love for the Lord and our love for one another.* We never need to feel alone in our sorrow and pain and no one is an island to themselves. We truly need each other in this life!

As this ministry develops we will be in prayer for other ideas the Lord brings our way to enhance our Christian growth as women of COTL.

Special thanks to Natalie Staley for providing original artwork bookmarks for each woman and to Judy Fischer for extra assistance. We welcome anyone who would like to help in the future to please let us know.



LaVonne Martin

with Debbie Bennetch and Nancy Hay

So Much Work - So many Blessings

Working regularly on the church property I've been able to see the work, efforts, and progress to bring about the changes we all now witness at Church of the Lamb's (COTL) fellowship barn. Following a year of continuous prayer and meetings and discussions of God's plan for this property, visions have begun to become reality. I Corinthians 15:58 extols us to be steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. I want to share the fruit I've seen of some of our labor.

Before the Pentecost party, many hours were spent weed-cutting trails, building bridges and fencing, planting and tending shade and fruit trees, and cleaning out the cow barn as a multipurpose space for Lamb—all to bring glory to God as we invite our community to rest in God's peace on the property he provided to Lamb.

Think about this. Just since January of '23, the following has been completed:

- January 12/13: Teams under the direction of James of Silverstone Patios, started and completed laying **over 5,250 stone pavers** as flooring for our barn fellowship space. That was preceded by excavating debris from the barn interior and receiving and leveling (under the direction of Larry Ayers) over **48 tons of stone and crushed gravel** to provide the base.
- February 11: **50 orchard trees** were planted under Joe's direction.
- March: Alec with Kayla and Dan completed the fencing and cows were brought back onto the property, confined within their OWN SPACE (Double YAY!).
- March 11: James and the team added a sealing finish to the stone surface of the barn floor.
- April 6: Larry and Daniel added electricity to the barn.
- April 8: **Easter services were held in the barn on a REAL floor, with electrical light and sound. Praise God!**
- April 21: Silver Run Forest farm directed and conducted tree cuttings which were planted by teams I directed at the church workday on April 22—EARTH DAY! We planted around **300 of the tree cuttings** prepared the day before. Other teams led by Daniel with Randy, Rick, and others also began construction of the terraced garden walls at the entrance.
- April and May: Dan and Randy led the youth in building knee walls and benches around the barn interior.
- May 6: The entrance garden's terrace walls were designed by Linda, Kappy, and Kate and constructed by Daniel, Don, and Jed.

And then some real fun began:

- Last two weeks of May: **90 (yes, NINETY) tandem axle dump trucks** delivered soil to fill and grade the area in front of our barn to create overflow seating and patio "fellowship" space. That's about 1,188 tons of soil (2,376,000 pounds!!). A pad was also built up for our storage shed. Three tandem loads of gravel came next, followed by two tandem loads of finish gravel (a total of approx. **90 tons of gravel**) and one tandem load of sand. Goods Excavating spread gravel on the "patio" area of the soil and the area designated for our storage shed. **Thanks to Goods Excavation for the excellent fill and grading work!**
- First days of June : James "finish graded" (by hand) the gravel in the "patio" area.



The final finishing team—just some of the many hands that helped on this project.

Then we were all hands on deck

- June 5/6: James directed us to lay fabric on the stone in the patio area and then cover and grade with crushed leveling gravel.
- June 7-9: Rotating teams of volunteers were directed by James to lay pavers on the new patio area as he spread and leveled the sand base ahead of us. Sand and soil were moved around the area using a tractor maintained by Rick. About **6,720 paver stones (Fourteen full pallets, or 44,310 pounds!)** were CARRIED and placed in two and a half days. The teams included the youngest members of Lamb (like Abel Zimmerman and Amelia Velker) to the wisest (like Joe Parker) and many in between. Even Ben Sharpe got involved for a bit, carrying stone to be placed in the patio. Teams were sustained during this work by lunches delivered by Kristi, and donuts from Fran. Everyone was in awe of what we accomplished in such a short time.
- I can go on and on about the continuing work around the property that has been happening since, like the plantings in the terraced beds. But I'll stop here for now.

I Corinthians 12:12-27 looks at the importance of all parts of the body working in concert for the Lord. If ever there was a better example of the need and worth of the parts of the body of Christ serving the whole, I cannot think of it. For me personally, acting (working on God's land) in faith over the past year was a saving grace following some significant life events. **The rewards far exceed the toil and labor.** Many of you who asked me to help with a particular task were actually ministering to me this past year. And you didn't even know it. Matthew 25:40-45 says what you did for the least of these you did for me. I was the least of these.

Since taking over the care of this property, Church of the Lamb's work has allowed the land to literally spring to beautiful life in so many ways — a metaphor in its own right and an exciting glimpse of the promises of God coming to fruition in the work of his people.

All praise to God,

Jed Pascarella

Land Team Member



The Blessing of the Honeybee

In Guatemala, we discovered that the Poqomchi, a Mayan indigenous group we worked with, believed you are specially blessed if honeybees are drawn to your house. When Katrina and I first moved into our home in a tiny Guatemalan village, we found two huge honeybee hives in either end of our house. Consequently, after a long process of extraction, we found ourselves with a lot of messy honeycomb and honey to share with the happy neighbors, and an instant reputation amongst the locals for being blessed. That began my journey in learning about and caring for honeybees.

Back in the States several years ago, I tried my hand at raising a couple of hives but found that absent a good mentor, raising bees is a challenge to learn. There are so many questions that even DIY Youtube videos cannot answer. My first foray into beekeeping ended in failure as I watched my last hive “abscond” and float down the street in a swarm. It felt like my dog had just died. I put the boxes away and strongly considered giving up.

Then, a few years ago, I met Don, a worker at Monger Lumber (and originally from Nepal) who was willing to be my mentor. Don was patient and willing to inspect my bees when needed; I was able to make it through my first winter with three viable hives. That Spring, I returned from a long trip abroad to find I was served notice that my backyard hives were against city code. I would need to remove them immediately. At the same time, I was able to capture swarms from all three hives which doubled my apiary. Getting them out of my neighborhood where children were playing in such close proximity seemed like a good idea and Kevin was gracious in allowing me to put the hives in their front yard. Kevin along with Daniel helped me move the six hives at night to their new digs and a year later we currently have five thriving hives.

Last summer was the first time I've safely harvested honey, totaling about 40 pounds – just enough for our own use over the year, and gifts for family and friends. I am often asked if I will ever harvest enough to sell, but the truth is that I do not know, and for the moment, I am dealing with as many bees as I can handle. The bees should prove to be helpful at the Abbey as pollinator partners for the fruit trees, the flowers, and other trees throughout the property. After the honey has been harvested this summer, the plan is to move them down beyond the barn so that the Whitfields can have free use of their entire yard.

I love to talk about the bees, teach as much as I know (I still feel very much like a novice apiarist), and show-and-tell for those who dare to get close enough. There are so many fascinating angles to learn about bees and for good reason. The Bible references them and their honey at least 66 times as they are loaded with metaphors and lessons to draw from. They are a marvel of creation. I am always impressed after working with them, even though it might be their amazing capacity to sting me in the most sensitive places – like the end of my nose! My hope is that even as I grow in confidence in working with them, that Church of the Lamb will grow in appreciation of God's gift and blessing of the honeybee.

Ernie Didot

(Seriously, is there anything Ernie can't do?)



Introducing Church of the Lamb Member: Ben Bowman



I was born in Harrisonburg and have lived there and in the surrounding area my entire life. During my early childhood my family attended First Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg. During my late childhood my parents converted to Orthodox Christianity and so I went to an Orthodox church, and in my later teen years and early adult years I attended several Mennonite churches, and then a Baptist church. After attending the Baptist church for a few years, I started coming to Church of the Lamb because Katrina invited me one day while I was having breakfast with my friends at the Bowl of Good. I have been here ever since. At COTL, I help with set up and with preparing the Sunday morning coffee.

I received a BA in Interactive Media from James Madison University and have worked as a web developer for my entire professional career. Currently I work at O'Reilly, updating and adding features to one of their websites.

In my spare time I like to study Japanese and lift weights. I've been studying Japanese for 3 years and have traveled to the Osaka region of Japan; I hope to eventually become fluent. While in Japan I visited a Japanese Christian church which was very interesting. The service was entirely in Japanese so I couldn't really understand much, but I could tell that they were worshipping with the same spirit that we do here in America.