

Dear Eden Members, Attendees and Friends,

We have left 2022 behind us and have entered 2023. As I have said in past writings, my memory of what happened on any given Sunday in 2022 is in the deep recesses of my mind and does depend on Mary's reporting to present the events and happenings in her report. I do take pleasure in reminding us of our July 17th baptism at the Best Western Motel for Estelle Cook, Tim and Heidi Davis and welcomed them into formal membership at Eden Baptist Church.

As in any year, we don't know what the future holds for Eden Baptist Church but I think we can all agree that our relationship to God in Christ has to be # 1 on our list of priorities. As you think about your relationship to Christ a reflective question, do you have a real relationship with the Lord or are you just going through the motions?

I read an article some time ago printed in "Dateline" entitled "We're not playing church anymore" written by Larry F. Beman.

*"There is a difference between being 'religious' and being 'faithful.' When you are religious, you do all the right things. When you are faithful, you engage in a life-time encounter with the God of salvation. When you are religious, being part of a church is as you should. When you are faithful, you find a church that gives you life and energy. When you are religious, the Bible is something you want to read. When you are faithful, the Bible is a living part of your soul. Churches spend enormous energy 'being religious.' They use committee meetings, goal-setting sessions, and volunteer time to care for their institutional maintenance and survival. These churches, for the most part, have reached a plateau or are in the throes of decline. The churches that are filled with energy are those that remember their primary reason for existence. **They don't just "believe in God"; they know God. Knowing God, they engage the journey of faith, and they invite others to join them."***

As we begin another year of ministry at Eden Baptist Church, it is evident to me that we have a core of faithful people that God blesses in various ways and has done so over the years. Our prayer is the HE will continue his blessings upon our faithful congregation.

As we think about our relationship with God / Jesus, I'd like to pose some questions for you to ponder / answer. They may not be new to you but perhaps haven't been considered recently. There is no need to answer them to anyone in particular unless you feel led to do so.

- 1) What is it that makes your relationship here (Eden) special?
- 2) Do we have something to offer people that will cause folks to want to worship with us?
- 3) Do we know what people are looking for when they come to worship?
- 4) Do we want to do anything that will attract young people with children?
- 5) Are there elements of our worship that we should consider changing or adding?
- 6) What is the most uplifting part(s) of your worship experience?

The importance of these questions is how they impact you, and for you to realize that your answers are reasons for inviting others to Eden Baptist Church. Remember, Believers are an empowered people, filled with the Holy Spirit in which God has begun a good work in them.

Php 1:6 ESV And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

1Ti 1:12 ESV I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,

God is faithful to HIS church; are we faithful to HIM?

As we move further into 2023, you may not sense HIS calling at this moment but remember the words of Isaiah:

Isa 40:31 ESV but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Would you declare, upon reading this, that you are waiting for the Lord to use HIS “still small voice” to speak to you and embrace the promises of Isaiah 40:31. Let’s make that our verse of the year for 2023.

That we will “wait” on the Lord as he speaks to each of us as a call to service for HIS message of the Gospel.

I want to express a deep appreciation to this fellowship for allowing me to be your pastor for as long as you have. Kathy and I have a deep love for all who make up Eden Baptist Church whether in person, as summer visitors or through our connections using Face Book.

God’s Blessings in 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'B' and a trailing flourish.