



The Transformer

February 2018

717-866-4910

Friedens Lutheran Church, 301 W. Washington Ave., Myerstown, PA

On the Eagles, the Super Bowl, and the Idols in All Our Cities

Written by Pastor J. R. Briggs

Published in the Mission Alliance blog, January 30, 2018

[Pastor Wallace's Note: The February Transformer appears on the day of pro football's Super Bowl. Being located near Philadelphia there are probably many of us who are rooting for the Eagles. The author of this pastoral letter is a long-time Eagles fan. He also is a person who recognizes that among fans and non-fans alike there is a prevailing idolatry. It takes our focus away from the invitation Jesus gives to, "Come and follow me." Please take the time to read Pastor Briggs' piece and then pray with the psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart..." - Psalm 139:23.]

This week, the city of Philadelphia is electric. The beloved Eagles are slated to appear in Super Bowl 52 against the New England Patriots this Sunday. It's only the third time in franchise history the Birds have been to the Big Game – the first time in 13 years – and the Eagles have never won a Super Bowl.

I've lived in the Greater Philadelphia Area for twelve years; ten years ago, I planted a church. One of the things I quickly noticed when I moved to Philadelphia was the intense zeal for the Eagles. If you could summarize Eagles fans in one word, it would be passionate. Sure, every city has its pocket of passionate fans, but Philly is markedly different. Fans want a Super Bowl ring so badly that for years people have worn t-shirts that read "Just One Before I Die." Philly is passionate about the Eagles. Sometimes a bit too passionate.

I've always loved sports. I am thrilled Philadelphia is on the brink of winning their first Super Bowl. But I have a complicated relationship with the Eagles, one that leaves me uneasy and concerned.

I root for the Eagles, but I'm not a passionate Eagles fan. I love Philadelphia, but this undeniable angst I feel is not for reasons related to sports; it's a theological one. To be direct, the Eagles are an idol in Philadelphia.

On Sunday mornings, people gather in church buildings across the city; Sunday afternoons, in the fall, people gather in South Philly for the worship service, which often begins at 1 pm. This coming Sunday adherents will gather in Minneapolis for the most significant of all worship services.

This is the essence of *eagolatry*.

It's All of Us

If you're not a sports fan, don't move on yet.

Idolatry is not limited to the Eagles or the people of Philadelphia. Idols are in every city and in every context because they reside in every human heart. We all have loves and longings, many of them errantly placed. Calvin wrote that our hearts are idol factories. The question, of course, is not if we worship, but what or whom do we worship.

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The object of our worship and affection can often and easily stray from our Creator. Augustine wrote that an idol is anything we use that should be worshipped and anything we worship that should be used. Tim Keller described an idol as a good thing that becomes the ultimate thing.

The Eagles can be a good thing (as can the Patriots, as difficult as that is to admit). So can money, careers, family, technology and our stuff, among other things.

But making any of them the ultimate thing [imprisons] our souls. When we make something ultimate, we will make it our very identity, willingly offering up sacrifices through the expression of our time, attention, hopes, imaginations, energy and money. Regardless of who or what we are worshipping, it always demands sacrifice.

... [Participating] in God’s mission requires inviting people into whole-hearted allegiance to Jesus Christ. To do so, we must call people out of the other enslaving allegiances prevalent in every context. We must proclaim the good news, speaking directly to these idols. But how might we courageously, compassionately and compellingly speak truth to the prominent and enticing idols in our contexts?

5 Ways to Address the Idols in Your City

One: Look at the skyline

Leonardo de Chirico, a church planter in Northern Italy, wrote that our approach must be similar to Paul’s approach in Acts 17 at Mars Hill when he addressed the idols in Athens.

The Apostle Paul walked around and observed the city. He interacted with and reasoned with the Athenians. He debated with ... philosophers, quoting their own poets. He keenly noticed their idols of worship—and clearly and directly addressed them.

This makes me wonder: if Paul were to walk the streets of our context, what would he say? What idols would he identify? In our modern contexts, de Chirico writes, if we want to know the idols of our city, look at ... what drives the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of our community. In doing so, we can begin to understand the loves and the longings in a particular place.

Two: Help people understand their own participation in cultural liturgies

James K.A. Smith, in his book *Desiring the Kingdom*, writes that because our hearts are designed for worship, we engage in cultural liturgies that shape our loves and longings—even more than we imagine.

These cultural liturgies take place in malls, coffee shops, and yes, even sports arenas. Part of our calling is to ... [help] people identify and name these liturgies for what they are. They must be named if they are to be changed.

Philadelphians have the gods (athletes), a temple (Lincoln Financial Field), worship vestments (uniforms and other NFL sanctioned apparel), communion elements (tailgating with brats and Bud Light – *dilly dilly*) and worship songs, both local (“Fly Eagles Fly”) and national (the National Anthem). All of these elements shape who Philadelphians are and who they will become.

We must learn to ask incisive questions, such as:

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- What are the cultural liturgies in our context and how might you begin to help others identify them?
- What alluring story of promise does this idol seek to tell to adherents?
- And ultimately, how can these elements of worship be rechanneled away from created things and toward the Creator?

Three: Address the effortless flow of people's money

As Tim Keller said, "Money flows effortlessly to that which is its god."

A few years ago, I had coffee with a young man who was complaining that our church always talked about money. I pressed in, asking him to clarify, as we'd only had one sermon on giving and generosity in the past two years. He shared he gave a little bit to the church on occasion, but felt the church was "too pushy." Knowing he was an Eagles season ticket holder, I asked him if he'd ever complained to the Eagles front office about the thousands of dollars he paid each year for his tickets. Stunned, he told me he'd never even thought of doing so—and said he probably never would.

If we want to know what drives our loves and our longings, look at the effortless flow of our money. Our checkbooks are worship documents. How might we help people to see that their credit card statements, bank accounts, and checkbooks reveal their deepest loves and longings—and that many of them might be rooted in idols?

Four: Call it what it is

In Acts 17, Paul begins by affirming the religious devotion of the Athenians, but he intentionally moved to more pointed communication: addressing the uselessness of their idols. Moved by an intense frustration and deep disturbance with what he saw, Paul was compelled to help people see and understand that what they worshiped was insufficient and untrue.

Just as Paul was moved by a Spirit-led [anguish] by the idols he saw in Athens, we too should be deeply disturbed by the idols we see in our contexts. If we claim Jesus is Lord, it means all other forces of power and authority are not. We must be people courageous enough to call out the idols in our culture, all the while expecting passionate pushback by adherents (that's the nature of our idols; we will defend them at almost any cost).

But the haunting reality of idols is that they always disappoint. Always. Maybe not now or next season or even in a decade. But eventually, at some point, they most certainly will. Idols leave us disappointed and empty. It's just a matter of time. And helping people get to that point can be a distinct gift in the long run.

Five: Give hope

Paul moved from affirming their religious devotion to calling out the futility of their idols to offering something more alluring: a God who was known, a God who was near, and a God who wanted relationship with human beings.

Simply running around calling out cultural idols is insufficient; it must also be met with a vision of a better, more hope-filled reality. Being faithful to our calling is to give a clear and compelling picture of a God

whose love was so large that He had to be close to His people. He is the One worthy of our allegiance and our worship because of His unfailing promises. No matter what, as leaders, we must give hope. That’s what is available to us—and what is for us to proclaim and make accessible to the world.

[Today], fans around the world will enjoy Super Bowl 52. I will, too. But as fans participate in these uniquely American cultural liturgies (many of them unknowingly) shaping their loves and longings, may we remember this is not just limited to football. We live in a world saturated with cultural liturgies that shape our allegiances and worldviews in a wide variety of alluring expressions and enticing promises every day of the week.

May we always be courageous, hope-filled leaders who proclaim our allegiance of the king and who also call others into that allegiance—because it is worth far more than a Super Bowl ring.



March 17th Fair Trade Fair using SERRV.org will be held here at Friedens from 9-12 noon. However, pre-orders will be possible through February by using catalogs* or online address SERRV.org. Peruse catalog/online items during the week and place your order during Fellowship Hour on Sundays in February. 10% discount and exemption from shipping and handling are possible by placing your order at Friedens on Sundays during February. **Cash or check payable to Friedens.**

*Spring Catalog arrival is expected soon! Until then, feel free to view Winter 2017 catalog.



For your Lenten Journey: Feel free to pick up a Lenten booklet, You Are the Way as you leave the service today. Please limit booklets to 1 per residence. For large print version of this booklet, call 717-866-4910 during office hours.



Join Us For Breakfast

March 25-Palm Sunday Breakfast
7-11 am in the Fellowship Hall. Breakfast casserole donations wanted. See Jan DuBois.





Food Collection

On Sunday, February 4, food will be collected for the Lebanon County Food Bank. All gifts are welcomed. There is a need for frozen hams, canned meats and stews, canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned soups, peanut butter, towels/wash cloths, paper towels, toilet paper, and reusable plastic containers.

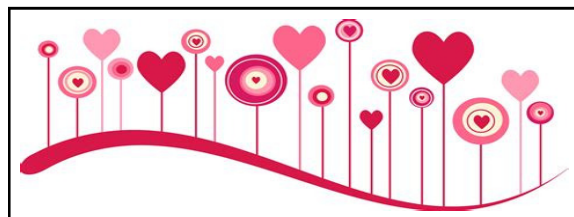


Easter Lilies If you are interested in ordering a lily to place in the church for Easter, now is the time to do so. To order, please use the envelopes on the narthex bulletin board and place it in the offering plate or bring it to the church office. The cost is \$6.75 each. The last day to order is **MARCH 6**.



Dear Friends at Friedens,
Thanks to all of you for your many caring acts this past year. You have called, sent notes and visited. You've seen to it that I have weekly and monthly publications, sent many dedicated members to share Holy Communion in my home, and have brought blessings of an enduring poinsettia plant by way of Barbara Grumbine and Sally Sholley. In all ways you have been a witness to faith and sustainer of my own faith. I continue to miss participating in corporate worship and you all bring it to me. Thank you!

Phyllis Rohland



Lebanon Lutheran Mission Team Mission Trip June 17-23: Possible work sites include Habitat for Humanity, Wittle Farm, Camp Kirchenwald, Camp Furnace Hills. Age 14 and up. Lodging for week OR Workday only possible. Deadline for registration-March 1, 2018. See Jan DuBois for Commitment Form or more information




LENT:

Ash Wednesday - The season of Lent begins on Wednesday, February 14. At Friedens we will observe Ash Wednesday worship at 12:15 pm and 7:00 pm in the evening.

Mid-Week Supper & Worship - Friedens hosts Wednesday evening soup supper and worship during the Wednesdays in Lent - Feb 21, 28, March 7, 14 & 21. Supper begins at 5:30 pm and Evening Prayer starts at 7:00 pm. As part of midweek worship, Pastor Wallace presents a bible study on the book of Ephesians.

Prayer - Pastor Wallace invites you to join him for a Lenten discipline of prayer. Each week following the Mid-Week Worship, the prayer group will gather to pray for the congregation, the community, the nation, and the world. Prayer begins at 8 pm and concludes at 8:30 pm.

FEBRUARY 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 	3
4 9 AM- Contemporary Service 10:45 AM— Traditional Service	5	6	7 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band	8	9	10
11 9 AM- Contemporary Service 10:45 AM— Traditional Service 6 PM—Get Acquainted Dessert	12	13 7 PM—Life Group 7 PM—Property Committee	14 9 AM— Women Sew 1 PM; 6 PM; 6:45 PM—Life Group 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band 12:15 PM & 7 PM - Ash Wednesday	15 	16	17
18 9 AM- Contemporary Service 10:45 AM— Traditional Service	19  6:30 PM—Finance Committee 7:30 PM— Endowment Comm.	20	21 5:30 PM—Men's Yoga 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band 7 PM—Lenten Service	22 7 PM—Church Council	23	24
25 9 AM- Contemporary Service 10:45 AM— Traditional Service	26	27	28 9 AM— Women Sew 5:30 PM—Men's Yoga 6:45 PM—Praise & Worship Band 7 PM—Lenten Ser			

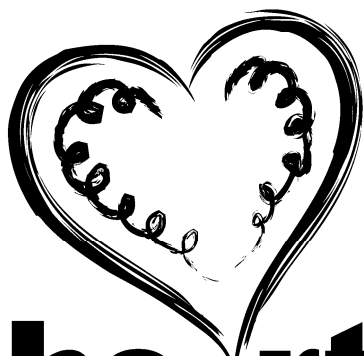


Friedens Lutheran Church, Myerstown, Pa
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
Sunday, January 7, 2018

1. Chris Heft, Council President, called the congregational meeting to order at 10:12 am. He opened with prayer and thanked everyone for attending.
2. Milicent Treat was recognized for her 33 years of service as Financial Secretary. We are very grateful for her dedication and commitment.
3. John Umberger, Sharon Riegel and Chris Heft were recognized for their service on Church Council. Thank you for your dedication and commitment.
4. Lynn Appleby was recognized for her service with the children’s worship program. Thank you for your commitment and dedication.
5. Chris Heft requested a motion to declare Kim Garhart, Brian Kleinfelter, and Amanda Klopp the new nominees to serve a two year term on Church Council. Alan Donchez made a motion to accept the nominees. Jeffrey Gumpert seconded the motion and the motion passed. Thank you to the nominating committee, Chris Heft, Jody Appleby and Janice DuBois for your service.
6. Chuck Bissell, Minister of the Family, Youth and Children’s Ministries reported on the latest events and visions for the group. The youth were encouraged to share their experiences, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of this group.
7. An update was provided from Jonathan Zinn, Chairman of the Financial Committee. A request was made to prayerfully practice the 52/10 tithing program to support our continued financial obligations and commitment to God and our faith.
8. Chris Heft called upon Pastor Wallace to install our new church council.
9. Jon Koller made the motion to adjourn. Jim Kneasel seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Wendy Gilbert
 Council Secretary

OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS					
December 2017					
					% of Budget
Current Budget	Goal	\$33,857.00	Goal to Date	\$203,142.00	71%
\$406,280.00	Rec'd	\$35,378.00	Rec'd to Date	145,879.00	
Spang Crest	Rec'd	29.00	Rec'd to date	176.00	
Hunger	Rec'd	145.00	Rec'd to Date	1,110.00	



heart sandwich

Show your love by making someone this heartfelt snack on Valentine's Day.



What you need:

- 2 slices of bread
- 2 heart-shaped cookie cutters (one large, one small)
- Lunchmeat and cheese (or peanut butter and jelly)

What you do:

1. Cut a large heart out of each slice of bread.
2. Cut a small heart from the middle of one big heart.
3. With the small cookie cutter, make several heart shapes out of the meat and cheese. Place between the bread slices.
4. If you're using peanut butter and jelly, spread both onto the large, solid heart. Then place the slice with the small heart cutout on top.



FRIENDS OF SPANG CREST 2018 Annual Membership Drive

The Annual Membership Drive is your chance to join or renew your membership to the Friends of Spang Crest. This year's drive will run through **March 31, 2018**.

The Friends of Spang Crest is an auxiliary organization dedicated to supporting activities and projects benefitting the residents of Spang Crest, LutherCare's Senior Living Community in Lebanon, PA. In 2017, the Friends of Spang Crest donated over \$27,000 to Spang Crest for programs, services and purchases including: Benevolent Care; Resident Christmas Presents; Digital Picture Frames; Patio Furniture; Bus Trips; Specialty Wheelchairs; Resident Halloween Event; Outdoor Band Concerts; Family Entertainment Nights and Fish Tank Maintenance.

Your membership dues, combined with generous donations from congregations, individuals, annual fundraising events and proceeds from the Spang Crest Gift Shop, will allow the Friends of Spang Crest to continue its work in 2018.

Membership Levels for 2018 are:

Member - \$2.00	Sustaining - \$10.00
Contributing - \$5.00	Patron - \$25.00

Janet Kehrli and Barbara Grumbine will collect dues on **Sunday, February 18th**.

Please add "Friends of Spang Crest Membership" on the memo line of your check.

Thank you for Supporting the Friends of Spang Crest.

Together We Make A Difference!