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Please notify the church  
office of updates or  
changes to your  
address or contact  
information or any  
corrections to the  
Church Directory.  
Thank You!!

#### Events in September

**Sept 2 - Choir practice**

**Sept 7 - Holiday**

**Church Office Closed**

**Sept 10 - 10 am Ruth Circle**

**Sept 10 - Thurs. evening**

**Bible Study**

**Sept 14 - Noon Mens**

**Bible Class**

**Sept 15 - Textile Tuesday**

**Sept 16 - 5:30pm Meal**

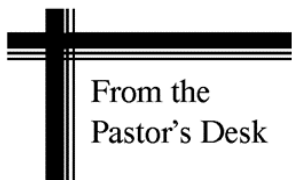
**6:00pm Midweek Classes**

**Sept 27 - Trap Shoot**

## *Living in the* **Shadow of the Cross**

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### The Cost of Community

Throughout the summer, our Epistle Lessons have come from Paul's letter to the Romans and I've pretty much let them slip by. But, the first two Sundays in September have us finishing Romans with readings from chapters 13 and 14. As Paul wraps up this letter to a church he had never met before, he puts to them a question that every church eventually has to answer: what does it actually cost to live together as the body of Christ? Paul's answer comes in two parts, and neither is comfortable.

The first cost is sacrifice. In Romans 13, Paul writes, "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" (13:8). Notice the word owe. Paul doesn't picture love as something we give until we're even — he pictures it as a debt that never clears. Most of our relationships run on an unspoken ledger: I did this for you, so you owe me that. Paul erases the ledger. Love isn't a transaction we complete; it's an obligation we keep paying, especially toward the people who will never fully repay it.

The second cost is understanding, and Romans 14 is sharper here than it first appears. Paul addresses a real dispute in the Roman church between the "weak" and the "strong" — but it helps to know what those words actually mean. The "weak" aren't shaky believers; they're Christians who haven't yet grasped the full freedom the gospel gives regarding food and holy days. The "strong" understand that freedom clearly. And Paul's counsel to the strong isn't "you're right, carry on" — it's to voluntarily set that freedom aside rather than wound a fellow believer's conscience. Understanding and sacrifice turn out to be the same act, seen from two angles: the strong give up their freedom precisely because they understand what it would cost someone else if they didn't.

Underneath both is the deeper reason no one gets to sit in judgment: "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (14:10).

*Continue . . . . .*

Standing with God was never earned by which days we keep or what we eat — it's given by grace, through faith, on account of Christ alone. If that's true, the ground is level. No one has earned the right to look down on someone else's conscience.

These two costs aren't unrelated to what we talked about in July, when we looked at Christian freedom in Luther's sense — free in conscience, bound to no one but Christ. Romans 14 shows what that freedom looks like turned toward each other: not "I'm free to do as I please," but "I'm free enough to set it aside for your sake."

Neither comes naturally. Both are exactly what Paul says love does. As you hear these texts preached in the coming weeks, I'd ask you to sit with a simple question: where, this month, is God asking something of you — a debt to keep paying, a freedom to set aside, or a judgment to lay down?

In Christ,

*Pastor Tom*

Pastor Tom Vanderbilt





The discipleship team would like to say a huge **THANK YOU FOR ALL THE HELP AND DONATIONS, for our Summer Meals in the Park.** With everyone's help in this very important mission in our community we were able to provide 1380 meals. We also came in way under budget. We also want to say a big Thank You to Capital City Fruit and the congregation members who brought extra produce for our guests. Everyone there appreciated everyone's generosity both time, prod-

uct and produce. Many hands make light work and that was very apparent this summer. Thank You Everyone and we look forward to working with all of you for all the upcoming events. If you would like a calendar of upcoming events for the year 26/27 contact JoAnn Chapman, one will be sent to you. Going forward most of our meetings will be by email, if you would like to be part of our team let myself or Colleen know and we will add you to the email list. Our next in person meeting will be Oct 5<sup>th</sup> to plan the Thanksgiving meal and cookie exchange.

**Thank You again Everyone for all the help!**

**Discipleship Team**



## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

**We are in great need of Volunteers to step up and help with our MidWeek Meals on Wednesday nights. We have guests that come every week expecting a meal as well as Heal House guests and our church member students that attend our education classes. If we have no volunteers, our Discipleship group members have been stepping up to make sure there is a meal. Our Discipleship group cannot continue to make every meal. If we do not have volunteers to prepare meals, there will be no meals. So find a couple friends and create your own group to help with a meal. Discipleship is willing to purchase ingredients the weekend before if you cannot afford to buy the ingredients but would be willing to make a meal. If you would like to purchase the ingredients and be reimbursed you need to fill out a reimbursement form found in the kitchen cabinet. If you don't know how much food to make for the meal (we serve between 40-50 each week), we can help you with the amounts needed. Contact Ed & JoAnn Chapman @ 515-250-3847 or [djchapman@chapmanhome.tech](mailto:djchapman@chapmanhome.tech).**