

Dear Friends,

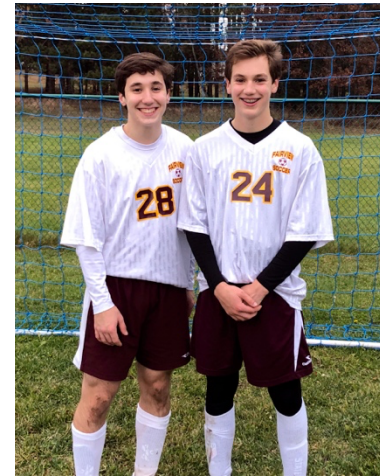
“to those who are the called, loved by God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.

May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.” (Jude 1b-2)

We pray that you, too, have experienced the truths in this greeting these last many months of more pronounced uncertainty and turmoil. Oh, that the Gift of heaven would continue to be sweeter and more magnificent to us this Christmas!

In September, Jon pulled off a wonderful surprise for Stacy’s 50th birthday - having her wake up to a pancake breakfast with all of the kids home for the weekend! Her parents tagged along, too! Best gift for sure!!! He also splurged and purchased 2 commentary sets for her own library - since they were 50% off ☺ Another sweet gift will arrive late April, early May as there will finally be “aunts and uncles” in our house!

The boys had enjoyed fall sports: Samuel ran XC, finishing 6th in the league and their team made it to the State meet at MIS!!! The boys also played soccer - Samuel in goal and Isaiah scoring goals. What fun to see them work together! (In one game, they each managed to score a goal and save a goal as the keeper!) Isaiah also was an assistant coach to Jon for the Jr. Hi boy’s bb team; Isaiah was just as disappointed as the players that their season succumbed to the “cancelling committee” ...



It was a delight to gather with our family in November to witness Andrea’s baptism and then a few weeks later to feast around a turkey and get in the annual backyard football game! And while the boys transitioned to virtual school, they were able to lend a hand installing the ceiling tiles in the new Carpenter Shop. Samuel worked with the ‘fire cleanup’ crew this summer and now to have a small part in this finishing crew is amazing to consider what God has accomplished through the destruction, the giving, the volunteer and resident staff labor, and the resupplying...all glory to God!



We marvel at all the work accomplished here at Barakel these past few months just as we did during the summer - to see so many eager and willing to provide lending hands and hearts in such a variety of ways! Check out this link to get a small glimpse <https://www.campbarakel.org/2020-review>. At this point, the cabins are freshly cleaned, the new Carpenter Shop is being set up, the rinks and ski trails are getting packed with that 10” of new snow, all in anticipation of hosting campers again come January! The schedule is different, but we’re hopeful to have speakers’ warm hearts with gospel truths after teens enjoy the chilly outdoor activities. Pray with us to this end ☺

As the 12 Days of Christmas approach, we have just finished studying the 12 ‘judges’ in Judges with our seasonal staff. We’ve considered these saviors sent to deliver God’s chosen people. We were reminded of the chosen people’s indifference, rebellions and outright adultery to their faithful and loving God, YHWH (Ex. 34:6-7) juxtaposed against God’s justice, long-suffering and humbling faithfulness in His hearing and saving again and again.

Othniel - one with “no flaws” reminds us of Jesus Christ, the perfect Savior

Ehud - the impeded deliverer reminds us of Jesus Christ, weak and rejected by men

Deborah - one discerning and encouraging to the faint of heart reminds of us Jesus Christ, gentle and lowly (Gentle and Lowly by Dane Ortlund)

Gideon - told to go in his might reminds of us Jesus Christ, our Mighty Warrior King who defeated sin, Satan, and death at the cross
Jephthah - the only one to rightly declare, "the LORD, the Judge" pointing to Jesus Christ, the true Judge over His people (Rev. 2-3)
Samson - set apart from birth to save his people...
"Minor" Judges - who, like the genealogies, remind us that despite the Garden curse (death), life continues on in anticipation of the promised seed, Jesus

"The darker God's people are seen to be, the brighter God's grace shines out!"

A favorite of mine this time of year are the lights, especially on our tree and outside as we have no streetlights, and it gets dark in our "neck of the woods"! But I really only enjoy them when in the darkness...

Darkness. Right at the beginning. "...darkness was over the surface of the watery deep".

We're wrapping up our fall study of Judges and it's horrifyingly dark! Certainly not the material for a "Hallmark" Christmas movie and yet...I've come to conclude that these chapters bring clarity, light, to Christmas.

Salvation through judgement is on display in Judges and brings to mind these truths:

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness." Isaiah 9:2

"This is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." John 3:19

"You are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

"In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:4-5

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:17

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark 1:15

Judges ends with, "In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in right in his own eyes" after beginning with "the Israelites did what was evil in God's sight" (2:11). We've come to see that they did what was wrong in the eyes of God because they did what was right in their own eyes. They stopped and forgot to keep looking to their Savior and Rescuer ("I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery"!!!!) In the darkness, I am reminded again of my own Gospel Amnesia, that "failure to live in light of God's salvation and grace" and my need to repent and believe this good news that has come in Jesus Christ, the Light of the World!

Thank you for continuing to support us through your prayers and giving these past few months - the confidence in God's providing displayed through these means is such an encouragement. We humbly admit that we are incapable of doing this on our own as we so easily can turn from God just as the Israelites did time and again. Continue to pray for us that we would be obedient, trusting, dependent while holding fast to him as we face the future with courage. We pray this for you as well as you navigate these days and display Christ's glory to those around you!

Hoping to see you soon...

Jon & Stacy
Isaiah and Samuel along with the rest ☺