

All the Prayers of God's People

August 18, 2020

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 1:4

I'm currently reading a book by Brené Brown entitled "The Gifts of Imperfection". After each chapter there is a section titled "DIG Deep" which explores how we may *choose* to act differently and embrace the unknown, much like Esther did for her family. DIG stands for: **D**eliberate, **B**e Inspired, and **G**et **G**oing. Esther did these things in order to make a difference in her community and for her family. She prayed and deliberated, she became inspired as to how she was going to take action and then she acted with courage. For us it is the same when things are uncertain. During this pandemic, I would say we are all having to DIG deep.

Think about it this way, if you were Esther and your family was at risk, more than likely you would pray, become inspired, and then act to keep them safe or make a difference, because it is your family, right? What about if it is your church family that needs you to DIG Deep? What would you do then? I believe that we are at "such a time as this" in the life of Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church.

To DIG right now, especially during this pandemic, means that life as we know it is uncertain. We will probably not ever be able to return to the way "things were before", but I also consider maybe we shouldn't want to. For Esther, "before" meant slavery and lack of safety. For us, "before" simply was not working. The church across the world is in decline and the gospel is getting lost in the way "it's always been done". But *together*, we can all DIG deep and reach collectively for the vision that God has called us to pursue. We have opportunities to serve and love like never before because of this time of uncertainty! The other option is that we can remain silent and relief from this world's burdens will come from some other place. I believe that we as a church, are very much like Esther, being called for such a time as this. In fact, the Presbyterian Vitalization program begins with this such time.

Perhaps this is why I was called to this church. Perhaps this is why you were called to this church. Like Esther, let us deliberate, inspire and go, for such a time as this. Let us pray.

Lord Almighty, we your church are coming to you for wisdom, for deliberation, for strength and for a clear path for your people here at Seven Oaks and our surrounding community. We know, inherently, that what we have been doing for 50 years is no longer effective at reaching your people who would come into the Good News. We know that the most beautiful music and greatest small groups are not enough to outweigh the joys and pleasures of the world. So, Lord, give us the shovel and help us to dig. Show us where to plant new growth with creativity and joy that is infectious to all we meet. Guide our hands with gentleness that roots might grow. Time's Lord, they are a'changing, spurred on by a pandemic that has taken lives and livelihoods. Help us to align our hearts in deliberation, to be inspired and to act with courage, for "such a time as this" is upon us. Let us come together for this time and recreate your world here on St. Andrews Road and in our individual lives, walking with you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.