

Northeast Park BAPTIST CHURCH

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Ministerial Musings

March saw the passing of a man who is often referred to as one of the most brilliant minds of his generation: Stephen Hawking. He wrote an equation describing the entropy of a black hole and, though he was handicapped by a motor neuron disease (ALS), became one of the world's greatest communicators of mind-boggling science. Many who celebrate his life find comfort in the date of his death: 3/14, aka Pi day (for its connection to the mathematical numeral pi) and also the birthday of Albert Einstein.

Yet for all of his brilliance, Hawking remained to his death an atheist. Quoting Time magazine, Stephen said, "Before we understand science, it is natural to believe that God created the universe. But now science offers a more convincing explanation," he said. 'What I meant by 'we would know the mind of God' is, we would know everything that God would know, if there were a God, which there isn't. I'm an atheist.'" Hawking's science is of the highest order. His belief on God, however, completely missed the mark.

It is startling that someone could look so deeply into the workings of the world, and completely miss the hand that ordered those things. The apostle Paul knew this to be possible when he wrote to the Romans, "*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*" Romans 1:19–23 (ESV)

We grieve together that the passing of the truly brilliant Stephen Hawking marks the entrance of another soul into the presence of God's eternal wrath and separated from God's presence and glory.

Here's irony: Stephen Hawking will be buried later this year after a *thanksgiving* service (who will receive the thanks?) at...wait for it...Westminster Abbey. How ironic that the profound atheist who argued science shows the lack of need for God will be buried in a church.

God is good.

Steve

To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Acts 10:43 ESV

Why Mister Rogers (Still) Matters

March 21, 2018

Russell Moore, President of ERLC

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of public television's *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. The milestone will bring with it a major book, a feature film (starring Tom Hanks as Fred Rogers), and even a U.S. postage stamp. When one considers all the ephemera of children's programming, the ongoing cultural resonance of this show is staggering. Fifty years from now will anyone note the anniversary of *Gumball* or *Clarence*? I doubt it. So why does Mr. Rogers, even long after his death, still beckon us into his neighborhood?

Fred Rogers, after all, is hardly the sort of person one would choose to "connect with the next generation." He was a Presbyterian minister, of all things. Those cardigan sweaters and loafers would have seemed out-of-date in all fifty of the years since the first broadcast aired. Mister Rogers had no zaniness or charisma or celebrity pull that one would audition if one were looking for someone to speak to children.

But that is why he persists in the public imagination. Mister Rogers was never "Fred." He was *Mister Rogers*. He was a grown-up, and that's exactly what children loved.

That's the part of Fred Rogers's work that is probably the easiest to misunderstand. One can listen to the songs he sang... "It's such a good feeling to know you're alive..." or "I like you just the way you are..." and assume that Rogers was a live-action version of a sappy self-esteem curriculum. Rogers, though, would talk to children about the darkest topics possible, addressing children's fears directly, whether those fears were about being sucked down the drain in a bathtub or parents' divorcing or the death of grandparents. He even helped children think through terrorist attacks and war, in a way that neither waved away the darkness of violence nor surrendered to fear or anger.

When one listens to those old broadcasts, what is striking is that Rogers, while not startling children with graphic details inappropriate for them, deals honestly both with the children and the subject he's addressing. There is reassurance, but it seems to be an earned reassurance—the reassurance of one who is a diplomat from the world of grown-ups.

I think often of the account I read of a man who grew up in extreme neglect and abuse but found a few minutes of respite every day when he entered *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. "When he said, 'I like you just the way you are,' it was as though he was speaking directly to me." Rogers transcends generational differences and media trends because he had a unique ability to break through the fourth wall of the screen, to seem to be actually talking to his audience, to actually almost see them.

The idea of being seen, of being acknowledged, is almost universally recognized by early childhood development scholars as necessary for the healthy emotional and mental growth of a child. As a Christian, I think this need points not only to the foundations of nature, but beyond nature. At the baptism of Jesus, the Father's voice announces, "You are My beloved Son, and with you I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Children were drawn to Rogers not because he was a spectacle; he wasn't. They were drawn to him because an adult seemed to look over that glass divide and say to them that their value was not in their striving and doing and buying and consuming. "It's you I like. It's not the things you wear. It's not the way you do your hair. But it's you I like. The way you are right now. The way down deep inside you, not the things that hide you. Not your toys; they're just beside you...But it's you I like."

Sappy? Yes. Awkward? Kind of. Mister Rogers would probably plead guilty to all of that. But, for at least fifty years of children, he never seemed to be selling anything. In an era in which whirl is king, Fred Rogers provided a little vision of stability. He had the same house, the same mailman, the same puppets, and in his personal life, the same wife. In a world of fractured neighborhoods and splintered families, who can honestly say that we don't need to see, somewhere, that such is possible?

In 1997, Rogers received an Emmy Award for lifetime achievement. His acceptance speech went viral, and is widely viewed even now. What made it so was not some sort of explosive antic, but his request to the crowd to take ten seconds, in silence ("dead air" in television-speak) to think about the people in their lives, living or dead, who had believed in them, helped them along the way. Those ten seconds were filled with images of world-renowned celebrities wiping away tears. That, I think, is why Mister Rogers still matters.

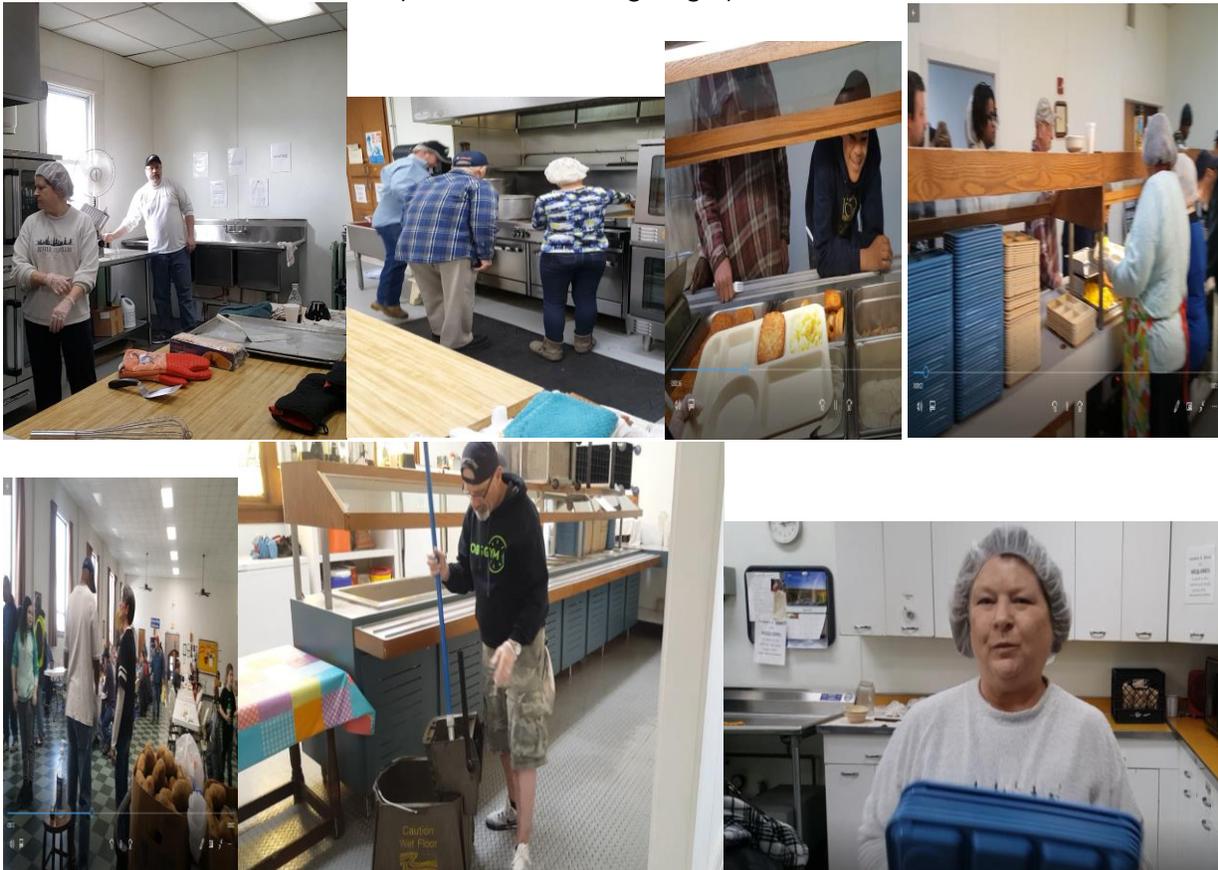
His program reminded us that we are not alone. He reminded us that no matter how we display and act tough, however much we "win," that what we really want is to be known and to be loved. Mister Rogers never seemed to care whether people thought he was old-fashioned or irrelevant or not "edgy enough." He remembered what it was like to be a child, but he had loved being a grown-up, and he knew we could too.

We are looking, ultimately, for the weight of the glory of the kingdom of the reigning Christ. But, sometimes, along the way, it's good to be reminded that, despite all the brokenness and loneliness of a fallen world, it can be a beautiful day in the neighborhood.

<https://www.russellmoore.com/2018/03/21/mister-rogers-still-matters/>

NEP's Potter's Wheel Ministry & History By Rick Simpson

I was asked to give a brief history on how Diana & I became involved in the Potter's Wheel ministry. That is easy, my wife! June 2009 my wife came home from work talking about a friend of hers that belonged to St. Marys' church, and they were serving breakfast down in the inner city. This church was serving breakfast two Saturdays a month. The church needed to give up one of the Saturdays. My wife and I decided to check it out. Not only did we fall in love with the idea of serving the Lord by serving others as Jesus did, but I found myself falling in love with my wife all over again!!! We prayed about it and asked God to lead us in the direction He wanted us to go. Well, 9 years later and God is still holding that door open!!! The Potter's Wheel ministry has taught me a lot of things. For one, I love my wife more than ever for being the person she is and believing in me. We tease one another all the time about how we could not work together because she is always right. It has taught me more about my church, about myself, and more importantly about how God works. My vision for the Potter's Wheel is whatever God has in store for our church. I am thankful for the continued blessings that I see in each and every one that volunteers each month. Thank you, God, for not giving up on me!!!!



Presenting Bro. Charles Gunn, Deacon

The duties of a deacon are simple. They assist the Pastor in serving the needs of the church. NEP has many wonderful deacons currently and throughout the years. Charles Gunn has been married to his wife for many years and together they have served the Lord faithfully. Five years ago, the Gunn's were lead to Northeast Park Baptist Church. They had visited many other churches in the area but, from the moment they entered the doors of NEP, they felt like they were in a comfortable country church like the one they came from. He was at "home" at NEP.

Charles has always strived to serve the Lord and, as a deacon for three years, he has had many opportunities to do so. He loves the interaction with the church members, visitors and attendees. He loves being able to assist Pastor Steve and the other deacons. Fellowshiping with the church members brightens his day. Anytime a member has a problem, Charles is there to biblically assist that member who needs help spiritually or otherwise. Charles and Pat have daily devotions that they study the Word and grow together. He also uses these studies to prepare for Deacon of the Month duties. Charles can be found visiting shut ins, making hospital visits or just offering up an encouraging word to someone.

Thank you Charles, all the current and past deacons of NEP for sharing yourselves with our congregation during the difficult as well as the happy times.



The Gunn's in action serving others. (March 2018)

Youth in Action

The Youth have been busy. They have been working their way through Exodus on Wednesday nights and have some exciting events coming up. In April they will have a picnic at Misty's parents' house on Friday, April 20th. A Lawn Game tournament with prizes will be planned along with hot dogs and s'mores around the fire pit. In May the Youth will have their first ever family banquet. On Thursday, May 24th, parents and families of youth are invited to dinner and end-of-year presentations. More details on this event will be coming soon. Church help is needed with sides and desserts. A big thank you to all the "Adopt a Youth" Parents. The kids are always delighted to find a surprise treat for them.

