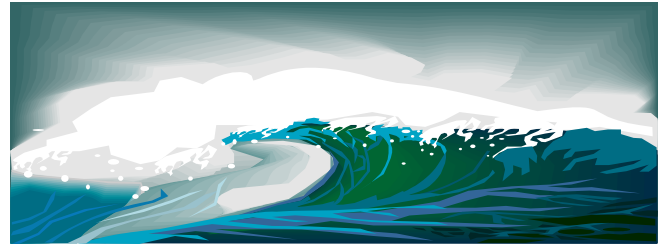




The *September 2017*
Anchor



We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul...Heb.6:19a

**First Baptist Church , 215 Ann Street, Ravenswood, WV 26164 ~ 1-304-273-9910
Pastor Mark Gerstell ~ 1-304-377-2812 ~ www.fbcravenswood.org**

God's handiwork was witnessed by many on August 21, 2017. For a short while people came together as they watched the solar eclipse, in awestruck wonder. This is the first total solar eclipse observed in the United States in thirty-eight years, with the next one not happening until 2024. This is one of God's magnificent displays in nature, which occurs when the moon passes directly in front of the sun. The sun becomes totally darkened, but then again becomes a brilliant light when the moon is out of alignment.

Many scholars have compared the total eclipse to Christ's birth and resurrection. When the sun becomes dark it is like Christ dying on the cross. Jesus and who He truly is, was hidden for a brief time. The sun, after a period of time, becomes plainly visible after an eclipse and all is well. *After an eclipse the sun's illumination is once again fully visible, just as the true SON was after His resurrection for those who believed.*

In addition, eclipses in the Bible have often served as metaphors for the end of time. The world remains today under a dark veil for non-believers. One day the eclipse created by Satan will be torn away; just as our sun was once again plainly visible so too will the Son of God be on the event of His second coming.

John 8:12

"Then Jesus spoke to them saying "I am the light of the world, he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of the world."

In our world there are many different paths one may choose to walk. As Christians we believe there is only one path to eternal life and the way is led by the good shepherd who is Jesus Christ. With the eclipse, some were able to observe the lighted circular ring caused by the sun being hidden. In Christ there is no beginning and no end. To believers, He is never hidden from their hearts.

All people have times of eclipse in their lives. Watching the news just illustrates the grief, sadness and despair in the world. However, Christians have a secret weapon in fighting these dismal events. They can view eclipse times through their lenses of faith. This allows them to have hope, because they know the light of Christ is near.

Christians must become their own circle of illumination in the community. The church must be its own beacon of light in the dark times. *Ravenswood First Baptist has done that and truly has become a church, "reaching out, inviting in, and growing in Christ together."*

Let us continue to shine the light of Christ from our hearts and exemplify His light to those around us.

Many Blessings,
Pastor Mark

Are you ready for some football? It's hard to believe high school football is underway already here in Ravenswood and across West Virginia. This means, it's time for the *First Baptist End Zone Celebration* to resume after each home football game at our church. The End Zone provides a safe environment for youth to attend following each home football game where they can relax and fellowship and enjoy time with their friends, along with wonderful food, drinks and music. This outreach ministry of the church is the talk among many churches in our region for being a successful outreach drawing anywhere between 150 and 200 young people each night. For many of these kids, they do not attend church. *As such, taking time to show them love while they attend, along with inviting them to our youth programs are ways we can share Christ with them in a non-threatening environment.*

I was pleased with our turnout for the *end of summer youth retreat* at Parchment Valley Conference Center. We had about 15 people attend the pool party, and about the same for our dinner at the Barn. Young people were involved in two lessons including a Vesper service. Nine Captivators stayed overnight and attended church services the following morning. The **Fall Teen Rally** is coming up in mid-September and Captivate will likely attend the Saturday session.

The church is in the process of planning the *Community Carnival* block party set for October 14. There are already some fun activities planned including a dunk tank, craft center, several giant inflatables including the Velcro fly-wall. **What's a fly wall?** It's a large inflatable where both adults and children are placed in Velcro suits and jump against the large wall, sticking to it, like a fly on fly-paper. It's hilarious! The kids are hopeful Richard Massey and Bill Stewart will don the suits. Perhaps, Tim Rupert will give it a whirl. I'm not sure the suit will fit me, but if it does, well, we'll see. Best of all these events are **free!** We are pleased that the Jackson County Ministerial Association has already agreed to partner with us on the event as an outreach effort to our community.

In closing, I want to say what a pleasure it is to fill in for Pastor Mark in the pulpit on Sundays while he continues to recover from his illness. I'll never be able to fill his shoes, and he is way better than I could ever hope to be. But, I feel honored to have his trust, our deacons' trust and your trust in bringing the Word until he is back at 100 percent. I am privileged to just be a servant along with other ministers within our church like Bill Stewart and Larry Bailes. Let us continue to lift Pastor Mark and Susan up in our prayers. Pastor Mark is my Pastor too, and I know you are like me, when I say I just want him better, so he can back to preaching. I know the Gerstells continue to feel and see our Church's love for them. Thank you all for your words of encouragement for him and for me. **May we continue to be the church that God has called us to be, reaching out, inviting in and growing together in Christ.** We got this.

Love and prayers, **Pastor Toby**