

# Letters to the Church



APRIL '23

## DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

There's a great lesson in the gospels that tells us how we as Christ's followers should regard the young among us. Crowds were gathered around Jesus as he was about to begin his last journey to Jerusalem. The people began bringing their children to Jesus so that "he might lay his hands on them and pray" for them, but his disciples in their misplaced zeal "rebuked the people." (Matthew 19:13) What follows is a moment showing both the great compassion and humanity of our Lord. In fact, it is one of the few instances when our Lord gets mad and we should consider why.

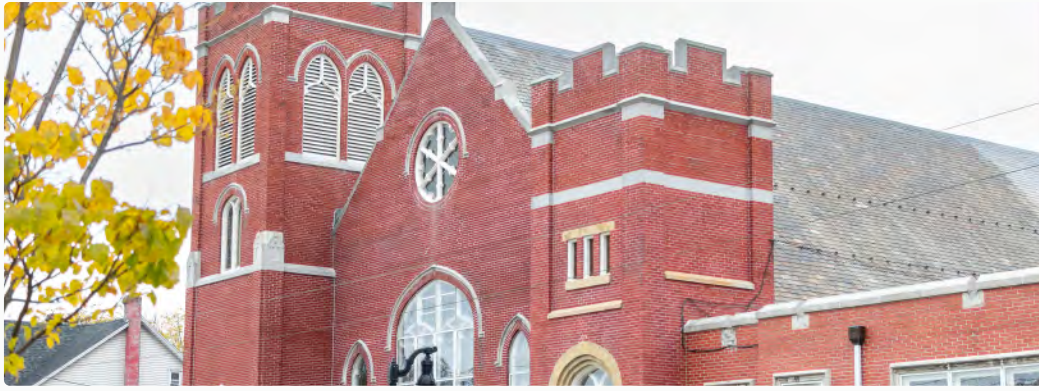


*But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."*

MARK 10:14

The Greek word for children here, *paidion*, means "little children." These were from the age of toddlers to about seven years old. Culturally, both the Hebrew and the Greco-Roman communities tended to only see children as those who didn't yet contribute anything meaningful to society. Surely his disciples hindering the children was well intended, but note how it angered our Lord and he commanded that the children should not be ushered away. Instead, "he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them." (Mark 10:16)

Isn't that a beautiful scene? Just picture him lifting them in his arms, blessing them, and praying for these little disregarded ones. I can't help but think of some of our little ones at PA Bible. Once again we see our Lord showing honor, dignity, and love to those who were socially excluded. Christ came for all people and he showed special compassion to those considered "outside the circle" and regarded generally as "unimportant."



In the same way, when we assemble at 700 Market Street, our many little ones should be esteemed as part of the congregation **now**, and not as something for them to graduate into. The same hardness of those disciples is still seen sometimes today when Christians consider youth ministry to be “lesser work.” Make no mistake, what we are doing in teaching and raising our children is arguably the most important work of our church.

For this reason (among many others), when I pray for Nate Vail, I thank God for him twice. Since day one of his service as the leader of our Youth Ministry he has established the principle that the Youth Ministry is part of the whole assembly and not a mere secondary module within the church. His heart as an elder and his attentive care for our young ones reminds me of our Lord with those little ones two millennia ago.

However, we have a great “problem” at PA Bible. We have many little ones and many more on the way! Yes, at times they can be loud. Yes, at times they can be distracting. Yes, they are all still growing in social grace (how about you?) but never forget, **a church without children is a dying church**. So, support and pray for our Youth Ministry Team. They are an amazing, humble, patient, and joyful group doing the work of the Lord.

If our Savior carries, the works accomplished in those little hearts downstairs by our Youth Team will outlast all of our lifetimes. Their faith will bear fruit for the Kingdom beyond their own generation. So remember them in your prayers. Volunteer to help serve in the youth work. Don’t hinder our little ones, but treat them with honor. They may be lesser in stature, but not in value.

**YOUR PASTOR & SERVANT,**