



FOCUS

SEPTEMBER 2022 - MMXXII ISSUE VIX

735 RIDGE LAKE BOULEVARD | MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38120

Lifeline! by Pastor Jim Fleming

“Nevertheless, the Lord your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loves you” (Deuteronomy 23:5).

Why does God allow suffering? If God really loved us, wouldn't He keep bad things from happening to us? God's detractors like to ask these things—usually as a justification for doubting God's goodness and questioning His existence.

Moses has an answer. As Israel prepared to enter into the Promised Land, Moses gave a riveting speech in which he recalled Israel's experiences with God in the wilderness. One incident that came up for review was the Balaam debacle (detailed in Numbers 22–24). The brief reference (in Deuteronomy 23:5) to this incident communicates volumes to those who want to use their encounters with evil to call God on the carpet.

Let's get this straight on the front end. God **could** have created a world in which there was no suffering. But the cost of such a creation would be the absence of free will. Adam and Eve could have been created in such a way that they had **no choice** but to obey God. They would never have eaten the forbidden fruit, sin would not have entered the world, and all the pain and heartache that sin produces would not have been unleashed on humanity.

But God chose, instead, to give Adam and Eve a choice. It would seem that God prefers the devotion of those who choose Him more than the “love” of those who cannot do otherwise, even though His preference introduces a risk factor: Those who are devoted to God because they choose to be can also choose **not** to be.

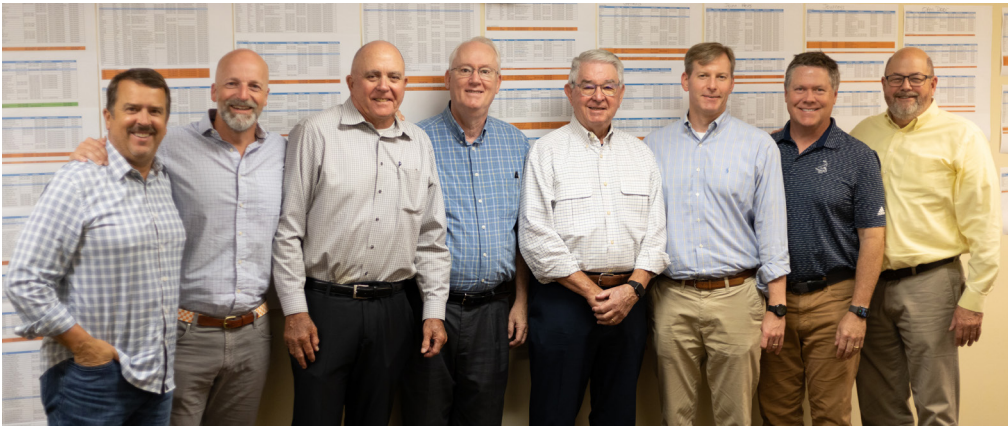
Sin entered planet earth in Eden, and pain and suffering have been the result. This fact does not tell us about God's love, but God's desire to be loved by choice. The **Balaam Factor**, however, tells us all we need to know about the love of God in a sin-driven world. The **Balaam Factor** assures us: God's love will not insulate us from curses, but it moves God to turn curses into blessings!

Moses is saying that, because of God's love for Israel, He turned bad into fuel for good. This principle is reiterated in the New Testament (Romans 8:28 and James 1:2-3 come to mind) and connects to all who know Jesus. As long as we live in a world of sin, we will not be insulated from suffering. But God loves us and will convert the bad things that happen to us into something beneficial. God will use bad to promote our best.

The only question worth asking in the face of trial is, “Do you believe Him?” Do you believe God is able to use “disasters” and disappointments; pain and persecution; suffering and sickness to produce good things in your life? If you will believe this (It **IS** the truth!), then you can respond to

every set-back with joy and gratefulness. Whatever is weighing on your heart right now, God will use it as a source of blessing in your life. Trust Him. He loves you! That's all you need to know. This unassailable fact is your lifeline.





Shepherding Council to Strengthen Care of Members by Steve Boyd and Taylor Park, Shepherding Council

“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3)

Peter exhorts the elder community of his scattered audience to shepherd the flock entrusted to them. To shepherd intentionally, willingly and humbly. Our shepherd group at First Evan desires to be like those faithful shepherds Peter describes. We regularly want to evaluate and strengthen our efforts in shepherding and caring for members—especially coming out of the pandemic, we must assess and make needed adjustments. The Session has charged the new Shepherd Council (SC) to come alongside our existing shepherds to determine the best plans for member support, personal growth, and outreach.

First Priority: Two immediate priorities surfaced from the recently conducted interviews of members and regular attenders.

1) Becoming intentional and proactive in the area of outreach which will eventually make its way into our shepherding priorities with the work Steven Yeo is doing.

2) Many connected to First Evan do not have a close connection to their shepherd. Therefore, the Shepherding Council will see that:

“Everyone who names First Evan as home should be the recipient of proactive and informed prayer, growth assistance, and personal ministry guidance from a shepherd they know and trust as they do life together.”

Structure of Shepherding Ministry: Our ministry is structured into three tiers:

- 1) **The Shepherding Council** serves under the session seeking to come alongside existing shepherds to communicate, support, equip, and encourage. Steve Boyd chairs this group with Taylor Park as staff advisor.
- 2) **Shepherds**—the backbone of our ministry. The shepherd’s primary role is to provide that “proactive and informed prayer, growth assistance, and personal ministry guidance”. Where possible, little disruption of existing relationships is intended. The goal is to strengthen and reinforce, not replace.
- 3) **Shepherding Assistants** will assist the Shepherding Elders where sheer numbers or particular needs warrant additional support.

Confirming My Shepherding Elder: The interviews indicated many are not sure who their official Shepherding Elder is. Every member should have an assigned Shepherding Elder. However, as we are updating our records and confirming the status of some of our Shepherds, a few of these assignments may be changing. If you have a TouchPoint account, you can find your Elder under the “Involvements” tab. Jacki Stieferman (jstieferman@firstevan.org) would also be happy to assist you.

A COMMITMENT TO SPEAK GRACE

Transition Challenge

Last Spring, we embraced six key challenges we are facing as a church. The first challenge is captured in this two-word command: “Give grace.” God wants us to speak in ways that give grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29).

So this summer, our pastoral staff gave us a key mission briefing in a sermon series titled, “Graces of Reconciliation.” We learned that God has given us grace that equips us to, in turn, give grace gifts to others. These gifts can be conveyed when we say something as simple as: “I did what was wrong,” “I forgive you,” “I want to become a better person in Christ,” and “Here’s what you need to know.”

If you were in the worship service on August 14, you received a card titled [“A Commitment to Speak Grace.”](#) At the end of the service, Pastor Fleming explained how this card can be used as a tool for the next 30–60 days. (Don’t have a card? Pick one up at the Welcome Center.)

1. Several times each week, read through this card.
2. Ask the Lord to identify any ways in which you need to take action.
3. Use confession, forgiveness, teachability, or exhortation as God prompts you. If this means reaching out to someone to reconcile, go for it.
4. Once you have acted on what God has prompted you to do, write the date and a one or two sentence summary of what you did on the back of this card.
5. Hang on to your card and keep using it.

In a month or so, we would like to gather as a congregation to encourage one another by sharing some tales of grace. Between now and then, keep working at applying what we have learned about how to speak grace to one another.

Don’t let this sermon series go to waste by just doing the usual. (Need a refresher—[click here.](#)) Make what we have been taught live in your words and action.

CHURCH-WIDE (CONTINUED)



Midweek at First Evan
Dinner and Activities for All Ages!
Wednesdays, September 14–
November 16 (No Meeting October 12)
There's something for everyone on
Wednesday nights this fall. It starts
with dinner at 5:00 p.m., then we
have activities for all ages. Visit
www.firstevan.org/midweek.

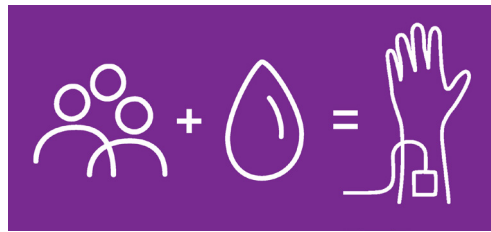
Attending or volunteering and
need childcare? www.firstevan.org/midweek-childcare
(For ages 2 and under. Subject to availability.)

Midweek Fellowship Meals
Wednesdays, September 14– November 16 (No Meal October 12)
5:00–6:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

During the school year the church gathers for fellowship meals on Wednesday evenings. The food is prepared by John Dawson and Jimmy Garrison and is served by faithful volunteers. Each individual has a choice between an entree and side item or the weekly soup and salad bar. A dessert is served with every meal.

Visitors and guests are always welcome and reservations are not necessary. Find our weekly menu at www.firstevan.org/midweek-menu. We take cash, checks, or Venmo @fecmemphis.

\$8/adult
\$4/child (3–10 years old)
\$40 family max
\$9/take-home meal



Blood Drive 
Wednesday, September 28
4:30–7:30, A124

The pandemic has accentuated the need for blood donations. First Evan is sponsoring a blood drive at the church. New donors, please contact Sam Hezlep at 901-486-6237.

October Fun Fest
SAVE THE DATE:
Saturday, October 29
11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., East Lawn

PRAYER

Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting
Weekly, 6:15–8:00 p.m., D114

A prayer guide is provided each week to assist in praying for our church, ministries, sick, bereaved, country, missionaries, and military. For more information, contact Chuck Downs at cadowns@bellsouth.net.

First Evan Prayer Focus
Sundays, 5:00–5:30 p.m. via Zoom
Every week you are invited to pray specifically for our transition. We will use the [prayer guide](#) found at the information desks. [Click here to join the meeting](#). Meeting ID: 863 8809 4094; Passcode: 758395.

GLOBAL MISSIONS

Missionary Care Fund
The Missionary Care Fund can be used to assist missionaries with expenses that are the result of unexpected circumstances and health-related issues. Your generous donation can help a family in a time of need. Please consider giving to the “Missionary Care Fund” by designating on check/offering card.



Monthly Meet & Greet
We would love for you to join as we fellowship with and encourage our Missionaries and National Partners! Times and days will vary. Below is the zoom info we will use for the meetings. Please stay tuned to social media and emails to get the latest update on who we will be meeting with and when. [Click here to join meetings](#). Meeting ID: 824 2619 1429; Passcode: 518957.



GLOBAL MISSIONS (CONTINUED)

Tlapaneco Indian Ministries, Inc.
by Hickman Ewing



First Evangelical Church has partnered with the Gospel ministry work among the Tlapaneco Indians of Guerrero state, Mexico, for over 80 years. Mr. H.V. Lemley married Mildred Lewis at First Evan in October of 1939, and they went directly to work in a remote region of this tribe. When Mrs. Lemley went to be with the Lord in 1972, Ruben Gaytan became Mr. Lemley's "Timothy," and together they carried on the ministry. When Mr. Lemley went to be with the Lord in 1993, Ruben became the Director of the ministry. In 1997 he married Leticia Aguilar, missionary and granddaughter of the first Tlapaneco convert to Christ, and together they have carried on the ministry. There are now many Tlapaneco believers, some 50 churches and missions, and approximately 45 full-time ministry workers.



In July, Ricky Varela and Hickman Ewing traveled to the city of Tlapa, Mexico, for the annual **Pastors and Leaders Conference**, held at the Tlapaneco Christian Center/Bible School. This was the first such in-person conference since the summer of 2019, due to COVID. About 100 pastors, female missionaries, translators, and church leaders attended. First Evan has typically supplied the main speaker for this conference every other year (i.e. 2015 Pradip A., 2017 Seth Stevens, 2019 Ron Man). This year Hickman was the principal speaker on the subject of "Unity." Ricky led the devotional times each morning (beginning at 7:00 a.m.). One of the highlights each day was the worship and singing of hymns and songs from noon to 1:00 p.m. daily. It was encouraging to see the young male Bible school students playing their guitars and leading the singing.



It was a time of mutual encouragement and learning, focusing on our oneness as believers in Christ. Jesus prayed the night before He went to the cross that His then disciples (and those of us who would believe in the future) would be one, even as the Father and the Son are (John 17:21). We considered John 13–17 (and many other New Testament texts), including Jesus' command to love one another. How do we show love? Warren Wiersbe (who spoke at First Evan years ago) wrote: "Lest that important admoni-



tion be received in a vague fashion, it is fleshed out by a couple of dozen additional 'one another' statements that further explain what Christian love really is." It was so touching every morning, before the 7:00 a.m. devotional, to see each of the 100 believers present "greeting" each and every other believer individually with a handshake and a hearty "buenas dias" or "wah-sot-low" (good morning in the Tlapaneco language).

On the final day we participated in the Bible School graduation service. Ricky and Hickman awarded the diplomas, Hickman gave a message from 1 Peter 1 on our calling, and Ricky prayed a prayer of consecration for these new pastors.

Ricky and Hickman also met for some 4+ hours with the Tlapaneco Christian Churches (ICT) Board of directors, which consists of seven pastors (Emanuel, Abel, Roberto, Timoteo, Felix, Tanis, and Moises), and Ruben.

Though this tribe is now "reached" in a missiological sense, the vast majority of the approximately 200,000 Tlapaneco people do not know our Jesus personally—many still clinging to their ancient pagan custom of sacrificing to the rain god. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ as they take the good news of the Gospel to their people, often in the face of much opposition and persecution. They send their warmest greetings and thanks for the ongoing partnership with and support of First Evan.

WORSHIP



Hymn Sing

We had a great evening together singing many classic hymns of the faith. We glorified the Lord through song as a congregation, along with choir, piano, and organ. What a gift we've been given through the words and music of saints from many centuries! Using our hymnals, we sang "A Mighty Fortress," "How Firm a Foundation," "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," and many others.



Worship and Prayer for the World

Sunday, September 11
6:00-7:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall
(Nursery for ages 2 and under)

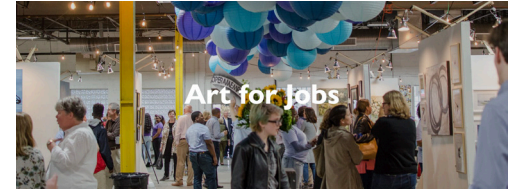
Join us for a time of worship in song and prayer for the nations! This will be our quarterly World Prayer Focus and Worship Pastor, Ken Boer will lead us in worship.

Baptism

Sunday, October 9
10:45 a.m., Sanctuary

If you are interested in baptism, please apply by Sunday, September 11 at www.firstevan.org/baptismapplication or contact Katelynn Bernadini at kbernardini@firstevan.org.

MEMPHIS MINISTRIES



Serve Our Partner Ministry: Advance Memphis

Tuesday-Thursday
September 20-22

Advance Memphis needs volunteers for **Art for Jobs**, an annual sale promoting economic stability for our South Memphis Neighbors.

Ways to Serve:

- Invite artists to contribute artwork
- Volunteer for behind-the-scenes help
- Purchase artwork
- Pray for a successful event

Get involved! Visit www.advance-memphis.org/afj-2022.

FEC KIDS



Parent Orientation

Thank you for joining us at our FEC Kids Parent Orientation! If you missed, please pick up your copy of *Let the Children Worship* at the C-Wing check-in desk.

Church Resource Shelves

Please stop by our FEC Kids Church Resource Shelves located at each entrance of the church to pick up coloring sheets, sermon notes, or to borrow books for use during the worship service.



FEC Kids Midweek

Wednesdays, September 14-
November 16, 6:15-7:30 p.m.*

Preschool, C-Wing | K-5th Grade, Gym
K-5th graders will have theme nights, scripture memory work, discipleship groups, games, and guest speakers! Our preschoolers will reinforce Sunday's lesson and participate in crafts and play. Sign up at www.firstevan.org/feckids-midweek. Childcare is available for children ages 2 and under for adults participating in adult Midweek activities (register at www.firstevan.org/midweek-childcare). *Childcare will also be available from 7:30-8:00 p.m. for kids with parents participating in on campus electives.

A LOOK AT SEPTEMBER King David

SEP 4 God Chose David to Be King (1 Samuel 16)

SEP 11 David Fought Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

SEP 18 God Made a Covenant With David (1 Samuel 6-7)

SEP 25 David Sinned and Was Forgiven (1 Samuel 11-12)

Big Picture Question:

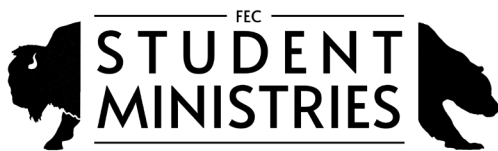
What is Grace?

Grace is when God gives us something good even when we do not deserve it.

Memory Verse:

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace." Ephesians 1:7

STUDENTS



Student Ministries Midweek Wednesdays, 6:15–8:00 p.m. Impact (6th–8th grade), E226 Common Ground (9th–12th grade), E202

In August, Impact and Common Ground had their Fall Midweek Kick-off. It was so fun to get back into the swing of things. We played games, had small groups, and learned about how God uses those who are willing to do incredible things for His kingdom. We were so grateful to be able to all worship with a live band together to get the year started!

Midweek is a place for students to meet together and have the opportunity to grow in their relationship with Jesus, their friends, and their adult small group leaders. Each week we meet to connect with one another through food, worship, teaching, and small group time.

Impact Fall Retreat

At the end of August, Impact gathered together for the annual Fall Retreat. We were scattered around host homes, service sites, and we even got to do some rock climbing at Memphis Rox! We learned about how the intimacy of our relationship with Jesus changes us by looking at the lives of several of Jesus' disciples. It was such a great weekend of growing closer to God and one another.

CARE

ACT II Widows Fellowship Monday, September 12 10:00 a.m., Chapel

ACT II is a group for widows that meets the first Monday of each month in the Chapel for prayer and fellowship (unless there is an outing). This month, Christian image consultant, [Miriam Howle](#), will speak on being "Wonderfully Dressed." A brunch will follow.

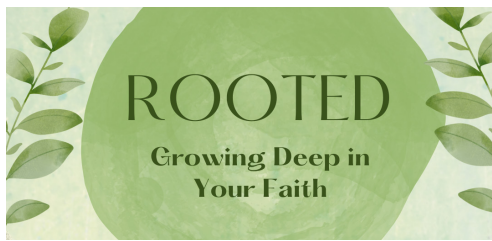
In October, we will attend the Alice in Wonderland exhibit at the Botanic Gardens at 10:00 a.m., followed by lunch at Fratelli's Garden Cafe.

For more information about this ministry or to RSVP, contact Cathy Graham at 901-685-1028 or 901-299-1426 (cell).

He Cares Ministry

We are looking for someone to restart and coordinate our He Cares Ministry. We also need one or two retired nurses on campus for this gathering. This is a special ministry designed to meet the needs of our seniors desiring more fellowship. We meet monthly from 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m. for a day of arts/crafts, devotional/prayer time, communion, and lunch. Every "Dear One" is assigned at least one caregiver that stays with them throughout the day. This is also a ministry for the caregivers of the "Dear Ones" who can have a day to run errands, shop, or just take a nap. If interested in volunteering, please contact Jim Henry at jhenry@firstevan.org or 901-490-5825.

WOMEN



Heart to Heart Bible Study "Rooted: Growing Deep in Your Faith"

written by **Crickett Keeth**

Tuesdays, September 13–November 15, 9:30–11:30 a.m.

Fellowship Hall or

Wednesdays, September 14–

November 16, 6:15–8:00 p.m., Chapel

Join us for this 9-week Bible study designed to take you deeper in your walk with God. Divided into three sections (The Foundation, The Growth, and The Fruit-bearing), this study will walk you through ways we need to be rooted in order to bear fruit for God's Kingdom. Details and registration at www.firstevan.org/h2h.

EQUIPPING



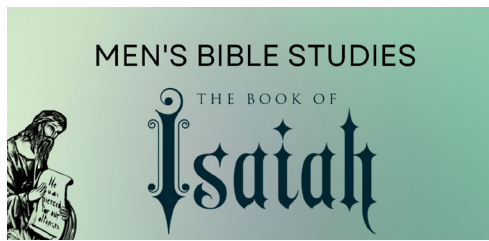
Momentum Yes

Wednesdays, September 14–November 16, 6:15–8:00 p.m.

A121/122 | Led by **Jim Pendleton**

MomentumYes is a free video-based series for small groups which teaches, inspires, and equips everyday people to rethink God's mission. It is designed to actively engage believers in taking the next steps in God's mission. Details and registration at www.firstevan.org/momentum-yes.

MEN



Men's Bible Studies "The Book of Isaiah" led by **Buddy Jones**

Mondays, September 12–December 5 6:30–8:00 p.m., E143 (Moody Room)

Wednesdays, September 14–

December 7, 6:30–7:30 a.m., Zoom

Isaiah is known as the "Prince of Prophets" and his prophecy is the most theologically significant book in the Old Testament. The format includes weekly study assignments, small group discussion, and lecture. Contact Buddy Jones at buddyjones0@gmail.com. Register at www.firstevan.org/mens-bible-studies.



Men's Fish Fry

Tuesday, September 20

6:00–8:00 p.m.

Fellowship Hall

Cost: \$7/person

or \$50/table

Speaker: **Bill Morris**

Join us for an evening of fish, food, and fellowship with speaker **Bill Morris**, Former Sheriff of Shelby County (1964–1970) and Former Mayor of Shelby County (1978–1994). For tickets, go to the Fellowship Hall on Sundays or contact **John Dawson**, 682-8452, **Jack Pepper**, 833-0721, or email men@firstevan.org. (picture by *The Daily Memphian*)



YOUNG ADULTS



BREAK Book Study

Thursdays, September 15–November 10

7:00 p.m., The Hall's House

BREAK is a ministry for those post high school to mid 20's. Starting this September, we will study *The Knowledge of The Holy* by A.W. Tozer. Books will be provided. Email **Kassie Sanborn** at ksanborn@firstevan.org for the address and/or the details.



BREAK Camping Trip

Friday–Sunday, October 7–9

Cost: \$35, Sylamore Creek Camping Mountain View, Arkansas

Register by Friday, September 30 at www.firstevan.org/break. Contact **Kassie Sanborn** at ksanborn@firstevan.org for details.

SEPTEMBER 2022

				THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 Common Ground Beach Trip >>>	3
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	8	9	10
4 Common Ground Beach Trip >>> FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom	5 Church Offices Closed for Labor Day >>>	6 Canvas Art Class 6:00-7:30 p.m., E144	7 Student Ministries Midweek 6:15-8:00 p.m., E202/E226			
11 Communion FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom Worship & World Prayer Focus 6:00-7:00 p.m., F-Hall	12 ACT II Widows Fellowship 10:00 a.m., Chapel Men's Bible Study Begins 6:30-8:00 p.m., E143	13 Heart to Heart AM Begins 9:30-11:30 a.m., F-Hall Canvas Art Class 6:00-7:30 p.m., E144	14 Midweek Fellowship Meal 5:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall Midweek Begins 6:15-8:00 p.m.	15 BREAK Book Study 7:00 p.m., The Hall's House	16 Girls' Getaway>> Mariott Shoals Hotel and Spa (Florence, AL)	17
18 >>> Child Dedication FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom	19	20 Art for Jobs Men's Fish Fry 6:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall Canvas Art Class 6:00-7:30 p.m., E144	21 Art for Jobs Midweek Fellowship Meal 5:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall Midweek 6:15-8:00 p.m.	22 Art for Jobs BREAK Book Study 7:00 p.m., The Hall's House	23	24
25 Sunday School Leaders Meeting 4:30-5:30 p.m., E125/126 FEC Prayer Focus 5:00-5:30 p.m., Zoom	26	27 Canvas Art Class 6:00-7:30 p.m., E144	28 Blood Drive 4:30-7:30 p.m., A124 Midweek Fellowship Meal 5:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall Midweek 6:15-8:00 p.m.	29 BREAK Book Study 7:00 p.m., The Hall's House	30 Council Retreat >>>	