

Interview with Pastor Geoffrey Boyle - July 8th, 2019

00:01 - Jacob Beebe

What is your name?

00:02 - Pr. Boyle

Geoffrey Boyle.

00:04 - Jacob Beebe

What church? Do you pastor

00:06 - Pr. Boyle

Two, Grace Lutheran and Trinity Lutheran here in Wichita.

00:09 - Jacob Beebe

Where are those churches located?

00:11 - Pr. Boyle

Grace is at 3310 East Pawnee, southside of Wichita, and then Trinity is at 611 S. Erie St.

00:20 - Jacob Beebe

How long have you pastored these congregations?

00:23 - Pr. Boyle

Next month it will be nine years.

00:26 - Jacob Beebe

Have you pastored elsewhere?

00:28 - Pr. Boyle

No

00:31 - Jacob Beebe

What are the congregation sizes of these two churches?

00:33 - Pr. Boyle

They are both roughly the same. We have at each of them somewhere between I'd say 60 and 70 people that come every Sunday. As far as what's on the books, it's probably close to 130 at one, and 180 at the other.

00:54 - Jacob Beebe

What are the congregation's demographics? Do you have Hispanic services, do you have large youth groups?

01:06 - Pr. Boyle

So at Grace we do have a Hispanic ministry. So we have every Sunday divine service in Spanish where we have typically between five and ten people that come to that, it's fairly small. And of those that do come, two of them know English fairly well, And three to five of them don't know it at all, so it's entirely in Spanish. As far as the English services go, I would say it's mostly white, mostly older, we do have some of African-American descent, we do have some from Mexican descent or other Hispanic countries. I would say in general our demographic is a fairly older age. We do have more and more younger families that are coming and joining, and more babies are coming forth, and that's been a wonderful thing. We've had a few baptisms recently and another one coming next month. So I would say we are gradually lowering our age demographic.

02:13 - Jacob Beebe

What makes the LCMS faith, or your specific congregations, unique? What draws people to the congregation or to the church at large?

02:24 - Pr. Boyle

I'd say within the LCMS community, here in Wichita in particular, my two congregations are probably unique in their liturgical form of worship. We tend to use what the hymnal has given us in as rich and full away as we can. So we do have quite a bit more of a ceremonial side than I think what you would find in other LCMS churches around here. And some people are just drawn to that. Some people have resonated with why we do what we do, and we are very adamant to teach why we do what we do. And so when that's the case, you know, not everyone likes it, but as people come to know, maybe fuller and fuller way, what our confessions actually do uphold, they tend to resonate with the way that gets expressed in the liturgy.

03:18 - Jacob Beebe

What kind of community engagement is your church involved in? Do you have any outreach programs? How are new members reached? And is there an education program for them?

03:31 - Pr. Boyle

A number of things, and each church does slightly different things, like at Grace, we have a food pantry that Grace is... being located on the south side, right across from one of the poorest neighborhoods here in Wichita, we have a number of people that do come in off the street. And one of the things that our church, being a fairly lower, let's say it's got a lower budget than many other churches, so we just don't have a lot of cash. So when people come in, we say we can't actually give you money for either the gas or housing or whatever it is, but we do have a food pantry. And so we have every Tuesday, from 9 to 11, people come in regularly for food. And it's been a wonderful outreach and opportunity. It has not translated into a number of members, but that's also not why we started it, we started it because there is an area that needs this human care and this mercy and so we, we've been operating this food pantry for years, and it's through the donation of various churches, individuals, it's been able to carry on, There have been maybe two people that I know of that have ended up joining the church at some point through this food

pantry. But for the most part, it's simply an outreach. We also have a clothing giveaway. We have service at the Lord's Dinner. This is largely focused on this poor area here in Wichita. Another thing that Trinity has really gotten involved with and Grace in part has come along with it is Family Promise, which is a wonderful outreach towards the homeless and homeless families. And so I actually found out about this largely through Father Aaron Warwick at St. Mary's Orthodox. He came and spoke to our council about this. And what it is, is it's an organization where you have hosting churches that will take a family for one week, every quarter of the year, and take actually take up to three families where you have children and adults that share that you know, each have their own room. And host church will keep them overnight, and have staff that provide food and so forth, and shelter. And through a system of churches, a network of churches, they will be able to go to a different place each week. And they have a day house during the day. So our churches have come along as an assisting congregation to help supply food and extra people to care for that week. And that's been a great opportunity. We also serve at the Labor Finders a day labor place right around the corner from here trying to keep a neighborhood outreach alive there. We have other things that do try to bring people in, we've got a neighborhood Fall Festival here at Trinity every year. And we have a lot of our neighbors that come in it's a way of having a fun time fostering kind of a neighborhood joy and community that way, but also inviting people to our church giving them a little catechism that we put in all their bags and invite them to when our service times are and that sort of thing. We do offer new member classes fairly regularly. Right now I've got four people going through that. And so it's just as people come in and are interested and they end up visiting for a while will end up setting up a class and going through the catechism that way.

06:56 - Jacob Beebe

Do you have children education programs?

07:00 - Pr. Boyle

We do have a Sunday school at Trinity especially, and Grace is looking to start that. Grace has not had that very strongly because with an 8am service, it's a bit more difficult for that kind of age of kids to come. Trinity has had just a bit more. So during the 9:30 Bible study our we do have a Sunday school. We do not have any focused middle or high school or older sort of classes. We do have every Wednesday during the school year, roughly September through June, youth catechesis. So I'll teach that. And we have everywhere from three year olds up until some in high school that come. It's been a great opportunity to continue that education and that growth.

07:48 - Jacob Beebe

Where have you received your education?

07:51 - Pr. Boyle

I did my undergraduate at the University of Michigan. And then I went to seminary at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. While there, they have an exchange program. So I actually

went to Cambridge and studied at Westfield house for a year. And then I did my PhD through the University of Toronto.

08:12 - Jacob Beebe

And how, outside of the university, how do you continue your education?

08:20 - Pr. Boyle

Well, I did just finish the PhD. And so there's that. I've done various continuing education courses, though, which has been a great opportunity. These pop ups sporadically throughout the country. But I went to a continuing ed. week long course in Albuquerque, New Mexico for every year for about eight years or so. And that was a great opportunity. We have some of those here in Kansas. We also have every year a pre-lent retreat for all the pastors in the Kansas district where a professor from the seminary comes. And that's a great opportunity. We have an annual pastors conference or Kansas District Church Workers conference. I've presented a paper there every year for the last eight or nine years. And so that's been a great opportunity to continue that way. And then finally, we did start a book club, Pastor Fillipek and I, nine years ago, where we read a book every month and discuss it together. And we've been submitting those book lists, or syllabi, to the seminary, and they actually have recognized it as a continuing education opportunity. So every pastor that goes through that can obtain, I think it's two credits a year, from the seminary for that, which is a great continuing ed. opportunity to just keep reading and discussing it with other pastors.

09:40 - Jacob Beebe

Do you see your ministry or the church changing, growing, or modernizing now, or do you see any change in the near future?

09:52 - Pr. Boyle

You know, if anything, I see our cultural demands right now presenting it in such a way that the church needs to be the church. And so all the more I would say, with such a, I mean, I don't want to say it's a collapse, but it's not far from it. I mean, there's just so many tensions right now in the culture that what the church needs to be doing is providing a stable place that's not going anywhere, where families are collapsing, where ideas are just all over the place. And the church needs to be a place where people can come and find that it's not going anywhere. And so if anything, I think it's more encouragement to continue to uphold a true confession, a beautiful liturgy, and encouraging folks in this life that is gathered around what is good. So I don't see us trying to chase the culture that way, I see us trying to continue to be who we are. And as the culture continues to kind of crumble around us, folks are going to come to the high place, and that's going to be the church.

11:03 - Jacob Beebe

Now onto the Eighth Day Questions. How and when were you introduced to Eighth Day Books, and how and when were you introduced to Eight Day Institute?

11:13 - Pr. Boyle

Interestingly, in an indirect way and unknowingly, I was introduced to Eighth Day Books while I was on my vicarage at St. John Lutheran Church in Wheaton, Illinois. We had received a catalog from them. The pastors had apparently in years past ordered books from this catalog and was a very famous catalog that Warren Farha ran for years. We had it at the church there. And one day the pastor came in and threw the catalog and my desk and said, victor, what do you want? And so I went through and circled a number of books that I thought would be wonderful and figured if I got them great, if not, no sweat. Well I got all those books. It was wonderful. And it was a great catalog. I mean, this catalog had not only just books in there, but it had little stories about them and reviews about them and quotes from them. And it was hand selected, and just trying to uphold what really are great books, a bookstore unlike any other. Well, I had no idea that was in Wichita. So when I first came to Wichita, it was Pastor Cliff Winter, who's a member of Trinity, and as we get to know each other he said fairly early on, hey, there's this great bookstore right up the road that you're going to love. And so I he showed it to me, I went and it was it was amazing. And it's right on the same street as I live on. So it's Erie, just north of Kellogg. And so it's now become a place, we go there regularly. Our kids love it there, will go up on Saturdays, ride our bikes. And so I've been going there consistently since I came in 2010. Get to know Warren Farha well, Victoria, and a number of the other workers there. And it's just been a great place, a home away from home.

13:01 - Jacob Beebe

And the Eighth Day Institute?

13:03 - Pr. Boyle

Oh, the Eighth Day Institute. So I came into contact with that by going to the bookstore and I saw a flyer. And it must have been December of 2010. My wife and kids were back in Michigan, because through various tragic circumstance with one of my wife's roommates, and so they went back and I had some extra time. And so I was at the bookstore. And I saw this flyer for Christmas feast for the Eighth Day Institute so I asked what that was and was introduced to the Ladder right next door, the headquarters for the Eighth Day Institute. And that was my first encounter with the Institute. Loved it, ended up getting involved with Hall of Men, which is a gathering that meets on the second and fourth Thursdays at 7:30 for a meal, at 8:30 a little convocation where you've got the Nicene Creed, the Lord's Prayer, hymn and a scripture reading and reading from a church father, and then there's an informal, formal toast to one of the heroes of the faith. And guys gather around and listen, learn, discuss, you know, have just great friendships that are formed. So I was involved with the Hall of Men starting really in 2011, and have been involved with it. I have presented, I don't know, a dozen times probably various heroes of the faith. I've presented at various symposiums. I was just the keynote speaker for the so called Protestant side of the Florovski week, which is an annual academic conference, although it's not purely academic, it's just more on a more highly intellectual side of their offerings. And so that was a great opportunity to discuss with a Catholic, a Eastern Orthodox and a Lutheran but Protestant voice. Addressed this year it was the papacy, the Bible, and councils, what's the authority for the church? So I've been involved in that way, just presenting,

attending. But then I also served as the vice president for the institute and as a board member before that. And I don't know if it was for five years or six years, but it was for a good chunk of time that I was on the board and I came off the board, just the end of 2018, largely so that I could focus on finishing my dissertation because I needed to get that done in the spring.

15:37 - Jacob Beebe

You already covered this quite a bit. Can you give us a sampling of the topics that are discussed?

15:43 - Pr. Boyle

Oh, sure. Well, so at the Hall of Men, for instance, some of those that I've presented where someone like Rev. Childs who is a Presbyterian, was, since disease, but Presbyterian, biblical exegete from Yale University, happens to have been the doctor father for my doctor father, so I call him my doctor grandfather, but, so there's people like that, Cyril of Alexandria, I've presented on St. Michael, or Joe, you know, some of these biblical figures, Jeremiah I have presented. There's just a number of people this year, I'm actually going to be presenting on Arthur Carroll Peepcorn who was professor at the St. Louis Seminary in the late 50s through early 70s when he died. So, you get a number of these figures, you have also at this symposium level, you have topics that are covered, wonder, you know, you have topics of culture, you have topics of... we had Peter Leiter come in to talk about Constantine and a constantinian culture and that sort of thing, and how do we engage culture that way, from a very intentional Christian point of view. I did talk about Florovsky week, the year before it was on justification, and next year, it will be on baptism. So you get some of these. The idea is really that we are going to be an ecumenical organization that is not at the lowest common denominator, recognizes their differences. And we, rather than brushing those aside, we want to take them head on and say, you know, we want each community to be most rooted in it in its community so that we could have a real dialogue over the issues. So I've really appreciated that.

17:35 - Jacob Beebe

How does Eighth Day Books advertise their products to you? And how do how does the Eight Day Institute advertise its programs?

17:57 - Pr. Boyle

Sure. Well, Eighth Day Institute, I'll start with that, they have a website, a great website. And it's actually just been revamped and makes it very easily accessible to just pass that on. I guess both of them, most effectively, are advertising by word of mouth by people that are coming to the events, coming to the bookstore. And they encounter something that is very different, and I think very good. And so will bring that, it's that word of mouth, it's the most convincing form of advertising. But we do, we advertise for the institute in our monthly newsletter at our churches. You see it on Facebook, for both of them. You get mailings, occasionally, from each, especially the annual sale at Eighth Day Boone, you know, you'll get a flyer. But it's mainly through word of mouth, I think is at least most effective for the enduring customer.

19:06 - Jacob Beebe

Have you met any people through these organizations that have affected you professionally?

19:13 - Pr. Boyle

Yeah, I'm not quite sure how to answer it, affected me professionally, as far as by serving in the church, It's not like I'm looking for other jobs or anything like that. But, they have affected me, I'd say primarily personally, I've developed great friendships. And just a quick anecdote that is, for instance, two days ago I was going to the bookstore to pick up a baptismal card so I could send it to a godson of mine. I pull up, and as I'm pulling in and getting out of my car, I see a good friend of mine, who's the headmaster at Christ the Savior Academy, which is at St. George, which is where my wife works and all five of my kids go. So we've got a strong connection there. And so I see Galen, I say hi to him. And he's got two folks with him. One, a monk from New Mexico and the other a deacon who is to be ordained a priest the next day. And so they were both with him. And he was showing them the bookstore. And I, having been a board member and an active member at the Institute, have a key, and so I said well, have you shown them the Ladder and they said, oh no. And so we walked in the ladder. Loved, you know, these two guests loved it. So here we're able to have this conversation, meet new people, reconnect with old friends. After that, I go into the bookstore and there's about a half dozen people. The guy that's buying a book is a good friend, Chris Kettler, teaches at Friends University. So we talked for a while, Warren Farha has behind the counter. You've got Lucy, one of the newer employees that I've been able to connect with and her sister and her father that works. So it's just friendships get formed and you actually get to walk into a place and it is kind of like home. There's this joy that gets to be shared there. I would say with Chris Kettler is another example of a professional, he's someone that has been a longtime teacher at Friends, and has given me encouragement in terms of my own writing, the presentation I gave for Florovski, he was very adamant that I should seek to get that published. I've developed friendships with Matt Umbarger who is a professor at Neumann University and a few others that just through this community, have helped to shape thinking and maybe academic pursuits beyond maybe the career side of things.

21:43 - Jacob Beebe

Where are, for the Eighth Day Institute, where are gatherings held? How often are these gatherings, and what is their average attendance?

21:52 - Pr. Boyle

Sure. Well, starting with a Hall of Men, that is probably the most regular and then with that, because that's twice a month, Sisters of Sofia is once a month and that's for the women, is largely a similar structure. Those are all held at the Ladder, which is located immediately next to, west of, Eighth Day Book. Those are held, like I said, twice a month for the Hall of Men 7:30. And guys go home whenever they go home, sometimes after midnight, but we typically try to be done with the actual formal side around 10:00. Sisters of Sofia is once a month on the third Tuesday I believe, and that's roughly 6:30 until, I don't know, 9:00 or so. And then then you also have feasts and festivals, so sometimes they will have a Christmas feast or St. John of

Damascus award banquet and these things, St Patrick's feast also, St. Patrick's is typically held at the Ladder, but the Christmas feasts rotate through churches. So we've hosted it at Trinity, it's been at, there's a charismatic Episcopal Church, Resurrection, up on the north side by Bellaire, they have had it last year. And so there's a number of places where these things can be held. They're trying to incorporate churches into their, say, their offerings. There's an Inklings Festival, which is held at the Ladder and outside and it's been a great opportunity for families to gather. We often have a symposium at St. George, in the fellowship hall there, and last year was at St. Mary's because St. George was undergoing construction. I think most of them are, most of the offerings, are held at the Ladder, the bookstore, churches, St. George being the primary spot.

23:41 - Jacob Beebe

What are the demographics of the members? Are they mostly Orthodox?

23:49 - Pr. Boyle

Surprisingly, they're mostly Protestant. The vast majority of attendees at things like symposium Hall of Men are not just Protestant, but it seems non-denominational. I mean, there is a strong interest, I would say, in the Protestant world, towards these things that are that are different, holy, icons, theology, I mean, just pushing some on the sacramental side. There are, of course, the Orthodox and Catholics and Lutherans that attend these things, but the primary attendee is going to be some evangelical.

24:37 - Jacob Beebe

One more question, very broad question. How have you been involved with St. George Orthodox Cathedral? You say your children go there, and your wife works there. Have you been involved in other ways?

24:54 - Pr. Boyle

Sure. It's a community that I've become very close with. Father Joshua was a very good friend, he was their assistant priest for a while, and I've got know Father Paul quite well. And I'd say through the school primarily, through friendships through Eighth Day Institute, it has been a consistent, it's been a consistent connection there that and a friendship that's developed. The school side of it, though, has been primarily how we've been so involved with that church. I do attend their pascha service as much as I'm able to. In fact, I've taken some of our high school youth just so they could see what that service is like, and then we've talked about it afterwards. I've taking our kids to it. It's, it really is remarkable, and the community's been very welcoming and encouraging to us.

25:55 - Jacob Beebe

And last question, do you have anything else to say about the Institute, the bookstore, or St. George at large?

26:06 - Pr. Boyle



I would say sign up as an Eighth Day member, and I would say go to the bookstore as often as you can. And that St. George has been, I think, a really a constant pillar of and encourager of the Christian life here in Wichita, that I think our all our churches should seek to emulate and, and have that same sort of stability for the, for the sake of Wichita. And that's one of the nice things is, it's that George, you know it's just not going anywhere. It's been there for over 100 years. Not always in its present form, but it brings a beauty, a consistency, a truth and a goodness to Wichita, that I think is is very good. And the fact that they are very open to having these conversations, even befriending a Lutheran pastor, where I can be fully Lutheran and they can be fully Orthodox and, and we can have a great friendship that way.

27:09 - Jacob Beebe

All right, well, that's it. Thank you.