

'He loved people like Jesus loved people': Ridgefield church remembers Andy Inskeep

CAMERON KAST

cameron@thereflector.com

In just nine short months, Andrew "Andy" Inskeep made big impressions at the Ridgefield Church of the Nazarene. Working primarily with middle to high school-aged students, he led the Sunday night youth program in worship and led outings and activities throughout the year. However, according to Pastor Jason Matters, Inskeep was more than just a leader, he was a "hero maker."

"Around here, we talk about the challenge for us leaders is to be hero makers. We have this internal conflict that we all want

to be the hero. However, a really good leader makes heroes out of other people," Matters said. "That was something (Inskeep) was so good at, making people into heroes."

Inskeep joined the pastoral team at the church last November after a six month search by the church. Matters, who had heard about Inskeep while they both served in the Kansas City area, said he was "extremely excited" when he received an inquiry email from Inskeep about the position. "I remember thinking that I had heard nothing but good things about him and wanted him to be here," Matters explained.

Inskeep, 44, died earlier this month while on a youth outing in Hood River. Hood River deputies reported that emergency calls came in shortly before 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 5 about a couple of swimmers in distress. After deputies responded, they found two swimmers unaccounted for, Inskeep and an 11-year-old boy. The boy was found shortly after and was taken to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead. Search teams continued to look for Inskeep. His body was found by boaters on Thursday, Aug. 6.

The church is working to remember Inskeep and his ability to "relate to anybody and everybody."

Andrew Goode, a 19-year-old in Inskeep's youth program, was one of the people Inskeep invested in. Goode said Inskeep encouraged the youth to look out for the one person that wasn't being noticed and try to form relationships with them. He taught youth like Goode to "scan the room" and form relationships with people.

"He was great at relationships



COURTESY PHOTO

Andy Inskeep led the youth services at the Ridgefield Church of the Nazarene prior to his death earlier this month.

and investing in people's lives," Goode said. "He was incredible at bringing people together to make something happen and use people's gifts towards that."

Matters recalled a moment in which Inskeep put his people skills to work. According to Matters, a newer middle school-aged kid started to come to the church's youth group. While the boy was a little on the quiet side, Inskeep made a point to find out what he liked and discovered he liked the trading card game, "Yu-Gi-Oh!"

Inskeep then went home and spent some time researching the game and learned how to play it online. Once the stay at home order due to COVID-19 went into place in Washington, Inskeep did a Zoom call and played the card game with him over the internet.

"He really could relate to people on the other person's terms," Matters said.

Along with relating to people on their terms, Inskeep had a few things he loved himself. One of his favorites was the soft drink, "Mello Yello." Goode recalled a recent experience where he and his girlfriend drove out of their way to get a twelve pack of Mello Yello for Inskeep.

"He just lit up when we gave it to him," Goode said.

When Inskeep found out Goode had never had the citrus soft drink, he brought out champagne glasses for the occasion.

"He made it a special thing," Goode said. "I ended up liking it."

Grant Peltzer, another pastor at the church, said Inskeep didn't just connect with the youth, but with the entire congregation. Peltzer said Inskeep partnered with him to work with

seniors in the church as well as doing work in the young children's programs.

"He didn't just focus on middle schoolers and high schoolers," Peltzer said. "He was just an all around great guy."

To help the congregation grieve with a loss of their own, the church hired a trauma interventionist. Along with talking with members of the congregation, the interventionist led a small memorial service last Sunday night with the church's youth where the youth got the chance to talk and tell stories about their pastor.

Along with the Sunday night service, Matters said the church is working on planning a memorial service for Inskeep. For now, Inskeep has a memorial service planned for Aug. 23 in his home state of Indiana.

"We may live stream that on Facebook," he said.

Memorial services aren't the only way people are remembering Inskeep and the impacts he made. Inskeep's wife, Maria Swinger-Inskeep, has set up a memorial scholarship fund to support youth in all the churches her late-husband made an impact in. Those wanting to donate to the fund can do so at bit.ly/2XXqZBb and 100 percent of all funds donated to the "Andrew J. Inskeep Memorial Scholarship Fund" will go to supporting youth who were impacted by Inskeep's work.

"It really is remarkable that someone that had been a youth pastor here only nine months could make such a big impact," Matters said. "It's just a testament to who he was and his dedication to the Lord. He really loved people like Jesus loved people."

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In My Opinion

"And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves", Hosea 13:2. There is another verse that speaks similarly in Proverbs 3:5. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding". We don't like to think so, but apparently our understand can be faulty. This is also true in the scientific arena where any direction in knowledge that leaves the platform established in the Bible falls in the category of our own understanding. In other words, our own understanding that now leads away from the Bible is nothing more than our own opinion.

Opinions are okay, there is nothing wrong with our opinions, but we need to understand that to have an opinion means that it is a view or judgement formed about something, not necessary based on fact or knowledge. So here is the scary part of all this, as our opinions are verbalized and go forth to see the light of day for all to examine, do our opinions have any merit, based on what the Bible has already established? That is a tall order because there is a lot of subject matter in the Bible that has been acknowledged that what is between the covers of these sacred pages, is truth. For this reason, the Bible is constantly being attacked, not just by those with their opinions, as Charles Darwin, but by all that use the platform of truth and error combined, as did the serpent in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:1,4,5) "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers", 2 Timothy 2:14. Charles Darwin had and voiced his opinion, where his opinion did not reflect the light that comes to us from the Bible, so to "strive" or argue "about words" that formed his opinion is said to be "no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers". All of us are hearers, and as opinions form for our understanding, gain notoriety as did the opinions of Charles Darwin, the loosening of the foundation or the "subverting" that undermines the power and the authority of what has already been established comes into question, as in the case of the Bible. This "subverting" over a period of many generations leaves its mark in our mind, causing the "hearers" to forget, as they lose faith in their Creator.

Our eyes and our ears are created gifts, giving our bodies a firm foundation that it might expand, that we may learn the character and likeness of our Creator from the pages of the Bible placed within our reach, that could possibly be like the leaves hanging from the tree of life that was in the midst of the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:9) This atmosphere "of these things" would cause us to put God's word in "remembrance", shoring up the foundation of our faith based on truth and knowledge that has taken a continued beating by the waves of humanity putting forth their opinion. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth", 2 Timothy 2:15.

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun", Ecclesiastes 1:9. This verse applies to Hosea 13:2. Sin pretty much guarantees the repetitiveness of every generation, picking up and following after the generation before them. "And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: (Charles Darwin was a craftsmen, crafting his opinion) Let the men that sacrifice (or worship that opinion) kiss the calves". Every time we hear with our created ears and see with our created eyes, the promoting of the evolution theory, it's nothing more than the fulfillment of what Ecclesiastes 1:9 desires to put into our understanding while building our faith. Trophy kissing is something that we are familiar with, this has been a long-established practice, as is kissing up to man, leaving us no desire, no room to learn for ourselves what is truth based on the authority of the word of God. So, history repeats itself, "though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved", Romans 9:27.

This shows importance of Rev.12:17.

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