



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

September 2021

Editor
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Daddy, Tell Me a Story

It has come to our ears, O God, our fathers have given us the story,
of the works which you did in their days, in the old times *Psalm 44:1 (BBE)*



Rev. Gary Kiontke



Every child loves stories. Sometimes fathers might pray for a day when their children will not say, 'Daddy tell me a story'; but children take great comfort when their father says the special words, 'Once upon a time ...'.

I have written about how much my sister and I loved having our father read the Sunday Comics to us when we were very young. One rainy Sunday afternoon when I was seven years old, Dad sat in a straight backed chair while my sister and I were sprawled out on the carpeted floor. He had a book in his hands. It turned out to be a paperback copy of *Swiss Family Robinson*. He opened to the first page and started reading. I remember being somewhat disoriented. I was hearing words, but not seeing anything but our living room. I remember I had a feeling that something different and slightly odd was happening. Then I had a prayerful thought: I need to adjust to this new way Dad is giving us stories. Soon, I settled in and began to enjoy the adventures Dad was reading. I loved the tree house they built. The animals they domesticated were OK. And the pirate threat was exciting.

My parents must have planned this because the next year the Disney movie *Swiss Family Robinson* came to Pittsfield. Every child in our twenty home baby boomer neighborhood saw it the same week of summer vacation. Every boy agreed with me the best part of the movie was when the father and his sons stacked up many large logs at the top of a hill when they saw a ship loaded with pirates anchored near their home. The thunderous, chaotic release of the logs upon the pirates was the coolest thing we had ever seen. We could not stop talking about it all week.

When I was twenty four years old the first *Star Wars* movie came out. This was

another great story for young adult males. It turns out George Lucas was a big fan of the movie *Swiss Family Robinson*. This does not surprise me because after watching the forest chase scene in *Return of the Jedi* when I was thirty years old, a childhood friend and I talked about how it felt like something out of the movie we had enjoyed twenty-two years earlier. I have not seen the prequel movies, but I found online that Anakin Skywalker, who became Darth Vader, was named after Ken Annakin who directed *Swiss Family Robinson*.

The Bible has hundreds of stories about real people who lived in a two thousand two hundred year timeframe from Abraham (2100 BC) to John, son of Zebedee (100 AD). I discovered the Narrative Lectionary last November, just before Advent. It was developed by professors Rolf Jacobson and Craig Koester of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, in partnership with congregations across North America. It covers four years, one for each Gospel. Starting in September it covers stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the prophets, Jesus and Paul. Stories show us what God is doing in the lives of people. They tell of hope and disappointment, suffering and redemption. In different contexts, we find God dealing with the complexities of human life. From September through the third Sunday of Advent the lead story comes from the Old Testament. There is a complementary short passage from the Gospel for the year. Starting with the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the lead story comes from the Gospel itself, with a short complementary passage from the Psalms. Since January I have given twenty-two messages starting with an Old Testament story and using Luke twelve times and Mark ten times.

I have wanted to preach the Gospel of Matthew for some time. One reason is that it is the Gospel written primarily to the Jews. As such it has (continued on page 2 ...)

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more than 58 allusions to Old Testament passages. So, we will be using the Narrative Lectionary from the first week in September through the first week of June, which is Pentecost Sunday. The first Sunday, we will look at the story of Noah, then Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Solomon, Esther and the prophets. After Easter we see the call of Peter and Paul in Acts, followed by three weeks in Romans before ending with Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2) on June 5, 2022. Each month, I will give the texts and stories in the *Vestry Voices* for the coming month.

It is safe to worship in person. I hope that many who have stayed away will begin to attend as we start a new church year with stories about people who are just like us, with the same struggles, the same need to love and be loved, the same fears of not being good enough, the same sense of being overwhelmed by the circumstances of life in a world that does not seem to care about anyone or anything. Let us discover what God did to help them in their lives, and know that because He helped them, He can also help us!

Sundays in September

We will have Communion on September 5 and 19.

Here are the details on the sermon texts and themes for each of the worship services on the Lord's Day:

Sunday	Readings	Themes
September 5	Genesis 6:9-14; 7:6-12; 8:14, 18-22; 9:11-17 & Matthew 8:24-27	Flood and Promise & Jesus calms the storm
September 12	Genesis 12:1-9 & Matthew 28:19-20	Call of Abraham & make disciples of all nations
September 19	Genesis 39:1-23 & Matthew 5:11-12	Joseph in prison & blessed are the reviled
September 26	Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29 & Matthew 2:13-15	Rescue at the sea & out of Egypt I called my son

We hope many people will take advantage of the privilege we have to re-gather together to worship Jesus. We do so on the first day of the week, when He rose from the dead. Let us not take this privilege for granted, as so many did pre Covid-19.

Hope

By Petros

When life takes a turn for the worst, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6) Hope is a byproduct of our character which allows us to fight the good fight. How long and prepared we are with the battle and outcome depends on our faith in God. When our trials feels like the weight of the world is on our shoulder, having hope is the rock that we rest our worries on. Hope is the light we see in the distant, in the midst of the storm that brings wave after wave, slowly washing our prized possessions into the sea. Without hope, the loneliness is excruciating and becomes overwhelming. No one else knows the difficulties you face or will have to endure. In the midst of our trials there are powers that try to consume us. There is the darkness or deception that causes panic and depression. However, there is a power of goodness

that prevails and strives to keep you from facing creation and mankind — alone. And with the power to develop faith and eventually hope – to overcome all obstacles including death.

God claims to have created mankind and has proved His love, in no less than two covenants or promises. After completion of his creation, the first man and woman were cast out of Paradise and the generations that followed carried that sin nature to a point of no return to the loving arms of God. Man's (God) granted free will created a sin barrier to the Almighty's kingdom. Noah pleaded with God not to destroy the earth if he could find just one worthy person outside his family. But none could be found. To Noah and the generations after him, "I've set my rainbow to ... remember the everlasting covenant ... that water will never again become a flood to destroy all living beings between God

(continued, page 3 ...)



Hope (... continued from page #2)

and all living beings on the earth.” (Genesis 9:13-16) And a promise to Father Abraham, "... throughout (the) generations ... an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” (Genesis 17:7)

The promise is based on faith that God can do whatever He said. “I have made you the father of many nations.” Abraham acted in faith when he stood in the presence of God, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that don’t yet exist. Hoping in spite of hopeless circumstances, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations” just as he had been told. His faith did not weaken when he thought about his own body (which was already as good as dead now that he was about a hundred years old) or about Sarah’s inability to have children, nor did he doubt God’s promise out of a lack of faith. Instead, his faith became stronger and he gave glory to God, being absolutely convinced that God would do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” Now the words “it was credited to him” were written not only for him but also for us. Our faith will be regarded in the same way, if we believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

A little faith as in a mustard seed can move mountains, because God wants to reveal Himself so we can grow our faith in Him. God wants us to know He is our God. As “seeds” of Abraham, God accepts us as “good enough” by our belief in Him. As we allow the Holy Spirit to direct our paths, the Word of God teaches the faithful. As captured by the authors of the 66 books of the Holy Bible (through the Holy Spirit’s leading in their lives). For the faithful there is a peace beyond human understanding, because of the reconciliation between sinner and Glory. The Word of God teaches us about the Kingdom of God that is brought to us by Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Councilor and/or Comforter that Jesus gives so we may have “spiritual ears” to hear what God is teaching us on maintaining and living in God’s Kingdom on earth. In our trials and sufferings, knowing that God has a path for us helps us to endure. Endurance produces character. And character produces hope.

When I started this article, I prayed constantly for weeks on what God wanted but there weren’t any leads. Meanwhile, Nick and I were praying. Nick and Cassidy were getting ready for an Air Force assignment overseas when the turn of events started. As fate would have it, they were reassigned to a base in Missouri. It was truly a miracle that his family was able to buy a nice home near the base and to see God’s hand moving the family of three young boys and the dog. On the day the article was due, I was organizing the material that I had gleaned the last few weeks when I got the call from my

son that the lighting strike damage to their newly purchased home appeared to be covered by the insurance!!! Who has lighting insurance? God provided, including temporary housing since they could not stay. After weeks of insurance/engineers investigations on the tree that took the bolt and caused the foundation to shift and crack the sewage line, allowing sewage to fill the basement, it did not look like the insurance was going to cover damages.

Our prayer was centered on trusting God and walking the path he had. I was led to buy a Bible for someone by fate. The box it arrived in had “Trust in the LORD ... and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6) The whole verse stood out like a billboard so I took a picture and sent it to Nick. In the past few weeks, Nick acknowledged God several times, which I rarely heard before. I was a proud father! I felt in my heart God would make the difference. The day they discovered sewage everywhere in the cellar, he went ballistic, but God provided the scriptures to allow him to let go and not worry. A 14 foot trench was dug to get to the damaged sewage line. Pictures Nick sent led me to wonder if the plumber was siding with Nick’s claim in order to cover his expenses and possible error in diagnosis. The bed of sand showed a plastic sewage line with a hole that could have been caused by digging. And black gel that was plugging the line. The plumber had tried to run a camera into the line but hit the dark material. It appeared to me the plumber should have cleared the clog with high pressure water. Then, the insurance reported they would cover the \$9000 for the hole to investigate. But not the \$14,000 to replace line. Not to mention the cracked foundation and waste removal. Nor alternative living space since they could not stay at “home.” After Nick relayed all the bad news, I told him I would pray, and every time I was reminded of Proverbs 3:5-6, which I shared with him.

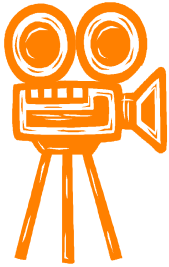
When I got the call on the reversal by insurance; it was Nick’s picture of the driveway without any cracks in driveway, taken the day before, that was key to insurance coverage. In the aftermath, there is a circular crack on the edge closest to tree. I have experienced many small voices or notions that I can relate as the Holy Spirit’s nudging. I hope the same for you!

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

FCC Will Have a Table at Olde Home Day ***Saturday, September 11 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM — in the Park***

FCC will have a table at Clinton's *Olde Home Day* on Saturday, September 11. Once again we are almost directly across from the church.

Movie Night ***Friday, September 17 at 7:00 PM***



We show a movie once each month, in Fellowship Hall, usually on the fourth Friday (third Friday, this month). The movies shown in the past have covered a range of genres, and were usually thought provoking.

We are able to show these movies based on the church's CVLI® license. However, this license does not allow us to advertise or publicize the names of these movies to the general public, and they are always free of charge.

We usually have free snacks available, and you are also welcome to bring your own meal, if you wish (many of us do!). So, please join us for a night out at the movies!

“The Way” Café Coffeehouse Returns ***John Polce on Saturday, September 25 at 7:30 PM***



Photo by am y from Freemages

After being closed for almost two years due to Covid-19, ‘*The Way*’ Café will be open again on Saturday, September 25 at 7:30 PM with our longtime friend John Polce.

We had a good phone visit back in June. He told me he has recorded three new songs in his home studio, and has sung them as coffeehouses are reopening after Covid-19.

If you have not been blessed by John's music before, please join us.



Photo “Late Summer Walkway” by Michael & Christa Richert from Freemages



SEPTEMBER 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 (††)	2 (**)	3	4
5 Communion Sunday (Note #1)	6	7	8 (††)	9 (**)	10	11 Olde Home Day (Note #2)
12 Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #3)	13	14	15 (††)	16 (**)	17 Movie Night (Note #4)	18
19 Communion Sunday (Note #5)	20	21	22 (††)	23 (**)	24	25 "The Way" Café (Note #6)
26 Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #7)	27	28	29 (††)	30 (**)		

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 9/5 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #2) 9/11 — *Olde Home Day*, in the Park, information table (set up at 8:00 AM), runs until 4:00 PM.
- #3) 9/12 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #4) 9/17 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
- #5) 9/19 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #6) 9/25 — "The Way" Café Christian Coffeehouse – John Polce: **7:30 PM** (doors open at 7:00 PM).
- #7) 9/26 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- (††) Wednesday Bible Study: **6:00 PM** (in Fellowship Hall).
- (**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).

