



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

May 2022

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An Important Prayer

Devote yourselves to prayer ... that God may open up to us a door for the word ... in order that I may make [the mystery of Christ] clear ... [as] I ought to speak.

Colossians 4:2-4 (NAS)



Rev. Gary Kiontke

There is much to learn about the Christian Life from this prayer and its application.

The prayer (Colossians 4:2-4):

To prayer, y'all must be persisting. Paul is asking the church in Colosse to be persisting in prayer. The word he uses has the connotation of being obstinate in prayer: resolute, bordering on stubbornness. Prayer is the key weapon in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18). As such it will never be easy because the enemy of God and His people hates Christians praying and will do all he can to prevent their praying persistently.

Paul then gives them two descriptions as to how they should be praying. First, they are to be continually staying alert in thanksgiving. This state of alertness, or being awake and watching, is what Jesus commanded in His final address to His disciples concerning His Second Coming (Matthew 24:42-44). But Jesus also said that until then "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come" (Matthew 24:14, NAS). And, they should be praying this way in thanksgiving. All Christians should be continually grateful for what God has done for them and who He IS to them. Christians come to be defined by God. And because of their love for Him, in accordance with the greatest commandment (Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Matthew 22:36-38), they come to be defined by Him. Philosophers have said we are who we love. Second, they are at the same time to also be praying for us, meaning Paul and his co-author Timothy. Timothy had come to faith on Paul's first missionary journey in 49AD (Acts 16:1-3) after Paul and Barnabas had split (Acts 15:36-41). This letter was written in 60AD during Paul's imprisonment in

Rome, some three years before Timothy became bishop of the churches in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:1-6).

Paul is desiring two results from the prayers of the church in Colosse. First, that God may open to us a door for The Word: to speak forth the mystery of Christ, because of which mystery I also have been imprisoned. Paul wants to have an opening to declare the mystery of The Messiah that was "hidden" in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the minor prophets and the psalms of Israel. But, now, due to the incarnation of The Messiah, and the Cross, the Empty Tomb, His Ascension and the giving of The Holy Spirit at Pentecost the mystery is much better known. He is currently under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:17-31); but, he is making disciples of those with whom he is often in close contact (Philippians 4:22). The thrust of Paul's prayer is that the last command of Jesus to make disciples of people of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20) will be fulfilled.

When I served at the Springfield Rescue Mission, the Executive Director had a metaphor for what often happens to people who persistently, passionately pray for something: They put "legs" on their prayers. Often, when we ask God to do something, He will arrange things so we become part of the answer to our prayers by joining with others to do the work to fulfill our prayers.

The application (Colossians 4:5-6):

In wisdom, y'all must be walking toward outsiders. Wisdom is correctly applying God's Word in every area of our lives, including speaking of the mystery of The Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus, The Savior. In The Bible, walking involves the whole way of life of a person. Paul is asking that Christians live in wisdom in all their interactions with outsiders: those of the world who are not knowing Jesus Christ, and the fullness of the life He has (continued on page 2 ...)

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An Important Prayer (... continued from page #1)

given by grace through faith. In other words, they have not experienced the abundance Christ gives in order that they may bear fruit for Him (John 15:5-16).

Again, Paul gives them two ways as to how they do what God requires of them. First, they must be making good use of this time, the season of grace. Second, their words are always being in grace, having been seasoned in salt. Salt is first of all appetizing. All people are hungry for God and His Gospel, even if they do not know it. Salt is also a preservative. To have life that lasts for eternity, people must respond positively to the Gospel; and, they must continue to do so to

the end. (The “perseverance of the saints.”) So, getting back to the beginning, as they speak the mystery of Christ, they must be persistently praying for the leading of The Holy Spirit as they interact with outsiders. They must pray those still in the world come to be reconciled with God in order to receive all the blessings He gives to His people.

The bottom line of the prayer and the application is that the members of the church will have come to know how they should respond to one another. Practice makes perfect. This is especially true in a church as it continues to grow through the addition of new converts.

Sundays in May

We will have Communion on May 1 and 15.

We have finished our walk through the Gospel according to Matthew. In May we will consider Acts and Romans, with a special chapter from Isaiah for Mother’s (Women’s) Day.

Here are the details on the sermon texts and themes for each of the worship services:

Date	Scripture	Title
May 1	<i>Acts 10:1-17, 34-38;</i> <i>Matthew 9:36-37</i>	God can cleanse people of every nation
May 8	<i>Isaiah 54:1-10;</i> <i>Matthew 12:46-50</i>	God can give barren women children
May 15		Guest speaker: Steven Sutton
May 22	<i>Romans 3:28-50; 5:1-11;</i> <i>Matthew 11:28-30</i>	God’s love and peace are through The Holy Spirit
May 29	<i>Romans 6:1-14;</i> <i>Matthew 6:24</i>	Life comes only from dying to the world IN Christ

The Bridge House

by Sally Camara

The Bridge House in Framingham is one of the ministries FCC supports. Dave Lang, who attended FCC along with his wife Debbie, is the director there and also one of the counselors.

The majority of this article was taken from The Bridge House’s website and newsletter, with permission from Dave.

THE BRIDGE HOUSE OFFERS HOPE

They are a faith-based recovery home for men with substance abuse problems. The program provides individualized treatment including counseling to support the spiritual, physical, social and intellectual health of each person in recovery.

The only requirement for acceptance to the Bridge House is a minimum of 30 days of verifiable sobriety from drug and alcohol abuse and a true desire and commitment to stay sober and build a life that sustains their new found freedom.

The men are required to find employment, stay clean and sober, do daily chores, follow house curfew and attend recovery meetings.

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The Bridge House (... continued from page #2)



The testimony of one such man was shared in the January/February newsletter "Bridges to You" and follows:

In the past year — just before Covid's full lockdown, we celebrated a graduation of a man (we'll call Gerald for confidentiality) who, upon graduation, drove his car out of the program to his new sober housing, secured by not just a job but a "salaried position." This was within what was effectively a year of treatment.

When Gerald first interviewed with the Bridge House intake manager, he shared he had no legal impediments. Then after acceptance to our counseling supportive residential program, he resisted employment at anything other than "construction" where he had (under the table) been paid quite well. When reminded the Bridge House program underscores with a "taxable" requirement that men find and maintain employment, the first job he applied for opened up a Warrant which turned into two Warrants (each related to his drug habit thefts). Needless to say, he didn't get the job — but he did get graces of humility and willingness of the Bridge House program to continue to work with him, despite his misrepresentations at intake.

With the open door to remain in treatment, in time he was able to find taxable employment and save enough money to get a car and down payment towards housing. He also cleared his two court cases, while remaining verifiably (through regular random drug testing) sober and learning new life coping skills for remaining sober.

There's more. The man who also announced at job search phase, "I don't do fast food" was successful in getting a fast-food job where he did well enough to make manager and get a nice salary.

After graduating, he continued to come to aftercare in the weekly process group run by his counselor. Offering the hope of his storied outcome, he was able to give back to new residents in the program.

Please be praying for the Bridge House – wisdom for the counselors, commitment for the residents and whatever else the Lord may put on your heart. Especially pray for their spiritual growth and genuine faith in Christ.

It Just Happens ...

by Petros

"It Just Happens ..." when I Goggled whether to use "Happen" or "Happens" the following text popped up. "Everything in life, even events that seem insignificant when they occur, happens for a reason. Dec 14, 2016." This article's title, "It Just Happens ..." counters the cliché ... things just don't happen. "It" will stand for the world view one chooses to abide in. "Just" is the character of the God who wants to be our God. He has made us in His image – righteous; by faith in God. "Happens" will be the events and experiences God uses to grow our faith. All things work for the glory of God. Good or bad, too little or too much; our contentment depends on knowing God has a purpose for us. Jesus started His ministry in Galilee preaching the good news of God, ***"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news!" Mark 1:14-15.*** When we turn from our ways and seek to live by Jesus' teaching, the Kingdom of Heaven comes upon us. It is the peace of God due a spiritual realization of His love for us. While the physical trials and earthly nature of this world in-

fluence us, living the Word will guide our life choices and allow the fruits of the Holy Spirit to flow, thereby giving us a Teflon skin that spares us the troubles of the world that God has already deemed as Satan's domain. As we look to God and live His Word – His plan for us unfolds.

By going to Bible studies and reading the Bible, it just happens, that we're trying to "keep the Sabbath" in our home. At first, the idea seemed foreign, but the thought kept surfacing in my personal study time and I couldn't ignore giving God a chance. Then came the revelation; it wasn't so much as giving reverence to God on Sunday, but to gain the wisdom of God, to allow hearing His "voice" in all matters as we take a break from our agenda. It was awkward to "impose" my desire for a "Jesus" movie over our Sunday TV agenda. But as the spiritual head of household, I sheepishly suggested this was one way of keeping the Sabbath. What a delight that the Holy Spirit was moving in the household as the following Sunday we were blessed by my wife's sugges-

(continued on page 4 ...)

It Just Happens ... (... continued from page #3)

tion to watch "A Coat of Many Colors." May you be blessed as much as I was by the movie about a young "Dolly."

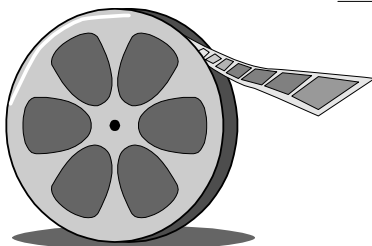
At the last Wednesday Bible Study, we discussed Jesus as the Son of Man and He will sit at the right hand of God the Father. I had a question as to why God's plan was to have Jesus as the Son of God when He is also God in the flesh. I was seeking a good reason to why Jesus called God His Father, when God easily shows how much He loves His creation by coming to earth as Jesus to suffer and die to atone for mans' sins. Even an after class discussion did not provide a good reason as to why it couldn't be as simple as God come to earth in the flesh of Jesus the man. I left trusting God had a good reason to make it harder for a nonbeliever to comprehend things like sitting at the right hand of the Father when I don't even get it! It just happens that by the time I got home I recalled how as a new believer, God had spoken the words, "like a father loves his son" to me.

In 1984, God had provided a home in answer to prayer. As I was totally consumed by the work involved in a "fixer upper;" I prayerfully asked why Jesus would die for "me" when I'm not even thinking or thankful of his mercy. Without hearing through my ears, "like a father loves his son" was in my mind as if I heard the words. I was not a father at the time ... but it was clear to me that no sacrifice was too great for a father to give for his son. At the time, God revealed how He has made us in His image, for me to understand the love of a father beforehand. People "know" the power of a father's love for his son. God uses the Father's sacrifice of His son so His creation can feel the depths of His love. Amen. The problem with His Creation is we don't care about much more than ourselves.

I am only a beggar sharing a piece of bread with any beggar that wants to feel the Father's love. I know because even after God spoke to this undeserving selfish fool, God knew the power of darkness was coming to rattle my cage. So, as I was resuming the hunt for the other end of a wire coming out of the second story floor, I was like sleepwalking, not fully aware of anything but that God had just spoken words to me. It was then that a thought popped into my head, that I would "jump" the hot and return wires and take my meter into the cellar to look for the short I created upstairs. It just happens that I never thought this out, but the first pair of wires in a maze of wires over 100 hundred years in the making, I "knew" that my meter was going to identify the wire two floors above me. Nothing!!!! Believing I was led to this particular wire, I dug my probes harder ... Bingo! I still feel the sensation of my hair standing straight up as I retell how God wanted me to know that He really spoke to me, TWICE.

It just happens, that today I am a new creature. Not because God spoke to me. Because for several years with a few "miracles" mixed in, I was like a baby sucking up breast milk. I wasn't growing until I started opening the Holy Bible in Bible study groups. I "discovered" Bible truths that no preacher or brother in Christ could share with me. Only when I earnestly opened the Bible with a hunger to read and find the truth did I feel the transformation. I'm finding meat to chew on that perpetuates more hunger for the Word. Studying verses would lead me to seek answers to more questions. I started to look forward to spend time with the Word and setting up quality time before God. It just happens the Truth shall set you free.

Movie Night **Friday, May 27 at 7:00 PM**



We show a movie once each month, in Fellowship Hall, usually on the fourth Friday. 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!





MAY 2022

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 Communion Sunday (Note #1)	2	3	4 (††)	5 (**)	6	7
8 Mother's Day Message; Baby Bottles; Coffee Hour (Note #2)	9	10	11 (††)	12 (**)	13	14
15 Communion Sunday, with Guest Speaker (Note #3)	16	17	18 (††)	19 (**)	20	21
22 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #4)	23	24	25 (††)	26 (**)	27 Movie Night (Note #5)	28
29 FCC Worship (Note #6)	30 Memorial Day	31				

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 5/1 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #2) 5/8 — Mother's (Women's) Day message: **10:27 AM.** ALSO: First Concern "Baby Bottle Fundraiser" begins.
ALSO: Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #3) 5/15 — Communion Sunday, with Guest Speaker Steve Sutton: **10:27 AM.**
- #4) 5/22 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM.** ALSO: Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #5) 5/27 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
- #6) 5/29 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM.**
- (††) Wednesday Bible Study: **6:00 PM** (in Fellowship Hall)
- (**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).

