



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

August 2023

Editor
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Faith

... faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1 (NAS)



Rev. Gary Kiontke

In the Gospels, Jesus often commended and encouraged people to have faith for Him to do miracles of healing – both physical and spiritual.

A woman having an issue of blood for twelve years came behind Jesus convinced that if she touched the edge of His garment she would be saved (from the flow of blood). When she touched Him she was saved (healed) and Jesus said her faith (for salvation-healing) had saved her (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48).

A commander of one hundred Roman soldiers had faith for Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant by His speaking the word (of healing). Jesus marveled at his faith (for Him to heal) and sent the man away saying as you believed, it will be done. And the servant was healed (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10).

Jesus also urged a father whose son had a spirit wearing him out, which His disciples could not cast out. Jesus rebuked the people for lack of faith (for Him to heal in His Name). Then they brought the boy to Jesus and the spirit forced the boy to the ground. The father said the spirit had been trying to destroy the boy for many years, but if Jesus could do anything, having compassion on them, help them! Jesus said, if you are being able to believe, all things are possible to the one believing (for Jesus to deliver from harmful spirits). The father cried out in tears, "I believe, help my unbelief." Then Jesus commanded the spirit to come out of the boy, and it did. (Mark 9:17-27) With this, Jesus showed that perfect faith for Him to do a miracle is not necessary.

Jesus can save even when people have insufficient faith. One night Jesus put the Twelve in a boat and said they would cross the Galilee. He fell asleep and a great storm

arose. The twelve woke Him up asking if He cared if they died. With two commands Jesus stopped the storm. Then He asked them, not yet you all are having faith (for Me to get you all across the sea when I said we would cross)? (Matthew 8:18, 23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25).

In spite of these miracles, we must understand that faith for Jesus to heal or deliver does not guarantee He will heal or deliver. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" did not depart from him, even though he besought the Lord three times (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Some people had trials of mocking, were whipped, were bound in prison, stoned (to death), cut in two, killed with a sword; were destitute, afflicted and tormented; and wandered in wilderness, mountains and caves – all being affirmed through faith (Hebrews 11:36-39). This affirmation of faith from the afflicted hints there is a stronger faith than "faith for;" because people with faith do not always get what they want.

A more certain faith is faith IN God. There are five benefits for people through faith IN Christ Jesus: they are children of God; they are justified and have atonement; they are in His Church; they have a hope kept in heaven; they have wisdom from Scripture.

- † All are being children of God through faith IN Christ Jesus: Jews, Greeks; servants and freeborn; male and female are all Abraham's descendants and heirs of God's promise (Galatians 3:26-29).
- † People are justified through redemption IN Christ Jesus, whom God sent for atonement through faith IN His Blood (Romans 3:24-25).
- † Faith IN Lord Jesus puts people under His headship in the Church which is His Body (Ephesians 1:15-22).

(continued on page 2 ...)

Inside this issue:

Faith	1
Sundays in August -and- Pastor Gary's Vacation, Part I	2
Mrs. Jolly and I Perform a Bach Duet	3
It Just Happens*... "Bird's Eye View ..."	5
Special Movie Night	6
August 2023 Calendar of Events	7



Faith (... continued from page #1)

- † Faith IN Christ Jesus is because of the hope that has been stored up in heaven, and heard through the truth of the Gospel (Colossians 1:4-5).
- † Timothy had a settled knowledge of Scripture which is being able to give him wisdom to salvation through faith IN Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

These benefits are for all who have faith IN Christ Jesus. But, the greatest assurance concerning faith is that because of the faith OF Jesus, people's faith IN Jesus is guaranteed. Whenever we feel we cannot maintain faith IN Christ Jesus, or have any faith for Jesus to give us what we are asking for from Him, always remember: He IS faithful, and He gives us His faith by His grace (Ephesians 3:8-9).

Here are four benefits because of the faith OF Jesus – His eternal faithfulness: life now; confidence to enter God's presence; the righteousness of God; patience to keep God's commandments.

- † Paul said the life he is living in the body, he is living in the faith OF The Son of God, who loved him and gave His life for him (Galatians 2:20).
- † Paul told the churches in Ephesus that according to God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, we have boldness and confidence to enter into God's presence in trust through the faith OF Him (Ephesians 3:12).
- † Paul wrote to the churches in Philippi that he wanted to be found IN Christ, having the righteousness which is through the faith OF Christ, the through God righteousness because of faith (Philippians 3:9).
- † John heard an angel in heaven say: Here is the patience of the saints, those keeping the command-

ments of God and the faith OF Jesus (Revelation 14:12). In this verse, both faith IN Jesus and the faith OF Jesus work together in all being sanctified because they have become children of God through faith IN Christ Jesus; and, who are justified through redemption IN Christ Jesus, whom God sent for atonement through faith IN His Blood.

When it comes to prayer and faith in God I will close with the last words Joyce Meyer spoke on her July 30 telecast. She began by saying she and many in the church went through a time when they had an unbiblical grasp of faith. They believed by praying boldly for miracles, they thought their strong faith would move God to act according to what they wanted. She said the church is in a better place now and said, "Ask God to give you whatever you want, and trust Him to give you what is best." I spoke to God and said, "Thank You, this is just what I am planning to write about tomorrow!"

Note: All Scriptures in this article are based on the King James Version. Paul often used a difficult Greek grammatical construction that could be translated either "of" Christ or "in" Christ. As I worked on a semester research paper on Philippians 3:7-11, I prayed that God would show me which of the two prepositions was correct for Philippians 3:9. After more than two weeks of prayer and analysis, I proved "of" is correct – not only in Philippians, but in at least three other times Paul used this construction, all in this article. For some reason, every English translation since the 1901 American Standard Version has used "in." My professor, an expert in Paul, wrote a comment on my paper that I had done good original research on this grammatical construction. ~V~

Sundays in August —and— Pastor Gary's Vacation, Part I

We will have Communion on August 6 and 20.

The first two Sundays will finish our four part series on the Ten Commandments.

I will be on vacation from Friday, August 18 through Thursday August 31. Walter Mutti will preach and lead worship on the last two Sundays. It is great to have him back at FCC. The last time he preached here was Sunday, August 25, 2019.

Here are the details on the sermon texts and themes for the first two weeks:

Date	Scripture	Title
August 6	<i>Exodus 20:12-16; Matthew 22:34-40</i>	God tells His people how to love their neighbor
August 13	<i>Exodus 20:17; Romans 7:7-13</i>	Coveting: the key sin to expose spiritual death
August 20	T.B.D.	Walter Mutti
August 27	T.B.D.	Walter Mutti



Mrs. Jolly and I Perform a Bach Duet

By Elin Lee

(This is a true story. Some names have been changed.)

I got a phone call the other day from a church friend who told me Mrs. Jolly had gone home to be with the Lord. As we spoke, my mind filled with a parade of images of my precious friend whose only desire was to serve her King. I saw her teaching English to international students, rocking cranky babies in the nursery, and scrubbing pots and pans at church banquets. Most of all, though, I remembered her at the piano.

Usually, people closed their eyes to avoid distraction when Mrs. Jolly played for mid-week prayer meetings, but I did not. I loved watching her play! Her feet were in constant motion as she used them simultaneously, almost as if she had forgotten the origin of her instrument and had to keep the bellows of a wheezing parlor organ full of air. And no matter what type of piece she played, she invariably found a way to work a cross-hand note or two into it, her left hand waving in a magnificent arc above the keyboard. Many times I tried to guess where she would fit a note or two into “Onward Christian Soldiers” or “Sweet Hour of Prayer” while she pedaled furiously. Other people were focused on praying; I (a new Christian) was focused on Mrs. Jolly — who provided the purest and most complete musical entertainment I had ever seen.

She and her husband, the Rev. Merrill Jolly, were retired missionaries. They had served in China for several decades until Mr. Jolly contracted malaria and they were forced to come home. Not one to be permanently laid aside, he served as greeter at a large inner city church after he recovered, passing tracts on the sidewalk and welcoming strangers into the sanctuary. Eventually, the post of Minister of Visitation was created for him and he kept very busy, but his heart was in evangelism and every Sunday morning, in every kind of New England weather, he was outside the church with a handful of tracts and a warm greeting. No one knows how many people encountered the Savior for the first time because of Mr. Jolly’s enthusiastic reception, but it is certain many did.

As a new Christian, I was eager to plunge into the Lord’s work, and was invited to join the outreach group to international students. I got to know Mrs. Jolly when we team-taught English as a second language to new arrivals to America. She spoke fluent Mandarin and had a love for Chinese people that was visible on her face. She teased serious Europeans into having fun with colloquialisms and with her brown eyes laughing, agreed with Africans that some American expressions were very funny and frequently made no sense whatever. Everyone had a good time learning English in Mrs. Jolly’s class.

Shortly before the annual spring banquet for graduating internationals and their families, someone on the organizing

committee remembered hearing me say that as a child, I had studied ’cello. The committee was at a loss for entertainers that year and as I walked by their meeting, one of them noticed me, grinned, and asked me to play for the banquet. She would not accept “No!” and thus it was decided I would provide at least one segment of the entertainment. I was mortified. That night, I took my ’cello from its place in the corner, wiped a year’s worth of dust from it, and began playing scales and arpeggios — badly.

One of the students, a wonderfully gifted pianist from Holland, volunteered to accompany me. We selected a simple arrangement of a Bourée by J. S. Bach from the Six Suites for ’Cello, and after several practice sessions, agreed that we could at least make a successful joyful noise unto the Lord. Three days before the banquet, however, he was stricken with appendicitis and rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery.

Guilty relief flooded me but I rose above it: if Arne could not play, neither would I! And I said as much to one of the banquet planners.

“Nonsense!” she smiled. “The Lord will raise someone else up!”

Two days later she telephoned with the happy news. “The Lord has raised someone else up!” she exulted. “I just spoke with Merry Jolly and he said Ginny will play for you!”

Instantly I saw cross-hand notes being worked into pristine, perfect Bach phrases and I reacted at my deepest gut level. “Oh, no! Not *Ginny!*”

“What do you mean, ‘Oh, no, not Ginny?’” From her tone of voice, I could almost see my friend’s frown.

“Why — she’s way too busy in the kitchen! You *know* she prefers to work behind the scenes.”

“Nonsense!” she laughed. “She told him that in order to hear you play, she will come *out* of the kitchen!”

I frowned. “She said that?”

“She did. I heard her say it myself. And I say, Amen!”

But *I* said, “Oh, my...”

We met several times to practice; then on the evening of the banquet, Mrs. Jolly and I rehearsed one final time. Our piece was shaky at best, and while she was a rock of confidence, I grew more and more nervous with each passing minute. She reached out and touched my hand.

(continued on page 4 ...)

Mrs. Jolly and I ... (... continued from page #3)

“I think we should pray.”

I thought we should pray, too, but I was at a loss for words. After all, I had spent so many prayer meetings *not* praying! She bowed her head and murmured, “Dear Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for our sins. Thank You for being here with us tonight. Please help my young friend. Calm her nerves. And may we together thrill the hearts of our students with Your great gift of this music.”

She smiled again, her eyes sparkling. “Everything will be fine!”

I don’t have the comfort of remembering that evening as a blur. I remember it in excruciating detail. Shortly before dessert, Mrs. Jolly took off her apron, collected me from near the sink and we walked to the stage and sat down. I tuned and re-tuned my instrument as Mrs. Jolly adjusted the piano bench, sounding the note A with great eagerness. My fingers were cold and inflexible, and felt as foreign to me as the students waiting in anticipation before us. Mrs. Jolly smiled, nodded, and we began.

Things went well until the key change, where I modulated dutifully into G-minor — but Mrs. Jolly did not. I was horrified. Suddenly, a lovely and impossibly simple piece of music became a dog’s dinner of discord. Mrs. Jolly frowned and went back to the key change. Foolishly, I tried to follow her, and went into G-minor — while she at long last went into G-major. Panic struck us both. She glanced at me, her eyes as round as soup bowls, and we stopped for a split second. Then each of us changed keys again.

I saw the European students and our church friends struggle against smiles and snickers. Some even glanced away, perhaps embarrassed for us. Or in pain. The clean-up crew drifted back to the kitchen. Mercilessly, we plowed on.

It was only a moment, really, perhaps just seconds before we looked at each other again and Mrs. Jolly was seized with inspiration. As she stared keenly at me, she sounded A several times to get my attention. She slowed the tempo, raised her left hand in a graceful arc above the keys and waited, fingers hovering. We ended our duet at the same time and miraculously, in the original key of G-major — and on the same note. Mrs. Jolly clasped her hands together in delight, smiled over at me and whispered in the silence that followed,

“I thought that went well, didn’t you, dear?”

“No!” I wanted to scream. “It was unbelievably *horrible!*” But instead, I managed to smile at her; then slumped back in my chair, one hand over my face to conceal tears of humiliation. All I wanted — and I wanted it desperately — was for the floor to open up and swallow me. And my ’cello. Death would have been better than facing the people sitting before us.

Suddenly the crowd erupted in loud, excited applause. The Chinese students, who outnumbered the rest of us combined and were seated at every table, thought we were wonderful! They stood up, smiling and happy. Some even shouted for an encore. The rest of the audience joined them, if only to be polite. I looked into those dear Chinese faces and thought that surely, they must be quite ill to respond that way — and then I remembered China’s twelve-note atonal scale and I, too, smiled.

I never played another duet with anyone after that interesting evening. I did get to know Mrs. Jolly quite well, and I grew to love her as a spiritual mother. She was kind and tender-hearted, always available if I needed to talk. For nearly a decade, we team-taught English as a second language to incoming international students and their families. And I learned a lot from her — not the least of which was that the Lord can and will use us for His glory when we are suffering for Him in our weakest and darkest hours.

A few years ago, she and Mr. Jolly finally retired permanently and moved to Florida — where of course, he greeted visitors at their new church, and she taught English as a second language and played piano for the mid-week prayer meeting. Then one night last week, Mrs. Jolly closed her eyes and went to sleep.

I am very sure that when she opened them a heartbeat later, she saw Jesus reaching for her hand and smiling at her as He said, “Welcome home! Well done, my good and faithful servant.” ~V~



“Cello” by PhotoObjects.net; “Piano Party” by zeafonso. Both from FreemImages.com.

It Just Happens*... “Bird’s Eye View ...”

By Petros

It Just Happens*... I asked the person on the phone with me, “Do you hear that?” The caller could hear the small plane that is constantly flying overhead checking me out. The plane is capable of giving a “Bird’s Eye View ...” of God’s creation. However, the little plane circles around to peek at what I am doing. Granted, I unknowingly gave a view of sunbathing in my birthday suit, several years ago. That was when I would take a power nap in the comforts of my open trailer with side walls for total privacy. Except from up above where the sun shines down! Towards the end of that experience, the little plane would cut the engine and glide over me using the row of tall pine trees for cover. The roar of the engine coming to life so it could climb back up made it so obvious my privacy was being invaded. The little plane took away the fun of my secret. It made me “decent” in order to enjoy my sun tanning power naps. It is likened to many of us who are able to enjoy the Creator’s beautiful countryside and wonders of abundant life, but miss the Kingdom of Heaven because of worldly distractions causing us to look in the wrong direction.

It Just Happens*... I got texted, “Why for the love of God ...” something about his name being included in “my” mailing list. I had corrected and apologized for my mistake in an earlier text. I explained it was not from my list and I would correct the sender. Afterwards, I had to expand on his inappropriate use of “for the love of God” (by adding) the Kingdom of Heaven is near. I loved the opportunity to make people think of what they are saying. Otherwise, people will keep on saying what they heard said in the wrong context.

It Just Happens*... Today, I’m still being the center of attention to the small plane despite the blessing of being surrounded by God’s beauty. The little plane will occasionally take another pass if it sees me getting back into my Tai Chi exercise. I’m enjoying the sun and God’s creation while getting some more flexibility and kinks out from my stiff body. The slow repeating swinging of body parts allows me to focus on having quality prayer time. It is hard to focus on clearing my mind. But it helps to gaze at God’s creation of nature and worship Him by song or just appreciation of my surroundings. I have come to realize that the slow methodical swinging of body parts increases my range of flexibility. When I start turning my hips, I see to the right and then to my left and my view is 180 degrees. With each swing, my range of motion expands and soon goes over 360 degrees! I then remembered a Scripture on being transformed and I connected it to the Scriptures God gives us. Little by little, we are transformed into a new being. I looked up “transformation” and found, “by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renew-

ing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2.) While the words don’t line up exactly with the scene, the verses connect me with God and his Grace and Mercy.

It Just Happens*... I was practicing my Tai Chi and meditating on some recurring themes. God knows I offered to help someone (whom I had huge indifferences with in the past and present) in the hope of unity and reconciliation. My offer was declined and I was questioning my motives. It was a pure moving of my servant’s heart and a hope to be part of, “... we pray that all unity may one day be restored.” At the moment I realized my heart was lining up to be part of the bigger picture of God’s Will, a dragon fly landed on the tip of my finger while Tai Chi had me slowly raising my finger towards heaven. It Just Happens*... the landing and thought was perfectly timed. There was no doubt, nor a better confirmation, that could be had. At least, I was convinced God saw my heart.

“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor uselessly.” Psalm 127:1

Author’s note: 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. When we turn from our ways and we look to God and live His Word – His plan for us unfolds. ~V~

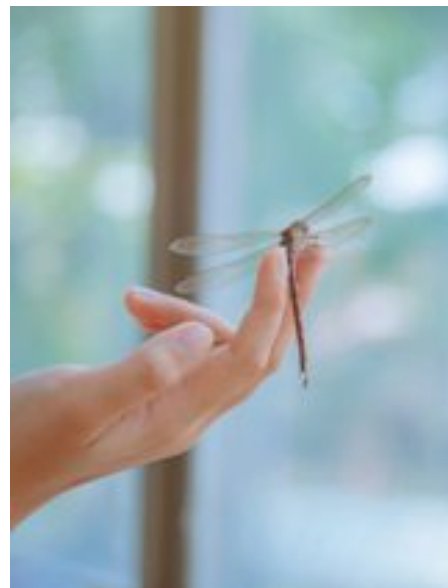


Photo by Min An. From pexels.com.

Special Movie Night
“Voice of the Martyrs — Hearts of Fire”
Virtual Event Rebroadcast
Friday, August 25 at 7:00 PM

This past July 14th, “Voice of the Martyrs” and “Lifeway” hosted the live-streamed “Hearts of Fire Virtual Event.” The Missions & Evangelism Team, following discussion with Pastor Gary, signed FCC up for the event. However, it was decided to actually show the broadcast as a Special August Movie Night, allowing us more time to get the word out to everyone who may want to join us to watch it (*our sign-up allows us this flexibility, and includes permission to publicize the event*).

From the “Hearts of Fire” brochure:

“Be inspired by four courageous women who showed incredible conviction and commitment to Jesus Christ in the face of intense opposition. Hear their powerful testimonies of faith, and enjoy worship music from Michael W. Smith.

- Gracia Burnham was held captive for 376 days by Islamic extremists in the Philippines.
- Anita Smith publicly forgave her husband’s killers after he was martyred in Libya.
- Helen Berhane was imprisoned in a shipping container for 32 months in Eritrea.
- Susanna Koh hasn’t seen her husband since he was abducted off the streets of Malaysia in 2017.”

Attendance is FREE, and each attendee will receive a card enabling them to get a free copy of the “Hearts of Fire” book, which tells the stories of eight other “courageous women who demonstrated great boldness and tenacity in the face of their pain and suffering for Christ.”

We hope you will join us for this Special Movie Night event! And please invite anyone else that you feel would also want to watch it with you!

The Voice of the Martyrs

Hearts of Fire

VIRTUAL EVENT

Hear inspiring testimonies of costly faith from four courageous women.



GRACIA BURNHAM
Held captive in the Philippines



ANITA SMITH
Husband martyred in Libya



HELEN BERHANE
Imprisoned in Eritrea



SUSANNA KOH
Husband abducted in Malaysia



AUGUST 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3 (**)	4	5
6 Communion Sunday (Note #1)	7	8	9 (††)	10 (**)	11	12
13 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #2)	14	15	16 (††)	17 (**)	18 Pastor Gary's Vacation Part #1 Begins (Note #3)	19
20 Communion Sunday; Guest Preacher (Note #4)	21	22	23	24	25 Special Movie Night (Note #5)	26
27 Guest Preacher; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #6)	28	29	30	31 Pastor Gary's Vacation Part #1 Ends (Note #7)		

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 8/6 — Communion Sunday Worship: **10:27 AM.**
 - #2) 8/13 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
 - #3) 8/18 — Pastor Gary's vacation part #1 begins.
 - #4) 8/20 — Communion Sunday Worship; Guest Preacher (Walter Mutti): **10:27 AM.**
 - #5) 8/25 — Special Movie Night — "Voice of the Martyrs—Hearts of Fire" virtual event rebroadcast — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
 - #6) 8/27 — Guest Preacher (Walter Mutti): **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
 - #7) 8/31 — Pastor Gary's vacation part #1 ends.
- (††) Wednesday Bible Study: **3:00 PM (but not on 8/2, 8/23, or 8/30)** (in Fellowship Hall).
 (**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM (but not on 8/24 or 8/31)** (in FCC Parlor).

