



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

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Editor
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Disciples of Wisdom and Disciples of Jesus

A disciple is not above his teacher,
but everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher.
Luke 6:40 (RSV)



Rev. Gary Kiontke



A disciple is someone who learns from a teacher. There is a relationship between a teacher and disciple(s). As a result, disciples learn more than information from a teacher. By observing how the teacher lives, disciples learn how to live their lives to maximize their potential to benefit the welfare of their community.

Jesus taught that when a disciple begins to learn from a teacher he or she has not reached his or her full potential; but, when a disciple has been fully taught, the disciple will be like the teacher.

John the baptizer, Jesus' cousin, had disciples. John taught his disciples to fast, and so did the priests who were Pharisees (Mark 2:18). So, contemporary prophets and priests taught their disciples how to live their lives according to the Torah given through Moses in light of the prophetic and wisdom books of Scripture. This is the essence of a Hebraic disciple.

The teachers of Greek disciples taught them from the classical philosophers how to live their lives for the greater good of both themselves and their city-state. This summarizes the goal of Hellenistic disciples.

By the second century before The Savior was born in Bethlehem, over half of the Jews did not know Hebrew, but only Greek. So, the rabbis translated the Torah, prophets and writings into Greek. This translation is called the Septuagint, because seventy rabbis collaborated on the translation. The Greek word for disciple-learner (also used in the Gospels and New Testament) is *māth-ā-tās'*. It is from the same root as the English word mathematics.

I am aware some people have a math phobia. There is a misconception that math

is merely learning to manipulate formulas that do not have much use in real life. This is mostly the result of bad math teachers. The truth is that mathematics teaches a holistic approach to solving everyday problems all people have by using some basic principles that anyone can discover and agree upon. However, the solving of problems requires what is called "outside the box" thinking.

Calculus is about only two simple principles. Anyone who has hiked up and down a mountain has experienced the first principle. As the mountain gets steeper more energy is needed to continue to ascend at a constant pace, conversely, on the descent more effort is needed to "brake" oneself from going too fast and possibly falling forward. The first principle could be summed up as the relationship between slope and the energy needed to maintain a constant speed. Hosts of large dinner parties can make use of the second principle to best match the tablecloths on hand with the different shapes of tables. The second principle is used to determine the area of surfaces of any shape and size. The multiple chapters in calculus textbooks teach many specifics in how to apply these two basic principles.

The "back" pages in the July/August *Christianity Today* gave the testimony of Francis Su. He entitled it: *I Loved Studying Math: I Needed God to Show Me Why*. The biographical paragraph stated he lives in Pasadena, CA where he teaches math, and he has written a book: *Mathematics for Human Flourishing*. In chapter three he tells the story of his father taking the family back to the remote region of China where he was born and lived until he came to the United States. His wife is also buried there. His father rented a clunker car, and put five family members and luggage in it. The road was more of an uneven path. About halfway through the trip the front wheels of the car made it over a (continued on page 2 ...)

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Disciples of Wisdom and Disciples of Jesus (... continued from page #1)

hump, but the bottom of the car was stuck on the hump and would not move. With darkness only a few hours away, they needed to get going again. Francis remembered that when the top of trucks get stuck on the bottom of an overpass, the drivers let air out of the tires to get un-stuck. He reasoned that if they could inflate the tires, their father might be able to move the car off the hump. However, they had no pump. After some pondering, he requested they remove the luggage and every passenger from the car. This amounted to about 700 pounds. The reduction in weight relieved pressure on the tires and his father drove off the hump. He uses this as an example of mathematical thinking.

People who can live their lives based on the above will be wise and have a good life. But everyone dies. What then?

Disciples of Jesus:

Rather than applying basic principles with “outside the box” thinking, disciples of Jesus live in a close relationship with Him through giving all their thoughts, desires and plans to Him in order to live under His direction. The best life, for now and after physical death, is lived by continually getting to know better the God who is Creator, King and Redeemer: The Man-God, Savior-King – Jesus Christ.

Unlike other rabbis, it is the power of Jesus’ person that impels people to follow Him as disciples. Consider when Jesus commanded Peter to put out to sea to fish in daylight after catching nothing all night. Every fisherman knows the fish can see a net underwater in daylight. But, he had a miraculous catch and needed help to get it ashore. This caused Peter to implore Jesus to depart because he is a sinful man; but, Jesus said, “Fear not, from now, men you will be catching alive” (Luke 5:1-11, literal translation). The miracle Jesus did caused Peter to recognize Jesus’ power and his own

sinfulness. But, Jesus’ promise of a meaningful future, starting from that very moment, caused Peter to want to follow Him.

Following Jesus is more than the first step on a path promising a better life someday, but rather it is the fulfillment of a disciple’s God given destiny. Jesus said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit ... that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you” (John 15:16).

Jesus summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34). He also said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ... He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:37-39, NASB). In other words, His disciples will renounce all they once thought was necessary for a good life to follow Him because of who He is.

Finally, all who are in Jesus will have joy even in tribulation: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you [are having – present tense] tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NASB). So, Jesus promises His disciples that they will have His peace even in tribulation – if they remain in Him by His grace through His faithfulness.

To sum everything up, disciples of Jesus have a growing close relationship with Him. And, as they remain in this relationship with Him, they will do all Hebraic and Hellenistic disciples did, and so much more because of the relationship they have with Jesus based on His forgiveness and love. ~~~~~

Sundays in September —and— Pastor Gary’s Vacation, Part 2

We will have Communion on September 3 and 17.

Three sermons will be from the book of Nehemiah with insights from the Gospel of Mark.

I will be on vacation from Friday, September 15 through Thursday September 21. Steven Sutton will be preaching on Sunday, September 17. It will be good to hear from him again.

Here are the details on the sermon texts and themes for the three weeks I will preach:

Date	Scripture	Title
September 3	<i>Nehemiah 1:1-2:8; Mark 11:20-25</i>	Effective prayer moves from adoration to confession to entreaty
September 10	<i>Nehemiah 4:7-23; Mark 4:35-41</i>	God protects His people who do His will
September 17	T.B.D.	Steven Sutton
September 24	<i>Nehemiah 5:1-19; Mark 6:7-12</i>	God’s people help the needy among them



Missions Report

by Sally Camara

A couple (*) that we support, with the ministry Beyond, had a busy 2022. With the easing of COVID restrictions, he was able to resume some international travel to Thailand, Kenya and India. He had numerous interviews with movement leaders and heard lots of great stories of how the gospel is spreading among unreached people groups through movements starting new movements. You can read about these stories in the Jan/Feb issue of *Mission Frontiers*, of which he was guest editor. He also was involved in teaching Perspectives through virtual presentations and interviews. He has written a small book called *Jonathan Edwards on Movements* that is available now through Amazon.

She was able to accompany him on a trip to Thailand for a Beyond in-person gathering. While there, she co-led a workshop on “How to Develop and Implement a Prayer Strategy.” She continues to serve as Beyond’s Director of Prayer Strategies and Associate to the VP of Member Health. Their four grown children also had active years serving in a variety of ministries including a church plant, working with a ministry that provides legal services to protect children and help survivors of trafficking, and working with

Samaritan’s Purse. What a blessing that their entire family is serving the Lord in various ministries.

He traveled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May and June to interview leaders of church planting movements among Muslims. He was also bringing in materials to help with deeper Bible training. He will be compiling info from the interviews for a new book. We will be hearing more about this in an upcoming newsletter, I’m sure.

On another note ... please keep the ministry of CEF (Child Evangelism Fellowship) in prayer. They will have a tent at both The Big E, from September 15 - October 1, and the Topsfield Fair, from September 29 - October 9. They do crafts with kids and share the gospel at the same time. They are also partnered with the Gideons, and so each person who visits their booth receives a pocket size New Testament. Pray that they have enough volunteers and are able to present the Good News with clarity. ~V~

NOTE: (*) Names redacted for privacy/security.

It Just Happens*... “Love God ...”

By Petros

It Just Happens*... In the beginning of August, Pastor Gary's sermon was, “God tells his people how to love their neighbor.” Two weeks later, Preacher Walter Mutti pointed out people are constantly being offended. The timing was helpful (perhaps critical) for God’s people to live “unoffendable” and tolerant of others. We are to be salt to the world, so we must behave accordingly. Walter’s message about how our anger and bitterness can rob us of the Joy in the Lord caught my attention. It made me realize I’ve forgiven the person that constantly hurts me, but there is a bit of resentment, shame and bitterness that I sweep my feelings under the rug. When the “person” is near, I choose to shy away from sharing the life and joy of those I love. I’m so ready to be “unoffendable” because I want the Joy of the Lord to be foremost in my life.

I believe the key to the Kingdom of Heaven is God’s greatest Commandment, “*YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND*” (Matt. 22:37-38). Love the God who wants to be our God! How easy is that! I have found the harder I try to pray or “find God” the more distracted I become. One of the best ways that gets me where I want to be (“in His Presence”) is during Tai Chi. I start appreciating and thanking God for his provisions and

wonderful creation. Through the (Tai Chi) repetitions I become aware of God’s blessing upon my creaking body and marvel how He is the Great Healer. My whole being, from my senses to my physical body, awakens to His awesomeness. The euphoric state doesn’t last long, as my thoughts and agenda return me back into this domain we reside in. The hope is we have a little more trust in God and more thoughts on our part to further the Kingdom.

Which gets us back to Pastor Gary's message ...“God tells his people how to love their neighbor.” “The second (commandment) is like it, *‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’*” (Matt. 22:38). Following the first and second Great Commandments will help us be the person God wants us to be. If I have to explain it, then maybe you are content in your life and will take things as they come. My concern is, without working to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus, by acknowledging the first and second Great Commandments, results in a harder life without a peace of the life ever-after. Our loving Father has planned each of our lives and wants to throw the biggest party with a fattened cow when we follow Him. We are all given a choice to choose to go up or down in life. We make our bed and must lie in it. Either path that one chooses will benefit from not being on the offense in this life and may

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It Just Happens*... “Love God ...” (... continued from page #3)

open your ears to God calling. By becoming unoffendable, we become more acceptable to share God's love, and our world becomes a nicer place to live in. By His Grace. I need to discipline myself to be more “unoffendable.” It Just Happens*... my spell check of “unoffendable” did not recognize it as a word. But when I Googled “unoffendable,” there was lots of information. I was impressed to see a lot of connections back to God. I especially liked eight steps on how to get an unoffendable heart. Ironically, from the date attached, Nov 20, 2019 it seems like a current event ... a sign of the times where our actions are becoming more offensive than ever.

From: “8 Steps to Cultivating an Unoffendable Heart” by Joanna Weaver (Credit/Reference to: Google Search – How to become unoffendable?):

1. *Determine to be a good forgiver.*
2. *Refuse to over-react.*
3. *Seek first to understand – then to be understood.*
4. *Believe the best, not the worst.*
5. *Grace people, don't shame people.*
6. *Refuse to pick up someone else's offense.*
7. *Trust God to make it right.*
8. *Ask God to help you love people.*

I have shared about loving God and the grace and blessings that one receives. Now, I have a story without the Love of God. She was 16 and he was 21. She loved the support and attention he gave her. As much as the couple loved each other, their separation was a mystery. Fast forward 50 years and she has made a career in police work and currently works as Director of Special Victims Division. He has made a name for himself in fashion and design. By chance, they end up in the same high-class function. By the end of the night they have bonded as if they were never separated. As a Director of Police, she is getting reports of his “gets what he wants” involving past female associates. The end of story is he took advantage of a 16-year-old girl whose father had abandoned her and the mother was an alcoholic. He appeared caring and could provide where there was a need. But the testimonies of many woman associates being taken advantage revealed his love was not genuine but self serving. One wonders what would have happened if the women had given God a chance.

Then there is the book being promoted on a 5-Step Plan to land the lover of your dreams. No God is needed. No true and everlasting love story here.

How about the guy that was left four times? #1) She claimed she couldn't trust him. #2) She cheated on him. #3) He cheated on her. They had too many drinks. And she took advantage of him. #4) She seemed like the perfect match. Both were in love, shared good times, talked about getting

married and having a family. Then his partner jumped ship on the premise that she was leaving because it was too good to be everlasting. Long story short, he was the one that could not trust his partner to be there for better or for worse. It is sad that many lives are incomplete and complicated without God's love.

And then there was the guy who was in love with his lawn mower. It was his third mower/blessing from God. Every mower had a story how God provided and how blessed he felt. One by one they quit on him. As great as machines #1 and #2 were, #3 was the mother of lawn mowers. It was bigger and had the largest cut than any mower in the hood. It was his pride and joy. He loved that mower. But he did not trust it. It would be running great and just die in its tracks. It had spent many nights out in the field. The next day, he would go down and try to figure out what happened. He had to figure it out. It was too heavy to push (with a dead 32HP engine). And in less than a week there would be more than two acres of grass. It broke down quite often and just as often the next day it would come back to life. Or not. Yet the man loved his mower. But he couldn't trust it. He was always making it run better. But then she would leave him low and wet. Dead in its tracks again. The man never lost faith that the mower would come back to life. Because he knew the love of God. His land was green acres in the Kingdom of God. He could abide in God's timing for all his needs.

Today, the man thanked God for loving him. And the day before the Sabbath he got his grass cut. He was glad to have the love of God who provides for all his needs. He doesn't trust his mower, but trusting in God and thanking Him for His Love is all that matters.

“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~

Memories of Pat Nason

Allie Cooper: “It was a joy and pleasure to know Pat. I enjoyed talking with her. One day when I was commiserating (being negative) she told me to read Job! I did, and thought how nothing I said compared to Job! I will miss her at church — a wonderful lady. Sincerely, *Allie Cooper*”

Peter Wong: “Pat Nason has been my church lady since the beginning of time. She was encouraging without acknowledging it. I have grown in my responsibilities as a church member, from sitting on the Board of Deacons, to chairing the Board because Pat believed in me. She was my children's Sunday School Teacher. I've seen Pat give special attention where needed, when needed. Many are blessed by the roles and growth she has instigated in the church. She could be a mother or best friend; whatever you needed, she was there.

“I feel that her steadfast faith was the result of her obedience to God. Pat hung in there with her faith in God and unwavering trust in God. As a result John (her husband), a non-believer, on the eve of surgery came to follow Jesus; and witnessed to his hospital room partner on the peace he had being in God's hands. Pat maintained her role as a Grand Ma and wife, while God used John as a new Christian to set up a regional outreach expo to working an M/C outreach table at Expo in Boston. John has made, and is still making, a major impact for God. He can tell you of so many committees and projects that he has chaired or managed that you won't have the time of day to hear it all. The guy can witness – no kidding! Pat is the saintly woman behind the successful man that John has become.

“When you hear of how God works in mysterious ways: Remember Pat who assumed her wife and domestic duties while supporting the church members. Remember how her steadfast faith impacted those around her. Remember John and the phenomenal work he has accomplished under his belt.

“My mother had a saying: if you run with the wild, you become wild ... if you run with the good, you become good. Pat has ratcheted it up a notch: if you serve God diligently, the people around you do phenomenal work. Amen.”

Pastor Gary Kiontke: “Debi and I got together and came up with these memories of Pat:

“The FCC Search Committee came to Countryside Bible Church in Lexington, MA to hear me preach on Father's Day 2001. I had received an e-mail with information about FCC. Pat was a member of the committee. Debi asked about the coffeehouse that had just started. Pat gave her a good answer. We later learned that Pat and John were very involved in getting ‘The Way’ Café off the ground. When I later interviewed with the committee I got to know something about



Mary and began to understand the special relationship Pat had with Mary's mother Eleanor.

“Even before I officially began on the first Sunday in October 2001, Pat took it on herself to lead the Sunday School of about fifteen children as a favor to the new pastor. I was very grateful for this and immediately saw the great love she had for all children. I took a course at Worcester State on teaching, and learned from experience that if the students know the teacher loves them, they enjoy learning and learn more.

“Since she lived just down the street from FCC, she was often in her room on the ground floor of the church. Sometimes we talked. Her number one theme was the great love of Jesus for people. Sometimes she talked about the two women who helped her to know Jesus and His love for her when she was a young girl. She had it in her heart to do what

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Memories of Pat Nason (... continued from page #5)

those women did for her to as many children as she could.

“I will always remember the celebration of John and Pat’s fiftieth wedding anniversary on September 25, 2004. They renewed their vows in the sanctuary (it was supposed to be a surprise). Then there was a reception with their family and members of the church in the downstairs Fellowship Hall. This was the first time I met all their children and grandchildren. It was a joy then, and is still a joy, to see a family with so much love. It is a tribute to the parents and Jesus.

“Eventually, they moved to Hubbardston, about an hour away from Clinton. That did not stop them from attending Sunday morning worship whenever they could. Debi mentioned she was especially blessed by all the times Pat showed up, even when she had to drag a large oxygen tank with her. By this, she showed her great love for Jesus and His Church.”

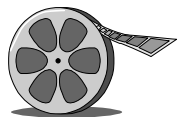
Charles Tamminen: “I remember Pat relating the story of how she, as a Sunday School teacher, had taken her class out to Central Park, and had them measure out the actual size of Noah’s Ark on the diagonal walkway. Now, that’s how a great teacher teaches! I can just imagine the expressions on the kids’ faces when they realized just how large the ark really was.

“And, I can never forget how Pat would not let me get away without giving and getting a hug.

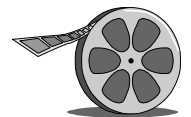


“Over the last couple of years, we have lost some of our most faithful and loved long-term members of FCC. We cherish our memories of them, and miss them; but we also know that they are now in the presence of the Lord.

“May we all thank and praise the Lord that, by His grace, we were privileged to know and work alongside these amazing people, and to be part of the life that we shared together with them, here at FCC.” ~W~



Movie Night Friday, September 22 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. So, please join us for a night out at the movies!



SEPTEMBER 2023

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

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 9/3 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #2) 9/10 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #3) 9/15 — Pastor Gary's vacation part #2 begins.
- #4) 9/17 — Communion Sunday Worship; Guest Preacher (Steven Sutton): **10:27 AM.**
- #5) 9/21 — Pastor Gary's vacation part #2 ends.
- #6) 9/22 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
- #7) 9/24 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- (††) Wednesday Bible Study: **3:00 PM (but not on 9/20)** (in Fellowship Hall). **Psalms study concludes on 9/27.**
- (**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM (but not on 9/21)** (in FCC Parlor).

