



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

August 2024

Editor
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Priests of God

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation *Exodus 19:5-6a (RSV)*



Rev. Gary Kiontke

In general, a priest is one who ministers before God on behalf of people, usually with sacrifices.

The first priest in the Bible is Melchizedek (king of righteousness, Genesis 14:14-20). Abraham met him after rescuing his nephew Lot and taking back his property, mostly animals. He is called priest of the Most High God. After he brings out bread and wine, Melchizedek blesses Abraham, and Abraham gives him a tithe of all his possessions. In Psalm 110, Yahweh blesses Adonai and calls him a priest forever, after the manner of Melchizedek. Finally, the author of Hebrews says Jesus Christ is High Priest forever after the manner of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5-7).

The second priest is introduced after Moses runs away from Pharaoh and Egypt. He is Reuel (friend of God, Exodus 2:11-20). He was also known as Jethro (his abundance) and became Moses' father-in-law (Exodus 3:1; 4:18). He rejoined Moses and his daughter after Yahweh delivered them from Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea; he rejoiced in all Yahweh did for Israel; then he blessed Yahweh and offered a burnt offering and sacrifices to God with Aaron and the elders of Israel (Exodus 18:1-12).

After this, Moses met with Yahweh on Mt. Sinai to receive God's Covenant for the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:20-24:18). As Aaron (light bringer) and his sons were ordained according to the covenant, Yahweh said Aaron and his sons were to serve him as priests throughout the generations (Exodus 28:1-4; 40:12-15, see also Numbers 17:1-12). Only high priests could bring offerings behind the curtain to the Most Holy Place; and all high priests had to be descendants of Aaron's sons Eleazar (God has helped) and Ithamar (coast of palm trees); and, their brother Levites were to help in the service of the Tabernacle (Numbers 18:6-7).

Only God or His official representative – the high priest – could make offering for

atonement (kippur) to satisfy the penalty for unintentional, or inadvertent, sin (Psalm 65:3). The first seven chapters of Leviticus give detailed instructions of the many sacrifices Yahweh required. The three most important were the burnt offering (for total consecration to God, chapter 1); the peace, or fellowship, offering (for the renewal of a relationship with God, chapter 3); and, the sin offering (for sins of ignorance, chapter 4). There was no sacrifice for sins of defiance, with a "high hand" (Numbers 15:30). According to the Theological Word Dictionary of the Old Testament, the inability to offer a sacrifice of atonement for presumptuous sin pointed the way to the "better covenant" sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 7:22-28; 9:19-26).

These were steps (Leviticus 8) for the ordination of Aaron and his sons for the high priesthood: they were washed in water (verse 6); then, anointing oil was poured on the head (verse 12); then, a young bull was sacrificed for a sin offering and its blood was put on the altar for atonement (verses 14-15); then, a ram was consumed fully as a burnt offering (verses 18-21); another ram was sacrificed for an ordination offering and the blood was applied to the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand and the big toe of the right foot (verses 22-24); there was a wave offering of unleavened bread which was then burned (verses 25-29); and, finally anointing oil, mixed with the blood on the altar, was sprinkled on the priestly garments (verse 30).

Here are some other duties of priests and Levites in Israel. They officiated in the sanctuary of the Tabernacle (Deuteronomy 18:1-5). They were to implore Yahweh, weeping between the Temple and that altar, on behalf of the people (Joel 2:17). They were tested teachers of Torah, showing no favoritism and offering sacrifices for the people at the altar (Deuteronomy 33:8-11; Leviticus 10:11). The high priest would inquire of God, by using the urim and thummim (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:18-23 – installing Joshua to succeed Moses; Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65 – in both books (continued on page 2 ...)

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Priests of God (... continued from page #1)

to determine whether men of the returning remnant who did not have proper genealogical documentation were qualified to serve before Yahweh).

The high priest was a type of Jesus, who is The Great High Priest, who offered Himself as the sacrifice for all sin (Hebrews 9). The Blood (death) of Jesus for repentant sinners is the heart of the New Covenant which had been prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31-36; 33:14-22) and Zechariah (13:1).

The apostle Peter explains that because of what Jesus Christ did, all who come to Him in faith can be refined in fire to be made holy as Jesus is holy (1 Peter 1:3-22). They are also being built into a holy priesthood to offer acceptable sacrifices to God, and they will never be put to shame (1 Peter 2:4-6).

This is the present reality of all people living by the faith of Jesus from now until He returns. The incentive in difficult

times (which will continue until Jesus returns – 1 Peter 4:12-16), is found in the vision John saw of the four living creatures and twenty-four elders before the throne of the Lamb. He heard them singing a new song to the Lamb (Jesus) concerning all who have been purchased by His Blood: “Worthy [are] thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou [were] slain and by thy blood [did] ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and [have] made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth” (Revelation 5:10-11, RSV). Because of Jesus, the word Yahweh gave to Moses concerning Israel (which was never fulfilled), is being fulfilled in Jesus because He has made people from every nation to be a kingdom of priests to God.

Let us praise God for all He has done, is doing and will do in Jesus, so we may be His priests forever! ~v~

Sundays in August

We will have Communion on August 11 and 25.

For August and September 1 we will have a five-part series on women of the Bible. The five women will be: Sarah, Hannah, Zipporah, Deborah and Mary of Magdala. Here are the details on the sermon texts and themes for each of the Lord's Day worship services in August:

Sunday	Readings	Theme
August 4	Genesis 16:1-6; 21:1-13; 1 Peter 3:1-7	God shows grace to the mistreated and mistreaters
August 11	1 Samuel 1:1-6, 9-17, 20, 24-28; 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-53	When hope fades pray while being open to God's will
August 18	Exodus 2:15-22; 4:19-26; 18:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:20-25	Even those close to a priest can be offended by God's ways
August 25	Judges 4:4-9, 14-16, 23-24; 5:1-3, 7-9, 12-16, 20-21, 31; Luke 8:1-3	Women can encourage weak men to trust God for victory

It Just Happens*... “For Everything There is a Season”

By Petros

This past July was a month of “here it is and now it's gone!” During the same time, the Word of God spared me any lasting disappointments. It Just Happens*... Pastor Gary clued me in personally before his vacation; before I knew how his teaching on Solomon and God's Wisdom would allow me to make the most of every situation. There is a time and a place where we let go and let God.

I've come to learn that Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, was granted Wisdom by God as vast as the grains of sand along an ocean. We see Solomon despairing over the fruits of his labor going to his son; one who has never worked and felt entitled. In the midst of Solomon's restless days and

nights, God showed Solomon how it is good to see the fruits of labor. To be happy. Accept where we are. A wise person is rightfully diligent by believing in Jesus. By the cross all are made righteous to live in righteous integrity. Wisdom without God leads to sorrow, but Jesus came that we may trust Him in everything. Don't be anxious about life's necessities.

Somehow, the ability to accept whatever situation I find myself in; remain calm and clear of mind; and to make the most of the situation, has been my standard of dealing with life. It comes from staying on God's path for the righteous; reading and owning the Word of God

(continued on page 3 ...)



It Just Happens*... (... continued from page #2)

as Truth; letting the love of God through Jesus' sacrifice overflow my cup; and the outpouring of love flows wherever the Holy Spirit leads. My son, Nick, while deployed in Iraq told me "making the most of the situation" is what got him through an unusual, precarious situation. Thanks be to God and all the glory to Him. Amen.

It Just Happens*... Pastor Tim Andrews preached "Do nothing." The Word of God will not run out, as illustrated by the flour and oil in 1 King 17:17-24. God wants us to come to Him. End around Him. Do nothing. Come with your questions, anger, sorrow, guilt, disbelief, etc. Come to understand who God is.

Preacher Walter Mutti enlightened us on what we do for eternity remains. All else is forgotten. The fame, celebrity, fortune, accomplishments, etc., are soon forgotten once the final nail is in. A great understanding in Matthew 28:19-20 was presented, where Jesus told his followers that they (we) would do a greater work than the One who could make the lame to walk and the blind to see. By sharing the Gospel – the Good News – of Jesus' salvation for all is an eternal life experience. Not to knock the healing power of Jesus, but Walt made a good point that people just being physically healed, yet not accepting the Good News, would be walking in hell and seeing the anguish and suffering there. That would be their eternity.

As we "go" about our daily life we are commissioned to bring the good news to all. Jesus says, "... I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Preacher Mutti encouraged us as we "go," with Psalm 51:12-13 – "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You." Amen.

"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation ..." is the difference-maker on a "here it is and now it's gone!" month. I got the proposal for the foundation work early in the month and they could start two weeks later. Wow. That's a miracle that they weren't booked till the snow flies. Before the foundation work could begin, I would have to hire a surveyor to ensure the build was legally within the property. I had lost a week trying to figure out what I needed exactly. Back to the Inspector's Admin Office and I was given a contact who had dealt with similar situations. Meanwhile, we had been preparing for a vacation with my wife to visit her brother in New Mexico. Often, I feel the preparation of relinquishing the care-provider responsibilities (for my mother and two adult siblings) is too much work to take a vacation. But God blessed us with a circle of support to do the job. Except the day before leaving, my brother's disability, that we had not anticipated, prevented me from leaving. Fortunately, my wife would be traveling with her sister. After her AAA and declined credit card prevented her flat tire from being fixed, a New York State Trooper volunteered to stay and change the flat so she could get on the road, again. After missing the airline flight, she did arrive in New Mexico, where she got backed into twice by a marijuana dispensary customer. Etc. So, by staying home, I met with the surveyor that weekend. And he could do the job and provide the plot plan, showing the set-backs, to enable breaking ground. Come Monday, I delivered the registered plot plan to the Inspector's office. Now, the foundation work could legally start. For the rest of the day, every time I heard a truck, I thought the foundation workers were arriving. By midweek, it turns out he is up in Maine. Then, I got a call from my contractor, that he wouldn't be able to close the barn up before the snow starts. So, he thinks it would be Spring, 2025 before he could start the build. More details than we have time. ***Which brings us back to Ecclesiastes 3:1-14:***

"A Time for Everything"

"There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven —

A time to give birth and a time to die;
A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.
A time to kill and a time to heal;
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
A time to weep and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn and a time to dance.
A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;
A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.
A time to search and a time to give up as lost;
A time to keep and a time to throw away.
A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;
A time to be silent and a time to speak.
A time to love and a time to hate;
A time for war and a time for peace."

(continued on page 4 ...)

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

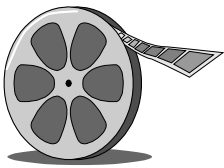
“What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils? ... He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor — it is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.” (Ref: New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.)

It Just Happens*... I was asking for prayer on the barn build and sharing Proverbs 3:5-6 with the Assistant Building Admin. The way she confirmed that “God has it ... we don't have to do anything” just elated me! Surely this is a reason for the need of fellowship for encouragement. And a confirmation on the Word I was receiving all July. It Just Happens*... everyone I mention the barn as a house for gospel bluegrass to praise God has shown great support and loved the idea. For all the July ups and downs ... join me in prayer that God has a time and place for all things and Satan be removed from interference, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

“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~

Movie Night Friday, August 23 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!





AUGUST 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 (**)	2	3
4 Communion Sunday (Note #1)	5	6	7 (††)	8 (**)	9	10
11 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #2)	12	13	14 (††)	15 (**)	16	17
18 Communion Sunday (Note #3)	19	20	21 (††)	22 (**)	23 Movie Night (Note #4)	24
25 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #5)	26 September "Vestry Voices" Articles Due (Note #6)	27	28 (††)	29 (**)	30	31

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 8/4 — Communion Sunday Worship: **10:27 AM.**
- #2) 8/11 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #3) 8/18 — Communion Sunday Worship: **10:27 AM.**
- #4) 8/23 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
- #5) 8/25 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #6) 8/26 — Articles are due for the September issue of "Vestry Voices" (for assembly/mail-out on August 27).

(††) Wednesday Bible Study: **11:00 AM** (in FCC Parlor).

(**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).

