



# Vestry Voices

## The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational  
Church of Clinton

March 2025

Editor  
Charles T. Tamminen

### God's Work

They said therefore unto him,  
"What may we do that we may work the works of God?"  
Jesus answered and said to them,  
"This is the work of God,  
that ye may believe in him whom He did send."

*John 6:28-29 (YLT)*



Rev. Gary Kiontke



believe in the Lord Jesus.

An event from the early church in Philippi supports this position. When an earthquake broke the chains of Paul and Silas a jailer feared for his life. When Paul assured him that no one escaped, he asked, "What is necessary for me to do that I may be saved?" They said, "Thou must believe in the Lord Jesus and thou wilt be saved, and thy household" (Acts 16:30-31). He asked what he had to do if he wanted to be saved. He knows something is required of him; and, he also knows salvation will come from outside of what he does: "me to do ... I may be saved" (not to save myself). But notice, the jailer is not the only one saved. We are told his household was also saved: his family, extended family and servants.

On first reading this exchange in John's Gospel, it may seem to many that Jesus is telling the people that if they believe in Him, the one God sent, they will be saved. While this is true, there is more to the exchange.

But first, we need to consider paradox and New Testament mystery. The definition of a paradox is an apparent contradiction resolved with more information. A New Testament mystery is the revelation of what was hidden in the Sinai Covenant (Deuteronomy 29:29) because of what Jesus did in His Crucifixion and Resurrection meant for all people (Colossians 1:25-28). He is the Sovereign King who is both the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) and the Yahweh anointed King who will break the nations with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:6-9).

But in the Gospels, before the cross and the empty tomb, there were many times Jesus did not directly answer a question. Instead, He stood the question "on its head" by answering what they should have asked Him if they had fuller understanding of Moses, the prophets and the psalms. This is what is happening here.

Just like the jailer in Philippi, who had not known Moses, the prophets and the psalms from childhood, they asked Jesus what they might do to do the works of God. These Israelites knew from Moses that God expected much of His people, so they wanted to know what they might do to do God's works. It is a human question, and many well-intentioned people have asked it since the first people were expelled from the Garden of Eden. They asked their question with a double contingency: Is there anything they might do that might be the works of God (what He requires)?

However, Jesus knew this was the wrong question to ask because there is nothing any person can do for God. So, He answers the question they should have asked: "What gracious act does God do so we might do the good He created us for?" In other words, people can never do enough on their own, without God's help, to do "the works of God."

So, Jesus starts with an amazingly gracious statement: This is being the continual work of God. In other words, independent of all that you might work, God is always doing this one work. And what is this work? God's work is making it possible that all of them, and all of us, might be continually believing in the Man God has sent. In fact, God is emphatically doing this work. It is a high priority for Him. Notice God is working in all people, but there is no guarantee that all people will come to continually believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior King of everything. But, by God's continual gracious work, anyone may come to continuously believe in the Lord (continued on page 2 ...)

### Inside this issue:

God's Work	1
Worship in March	2
It Just Happens*... "... As the World Turns ..."	2
Movie Night	3
March 2025 Calendar of Events	4



## God's Work ( ... continued from page #1 )

Jesus and be saved (Ephesians 2:8-10), even as the non-Jewish jailer was in Philippi.

Here is one more insight on this amazing grace of God. In his January 6, 2023 homily on the day of Epiphany, the day to remember the arrival of the Magi (Matthew 2:2), Pope Francis said, "The exciting adventure of these Wise Men from the East teaches us that faith is not born of our own mer-

its, thoughts and theories. Rather, it is God's gift." This is a beautiful re-statement of Jesus' answer in our passage from John's Gospel and the apostle Paul's interpretation of it.

God graciously gives Jesus' disciples the ongoing faith to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They, and we, need to continue to walk in that faith by power, strength, love and insight given by the Holy Spirit. ~vv~

## Worship in March

We will have Communion on March 2 and 16.

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, March 5.

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

Date	Scripture	Title
March 2	Joshua 10:1-15; Psalm 22:23-28	Yahweh fights for His people who rescue others
March 9	Joshua 10:16-28; Psalm 44:1-8	Yahweh gives His people victory over their enemies
March 16	Joshua 10:29-43; Psalm 118:5-11	Israel obeys Yahweh and He fights for them
March 23	Joshua 11:1-23; Psalm 105:8-11	Joshua took all the land Yahweh commanded
March 30	Joshua 20:1-9; Psalm 91:1-4	Cities of refuge protect the innocent from revenge

It has been an enriching adventure to see what God did through the first (human) Joshua. It has benefitted us to see how this Joshua foreshadows some of the glories of the second "Joshua," God's Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

## It Just Happens\*... "... As the World Turns ..."

By Petros

When I first started seriously reading the Holy Bible, I had to stop when I came upon how God's chosen people were to enter the promised land and kill the men, woman and children that were living there. My newfound faith allowed me not to doubt God's plan or question his love for all His Creation. But I had to accept God's wisdom and ways as way beyond mysterious. I witnessed His Love everywhere and the sacrifice He made to offer us salvation was the ultimate proof of His Love for all. I frequently thought of the Holy Bible as God's "love story" for His Creation.

I imagined, at the beginning, God loved His Creation and wanted all to live in a Garden of Paradise. He provided every need and expected, by His Love and Provision, people would honor Him by keeping one rule. "Don't eat the apple from the forbidden tree." But the fallen angel was hell bent to recruit as many lost souls to add to his doomed world. So,

by the end of the first chapter, it's safe to assume with time we would all take the bite to be as wise as God, so the lie goes. Continuing on, God gives us ten simple commandments to follow so He can love His Creation. But I can attest, that it's too easy to commit one little sin, which in God's eyes is a "game over," despite His Love to have the love of His Children. But, yet, He still loves us and provides for our needs, and wants all to spend eternity with Him. The love story brings out the ultimate act of love: a king's life given to save a beggar like me from eternal separation.

"It Just Happens\*..." I was sharing this point and was corrected that God doesn't love everyone. It's true ... God hates the sinners. But I believe He loved His Creation in the beginning and wanted everybody to call upon the God "who wants to be our God." It is said that He has placed His Truths in the hearts of all creation,

( continued on page 3 ... )



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

but many still refuse to follow or want His Love. It is also said that God says either you are with Him or against Him. There is no in-between. Although I have not seen reference in the Holy Bible, some believe in a purgatory.

For the last forty years I have been blessed by seeking and learning of God. When Noah pleaded with God not to destroy, including the deaths of two cities, there was not one that loved God more than the lifestyle they chose. God knew the hearts of all had turned from God and there was no turning back to God. When I asked God why He would die on the cross for a sinner like me? His answer, "like a father loves his son," spoke to my heart even though I did not have a son, then. When Jesus said he brings the Kingdom of Heaven to earth, I have come to realize the peace and joy of being with God is at hand. I am able to find shelter and live a life of peace and joy on earth within the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed for all. Over the years, I have learned to trust and keep the faith because of God's examples of love. However, I have left the killing and taking the land of "innocent" people out of mind and I accept the hard reality that either you're with God or against Him.

Ironically, God's people, the nation of Israel, wandered and complained in the desert for forty years. By today's standard, one could justify their complaining because they didn't have a home to rest and take comfort in. However, humans tend to take loved ones for granted – even God, the Almighty. Their life was different because they were seeing and living by the Hand of God. God had imparted His Commandments for a culture that generations succeeding would be taught the Law and live under it. In one sense it was an easy life of trust and obey. Pastor Gary was preaching from Joshua on his anointing to go and claim the promised land. He brought out the sin of one man would be punishable by stoning to death including his wife, children, etc. After service, we chatted and recalled that a relative had mentioned that she was glad not to have lived in the times of the Old Testament. "It Just Happens\*..." a revelation came upon us, that the culture was different and what seemed difficult and harsh was a lifestyle to honor God with all due respect being in His presence. In God's eyes, one man's disobedience was justification to punish the whole. Even the stoning to death was reinforcing and upholding to the honor of serving

God within the community or culture. Perhaps the saying, "one bad apple spoils the barrel" has some roots here: a lifestyle that seems inhumane today, but served to unite and encourage loving a special God.

Out of our chat, I can summarize that the original people living in the promised land had turned so far from God they would never come back to a faith in Him. They had already replaced God – our Father, with Gods of their own imagination. God is a loving God for all who look to Him. For all others, who have turned their backs to God, they will know the meaning of the grim reaper. As said before, one is either with God or against God. Unfortunately, the wrath of God is not dying in hell, but living eternity where there is gnashing of teeth and wailing. God has shown me what I could not understand without wandering in His Love for forty years.

But God is good. And we have a name for the barn. It will be known as the Bluegrass Gospel Barn. The main floor is done and covering the garage below. Support posts are set and lined up to extend an enclosed porch to make a 36'x42' dance and praise space to our Lord!

PTL! ... I lost control and slid on the hill when I rode my motorcycle, a very heavy Harley Davidson (FLHTPI) down around to the barn garage as the snow was turning into rain. By the grace of God, I was able to pick the bike up while still running and walk it into the garage (below barn). I thanked God for realizing a better path to travel versus the path I took. In the warm weather, it would have resulted in me sliding on a grassy hill and over a 30-40' embankment (depending on my final stop). God is so, so good. 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. ~Vv~



## **Movie Night** **Friday, March 28 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!

# MARCH 2025

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

## Calendar Notes:

- #1) 3/2 — Communion Sunday. **10:27 AM.**  
 #2) 3/9 — First Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.  
 #3) 3/16 — Communion Sunday and Second Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM.**  
 #4) 3/23 — Third Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.  
 #5) 3/28 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**  
 #6) 3/30 — Fourth Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM.**  
 #7) 3/31 — Articles are due for the April issue of "Vestry Voices" (for assembly/mail-out on April 1).

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

(\*\*) Thursday afternoon prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).



Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 9th -- please don't forget to "Spring Ahead!"

