



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

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God's People Welcome Outsiders Who Want to Come and Be With Them

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.
The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you,
and you shall love him as yourself;
for you were aliens in the land of Egypt:
I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:33-34 (NAS)



Rev. Gary Kiontke



you" was:

Guidelines like these also help believers in Jesus to think proactively about what can be done for the "outsider." Peter says that "once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:10, alluding to Hosea 2:18-23) – Arthur Jackson.

Christians, as God's people, should treat foreigners who come to live among them just as they treat their neighbors who were born in their own country. This is because they know they have been redeemed and delivered from sin and death to become members of His world-wide family, the Church; and, that Jesus has commanded them to make disciples of every nation on earth (Matthew 28:18-20). If people from other nations are becoming their neighbors, Christians do not even have to go overseas to obey Jesus' last command to His people.

We will now look at some passages from the Torah, Gospels, and New Testament on this subject of strangers, aliens and outsiders.

God commanded His people that one "law" (Torah – instruction) will apply to both the native born and the stranger sojourning among them (Exodus 12:48-49). Both the native born and sojourner can live

by God's instruction only by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Furthermore, both the Israelite and the stranger are to enjoy a day of rest every seven days (Exodus 20:8-10; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). In the second statement of the "Ten Words of Commandment," Yahweh reminds the Israelites that they were held as slaves for being foreigners in Egypt; but, He delivered them from that slavery. Therefore, they, more than any other people should have sympathy for a stranger sojourning among them because he or she is seeking freedom from oppression. And the author of Hebrews says there is a lasting Sabbath-rest for anyone who becomes one of the new people of God from every nation (Hebrews 4:8-11; Revelation 7:9-10; 14:6-7).

In the enumeration of God's statutes, Moses makes this simple statement to the people of Israel: "You will not mistreat or oppress the stranger because you were strangers in Egypt" (Exodus 22:21). He later explains why they will do this, appealing to their human sympathy based on their experience, by adding: since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you *also* were strangers in the land of Egypt (Exodus 23:9).

The stranger sojourning among the descendants of Israel also was excused from doing any work at all on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-31).

Our last passage from the Torah precedes the lead verse for this article. As God's people reap their harvest and glean their vineyard, they will leave some grain and grapes for both the poor and the foreigner dwelling among them (Leviticus 19:9-10).

In the second century before the Messiah -Savior came to earth to be born from a young virgin named Mary (Luke 1:26-38), fewer than half the Jews in the Roman Empire could speak or

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God's People Welcome Outsiders ... (... continued from page #1)

understand Hebrew, so seventy rabbis translated Scripture from Hebrew to Greek. The Hebrew word for “stranger” is *gār*, pronounced the same as the French word for war: *guerre*. It may be that after Babel, the French language retained the word for “stranger” but gave it the meaning of “war.” People without God in their lives will be strongly inclined to go to war with people who are strangers to them. The Greek word chosen to translate *gār* was *prōs-ā-lū-tōs*, which transliterates as the English word proselyte, meaning convert. The Greek word is a verb prefixed by a preposition. The verb means “come to” and the preposition means “to,” so the word is literally “to come to.” It was used of Greeks who were strongly attracted to the Jewish God, but stopped just short of conversion because of circumcision and keeping kosher food restrictions.

In Matthew’s Gospel the word is used by Jesus when He is confronting the religious leaders. He said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves” (Matthew 23:15, RSV).

On the day of Pentecost, after the Holy Spirit filled the one-hundred-twenty believers, (Acts 1:15; 2:1-4), Luke tells us that among those amazed to hear the wonders of God proclaimed in their own language were people from, “Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes” (Acts 2:5-12, RSV).

Of the seven Greek-speaking brothers full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit, who were chosen to free the apostles to focus on the ministry of the Word, Luke tells us one was a convert to Judaism, “they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch” (Acts 6:1-7).

After Paul preached the “Good News of Jesus” in the Antioch in the center of Asia Minor (now Turkey), Luke tells us, “the synagogue having been dismissed, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes did follow Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were persuading them to remain in the grace of God” (Acts 13:43, YLT).

The bottom line of what we have seen in the Torah, Gospels and Acts is that God welcomes all who come to Him regardless of their country of origin or residence. If this is true of God, it must be true of people in His church of every nation on earth. There is no way sincere followers of Jesus should ever reject or exclude people who are seeking freedom from oppression and refuge in Jesus from any nation on earth. As Paul wrote to other Churches in Asia Minor, “... you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and He lives in all of us” (Colossians 3:10-11, NLB, also Galatians 3:26-29). ~v~

Sunday Worship in June

We will have Communion on June 1 and 15.

Pentecost Sunday is June 8.

We will begin our first of two summer preaching series on June 22. The first one will involve four messages from the Book of Ruth (one for each chapter). This book tells one of the best stories in the Bible about God’s gracious and strong love for all people.

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

Date	Scripture	Theme / Title
June 1	Joshua 24:29-33; Psalm 77:14-18	The deaths of Joshua and the elders who knew Moses; Declare God’s wonders and power to the next generation
June 8 Pentecost	Numbers 11:16-30; Psalm 51:10-17	Yahweh’s Spirit rests on seventy elders; Let’s ask Yahweh to keep His Holy Spirit in us
June 15 Father’s Day	Genesis 7:1-23; Proverbs 13:22-25; Hebrews 12:4-11	A righteous father can save his family from destruction; A good father disciplines his children in love
June 22	Ruth 1:1-22; Matthew 5:3-9	We can trust Yahweh even in the depths of mourning; Mourners are blessed and comforted
June 29	Ruth 2:1-23; Luke 6:36-38	Yahweh provides harvest ‘leftovers’ for loyal foreigners; God gives back much to merciful givers

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Sunday Worship in June (... continued from page #2)

On Father's (Men's) Day, I will preach on how a righteous father (Noah) saved his family from total destruction. It has taken me over twenty-three years to speak on this chapter, but it seems that now is a good time to do so.

It Just Happens*... "As the World Turns, Wholeness Prayer"

by Petros

One of my favorite verses is "...choose for yourselves today whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15). When Joshua spoke "the Word" to the Israelite nation, he recounted how God had delivered their forefathers to a land that God helped them to conquer. In that time, there were idols of the land just as in my life. Pastor Gary preached on "... choose for yourselves today whom you will serve ..." I was reminded of all the idols that I placed before my God and how I need to clear my mind that was causing me to lose sight of God and His plan for me. I need to resist the quiet rebellion to go about life in my own way. Now is the time to choose which way to follow. Will it be God and receiving His Holy Spirit that bring us into the work of the Kingdom on Earth? Or a path that leads us away from what Gods' plan is for us? Re-affirmation to choose God every day was a key takeaway. Later that day, Linda had planned to celebrate my birthday at a Bluegrass happening in Jamaica Plain. It was a great preview of the Bluegrass Gospel Barn offerings when everyone (smiling and singing) broke into "I'll Fly Away ... Oh Glory ...!" "It Just Happens*..." I met up with a dear friend there, who shared how every morning she plants her feet on the ground for God. "I have a mirror where I must plant my feet and commit each day to '... choose for yourselves today whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD' (Joshua 24:15), inscribed in the glass."

"It Just Happens*..." I was talking to Charlie about a troubling situation, and he was reminded of a book that Jean Coles had on display. "It Just Happens*..." the book was still on display. My first thought upon seeing the title was "Wholeness" would be a perfect solution. Then, I saw it was on prayer, but I wanted a better "fix." "It Just Happens*..." after Charlie left, I had a chance to ask Jean Coles about Becoming Whole and the power of Wholeness prayer. I was more skeptical than wondering; but was so blessed on her breakdown of a course she promoted by <https://ent.freemin.org/> that I became intrigued with the concept of Wholeness Prayer. I was feeling that this was a leading to detailed prayer that God wants for His children to obtain, in order to invite God and seek His thoughts in a more intimate level of prayer/seeking His mind, that never would have entered my mind, otherwise. Freedom for the Captives Ministries provides wholeness prayer resources and other materials to equip and empower followers of Christ to partner with God, to see Him get the glory. Below, I took the liberty

of cutting and pasting some opening words from <https://ent.freemin.org/>:

What is Wholeness Prayer?

Wholeness prayer is a powerful way to partner with God in people's personal restoration and discipleship process. It helps people connect with God through prayer, and asks God to speak directly to the person being prayed for at their point of need. The five main steps involved in wholeness prayer are:

- (1) *Recognize: Identify (take captive) your negative feelings, thoughts, and actions*
- (2) *Recent: Bring these to God and ask Him to reveal a related recent memory*
- (3) *Root: Ask God to reveal any root(s) – the first time (or pattern) when you thought, felt, and/or acted this way*
- (4) *Receive: Receive His perspective - first at the root, if there is one*
- (5) *Renew: Apply this perspective in every-day life.*

I was thinking how this would be such a great tool to resolve my troubling situation. "It Just Happens*..." an angel corrected me that it's best to learn and grow the Wholeness Prayer for my personal relationship with God. And if it be His Will, let Him use me as a beacon of light. (If I become worthy!!!!!!!!!!!!) Amen and 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~



Helping Hand Fund

We have only put out Jack Downing envelopes since we invested heavily in sound and other equipment for both live-streaming and better-quality audio and visual for the local cable TV re-broadcast. We have now paid off the outstanding balance and still have funds in the account.

In the last few years prices for food, housing and gasoline have skyrocketed. While gas prices seem to be stabilizing at a new high level, the other two necessities are likely to go higher. In proportion to the needs of people, we have a low balance in the Helping Hand Fund. Starting Sunday, June 1, Helping Hand envelopes will again be available at both the offering plates in the front and the information table at the back. May God bless everyone who gives to the Helping Hand Fund to help our neighbors with needs.



Movie Night Friday, June 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.

So, please join us for a night out at the movies!





JUNE 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 Communion Sunday (Note #1)	2	3	4 (††)	5 (**)	6	7
8 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #2)	9	10	11 (††)	12 (**)	13	14
15 Communion Sunday (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 July "Vestry Voices" Articles Due (Note #7)	1	2	3	4	5

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 6/1 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #2) 6/8 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
- #3) 6/15 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #4) 6/22 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
- #5) 6/27 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
- #6) 6/29 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM.**
- #7) 6/30 — Articles are due for the July issue of "Vestry Voices" (for assembly/mail-out on July 1).

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

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

