



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

February 2026

Editor
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Jesus said: Ask the Father for “Our Daily Bread”

After this manner therefore pray ye: ...
Give us this day our daily bread

Matthew 6:9, 11 (KJV)



Rev. Gary Kiontke

Here is a question for all disciples of Jesus: Did Jesus say to me that if I ask the Father to provide for my needs He will give me what I need to sustain me to serve Him? Before giving your final answer, consider the difference between our culture and the Middle-Eastern culture of Jesus' day. Unlike our culture, which emphasizes individual rights as primary, the culture in which Jesus and the people who heard His words lived, always put the community as a whole as the greatest concern. From birth, children saw by example, and had instilled in them, the notion that families and communities cared for and watched out for each other. Whatever any member of the family or community possessed belonged to whoever needed it, everyone in the family or community.

Look at the pronouns in the text above. Every pronoun is plural, not singular. Jesus is commanding all the people, as a group, to ask the Father concerning something necessary to all people, namely daily food to fuel the body to work with Him to usher in His Kingdom on earth by doing His will as the angels of heaven do His will.

Jesus also knew that in His new creation of the Church, different people will have different callings, gifts, talents and abilities (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). In the world as it is after the rebellion in Eden, all of these follow the “bell-shaped” normal curve where most people have adequate resources for living, but some people have more than enough and others not enough. Human governments will always fall short of successfully addressing these differences in resources. But the correct answer to the opening question is that Jesus is saying that when His people, the Church, prays this prayer, the Father will give the people in the church, as a whole – us – enough bread, or resources, so that through generous sharing with one another,

each individual will have his or her needs met. In this way His Church will be built up on Him, closely joined together with the Holy Spirit dwelling among them (Ephesians 2:19-22). Furthermore, they will experience together the “surpassing understanding” love of Christ, being filled with all God’s fullness, with Christ’s glory in them (Ephesians 3:14-21). This is yet another reason why every Christian needs to be part of a local Church. Every one of us is lacking in some area of our lives certain skills or talents, finances or other resources, strength or compassion. But together, the local church as a whole, will always be given by God just enough so through sharing with one another, everyone’s needs are met (Luke 3:9-11). In fact, this is just what the early church in Jerusalem did (Acts 2:42-47).

All of this was foreshadowed in the seventh century before the eternal Word became flesh (John 1:1-14), in the book I like to call the “fifth gospel”: Isaiah; especially the last twenty seven chapters. These chapters are further subdivided into three sections of nine chapters each by a repeated refrain of “there is no peace ... for the wicked” (48:22; 57:21). I would like to focus on the first chapter of the final third, which Walter Kaiser interprets as focusing on the Holy Spirit (he states that the three sections correspond to the Trinity). In this chapter Yahweh says that acceptable “fasting” involves letting the oppressed go free, giving bread to the hungry, opening our houses to poor outcasts, clothing the naked, and caring for our flesh and blood families. Those who do this will experience healing, righteousness and receive the glory of Yahweh (Isaiah 58:6-8). Finally, those who delight in the Sabbath, and in honoring Yahweh in all they do, will be given great honor (Isaiah 58:13-14, NLT).

All of this is impossible in our own strength, but if we have the fellowship of the Spirit; and, through the Spirit wait in hope, then we will be able to live as God intends us to live IN Christ Jesus. Paul told the church

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Jesus said: Ask the Father ... (... continued from page #1)

in Philippi that if they had comfort in Christ and fellowship of the Spirit, they would consider others above themselves and look out for others in addition to themselves (Philippians 2:1-4). And to the local churches in Galatia, he got to the heart of the gospel by writing: In the Spirit, we wait expectantly from faith for righteousness, because rituals accomplish nothing, but faith which is working through sacrificial love (Galatians 5:5-6). This may be one of the ten most important truths of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8-10).

It is my prayer that God will use this article to help all of us to realize that the American emphasis on individualism, and the idea that Christianity is mostly a "personal relationship" with Jesus, and church is optional, is not from God or His Word. It is healthy to constantly rethink our assumptions and conclusions. ~v~

Worship in February

We are continuing to learn from the life of David as told in the books of Samuel.

We will have Communion on February 1 and 15.

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

Date	Scripture	Theme / Title
February 1	1 Samuel 23:15-29; Psalm 133	God can provide through friends and enemies When enemies overcome, trust in God delivers from fear
February 8	1 Samuel 24:1-15; Psalm 18:46-50	Vengeance belongs to Yahweh We can praise God for avenging us
February 15	1 Samuel 24:16 - 25:12; Psalm 45:1-5	It is good to show grace to others Gracious kings are blessed by God
February 22	1 Samuel 25:13-31; Psalm 125	Godly women try to prevent bloodshed Yahweh is good to His people, keeping them from iniquity

We will have fellowship and food on February 8 and 22.

Missions Report

by Sally Camara

We have recently become aware of a ministry called "Matthew 25." Although the ministry has varied services, we would like to see if our church would participate in one small area.

Matthew 25 ships medical items, clothing, hygiene products, and educational materials to disaster areas in the US and to several countries around the world. Among the items they ship are used prescription bottles and over-the-counter medicine bottles, such as aspirin and vitamins.

We will have a designated box available in Fellowship Hall where you can drop off your used bottles.

They must have ALL labels removed and be clean and washed in hot soapy water.

Not only will they be repurposed in medical clinics in poor countries, but by participating, you are helping the environment here at home.

Please see the graphic on page 3, for additional details.

***"And the king will answer, I tell you this:
anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me."***

(Matthew 25:40)

(continued on pages 3 ...)



Missions Report (... continued from page #2)

Pill Bottle Donations



Matthew 25: Ministries accepts donations of clean, empty, recapped, label and residue-free plastic pill bottles for inclusion in shipments of medical supplies. Our pill bottle program fulfills the dual needs of improving medical care in developing countries and caring for our environment.

Acceptable donations include:

Prescription and
Over-the-Counter Pill
Bottles

Large and Small Pill Bottles
(single-person/family sized)

Pill Bottles with and without
Secure Caps (Child-
Resistant)

How to prepare pill bottle donations for shipments of medical supplies:



Sort bottles by color and type



Remove labels, leaving
no glue or residue



Wash bottles and lids in very
hot water and dish soap



Rinse and dry thoroughly



Replace lids on clean,
dried bottles



Place clean, recapped bottles
in large resealable bags
marked 'Clean Bottles'

Where to send donations of clean pill bottles:

DONATION DROP-OFF

11083 Kenwood Road
Blue Ash, OH 45242

DONATIONS VIA MAIL

11060 Kenwood Road
Blue Ash, OH 45242

Please note that Matthew 25: Ministries does not pay for or reimburse postage for this program.

It Just Happens*... “Philippians 4:4-9”

By Petros

Last month, I closed with one of my favorite passages by the apostle Paul. In the book of Philippians, Paul writes to all the Christians in Philippi encouraging them to keep the faith, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (*Philippians 4:4*.) All the while, Paul, in a Roman prison, encourages believers by showing that true joy comes from understanding Jesus' love and His sacrifice on the cross. Paul is a Jewish Christian who shared the “Good News” to Gentiles (non-Israelite people or not Jewish). Descendants of Abraham (Nation of Israel-Jewish) believe they are the Chosen, exclusively. And Paul goes before the Council, “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.” (*Acts 23:1*.) “... Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!” (*Acts 23:6*.) “For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.” (*Acts 23:8*.) He is put under arrest as a Roman citizen and being protected from a group of radical Jews “... who formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who formed this plot. They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.” (*Acts 23:12-14*.)

Paul believes in his heart, by the Holy Spirit of Jesus, and is able to share his belief. “Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.” (*Philippians 4:5*.) Jesus said He would send a Councilor to help us. Could this be the Holy Spirit of Jesus? Having the Spirit of Jesus would definitely make Him near. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (*Philippians 4:6*.) By internalizing and “taking on” the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we won’t be anxious about anything. And, with a grateful and thankful heart we can trust God to provide our daily needs; as well as the ministry or purpose He intends for us. “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (*Philippians 4:7*.) We have the “peace of God” when we are sensitive to our heavenly Fathers’ feelings. His Love for us. The sacrifice He made is none too great for our salvation from eternal separation. Realizing our Father’s love will guide us to the love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control of Jesus. These qualities are referred to as the “Gifts of the Holy Spirit.” By surrendering to the Spirit of Jesus, we will take on His love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control. As we live in The Spirit of Jesus, the follies and dismays of our journey on earth won’t penetrate our skin. I’ve heard about the Heaven on Earth that Jesus brought when He came from Heaven. Oh, what a day it will be! When I get out of “my ways” to have the Spirit of Jesus Christ at the forefront of my life decisions. That’ll be the day when a life in Heaven on Earth will be ours!

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” (*Philippians 4:8*.) Ingraining the “whatever’s” works to keep a positive outlook in life. I think that the eight gifts of the Holy Spirit qualities results in the eight “whatever’s” life decisions. Or enables our walk to receive the graces and wonders that God has in store for us. Otherwise, we may miss our intended blessings, “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (*Philippians 4:9*.) If God goes before us, who or what can stand against us? If our walk reflects the life of Jesus, then we will be in the Heaven on Earth He brought for us.

“It Just Happens*...” I was asked about the progress on the barn intended for Praise and Dancing to God. I was miffed in my reply that it should have been done and in use this past year. And, work was stopped and will resume in the Spring. I’m trusting in God and it feels like I’m doing what I should be by waiting. But, what an eye opener when my sister in Jesus said I had the time (without distractions) to spend the last year with my mother’s blessings and joy. Hal-lelujah!! Praise the Lord!! God is so good!! The week she went home to the Lord, we took a walk to my brother’s house where family had gathered. I put on her warm clothes, and I pushed her wheelchair under the bright sun. And two days before she passed, we watched TV till 1AM. What a gift to hold uninterrupted quality time, good health and seeing God’s hand on her life to the very end. Sometimes we don’t see things right in front of our faces because our thoughts are not WWJD – What Would Jesus Do? I will consider this a learning moment. And be always thankful for God’s provisions for the joy of her memories. And anticipation of some sweet day to see her by the water’s edge and the opening (2026?) of the BGB – Bluegrass Gospel Barn. Amen and Amen.

“Peace, I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (*John 14:27*.)

PTL!!! “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~



Attention — Upcoming Game Night — In Fellowship Hall

Friday, February 6 at 7:00 PM

By Linda Wong



Bring your favorite game(s) and a friend, to enjoy an evening of game playing.

We will have Scrabble, Monopoly, Cribbage, cards, and ping pong available.

Hope you can join us! Bring a snack!

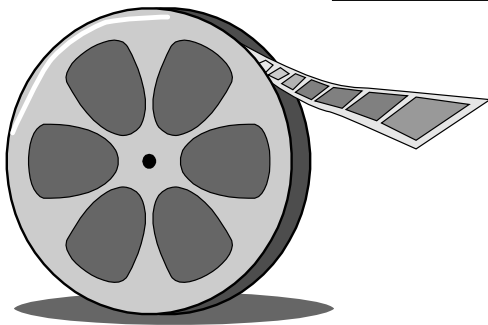
New Bible Study: “Job” **Wednesday, February 25 at 11:00 AM**

After some two years, we are concluding our study of the highlights of what the Bible teaches about the myriads of spiritual beings God created before He made the physical universe. Our next study will be the book of Job. This is a deep book with a unique vocabulary, structure, and variations on wisdom. It is almost satirical when it addresses “conventional” human wisdom. It will take all of sixteen months, some eighty sessions with weeks off for vacation and holidays.

It is open to anyone who can come to FCC on Wednesday morning, or who wants to be patched in vocally by telephone. To help me in planning the introductory sessions, and to know what portions that will need more time, I invite all people interested in this study to let me know their answers to the following questions.

- What parts of Job have affected you in a positive way?
- What parts of Job are difficult for you, either to understand, or because what you understand gives you concern?
- What questions do you have about the book that have never been answered adequately for you?
- Any general comments?
- Any general concerns?

Movie Night **Friday, February 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!



FEBRUARY 2026

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

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 2/1 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
 #2) 2/6 — Game Night, in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
 #3) 2/8 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
 #4) 2/15 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
 #5) 2/22 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
 #6) 2/23 — Articles are due for the March issue of "Vestry Voices" (for assembly/mail-out on February 24).
 #7) 2/27 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**

(††) Wednesday Bible Study: **11:00 AM** (in FCC Parlor). 2/4 — "Angels" tentative end-date.

(**) Thursday afternoon prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor). 2/25 — "Job" start-date.

