



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

March 2026

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What About the Other Six Days of the Week?

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

James 1:27 (NLT)



Rev. Gary Kiontke



During Lent, Christians traditionally examine their relationship with God and seek to live lives that are more pleasing to Him. It is my prayer that this article will be a help to people in God's Church as they seek God in Jesus between now and Good Friday.

There are some people in every church not able to come to the church building on the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10, see Acts 20:1; 1 Corinthians 16:2). What should churches do about this, so they fulfill the exhortation from the writer of Hebrews: "stir one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together ... encouraging one another" (10:24-25, RSV) not only on Sunday, but on the other six days of the week?

Members of the church must have equal concern for one another (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). It starts by realizing God has put each member of the church in the body according to His purpose. Every member is indispensable to Him, and should be to each other. This means everyone must treat weaker members with special respect, and recognize his or her own weakness. Because of this, there is no good reason to have division within the church. And the result is that whatever one member experiences, all members experience that together. This includes both suffering and rejoicing.

Members of the church must love one another by practicing hospitality and living in harmony (Romans 12:9-16). Everyone needs to be patient in prayer in whatever the difficulties are happening right now. Everyone has something to give to meet the needs of fellow members. Some people have time and the gift of a comforting presence to visit housebound people. Others have the gift of helps to do everyday tasks that another member may not be able to do. Hospitality usually takes place when people invite other members into their home for food, rest and en-

couragement. There will be times when "reverse" hospitality may be appropriate. By bringing food, love and encouragement to people unable to travel from where they are, those in need will receive care. This will please Father God. Harmony grows when people are like-minded. In his letter to the churches in Philippi, Paul said that every member of the church should have the same mind of Christ as He humbled Himself to serve (2:3-8).

Members of the church must encourage and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11). They did this by becoming a model church throughout all Greece in their service to God even as they suffered (1:4-10); when they heard God's Word they became like the early apostolic church in Judea (2:13-16); they stood firm in their faith and love (3:6-8). They are on their way to being built up in unity and faith of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the fulness of Christ, each part of the Body contributing to the building up in love (Ephesians 4:11-16). What would this look like in any town in Massachusetts today?

Members of the church must bear with, forgive, admonish and teach each other in love (Colossians 3:12-16). This is done through submission to the rule of Christ in their hearts and the Word of Christ (as recorded in the Gospels) dwelling in them richly. This is done through following the practice of the priest who wrote, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I will not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:11). Some may wonder how they can do the final word about singing spiritual songs together during the time they are not in church. But, as members meet together in twos and threes throughout the week, part of their time together could involve singing favorite songs about God, even some more contemporary songs dealing with life in Christ today.

The closing "one another" for members of the church involves being filled with joy and peace in the hope of the Holy Spirit to be competent to instruct one another (Romans

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What About the Other Six Days ... (... continued from page #1)

15:5-14). This makes it possible to accept one another. The competency comes from knowing the full Word of God, including the Torah and especially Deuteronomy. The word Paul used for *instruct* is the root of the word for law-torah in the Old Testament.

If we can pray about ways to practice each of these “one another” paragraphs this Lent, we will become a stronger church, more pleasing to God and Jesus. ~v~

Worship in March

We will have Communion on March 1 and 15.

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

Date	Scripture	Main Idea and Title
March 1	1 Samuel 25:32-44; Psalm 119:97-104	True believers are open to godly advice Those who love God’s Word, want Him to instruct them
March 8	1 Samuel 26:1-12; Psalm 86:14-17	Knowledge of God enables gracious action When enemies attack, call on the gracious God
March 15	1 Samuel 26:13-25; Psalm 86:5-9	Grace can lead to repentance of sin Supplication to the Lord of steadfast love leads to forgiveness
March 22	1 Samuel 27:1-12; Psalm 106:34-39	Those who live with God’s enemies will sin Interacting with the world can lead to idolatry
March 29	Mark 11:1-11; Psalm 22:14-18	People interpret Jesus’ actions according to their expectations David described the death of the Eternal King

We will take time off from our series on David on March 29 to reflect on the meaning of Palm Sunday.

Missions Report

by Sally Camara

Please take note of the yearly impact report from WARM (Welcoming Alliance for Refugee Ministry), shown on the next page. WARM continues to minister to refugees currently residing in both Worcester and Springfield. As you can see in the report, WARM meets their needs in various ways – English classes, driving lessons, tutoring for teenagers, Hope groups for women, soccer games for teens, and various group activities throughout the year. Among them are a summer picnic/game day and a Christmas party where the gospel is shared. WARM connects local churches with refugee families to walk beside them, from helping them read and understand their mail, to providing transportation for doctor appointments, to just being a friend. Refugees are completely legal and vetted. Most of them have spent years in camps due to war or persecution, making it impossible to return to their home country. They leave behind homes, jobs, a culture, and family members. WARM has welcomed people from such countries as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and others.

While the need is greater than ever (as of June 2025 there were a recorded 42.5 million people in refugee camps), the United States has closed its door to refugees since January of 2024. Just recently, the administration has called for refugees’ status to be reviewed (PARRIS), even though they have already gone through a thorough vetting process internationally and in-house. Can you imagine an Afghan family being sent back to Afghanistan, when their husband/father served with the US military against the Taliban? It would be a death sentence. Please be in prayer for all refugees worldwide and especially those in our country who are now faced with uncertain and chaotic times.

This was the heart of Job, a man of blameless and upright life:

“I was a father to the needy, and I took up the stranger’s cause.” (Job 29:16)



**“You shall not wrong an alien or be hard upon him;
you were yourselves aliens in Egypt.”**

(Exodus 22:21)

(continued on page 3 ...)

Missions Report (... continued from page #3)

WELCOMING ALLIANCE FOR REFUGEE MINISTRY



2025 IMPACT

37 EVENTS FOR REFUGEES!

3 INTERNSHIPS

53 EVENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS!

5 HOPE GROUPS for women's wellness

42 WOMEN SERVED



63 REFUGEE FAMILIES BEFRIENDED



231 ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

36 PARTNERSHIPS WITH AREA AGENCIES

12 APARTMENTS SET UP
47 REFUGEES SETTLED IN THEIR NEW HOMES

32 STUDENT DRIVERS
30 LICENSED
28,384 MILES DRIVEN!



952 REFUGEES SERVED

ENGLISH LEARNING CLASSES with childcare
121 STUDENTS
15 CLASSROOMS



FROM OVER 23 COUNTRIES

206 REFUGEE YOUTH SERVED

10 TEEN ART CLASS

26 ROCK CLIMBING

109 FRIDAY SOCCER

63 SUMMER SOCCER SCHOOL

24 GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

26 YOUTH HEALTH CLASS

28 HOMEWORK HELP

PREGNANT MOM & BABY CARE

IN HOSPITAL DOULA SUPPORT, PRE- AND POST- NATAL CARE FOR
7 MOMS & BABIES

1209 TRAINEES TO DATE FROM 117 CHURCHES

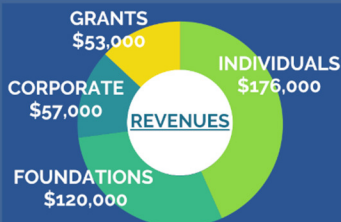
2 LOCATIONS
WORCESTER W. SPRINGFIELD

12,913 HOURS OF VOLUNTEER TIME

68,054 TOTAL MILES TRAVELED

BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND OUR CITY'S REFUGEES

www.warmwelcoming.org
est 2016



Fiscal year July '24 to June '25

It Just Happens*... “Tribes”

By Petros

“It Just Happens*...” I was informed there was a talk about the current crisis in our nation over which Christians are divided. And, guidance from our faith through scriptures. I was interested to learn how the scriptures would be applied to help. The talk would be at L’Abri in Southborough. From their website, L’Abri is a “shelter” from the relentless pace and pressures of 21st century life for genuine questions and honest reflection on the truthfulness of Christianity and its bearing on reality. The speaker was Dick Keyes; he pointed out he was not presenting a political support or opinion for either himself or L’Abri. I will mention some takeaways, in the same light, to the best of my recollection. He explained that tribes, or groups of any nature, from the beginning had tribal customs which were part of the accepted conformity of the tribe. He introduced the two main political parties in our nation. Keep in mind that there are tribal beliefs that are sacred in a sense. According to his research, the Democratic party advocates for civil rights, labor, and progressive reforms. While the Republican party was opposing the expansion of slavery and evolving as a conservative party. Keeping things as they are. Frequently invoking Christian values, many evangelical Christians see the Republican party as their natural home in American politics. Evangelical Christians, put in effect, the current administration.

“It Just Happens*...” While talking about tribal attributes, I was struck by an example that Dick Keyes shared. I imagined sitting in a church or house of worship and worshipping as is customary for whatever sect I happened to be in, at the moment. Due to one person’s reading of scripture, it causes an uprising of angered parishioners to the point of wanting to kill the reader by throwing Him off a cliff. It makes you wonder what the world is coming to. Even in a sacred setting to honor the God of one’s choice, a tribal effect can sometimes provoke intense reactions, even leading to extreme violence. The sad reality is that this isn’t an anti-church group imposing its tribal beliefs onto a house of worship. But the worshipers as a tribe with tribal values acting out an intent to murder a fellow worshiper.

When I first read about this case in Luke 4, Jesus was the carpenter’s son, and it was understandable that the synagogue would question his claims. And as the story goes, they tried to run Him off a cliff. But, because Jesus makes His way through the crowds, we forget the synagogue/tribe wanted to kill Him. There were so many more alternatives to seek, why Jesus would make such a claim, that were never asked. Dick Keyes made the point that there is a tribal nature to most, if not all, groups. It brings to mind when there was a “tribe” shouting “Kill Mike Pence,” when he was being upright and not submitting to hearsay. At the time, I assumed it was just chanting from a mob. However, just as the synagogue tribal mannerisms were determined to kill a life, I can’t help but think the mob wanted the same for Mike Pence during that time.

“It Just Happens*...” When I thanked Mr. Keyes for sharing his research and his remembering to mention how music is an essential element of the Christian tribe, many agreed that music is central to the ministry; and wonderful support on working on a BGB – Bluegrass Gospel Barn.

“It Just Happens*...” We went to the Framingham Bluegrass festival and watched numerous jam sessions. After watching this particular trio, the lead vocal/guitar player turned to me and said, “Your (my Name)!” After reacquainting and sharing my plans for the BGB – Bluegrass Gospel Barn, he told me what I was thinking ... “This was not a chance meeting. This was meant to be.” He and his partner on the piano are always setting up bluegrass jams.

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~

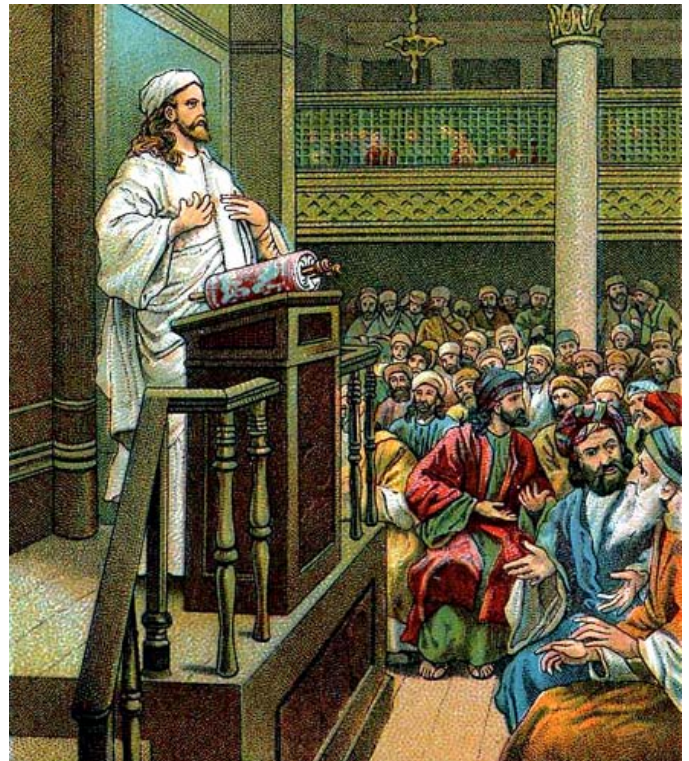
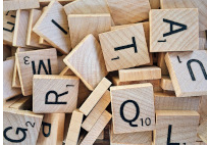


Image by: clipart.christiansunite.com



Game Night — In Fellowship Hall **Friday, March 6 at 7:00 - 9:00 PM** **By Linda Wong**

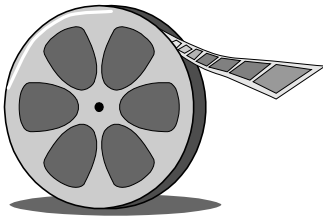


Bring your favorite game(s) and a friend, to enjoy an evening of game playing.

We will have Scrabble, Monopoly, Cribbage, cards, and ping pong available. We might try a new game, like Yahtzee!!

Invite your friends, neighbors, relatives!! Hope you can join us! Bring a snack!

Movie Night **Friday, March 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!



MARCH 2026

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

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 3/1 — Communion Sunday and Second Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM.**
 #2) 3/6 — Game Night, in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
 #3) 3/8 — Third Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
 #4) 3/15 — Communion Sunday and Fourth Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM.**
 #5) 3/22 — Fifth Sunday of Lent. **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
 #6) 3/27 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
 #7) 3/29 — Palm Sunday. **10:27 AM.**
 #8) 3/30 — Articles are due for the April issue of "Vestry Voices" (for assembly/mail-out on March 31).

(††) 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 8th -- please don't forget to "Spring Ahead!"

