



Vestry Voices

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The Role of Prophets in God's Kingdom

the prophets – who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice

Hebrews 11:32b-33a (RSV)



Rev. Gary Kiontke



Abraham was the first man in the Bible to be called a prophet (Genesis 20:1-7). The circumstances that led up to God's proclamation of Abraham's office reflect the truth that even the "father of the faithful" (Romans 4:16) was guilty of telling a half-truth (in other words, he lied in violation of God's ninth word of commandment to Israel though Moses, Exodus 20:16). When Abraham and Sarah sojourned in Gerar, just south of Gaza, he told king Abimelech that Sarah was his sister (she was his half-sister, verse 12). So Abimelech took Sarah to be one of his wives. But, before he did anything with Sarah, God appeared to the king in a dream to tell him the full truth about the marriage and warn the king. When Abimelech explained his side of the story, God acknowledged that the pagan king acted in integrity, but commanded Abimelech to restore Abraham's wife to him because Abraham was a prophet and would pray for Abimelech. As a result, God opened the wombs of Abimelech's wife and maid-servants (verse 18). This story is a good example of the truth that none of God's people are all good; and, even unbelievers have retained some of the image of God in them.

Moving forward about five centuries to Moses, we discover that the Covenant God, Yahweh, told Aaron and Miriam that Moses was more than a prophet (12:1-9). Yahweh tells them that He makes Himself known to a prophet in a vision and speaks to him in a dream (verse 6). In Moses last speech to the Israelites, before Joshua assumed leadership of God's people to take them into the "land of promise," he said that Yahweh, their God, would raise up a Prophet from them like Moses, whom they must listen to in order to obey His words; and, those who will not hear (to do) His words will be called to give an account (suffer consequences, Deuteronomy 18:15-19, NIV). The Gospels and New Testament affirm that Jesus is that Prophet of whom Moses spoke (Matthew 21:11; John 1:21; Acts 7:37-38).

After the death of Joshua, the role of the prophet for the established nation of Israel was made clear in the time of the Judges. When the Israelites did evil by worshipping the "gods" of the people they did not destroy in the land where they were dwelling, Yahweh delivered His people over to the Midianites. When they cried out to Him, Yahweh sent a prophet to them to take them back to what Moses had said in Deuteronomy and to explain to them the specific way they had broken their covenant agreement with their God (Judges 6:1-10). This incident shows why some Old Testament experts call prophets "God's Covenant enforcement officers!" This is an excellent way to understand the role of all prophets from Moses to Jesus.

The last judge of Israel, Samuel, was described by the Spirit of God in this way: As Samuel grew, Yahweh was with him, and none of His words were allowed to fall to the ground; and, all Israel knew Samuel was a prophet (1 Samuel 3:19-20). When Israel demanded a king, Samuel spoke to the people words of warning about how they must live under a human king so they still served the true King – Yahweh (1 Samuel 8:4-14; 10:17-25; 12:1-25).

The book of Chronicles was written to instruct the remnant returning from Babylon to Israel as to how they must live to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. After the death of Jehoiadah, a godly high priest, the people of Judah forsook the God of their fathers to serve the goddess of fortune and idols. They incurred the wrath of God who had sent prophets to them to turn them back to Himself, but they would not listen to obey (2 Chronicles 24:15-19).

In the last chapter of Chronicles we are told that under the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, all the people transgressed after all the abominations of the nations, mocked the messengers of God, misused His prophets until the wrath of Yahweh rose against His people and there was no remedy; and, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple, and slew almost everyone except a small remnant they carried into exile in Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:11-21). (continued on page 2 ...)

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The Role of Prophets in God's Kingdom (... continued from page #1)

Hosea was one of the prophets who had warned God's people. He had urged them to return to Yahweh. Then he relayed these words from Yahweh: I have cut them by My prophets ... but they have transgressed the covenant (Hosea 6:1-7). They did not repent and return to their God. Hosea's contemporary, Amos, gave the people of Israel a word from Yahweh that they would be punished for all their iniquities, violence, and robbery by their kings. The key sentence is that Yahweh God will do nothing unless He reveals His secret to His prophets (Amos 3, especially verse 7). Both Hosea and Amos were acting as "God's Covenant enforcement officers."

In the early fifth century before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Zechariah exhorted the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem to complete the rebuilding of the second Temple. Under the unprecedented circumstance of being given the opportunity to do better than their fathers with a new Temple, Zechariah tells them how to apply the greatest commandment to fully love Yahweh their God. Zechariah also reminds them of the second great commandment to love their neighbor in their own day, one thousand years after Moses gave them a second reading of God's instructions (Zechariah 8). The enforcement role of prophets for the present day is expressed in this word to Zechariah: Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "Take heart, you who today hear these promises uttered by the prophets since the day when the foundations of the Temple of Yahweh Sabaoth were laid, that the sanctuary would indeed be rebuilt" (verse 9, NJB).

We are now ready to look at the statement about prophets and faith from the New Testament book addressed to Hebrews who had become disciples of Jesus in His Church. We are told that through faith, the prophets brought about the righteous justice that God requires. This was dependent on God's people obeying what God spoke through His prophets with the faith they had received from Him by grace. This is

now possible for all God's people through the completed work of Jesus Christ on the Cross and from the Empty Tomb. Whoever will humbly depend on God, as a small child with his or her parents, will be forgiven of sins, receive the Holy Spirit and be reconciled to God as His adopted child. This is the Good News of Jesus.

This summer we will hear a nine-part sermon series from the twenty-two "enactment" prophecies in the Old Testament. These were times when God had His prophets do something to illustrate the message He was communicating to his people. The first two will be given in June (see next article). Four more will be given in July; and the final three in August. I am looking forward to sharing these stories about prophecy from God's Word. ~v~



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Sunday Worship in June

We will have Communion on June 7 and 21.

We will begin our summer preaching series on "enactment" prophecies on June 7. There will be a special sermon for Fathers and Men on June 21. On June 28 we will visit Trinity Congregational Church in Bolton for David Smith's last Sunday as pastor there. (See article on page 4.)

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

Date	Scripture	Theme / Title
June 7	1 Kings 11:29-40; Psalm 133	Ahijah demonstrates nation division with a robe; Unity is good and pleasant
June 14	2 Kings 13:10-25; Psalm 132:11-16	Ask Yahweh for more than we need; Yahweh will do great things through His Messiah from David
June 21 Father's Day	Deuteronomy 11:13-28; Proverbs 22:5-8, 15	Children must be taught God's words and ways; A father disciplines his children so they will not live in folly
June 28	See article (Page 4) on David Smith and Trinity Congregational Church	

It Just Happens*... “Share God’s Love”

by Petros

Work on the Bluegrass Gospel Barn continues to progress and there is a cupola sitting on top of the roof waiting to be shingled. The cupola is large enough for two people to sit and ponder the beauty of the surrounding treetops, Coach-lace Pond, and Mount Wachusett, with a coffee. More significant is the lantern that will come on at dusk as a beacon of Light to the “lost” and “hungry.” I believe there is a lot of talk around town, and everyone who has asked “lights up” when told there will be Bluegrass Gospel played and it will be a place to dance to and praise God. Oh, what a day that will be! When God’s Word is sung through the Bluegrass melodies, God’s Love will be manifested in so many ways. The faithful will share with the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Joy and Peace that unfolds will lead to rethinking of people’s priorities. It only takes a spark to get an all-consuming fire going. Smiles will make more smiles. And so on and so on. Let’s all pray for God’s Will to be done. Pray for each person to realize their Purpose and share in God’s Family.

Pastor Gary had a sermon on sharing God’s love. Defining success included doing God’s work. “We must cooperate with God in the ‘good works’ He wants us to do through us both individually and corporately, as His Church, to be salt and light in a decaying and dark world.” The title was *Combatants and supporters share in God’s victory*. “It Just Happens*...” both my son, Nicholas, and his wife have served in the USAF for most of 20 years. In the midst of uprooting from a tour in Okinawa to relocate to the USA, Cassidy, on the eve before traveling, took the time to express her love and appreciation as a father for her, on my birthday. I just about melted. The love of God though her words pierced my heart and will forever be engraved in my mind. Another example of God’s Love is the recognition Nicholas continuously receives for mentoring his troops. His motivation is to instill a better life than he had growing through the ranks. He was presented many recognitions including the second Medal of Recognition ever to be issued by Japan before leaving Okinawa. It is hard for me to accept the credit he gives me for his success. No doubt he is the son of a father who has felt the love and sacrifice of our loving God. My success is to be able to say God’s love overfilled my cup and those around me are getting splashed by His Love.

Being the faithful servant, Pastor Gary, in the following week presented “...the Holy Spirit (of God) empowers God’s people to do the good works God requires from each disciple of Jesus to fulfill his or her role in His Church.” I admit, early in my walk, I was intrigued by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, often weighing out which of the various gifts I had. When I discovered there was more than one listing it became more daunting. With time, I found following the “small voice” or leading of the Holy Spirit was more practical. Realizing our bodies were temples for the Holy Spirit helped to suspend some bad habits. His Holy Spirit allowed me to imagine the sacrifice and suffering that was made for me. The Holy Spirit or His Presence in me gives me a Hope that allows Joy where the world sees none. My eyes are opened to

the pain and empty goals of this world. The Holy Spirit in me gives me the “heaven on earth” Jesus said he brought to us. It is knowing that God is above all things. He is a God who wants to be “our” God. He loves me. And loves you, maybe even more!

“It Just Happens*...” my daughter, Jessica and I often have “walk and talk” where we share how our day went. She has a saying, “Things always work out for me!” We agreed that if we allow ourselves to follow the nudge or prompting (of the Holy Spirit), we will be at the right place at that moment, i.e. having “heaven on earth” Jesus said he brings to us. While Jessica has a more positive outlook on life, and I’m learning to break some molds I’ve held on to, I must say the number of times “It Just Happens*...” with the building of the barn is becoming quite unreal and almost to the point of expecting when will it happen. May God’s Will be done. Amen.

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 GDJ from Pixabay



Game Night — In Fellowship Hall

Friday, June 5 — 7:00 - 9:00 PM



The next Game Night will be held on the Friday, June 5.

We can play whatever games you wish; and the Ping pong table will be open! Feel free to bring your own games, also.

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



Movie Night

Friday, June 26 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!



David Smith's Last Sermon as Pastor

at Trinity Congregational Church

Sunday, June 28 at 9:30 AM

After more than twenty years of being the pastor at Trinity Congregational Church, my good friend and brother in Christ, David Smith will preach his last sermon and step down as pastor on Sunday, June 28. I have told him that I will support him by attending the last time he leads worship service as pastor of Trinity.

Since the two men who have filled in for me when I take a vacation-Sunday, Dave Lang and Walt Mutti, are elders at Trinity, they cannot cover for me. Therefore, I am suggesting we all worship at Trinity that Sunday. If anyone needs a ride, that can be arranged. I have spoken to our regular attenders about my plans. With this article, I am informing everyone. Many of you already know and appreciate David. I hope the rest of you will take advantage of this last opportunity to hear David.

Please visit Trinity's website for more information, including their livestream links, at: <https://www.trinitybolton.org>

Pastor Gary's Second Vacation Week

of the 2025-26 Church Year

Saturday, June 27 through Friday, July 3

I will be taking the week after David Smith's last Sunday as pastor at Trinity Congregational Church as my second vacation week.





JUNE 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31	1	2	3 (††)	4 (**)	5 Game Night (Note #1)	6
7 Communion Sunday (Note #2)	8	9	10 (††)	11 (**)	12	13
14 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #3)	15	16	17 (††)	18 (**)	19	20
21 Father's Day & Communion Sunday (Note #4)	22 July "Vestry Voices" Articles Due (Note #5)	23	24 (††)	25 (**)	26 Movie Night (Note #6)	27 Pastor Gary's vacation begins (Note #7)
28 NO FCC WORSHIP: Trinity Church, Bolton, MA @ 9:30 AM (Note #8)	29	30	1	2	3 Last day of Pastor Gary's vacation (Note #9)	4

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 6/5 — Game Night, in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
 - #2) 6/7 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
 - #3) 6/14 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
 - #4) 6/21 — Father's Day and Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
 - #5) 6/22 — Articles are due for the July issue of "Vestry Voices" (for assembly/mail-out on June 23).
 - #6) 6/26 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
 - #7) 6/27 — Pastor Gary's vacation begins.
 - #8) 6/28 — **NO FCC WORSHIP. INSTEAD:** Attend David Smith's last Sunday as Pastor, Trinity Church, Bolton, MA: **9:30 AM.**
 - #9) 7/3 — Last day of Pastor Gary's vacation.
- (††) Wednesday Bible Study ("Job"): **11:00 AM** (in FCC Parlor)
 (**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).

