

EARL PALMER MINISTRIES

serving to encourage and build up faith in Christ

Spring 2020

All Earl Palmer Ministries in person events have been postponed until further notice. See www.earlpalmer.org

I've Been Thinking . . . about a recent conversation I had with a friend who is working on the front lines caring for patients during the coronavirus pandemic. A question at the heart of our discussion came to me: "What is a helpful perspective for a Christian coping today with the global crisis that threatens our lives as we know it?" This is a question relevant to all of us. Where do we start? Here are some of the beliefs that ground me.

God created. I look to the beginning when God spoke. Prior to the speech, there is a Holy Consciousness in which God, the Father, thought. By His decision creation happened and there was meaning. On the sixth day in the saga of creation He created all living creatures. He created human beings in his own image. He created man/woman. He assured the created order of its worth. And He called it "good" (Genesis 1:26-31).

This account makes clear that He went further and gave man/woman dominion over all living creatures (Genesis 1:27-31). Each living creature was given a name: "Whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (Genesis 2:19). In this epic story, God grants authority with the words, "Let them have dominion." The sixth day ends with the mandate to be stewards of the created order. The mystery beyond the sixth day with its beginning and ending is in God's hands.

Noteworthy is that the right to name the living creatures serves as the beginning of science—to figure out how life works. The practice of science both intellectually and practically establishes a systematic way of understanding the natural and physical world through observation and searching for answers. Science can name the virus. To name something contains an aspect of control. Truth is aligned with the concept of stewardship to care for the created order. Science helps us to live in the sixth day.

We are grateful for the truth of science, especially in this time of a global crisis. Scientists worldwide are working day and night along with medical clinicians and teams of caregivers, ambulance drivers, and citizens at large to help each other, seeking to make healing happen for those in need, whoever they are, whatever their country of origin, their religion, their age, their race, or political history. The call for the stewardship of creation is not a solitary nor singular assignment. The import of more than one working together to carry out the purpose of science is recognized. Caring translates into knowing how to steward time and resources so as to live fully in the sixth day that we have here and now.

The motivation to care has its origin in God's act in creation and in sending His son to live out that love concretely in our midst. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him . . . He was in the world, and the world was made through him . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-4,14). These words further enrich caring to make it meaningful and enduring. I rest in knowing that I am loved and in knowing that I will do my best to do all I can do is guided by the compassion that is imprinted upon me in the call to care. We are accountable to care for each other. This extends to caring for the caregivers and attending to their needs as well as to the patients under their watch.

Clinicians especially have been called to posts of responsibility and to bring compassion and serve the sick while recognizing that the Lord cares for each and every patient before them. The value of a human life is paramount/the overriding principle. Through creation God has bestowed worth. Accepting the belief that each and every person is beloved greatly helps a person to have compassion and to care for another who is also beloved. Likewise clinicians bear a special burden to be mindful of the commitment to truth and to steward the essentials for caring in the press of overwhelming demand. Yet, we all realize that human efforts do not always succeed. And so, we encourage clinicians to have faith and to know that earthly tragedy is not the last word. The last word belongs to God.

The work of man/woman is penultimate yet of vital significance. Within the sixth day, in the face of danger, we work to protect against potential harm. However, there are limitations. We do not live on Earth forever. Here, too, there is a mystery. The gift of Christ brings us into the seventh day. Because of Christ's victory over death itself, the confirmation of his love for us goes beyond every boundary. The seventh day of fulfillment belongs to God. He is ultimate. God gives us the promise of eternal life that goes beyond the sixth day. For those who struggle and for those who tumble, the story is not over—not for any of us. Acts of compassion in caring and stewardship of science extend beyond the present and endure beyond the years of our current physical life. Every gift of caring and practice of truth is in favor of God's decision on our behalf.

God sees us in our distress. We are guided with a model of compassion as found in the parable of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10). Jesus tells about a Samaritan traveler who saw a man who was badly beaten, lying half dead on the edge of the road. The Samaritan felt compassion for the wounded man and offered help. He did what he could—gave first aid, took him on his donkey to an inn and told the innkeeper to care for him and that he would return to pay. With these seemingly small acts he saved the man's life. The only qualification for care was that the man needed emergency help. Jesus himself demonstrated instances of such help throughout his ministry. God hears when we are perplexed and trying to figure out what is happening. I find comfort in knowing that He finds us.

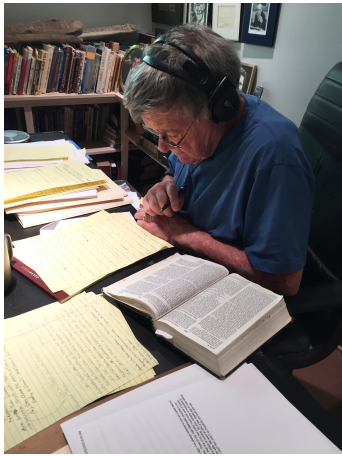
I submit these foundational beliefs for all of us. As under shepherds may our prayers go out to those stricken with the virus. And to those whose lives are in jeopardy. We pray especially for the care and protection of the doctors, nurses, and those attending the people who are ill. We ask for wisdom for those doing research and for leadership for those who guide us in prevention, testing, tracking, and treating strategies. We search for answers on how best to restore the economy. We remember especially those who are at the edge of coping as their livelihood is dismantled and means for sustenance are diminished. I encourage all of us to have faith and to know that earthly tragedy is not the last word. And always to remember—we are not alone in this valley.

Earl F. Palmer

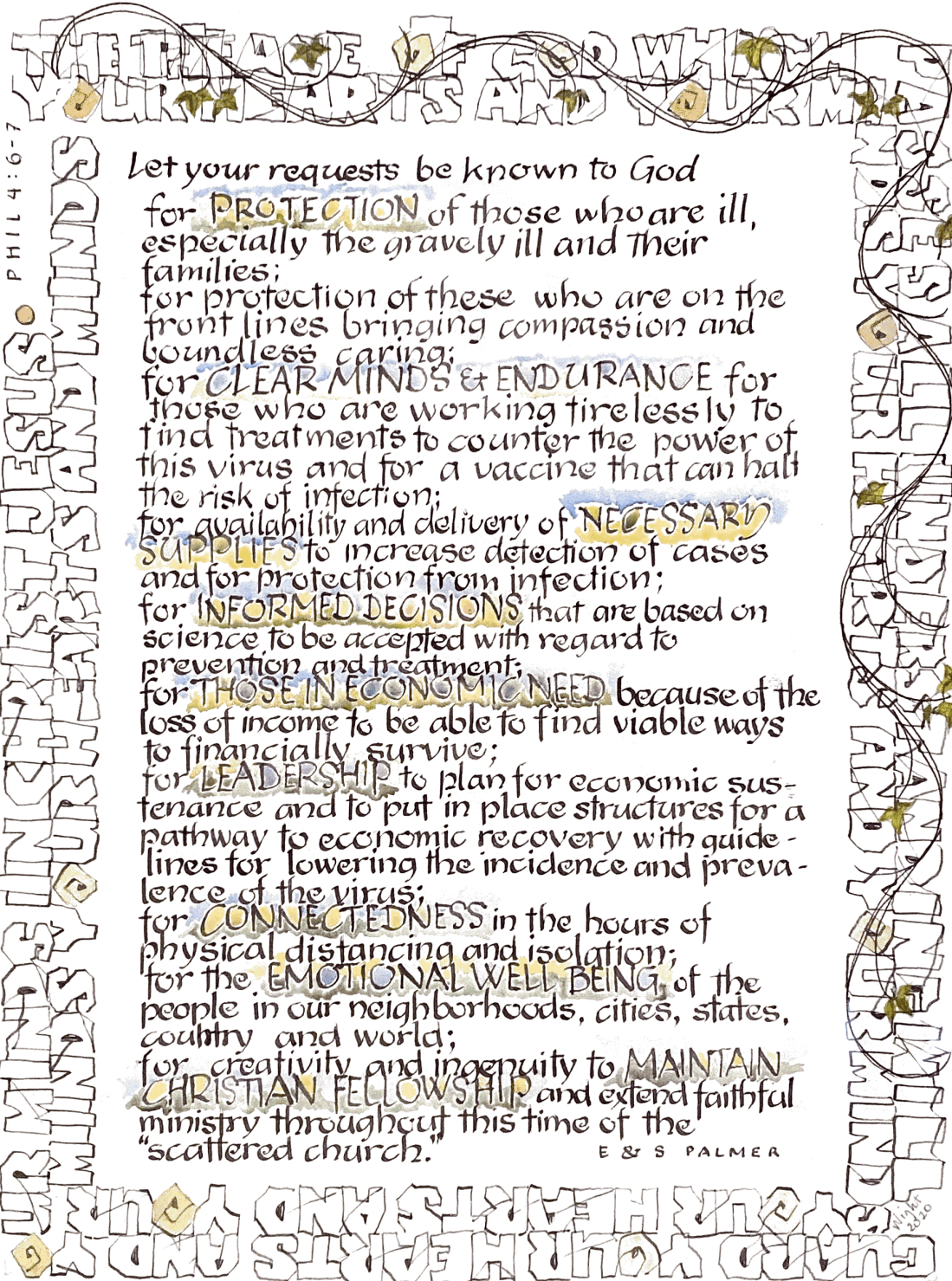
Working Together During the Lockdown . . .

I've joked a few times that I think Earl chose to write about Ephesians at this time because he is identifying with Paul's imprisonment while we are all in lock down. However, I did ask him why he thought that this commentary was so important for him to write. He gave me three reasons: (1) Ephesus was the place where Paul spent the most time, and we know the people there loved him. (2) I see Ephesians as a major follow-up book by Paul to his brilliant book of Romans, which he wrote first. Romans answers the question: "What is the Gospel?" It's about salvation! (3) Ephesians answers the follow-up questions: How do the people of the gospel live in the world of their time? This is teaching, how to live out the Gospel and growing in grace, along with specific and practical advice on discipleship.

Earl and I both agree that our favorite part of Ephesians, and of the commentary, is the musical nature of St. Paul's prayer in chapter three. Along with this, the practical advice is so earthy and useful. I feel very fortunate to have been a part of this writing process, and I've learned so much about how theological thoughts can be shared in a constructive and expositional way that can inspire others. I sure am inspired!
 —Tate Busby, EPM Ministry Associate



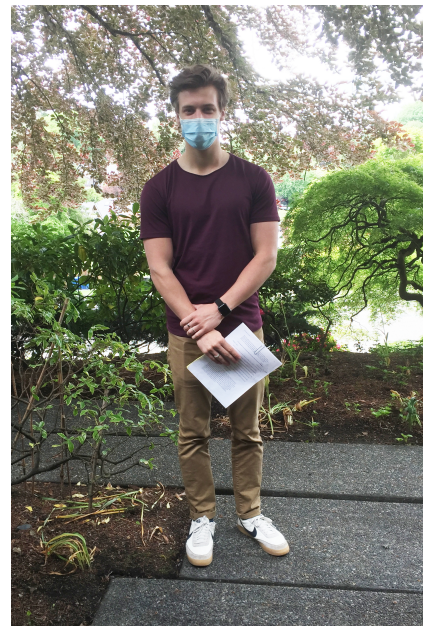
The study of the Bible is ongoing. Unaware that Shirley was taking this photo, Earl listens to "Songs through the Night" (2001) a CD from UPC's cathedral choir in Seattle where he served for a total of 25 years. The music helps him think while he studies and writes on his project, A Commentary on the Book of Ephesians, his focus every day during social distancing.



This beautiful artwork arrived in the mail!

The calligraphy at left was done by a longtime member of the First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley where Earl served for nearly 22 years. The inscription is from Philippians 4:6-8 and is taken from a message titled "Join with us..." which Earl sent out at the end of April to the EPM email list. This gift of art is now framed and stands to remind us to join in prayer and remember the needs of those in our surround at this time of the pandemic.

Thank you Mary Ann Wight!



HERE I AM! Tate Busby in front of the Palmer's house discussing with Earl the next draft of the manuscript of the Ephesians Commentary. All taking place with a six-foot physical distance!

Let us hear from Saint Paul today...

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence but through love become servants to one another. For the whole law is summoned up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5: 13,14).

So, let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity let us work for the good of all (Galatians 6:9, 10).

May these words to the Galatians us guide us as we look to Jesus who leads us to higher ground.

- We pray for protection of those who exercise their freedom and who stand for what is right in the face of injustice in our country as evidenced with the recent tragedy in the death of George Floyd.
- We ask for the halt of harm and hate manifest by those who have misused their freedom and come with bricks to destroy.
- We seek restraint among those in power who choose for self-gain to use unwarranted force against the innocent.
- We ask for help so as not to grow weary and for strength to stand together at that place where brokenness and hatred can be disarmed through love for our neighbor and love for ourselves that allows us to serve each other.

May the Lord guide us as individuals, as a city, as a state and as a nation to work for the good of all and may there be protection and hope for all those in peril and those who grieve alongside.

Love in Christ,

Earl w/Shirley on the side

IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS IN OUR COUNTRY, WE ADD THESE THOUGHTS AND REQUESTS FOR PRAYER.

On the Road with Earl!

The last trip Earl and I were able to go on before the stay at home order was to Spokane, WA in early March to attend an evening event to honor George Nethercutt, former congressman from the State of Washington. Along the way, we stopped to eat our lunch and finished up with the apples Shirley had packed for our problem-solving decision to drive versus exposure via air travel. The event was a surprise for George and filled with friends and supporters who brought love to both George and Marybeth. We had a great time talking about anything and everything for our 10 hours in the car. Hoping to go on another adventure soon once we are out of the woods!
—Tate



The Theological Commons Features

The Earl Palmer Collection at Princeton Theological Seminary

This expanded collection now contains more than 3,500 audio and video recordings and selected writings representing 64+ years of Rev. Earl Palmer's ministry. The vision began in 2005 when PTS decided to collect materials from Earl's life and work and create an archive in the temperature controlled room in the seminary library. In 2018 the decision was made to give the materials an official name, The Earl Palmer Collection at Princeton Theological Seminary, and extend it into the digital format that is now stored in the state-of-the-art Cloud servers.

Greg Murray, Director of Digital Initiatives, was key in the success of this effort. He took responsibility for receiving digital materials from both the archive and from Earl Palmer Ministries and format them for inclusion in the Theological Commons database and as a web interface. The collection was set up, thereby increasing usage of the material. In answer to the question, "Have you any comment to add concerning Earl's legacy through the digital collection?" Greg replied:

Earl's work is different from most of the other materials in the database. I feel that his content adds a dimension to the overall Theological Commons from a pastoral perspective. The collection is unique in that it lends itself to a general audience along with an academic one. His personal papers set everything apart from the vast majority of books and academic works. We now have the online audio player and video that allows you to listen or watch immediately!

Visit The Earl Palmer Collection at commons.ptsem.edu/palmer



Interns at home with Shirley and Earl

The final event before the shutdown was Earl's last Bible Study with the UMIN Interns. As is its tradition, the event ended with a brunch at Earl and Shirley's home. Pictured left to right: Hannah Volsky, Earl, Trevor Joireman, Shirley, Bryan McNair, Junelle Mariñas, Taylor Johnson, and Allen Turner. Here is some feedback from one of the attendees:

It's important to take time to sit in God's word with college students so they can gain a deeper, holistic understanding of who God is. When we only read about God through a single verse in a daily devotional, we miss out on the depth and richness that comes from diving into a specific book of the Bible, and all that God wants to say through that.
— Taylor Johnson



The Earl Palmer Award at Princeton Theological Seminary honors the ministry of Earl, 1956 graduate, shown with his uncle and father.

See article below.

UPDATE! THE EARL F. PALMER AWARD FOR THE JOY OF EXCELLENCE IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AND TEACHING

It is with gratitude that we announce we have reached a goal for the endowment at Princeton Theological Seminary to establish an award for excellence in the joy of preaching and teaching through exposition of the Bible in honor of Earl F. Palmer, expositor. The endowment reached its financial milestone in the early campaign, from the outset, in late November until the end of February, and will be able to present the award to one student who will be selected in late spring 2021 for use during his or her senior year at the seminary. For us, this was an astounding response in just over three months. In fact, the funds slightly exceeded the amount of the necessary \$125,000 required for the \$5,000 award and will be held in reserve toward a second award as initially planned for the two-year campaign. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided to halt the campaign until further notice in respect for the health and economic challenges facing the population at this time. When it is deemed appropriate and considered practical to continue in the drive for a second award, we hope to proceed and seek funds to complete the account for the second award.

At this time permit us to review the essential details surrounding the endowment. First, what is meant by the term "exposition"? To use Earl's words, "Exposition is a teaching/preaching form that enables a text in the Old and/or New Testament to make its own point here and now, and in turn, positions the content of the text within the whole biblical and theological witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Exposition of the biblical text is a way to make a theological and discipleship truth relevant and allows people to discover it for themselves. The goal is to help a person be able to say, "Aha! I see the truth for myself in the portrayal of the life of Jesus." Such an approach is basic to Christian ministry and central to Earl's sixty-four plus years as a pastor." This award is to encourage others to experience the JOY.

As explained earlier, the process for selecting the awardee is in the hands of PTS faculty who will nominate students who demonstrate excellence in expository preaching and teaching and who are in training for ministry. The endowment represents contributions to the seminary for the purpose of investment at a four percent draw that can increase in principal and support the awards in perpetuity. As the principal grows, additional awards will be given. Funds are to be distributed directly to students by the seminary. Contributions are acknowledged as charitable gifts by the seminary, which is responsible for maintaining records and reporting regularly to Earl/Earl Palmer Ministries. All contributions are also acknowledged personally by Earl with appreciation.

Chairman of Earl Palmer Ministries,

Tony Whately

If you have a file for giving in the future, here are details: All contributions are to go directly to Princeton Theological Seminary with notation, "Palmer Award for Expository Preaching and Teaching." For online contributions, see Ways to Give page at ptsem.edu/ways-to-give. Mail checks to Princeton Theological Seminary: Dept. of Advancement, P.O. Box 821, 64 Mercer St., Princeton, NJ 08542.

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1 Thessalonians 5:11

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EPM's mission statement comes from 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Serving to encourage and build up in Christian faith." These words from the Apostle Paul inspire our ministry of teaching, writing, and mentoring. First, we seek to mentor young theologians through our internship program and theological dialogues. Live podcasts through the Kindlings Muse offer regular teaching and conversation for all ages to consider major Christian themes. Word and Worship provides a setting for expositional teaching of the Bible and inspirational music. EPM's wider ministry focuses on encouraging pastors and giving a case for expositional worship.

If you have any questions regarding Earl Palmer Ministries and its events, or to schedule an event, visit us at www.earlpalmer.org, email us at info@earlpalmer.org, or call (206) 524-3250.

If you know of others who would like to receive this newsletter, or if you would prefer not to receive this mailing, email Tate at info@earlpalmer.org.

Your support makes this ministry happen. As we continue in this 12th year of ministry, we invite you to share in this outreach again with your prayers and your financial investment. To make a tax deductible contribution, please send a check made out to Earl Palmer Ministries, PO Box 85117, Seattle, WA 98145; electronically via PayPal; or by credit card at www.earlpalmer.org.

On behalf of the EPM team, I thank you.

— Earl F. Palmer