

the tapestry



A WORSHIPING COMMUNITY OF GRACE

Faith Church, a Reformed Presbyterian congregation, is a member of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a denomination faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed Faith, and obedient to the Great Commission.

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

BY JOHN ARMSTRONG JR.

As we come into the new month of September, we are looking at a whole new School year, we are kicking off our new Sunday school classes, and the ministry year is really starting afresh. Your Committee on Discipleship Ministry (CDM) in conjunction with the Session is seeking to get us focused on our worship and coming to a deeper understanding of what we are doing in worship. There is no more important thing that we do than to join together in corporate worship. We want to instill a love of God in our children that is expressed in our worship. We will not be changing the worship service itself, but you will notice some minor additions when we get to the New Year in January. These will be added primarily to help our children stay oriented during the worship service. Now, we will travel back into newsletter history and take a look at an article I wrote for our newsletter (which was called, 'The Beacon' back then) as we focused on our order of worship. Things have changed since then; we no longer do announcements at the beginning of the service, but that doesn't make what I said then any less important now.

Pastor's Pondering – July 2008

There is an old pastor joke that tells of a pastor that preached a sermon one Sunday and then preached the same sermon the next Sunday. The people in the congregation spoke amongst themselves

and figured that he was very busy and just ended up preaching the same thing twice. The next Sunday the pastor again preached the same sermon. This time on the way out of the church one of the elders mentioned to the pastor that he had preached the same sermon three times in a row. The pastor calmly responded, "When the congregation learns the lesson from that sermon then I'll preach something else." Every pastor gets that joke, unfortunately not everybody in the congregation gets it. I am reminded of that joke whenever I have put forth clear teaching and yet things do not change.

There is much talk of change these days. Many cry out for change in our nation. The scope of those changes spans the spectrum of our society. However, the changes I am speaking of in the church are changes in people. The Christian life is about change. The Holy Spirit's mission is to take sinful believers and change them to make them more and more like the Lord Jesus. That means change for you and me. Sometimes I don't want to change, but God's will for me is change. We call that sanctification. As we grow in sanctification, we grow in our relationship with the Lord, and we become better worshippers.

I say all that to get to my subject for this edition of The Beacon. Last time I wrote about the first part of our worship service, namely the prelude. Pay attention during the next prelude and see how we are changing (growing) in our worship as a congregation. Remember the prelude is a time to prepare our hearts, not a time to chat and catch up. The next thing after the prelude is the "Welcome and Announcements". Many people would ask

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Pastor's Ponderings | 1 |
| by Pastor John Armstrong | |
| How We God the Bible | 2 |
| by Bruce Brierly | |
| Historic Missionaries | 3 |
| Persecuted Church | 3 |
| Intern's Insights | 4 |
| by Quentin Johnston | |
| Charlie's Favorite Books | 5 |
| Early Church Fathers | 5 |
| Faith Family Page | 6 |

What do announcements have to do with worship? Well, we will seek to answer that right now.

We will start with the welcome. If you pay attention, you will notice that we always begin the welcome with a word from Scripture. This way the first thing you hear from the pulpit is the word of God. The welcome is important because we want it to do two things. First, we want the gathered congregation to recognize that we are not just a collection of individuals that will be going through the motions of the service all at the same time. We want the congregation to recognize that indeed they are to worship God as the gathered body of Christ. This is something we do together in unity. Secondly, there is an outreach aspect

to the welcome. We want visitors to our worship to feel welcome and to invite them to be part of the gathered body of worshippers with us. We also want them to take the time to fill out a visitor card so we can follow-up with them.

If you have ever been to summer camp you probably are familiar with some version of an announcement song sung to the tune of "the farmer in the dell" that goes something like this: "Announcements, announcements, announcements, a terrible way to die, a terrible thing to be talked to death, a terrible way to die" I will spare you the

rest. Announcements are kind of universally understood as the time when you can tune out. So, we are left with a question. How can the mundane announcements of what is going on in the life of the church be a significant part of worship? Well, think about that question. It answers itself. What is more important than the life of the church? Therefore, announcements are important because they tell us what is going on so that we can participate in the body of Christ of which we are a part. Corporate worship on Sunday cannot give you all you need to be a growing, productive member of Christ's body. You need more than that and you

find out about growth opportunities beyond the Sunday worship service, in that service, during the announcements.

So, what am I asking you to do with all of this? I am asking you to be in the sanctuary for the prelude and focus during that time on preparing your heart for worship. Then pay attention as we go through the welcome and announcements so you can know what is going on in the life of our church. Then you will be participating and better equipped to participate as we grow together in Christ.

How We Got the Bible

by Bruce Brierly

Up until now I have briefly reviewed how we got the books of the Old Testament. I have only touched the tree-tops as time and space do not permit a deeper discussion. Before I go to the New Testament I want to discuss the Apocrypha. Why don't Protestant churches consider the books of the Apocrypha to be part of the canon of Scripture?

I can only touch the tree-tops, and there are a lot of trees to touch! The books that make up the Old Testament Apocrypha are what we call the Deuterocanon, meaning the second canon. These include the books of Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus), 1 & 2 Maccabees, and Wisdom. Different Orthodox churches have a slightly longer list. OK, so what about these books?

The Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek in the second century before Christ. This is what is now known as the Septuagint, which includes the Deuterocanonical books. The earliest known fragments of these Deuterocanonical books are from the third century, BC. Although some claim that they were from an earlier time frame and lost until the third century BC, the evidence suggests they were written in the intertestamental period. That doesn't mean earlier fragments won't someday surface, but it does throw doubt on the claim of being from an earlier period. The Deuterocanonical books are helpful to understand Jewish history and thinking in the intertestamental period.

The Dead Sea scrolls contained the Zadokite Document and commentaries. The men of Qumran (100 BC to 68 AD) treated the "22" books of the Old Testament as authoritative (they divided them up differently, making a list of 22 books, but the list is the same as our 39 Old Testament books). Apocryphal books were mentioned, but not with some of the key words and phrases used when referring to sacred texts, such as 'It is written.'

Part 8



[Harris, R. Laird. "Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scriptures", Greenville, SC, 1995., pages 140 - 142].

Complete OT scrolls used in the temple were given by General Titus (the Roman general in charge when Jerusalem was destroyed) to the historian Josephus as a gift (roughly AD 79). Josephus wrote, "For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them, five belong to Moses, which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind until his death. This interval of time is little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. [Flavius Josephus, Against Apion, book 1, paragraph 8.]" Many sources believe that Xerxes and Ahasuerus were the same person, where one was his Greek name. Therefore the Jews believed the book of Esther to be authoritative and written by a prophet.

Various rabbis had their own lists of canonical books, but as far as the official books used in the temple, the books of the Deuterocanon were not considered to be of the same calibre as the 39/22. In other words, they were helpful and useful, but not authoritative. If only some of the early church fathers had been so clear in their word choices. Lord willing, I will discuss that next month.

Historic Missionaries You Should Know

brother andrew (1928-2022)

Andy van der Bijl was born in a small Dutch village in the late 1920s. He was always looking for thrill and adventure, so when he was 18 he joined the Dutch Army. He lived recklessly during his time in the military, with little thought of God or the future. But when he was shot in the ankle at age 20, which sent him to the hospital for awhile and ended his military career, the love and joy of the Sisters who cared for the injured—as well as his sense of guilt over the things he did while in the military—led him to pick up the Bible. He came home an empty, broken young man, but with a thirst to know God. One night he finally prayed, “Lord, if You will show me the way, I will follow You. Amen.” From that day, God led him on a new kind of adventure, bringing Bibles and much-needed spiritual encouragement behind the Iron Curtain, and later to countries in the Middle East.

You can read about Brother Andrew’s conversion and his journeys in his book God’s Smuggler.

kindredgrace.com/missionary-heroes-stories

PERSECUTED BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN Eritrea

Overview:

Located on the Red Sea, Eritrea is governed by a totalitarian regime that seeks to control every aspect of life. Some have compared Eritrea to the “hermit kingdom” of North Korea, as it is one of the most secretive and isolated countries in the world. In 2002, the government outlawed every form of religion except Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism and the Lutheran Church. All other religious groups are illegal, and the government maintains tight control of approved churches, including their messages. Despite hardships, the body of Christ in Eritrea continues to grow due to the faithfulness of church leaders inside and outside the country.

Major Religion:

The population is nearly evenly divided between Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians. About 3 percent hold evangelical Christian beliefs, which the government deems illegal.

Persecutor:

The authoritarian government harasses, arrests and imprisons Christians.

What It Means To Follow Christ In Eritrea

Evangelical churches must meet secretly. The government actively seeks to infiltrate these underground churches and imprison their leaders. More than 200 believers are known to remain in prison, including several top leaders. Imprisoned Christians are not given a trial or allowed to see their families, many of whom do not know where their loved ones are imprisoned or even if they are still alive. Christians simply disappear and are assumed to be in government prisons. The conditions inside these “prisons” are some of the harshest in the world. Christian prisoners are provided meager rations and held in shipping containers in extreme desert conditions for years. When long-term prisoners are released, they are blacklisted by the government. They are unable to get jobs, they are watched constantly, and their families lose opportunities. They still need extended physical and emotional help.

Access To Bibles:

Bibles are available, but the government tracks each Bible sold. Christian literature is highly regulated, and most believers who want Bibles must smuggle them in. For this reason, many believers must access Scripture by digital means.



<https://www.persecution.com/globalprayerguide>

INTERN'S INSIGHTS

BY QUENTIN JOHNSTON

Christ, Our Hope in Life and Death

*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
(Colossians 3:3-4)*

There is no greater comfort to the Christian than this truth—that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and on the third day was raised in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4). But why? What does this mean for our present suffering? Why should we have hope when we observe everything under the sun, like Qohelet in Ecclesiastes, and see this great evil—that there is no advantage of man over the beast, for they all die the same. Or consider Job, an innocent sufferer who never received a direct answer for the reason of his suffering.

But we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He canceled all debts that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:14). Sin has been put to death because Christ has been put to death. You are made alive because Christ is alive! You are now united in Christ.

How amazing the implications of this blessed union in Christ. Here in Colossians 3, we first see...you have died. A phrase that stops you in your tracks. It is no longer you who live (Gal. 2:20a), and the old has passed away (2 Cor. 5:17a). But now you have life! Christ lives in you (Gal. 2:20b), the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).

And even more, it says your life is hidden with Christ in God. The word “hidden” comes from the Greek word *kryptōs*, which has connotations of “storing away treasures” (cf. Psalms 30:20, Psalm 2:1). This verse has remarkable, eschatological implications.

Paul often speaks about how God delivered us from the present age to a future age (Gal. 1:3, Phil. 3:20).

Our citizenship is in heaven. This is not a “then” reality. This is a “now” reality. This treasure has been stored away—concealed and protected—until the day Christ returns.

This is what Paul means when he says, “we have this treasure in jars of clay” (2 Cor. 4:7). The treasure is the glory of the gospel hidden in our frail, earthly bodies (jars of clay). As followers of Christ, we will be afflicted in every way. Just as Christ subjected Himself to the sufferings of the world, now we will continue to suffer in this world but for Christ in our union with Him—“carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies” (2 Cor. 4:10). This is why Paul can say paradoxical things such as “death is at work in us, but life in you” (2 Cor. 4:12). “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

So suffer well knowing the power of His resurrection. Live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age (Titus 2:12), knowing that you do not belong to this world but the world to come. Ephesians 1 quite poignantly lays out the purposes of God’s will, established before the beginning of time. It’s all for His glory (v. 6, 12, 14). All the purposes of God are ultimately for His glory, but through our union with Christ, we have complete confidence that His glory is for our good. This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:17).

Charlie Van Meter, What are the ten best books or authors you've ever read?

#2 A.W. Pink

Arthur Walkington Pink was born April 1, 1886 in Nottingham, England and died July 15, 1952 in Stornoway Scotland. Pink was in a theosophy cult at first but when he became a Christian he proceeded to spark a renewed interest in Calvinism (Reformed Theology) with his many writings. He became one of the most influential evangelical authors, known more after his death than during his lifetime. He held a variety of pastorates and teaching positions but his strong views and personality led him to his decision to devote himself to writing, which he did the last 14 years of his life in Scotland, where he kept a strict schedule of study and writing. He married Vera Russel from Bowling Green, Kentucky in 1926 and she devoted herself to his ministry and care. She died in 1962.

Pink's books were very influential to me, especially "The Sovereignty of God," "The Attributes of God," and his commentary on Hebrews. All of his "Gleanings" series is well worth the effort to work through. For people of the Reformed tradition, he provides one excellent resource for Bible Study: "Sovereignty of God" which I think is a must read. "Attributes of God" is a very easy read yet profound in its clarity, leaving you with a new appreciation of the God who watches over us. Commentary on Hebrews is scary when you look at it but it flows easily. Each chapter is an exposition of a small number of verses you may have thought you understood until you read Pink's thoughts on them. Have a cup of coffee and take your time.



Early Church FATHERS

JUSTIN MARTYR (81 - 165)

Justin was born in Neapolis, the ancient Shechem. He became a convert from paganism, having seen much persecution of Christians. He searched for truth in a variety of philosophical schools, seeing the Gospel as the truest and most perfect philosophy. He was finally led to the Lord by an old man. He continued to visit the philosophical schools now sharing his faith. He taught in Ephesus and Rome, become a famous Christian apologist, defending the Christian faith. He also effectively battled against gnosticism. He was martyred in Rome and awarded the name "Martyr".

This is Justin Martyr's description of early Christian worship: "On Sunday a meeting is held of all who live in the cities and villages, and a section is read from the Memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the prophets, as long as time permits. When the reading is finished, the president, in a discourse, gives the admonition and exhortation to imitate these noble things. After this we all arise and offer a common prayer. At the close of the prayer, bread and wine and thanks for them according to his ability, and the congregation answers "Amen". Then the consecrated elements are distributed to each one and partaken of, and are carried by the deacons to the houses of the absent. The wealthy and the willing then give contributions according to their freewill, and this collection is deposited with the president, who supplies orphans, widows, prisoners, strangers and all who are in want."

His books include:

First apology: To Emperor Antoninus Pius against claims that Christians were atheistic and immoral.

Second apology: A protest to Emperor Marcus Aurelius against the injustice of Christians being executed.

Dialogue with Trypho: A debate with Trypho, a cultured Jew, who said that Christians broke the Jewish law and worshipped a man.

www.julianspriggs.co.uk/Pages/ChurchFathers





MATTHEW
28:19-20

GO therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

PRAYER FOR US

Father God,

Confession is hard. None of us likes to be reminded that we're wrong, or we're weak, or that we've caused pain. We may freely admit we're 'sinners,' but when it comes down to naming our specific moments of error, we don't want to hear it. We prefer to lean on Your good graces and recall Your death as payment for 'our sins,' that mysterious and undefined cloud of something or other, rather than shoulder up under the very real harmful words and actions we have chosen. It is its own sin of avoidance.

And for all that we try to evade it, confession is one of the most profoundly necessary ingredients in our growth. By naming our sin, we are defining our neediness, and we are declaring You to be much larger, and unthinkably more holy than we are. Saying it makes it real and ugly in the presence of Your glory and it puts us back where we belong in a position of trusting submission. The clarity of confession opens the door to real, life-changing repentance and the relief of being LOVED through forgiveness. In our hearts, we then treasure Your sacrifice more dearly and worship You with a kind of genuine gratitude we didn't know before. There is so much beauty in it. Thank You for requiring of us this hard, beautiful thing. Amen.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY September

- 1 Kathy Wagner
- 1 Arliss Veldhuizen
- 5 Gillian Howe
- 6 Ed Hale
- 8 Ezra Newman
- 16 Sue Guynn
- 17 Adelaide Wilson
- 20 Janet Seabolt
- 20 Jade Messinger
- 22 Calla Cooper
- 24 Griffin Paugh
- 28 John Nicodemus
- 29 Cheryl McAdams

Your paragraph text

Pastor's Sabbatical

Please be in prayer for Pastor John and Cyndy as they take a much-deserved three month sabbatical from Sept. 11-Dec. 11 in Texas with their children and grandchildren. Pray that the Lord will grant them true rest and revival, time fully away from the work of the church, and spiritual renewal in body mind, soul, and spirit. Pray for the elders as they handle more than their usual load, and pray for those coming to preach. The Lord has richly blessed us with capable leaders so that John and Cyndy can truly rest. Praise the Lord!



WEEKLY

Sundays:

- 9:15am Sunday School
- 10:15am Fellowship
- 10:45am Worship
- 5:00pm Evening Worship (1st Sundays only)
- 5:00pm Youth Group (All other Sundays.)

Mondays:

- 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal

Every Other Tuesday: (2nd, 16, 30)

- 12:00pm Men's Bible Study

Wednesdays:

- 12:00pm Men's Lunch Bunch
- 7:00pm Prayer meeting

Thursdays:

- 7:00pm ESL Ministry

Fridays:

- 10:30am Fiber Fellowship

Saturdays:

- 10:30am Downtown Christian Fellowship

MONTHLY

Third Saturdays, (16th)

- 8:30am Men's Breakfast
- 8:45am Women's Bible Study **

Third Sundays,

- 12:00pm Fellowship Meal

Faith Church

Sunday School for All Ages 9:15am
Worship Service 10:45am
Evening Worship, 1st Sundays 5pm

8158 Yellow Springs Road,
PO Box 8158 Frederick, MD 21702

faithchurch@faithreformed.org
<http://www.faithreformed.org>
301-662-0662