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tapestry



A WORSHIPPING 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.

I hope you have been reading the Pastor's Ponderings from the last several months as we have been working through the elements of worship and why we have what we have in our worship service. These are articles I wrote a long time ago, but I have found them informative and in fact I have been reminded of things I had forgotten even as I reread this months article. I hope you find it instructive.

September 2009

Well by now you should be anticipating what the next topic for my "pastor's ponderings" will be, if you have not figured it out yet, I'm going in order through our order of worship and commenting on each of the things we do in worship. For this Beacon I'm going to discuss the Scripture reading that comes immediately following the assurance of pardon. Why do we read Scripture in the worship service other than what is going to be preached? That is an excellent question that I have been asked before and I'm going to do my best to answer it in the following few paragraphs. There are those who would argue that reading a whole chapter of Scripture that stands alone without comment or exposition is tedious and unfruitful. Yet I disagree, because the word of God says of itself in Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." This word of God is, in-and-of-itself, powerful as it is applied to our hearing by the Holy Spirit. That is summed up nicely in the Westminster Larger Catechism, question 155: How is the word made effectual to salvation? Answer: The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

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"For the word of God is living and active."

Hebrews 4:12

Now, I realize you may be saying, “wait a minute, that is talking about the word read and especially the word preached. We are talking about the word read only.” Yes that is true, I’m speaking of the word read only, however, let me point out to you the fact that I do not have the luxury of time to preach long sections of Scripture as I would like. I only preach to the congregation one time a week and I do my best to bring you sound biblical exposition of the book that we are going through. It took us almost two years to get through Acts. It has been a year since I began preaching through John and we are just now on chapter 8. Frankly, I don’t think that is enough exposure to the Scripture in the worship service. It may surprise you to know that in the past three years we have read through the book of 1 Samuel, all of the Pauline Epistles (13), Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter. Before long we’ll have been through all the books of the New Testament with the exception of the Gospels and Revelation. That is a significant chunk of Scripture. It is good for you to be exposed to it. Why? One, it builds your ability to listen and focus. Two, to a lesser degree than preaching but still in a very powerful way, it does all the things spoken of in the catechism question above. Take some time to reread that question and answer. In the Directory for Worship which our church has adopted as part of our Book of Church Order, the public reading of Scripture is described as follows: “through it God speaks most directly to the congregation, even more directly than through the sermon.” Wow, that is a strong statement. If that is true, then of course as a pastor, I want you to get good doses of the public reading of Scripture each week. When we finish our New Testament readings we will go back to the Old Testament and pick up our reading there. The desire is that we be well-rounded, biblically literate Christians. You cannot be that if you are not well familiar with Scripture. To that end we will continue our weekly reading and I encourage you to spend time in the Scriptures daily. You may do well to prepare for worship by reviewing the Scripture reading for the day. Bathe yourself in the word of God and you will not be disappointed, soak up all you can, it will serve you well.



April 2026

We have been doing an annual Chili Cookoff since 2012. We only missed one year because of Covid. Of those 14 years of competition, I’ve had the good fortune to win four times. I can say that I’m pleased to have won, but I’m just as pleased to see others win, and I’m delighted to be able to say that I’m surprised to have won. My chili was good, but so were many of the others. The competition this year was as good as it has ever been. That said, I thought I would share the base recipe that I used so that you could try it yourself. I did add some things to mine, more peppers a little more tomatillos and I was a little more generous with the meat. So, you can adjust it anyway you see fit. This is a good green chili, so get yourself some warm tortillas and enjoy a big steaming bowl full.

Chili Verde (Mexican Green Chili Stew)

Ingredients :

- 2-3 lbs pork shoulder, cut into cubes
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4-5 roasted green chiles (Hatch, Anaheim, or poblanos), chopped
- 1-2 jalapeños, diced (optional)
- 1 lb tomatillos, husked and chopped (or 1 can tomatillo salsa)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- Optional: small diced tomatoes or Rotel for added depth
- Optional for serving: chopped cilantro and fresh lime wedges

Instructions:

1. Heat the oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Season the pork with salt and pepper and brown on all sides in batches.
2. Add the chopped onion to the pot and cook until softened, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the garlic, roasted green chiles, jalapeños, and tomatillos. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes until fragrant.
4. Pour in the chicken broth and add cumin, oregano, and optional tomatoes if using. Stir well.
5. Bring to a gentle simmer, then cover and reduce heat to low. Cook for 1½ to 2 hours, stirring occasionally, until the pork is fork-tender and the sauce has thickened.
6. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed.
7. Serve hot with warm tortillas, rice, or beans. Garnish with fresh cilantro and a squeeze of lime if desired.

Variations:

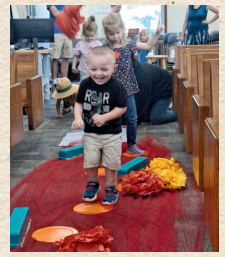
- Substitute pork with chicken thighs for a lighter version.
- Add diced potatoes during the last 30 minutes of cooking for a heartier stew.
- Blend part of the sauce for a smoother, thicker consistency.

Tips:

- Roast tomatillos and peppers under the broiler until lightly charred for deeper, smokier flavor.
- Skim excess fat from the surface if desired for a cleaner finish.
- Allow the stew to rest for 10 to 15 minutes before serving to let the flavors fully settle and deepen.



Easter Event PHOTOS



PERSECUTED

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN Russia

Overview:

Christians in Russia who are not part of the Russian Orthodox Church are legally restricted in several activities of their faith, especially evangelism. While the Putin regime hasn't yet used these laws to severely persecute Christians in Russia, there is great concern at how ideologies, such as the "Russian World" (Russkiy Mir), that lead to persecution are being instilled in Russians through media portrayals, government edicts and Russian Orthodox Church teaching. For example, Russia's 2016 Yarovaya Law (named for the law's political champion, Irina Yarovaya) claims to counter terrorism and secure public safety, but the law restricts Christians' freedom of worship and evangelism. The law and its amendments characterize Christians and churches outside the Russian Orthodox Church as religious extremists, criminalizing the speech and activities of Russian Christians who faithfully witness for Christ. Christians in Russian-controlled areas outside the country face increased restrictions and suffer violence at the hands of those acting on behalf of the Putin regime. In these areas, all Christian activity is tightly controlled by severely restrictive religious laws. Churches outside the Russian Orthodox Church, even those that previously had been legally registered, are being denied permission to exist, and unregistered churches face punishment. All Christian literature must be approved by Russian-backed authorities before it can be legally distributed. In addition to these restrictions, churches have been violently attacked, pastors have been attacked and abducted, and some pastors have been killed. With respect to Putin's war with Ukraine, the intent of the war is not to persecute Christians but rather to further Putin's consolidation of power. However, elements of persecution are occurring within the context of war. Persecution has been used as a tactic to isolate Christians who are opposed to Putin and his regime. While Putin is not opposed to (Orthodox) Christianity and has publicly espoused conservative moral values, even presenting himself as the "protector of Christianity" in Russia, he is opposed to the West and views evangelical Christianity as being connected to the West. Some Christians with connections to the West have been targeted for persecution, while Russian Christians who do not oppose the regime still meet openly in their churches. In Muslim-majority regions of the North Caucasus, such as Chechnya and Dagestan, Christians face persecution both from their families and the local government. The Putin government cooperates with Islamic authorities as a strategy to exert control in the region.

Prayer Requests:

- The government restricts evangelism. Pray that Christians will maintain a faithful and courageous witness.
- Pray for the unity of Russian Christians as government policy seeks to divide them. Use John 17:20-24 as a guide.
- Pray for Christians facing persecution from their families and communities in Muslim-majority regions such as Chechnya.
- Biblical Christians are characterized as "extremists." Pray that their love will be evident and winsome.
- Pray that churches denied registration will continue to meet secretly for worship and fellowship.

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



#10 Kingdom Prologue

by Meredith Kline

Kline (1922-2007) was a Theological and O.T. scholar who taught at Westminster Theological, Gordon-Conwell and Reformed Theological seminaries over his long career. He is mainly known for his work on Covenant Theology in the Reformed Tradition. He was ordained a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

As one of Kline's landmark works, this study focuses on the book of Genesis and its account of the formative ages in the eschatological movement of the Kingdom of God from creation to consummation. This is a biblical-theological commentary on Genesis and is designed to uncover the foundations of God's covenantally administered kingdom with its historical development, and its institutional structures and functions.

The book itself, as you might imagine, is quite dense and is the result of decades of lectures on the subject. Kline offers a lot of interesting insights into the pre-Fall, the Fall, and post-Fall eras that we don't normally think about when studying Genesis. For example, he argues that there is an eschatological goal designed in creation itself. The goal is seen primarily in the Sabbath; Sabbath rest is the goal of humanity. As God takes his rest on the Sabbath, He invites humanity into his consummation of creation which can only be obtained through the covenant of works. Jesus fulfills this covenant and we are in Him.

Great book for those interested in pursuing covenant theology at another level. Interesting bedtime reading for those up to the challenge.



Early Church FATHERS

Western church - Latin speaking

TERTULLIAN (160-220)

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, known as Tertullian, lived most of his life in Carthage. He was a son of a pagan Roman government official and became a Roman lawyer. He studied in Rome, where he was converted in 197 after being impressed at the courage of Christian martyrs. He was the first major Christian author to write in Latin, introducing many of the common theological terms. He is remembered as the father of Latin Christianity. He was the first person to use the term 'Trinity'. He is known for his pithy sayings, like, "The blood of the Christians is the seed of the church". He had strict moral views which led him to join the severe ascetic Montanists in 207, being disenchanted with the lax worldliness of the priests of the Roman church. He gives us the first reference to infant baptism, in 197, when he condemns the practice. He also opposed the growing distinction between clergy and laity.

www.julianspriggs.co.uk/Pages/ChurchFathers



INTERN'S INSIGHTS BY QUENTIN JOHNSTON

Sola Scriptura or Sola Ecclesia?

Geneva had recently lost its main leaders and fighters of the Reformation. John Calvin and William Farel no longer resided in Geneva, as they had been exiled for issues related to church discipline. The time was ripe for the Catholics to intrude upon the feeble state of religion in Geneva, so Cardinal Sadoletto wrote an irenic letter to win the Genevans back to the Catholic faith. The premise of Sadoletto's letter was to call the Genevans back to the true Church of Christ, always and everywhere directed by the one Spirit of Christ. Thus, the main issue raised concerns whether the Holy Church or the Holy Scripture is the ultimate authority.

Calvin begins his reply by respectfully addressing Sadoletto as one of much respect in the public eye. Calvin does not accuse Sadoletto of any devious intention, but expresses his conviction that he must respond in severity. What Sadoletto's letter is an affront to the Word, and Calvin treats it as such, saying he is compelled to withstand him openly. Calvin accuses Sadoletto of undermining the Word and seeking to recover the Genevans to the power of the Roman Pontiff. Calvin then lays out that it is not the Genevans but the Roman Church that has forsaken the true Church.

Leaving the Roman Church was not easy for Calvin. He did not desire it, nor seek personal advantage against the Pope, but the present situation occurred out of necessity, for the Church had been exposed to a "deadly poison." Many in authority within the Catholic Church abused their influence to receive great wealth and live in luxury. Calvin proposes that the church in Geneva follows the practice of the ancient Church, "providing ministers with frugality befitting their order." Therefore, the Reformers did not break from the Catholic fold for personal gain but for obedience to the Word given by God.

Calvin asserts that a true Church submits to the Word of God, whereas Sadoletto promotes submission to the authority of the Church. The Church is governed by the Holy Spirit, but that government is "annexed to the Word." Boasting the Spirit without submission to the Word blasphemes the name of the Holy Spirit. The written Word preserves and propagates the truth and protects the Church from corruption and falsehoods.

Additionally, Sadoletto charges that the Genevan church worships in a way unsanctioned by God. Calvin agrees that worship must be as God wants, not framed at random. The only legitimate worship is that which He approved from the beginning. The question remains which party retains that worship of God which is alone legitimate. Sadoletto assumes the rule of worship is prescribed by the Church, but Calvin says the Word is the rule by which all doctrines are tested.

Sadoletto argues that the Catholic Church has approved doctrine for more than fifteen hundred years, while the Reformers introduce innovations. Calvin maintains that Reformers adhere closer to the Apostolic faith and do not neglect the Church Fathers. He rejects doctrines such as transubstantiation, auricular confession, and other practices, stating they were neither commanded by Christ nor practiced in the ancient church.

Calvin further asserts that doctrines such as justification by faith have been hidden. "Wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation overthrown." Thus, Calvin stands upon the conviction of Sola Scriptura and that following man-made superstitions is an affront to God and a misrepresentation of the Holy Spirit.*

*All quotes come from The Reformation Debate by Sadoletto and Calvin

Featured FACES

OF FAITH CHURCH



The Paire Family

Parents' Names: Warren and Monica

Kids' Names: Will, Spencer, Leah

How long have you been coming to Faith?

Since 2006, 20 years!

Where do you serve?

Warren has been serving as a deacon for many years and is also an active member of the IT and building committees. He builds the VBS sets. Monica is currently a Sunday School teacher but also serves annually as the Registration Coordinator for VBS and the Church Retreat.

What work do you do?

Warren is an engineer for the United States Army. He designs the electronic systems used in operation centers to move audio, video, and data where it's needed. Monica has retired from her various roles in public, private and homeschool education and is currently a homemaker and a Sunday School teacher for the 3rd-5th grade class.

Tell us a little about your family.

Warren and Monica met in 1985 at summer camp where Monica was a camp counselor and Warren was the maintenance foreman (and a "townie"). They were married in 1989 in Lancaster, PA. They moved to Frederick in 1993 for Warren's job. After the birth of their oldest child, Will, in 1994, Monica left her full-time profession to tutor privately and become a stay-at-home mom. They had two more children, Spencer and Leah. Monica became a homeschool mom while Warren climbed the career ladder. Monica became very involved in the Frederick homeschool community, and once our boys were old enough, Warren became very involved in Boy Scouts. Warren was the Scoutmaster of our local troop for 14 years and then spent five years as the District Activities Chairman before leaving Scouts due to the sad change of direction Boy Scouts took. Warren and Monica enjoy traveling, especially on cruise ships and have made two transatlantic cruises so far. They plan to explore the US once Warren retires and builds them the custom RV he's designing.

Here at Faith Church we have many people in our congregation who serve behind the scenes! This month we recognize Mrs Ellen Nicodemus who has been preparing communion for over 20 years!



"I started helping with preparation for the Lord's Supper each month 20 some years ago at the invitation of Ruth Slocomb and assisted and learned from her until her death in 2008. Ruth was very deliberate and caring in the way she prepared the elements, set the table, and handled the chalice, trays, and cloth. I have been blessed to continue in this tradition.

My grandchildren have helped sometimes and it gives us a chance to talk about the sacrament and its meaning. Now I am glad to serve with Stephanie Essimengana each month in this ministry and to reflect on the transcendence of this sacrament across culture and language.

Just as Ruth involved and mentored me in this ministry, I would love to involve others in this ministry. If anyone is available before the Sunday school hour on Sunday mornings and would like to work as part of this team, it would be wonderful to expand the circle!"



2026 PCA Women's Ministry Conference
By Christine Stalnaker

It's been just about three weeks since Rebecca Frost, Kriste Passarelli, and myself attended the PCA's Women's Ministry conference in Atlanta, GA and we continue to reflect upon the wonderful truths taught from II Corinthians.

This year's theme was Clay-like Calling: God's Glory in Our Weakness. The conference is designed to explore the glory that can be found when God's power is perfected in that our earthen vessel cracks. In an age that values perfection and flawlessness, the Japanese art of Kintsugi, mending broken pottery with gold, highlights how beauty can be found in brokenness. This method of repair celebrates or highlights the damage rather than hiding it. The golden artistry lifts our eyes to God's transformative grace, "so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves."

Over 500 women attended the conference! We had the opportunity to meet new women and make friends with many women from across the United States, including a time together at a northeast regional gathering to meet women from other local PCA churches. During the conference we had wonderful times of singing praises to God. Talks from keynote speakers were based upon II Corinthians and Clay-like calling theme. A few highlights include:

• **Glorified Clay: Glimpses and Glimmers of Glory**

based on II Cor. 4:16-18 God's glory is the manifestation of God's power, His wisdom and goodness in creation and in our lives.

• **Captivated by Glory – Sustained by Grace – II**

Cor. 12:1-1 – God's power is made perfect in our weakness. We should not despise our weakness but shift our focus to Christ.

• **Remember Reconciliation's Refreshment for the Weary – II Cor. 5:11-21** - We are a new creation in Christ.

So, we should walk in his wisdom and depend on God that He is glorified. The love of Christ controls us!

• **God is at Work Around us, in Us, and Through Us**

– II Cor. 2:14-16, 3:18 and 4:6-7 - We are a trophy of grace. Our sufficiency is through Christ. We are a treasure – jars of clay – to show the surpassing power belongs to God.

The conference provided many resources not only for women's ministry, but also a vast variety of other PCA's ministry such as children's ministry, ESL, great Commission publications, Covenant College – just to name a few

We also were reminded that we are deeply connected because we are looking at Jesus together. We are created and called. And we are unified - we are one yet diverse - by design we are interdependent.

The conference was a wonderful time of scriptural teaching and encouragement!



Faith Family Page

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

April

- 1 Tom Balma
- 1 Ellie Paul
- 1 Bob Smerk
- 4 Brian Boyer
- 6 Violet Nardi
- 7 Anna Newman
- 8 Norah Ponath
- 9 Zach Phillips
- 12 Luke Normoyle
- 12 Maguire Thomas
- 12 Robin Willis
- 13 Jordan Ponath
- 15 Heather Sampsel
- 15 Matt Yost
- 23 Cassie Paul
- 24 Brooks Thomas
- 24 Quinlan Thomas
- 24 Reid Wilson
- 27 Greg Stalnaker



"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new".

PRAYER FOR US

God of new beginnings, as the earth awakens and stretches toward the sun, we thank You for the quiet miracles of spring; for buds unfolding, for longer days, for the soft return of warmth.

Renew our hearts as You renew the fields. Where we have grown weary, bring fresh strength. Where we have felt stuck, breathe new life and possibility.

Almighty God, teach us to notice the small beauty around us the song of birds, the color of blossoms, the gentle reminder that change can be hopeful.

Lord, help us to grow with grace, to release what no longer serves us, and to step forward with courage into what is yet to come. May this season fill us with peace, root us in gratitude, and awaken in us a quiet joy that endures.

In Your Name,
Amen

Happenings 8

WEEKLY

Sundays:

- 9:15am Sunday School
- 10:15am Fellowship
- 10:45am Worship
- 5:00pm Youth Group
- 5:30pm Evening Worship / Meal (1st Sundays only)

Mondays:

- 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal

Every Other Tuesday: (14th, 28th)

- 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 (breaking for summer May 22)

Saturdays:

- 10:30am Downtown Christian Fellowship

MONTHLY

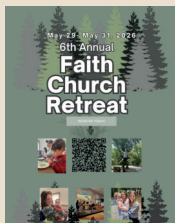
Third Saturdays, (18th)

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

Third Sundays, (19th)

- 12:30pm Fellowship Meal

Coming Events



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

Sunday School for All Ages 9:15am
Worship Service 10:45am
Evening Worship, 1st Sundays 5:30pm

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

