



Forest Hill Church
presbyterian

The TOWER

NOVEMBER 2020

WORDS FROM PASTOR VERONICA

Biblical scholar, Walt Brueggemann writes,
“Whether we are liberal or conservative
Christians, we must confess that the central
problem of our lives is that we are torn apart
by the conflict between our attraction to the
good news of God’s abundance and the power of our belief in
scarcity...We spend our lives trying to sort out that ambiguity. (“The
liturgy of abundance, the myth of scarcity,” religion-online.”
Org/showarticle.asp?title=533.).



In biblical times, in Jewish culture, people hid what was most valuable to them in obscure places, concealed and tucked away in seemingly worthless jars of clay, while inside gold, pearls, diamonds, and precious jewels could be found. This common practice serves to illumine the gospel story of the feeding of the 5,000, recorded in John 6:1-13.

Historically, this story has been told from the perspective that Jesus supernaturally multiplied the fish and loaves. And while I love a good miracle story, the author doesn’t actually say that. John does say that there was a great need— 5,000 hungry men, plus women and children, (not included in the count), and that they were all fed, beginning with 2 little fish and 5 barely loaves, a young boy’s lunch.

John also tells us that when Jesus had compassion on and conveyed his intention to feed the crowd, the disciples thought he'd lost his mind. Indeed, this is a miracle story, but it's one that transcends the supernatural. This gospel story marks a shift in orientation, a conversion from fear to trust.

Because one little boy offered to Jesus his modest lunch, lovingly packed for him by his mother, a miracle commenced. Jesus offered the fish and loaves to God in prayer, and passed them to the people—they mysteriously multiply, instead of running out. Then, moved by the love and compassion of Jesus, and encouraged by the generosity of a little boy, the fear of scarcity gave way to loving generosity as bread hidden garments was given in love and trust. Thus, Jesus' prayer unlocked the vaults of fearful hearts, and their offerings joined an emerging miracle. Later, when Jesus told the disciples to gather up the leftovers, they took up 12 baskets full of fragments—God's abundance.

Jesus could well have pulled out of thin air food sufficient to feed a multitude, but the far reaching miracle in this story is that in the safety and security of God's abundant love, all gathered were changed by generosity, and took part in a miracle of God's love and abundance. In changing hearts, Jesus fed a multitude, and they in turn fed each other.

"Generosity in Hardship" invites us to trust in the good news of God's abundance amid the pervasive messages of scarcity, and also nudges us all to claim our place in God's unfolding miracle through Forest Hill Church. In faith and trust in our God of abundance, let us strive for 100% participation in giving.

~Grace and Peace,
Pastor Veronica

WORDS FROM PASTOR JOHN

During this election cycle I have been thinking a lot about Christians, what makes us tick, what do we believe; what is really foundational to our faith. We hear about liberal and conservative Christians, right wing, left wing, Evangelical and Progressive. It can be a real turn off!

This fall a small group has been reading The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith by Professor Marcus J. Borg. I think everyone in the group is being challenged and enlightened by this book and by each other's wisdom.

Some of the questions Borg asks are these: What does "faith" mean? How do you read the Bible? What do Christians believe about God? Why and how is Jesus central to our religion?

In the chapter "God: The Heart of Reality" Borg writes about the "character of God." He summarizes that there are two main ways of "imagining God's character". Either God is a God of requirements and rewards; or, God is a God of love and justice. Both of these attempts to describe God (who is actually indescribable) can be found in the Bible. Typically, Christians emphasize one or the other of the characteristics.

Borg writes, and I think he is correct, that our belief in unconditional grace makes a God of requirements and rewards ultimately suspect. He believes; *"the notion that salvation is primarily about 'going to heaven' is a distortion."* And then Borg writes these two brief paragraphs which I think are rich and helpful.

"The Christian life is not about believing or doing what we need to believe or do so that we can be saved. Rather, it's about seeing what is already true – that God loves us already – and then beginning to live in this relationship. It is about becoming conscious of and intentional about a deepening relationship with God."

Borg ends his chapter on God with these wonderful words: *“What’s at stake in the question of God’s character is our image of the Christian life. Is Christianity about requirements? Here’s what you must do to be saved. Or is Christianity about relationship and transformation? Here’s the path: follow it. Both involve imperatives, but one is a threat, the other an invitation.”*

I invite you to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who shows us the heart of God which is love!

Even in these difficult days we are not alone. Be of good cheer. God bless you!

~John

GREETINGS FROM THE DEACONS!

Autumn, even during an election year, offers much upon which we agree and in which we find delight. We share a love of the beauty of colorful trees and perennials, the pleasant outdoor temperatures, and the smells of nature evolving, the swish and crunch of leaves under our feet and our bicycle/tricycle, outdoor gatherings around a fire, and maybe even clambakes.

This savoring of autumn also points to our ability to be in the moment. We know what is coming here on the North Coast- colder and darker days. Yet, we treasure this, for all that it is.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” Ecclesiastes 3:11

During our recent Deacons meeting, we shared a common joy of SEEING each other, unmasked, via Zoom. Even those who dreaded yet another Zoom meeting, said it had changed them for the better,

to see each other. We were also uplifted by the news that Ginny Young was thrilled beyond measure, over the many, many, MANY birthday cards sent to her by Forest Hill friends! Yay, congregation! Just look what you've done, and may you all feel the joy you created!

I know there is nothing better for people than to be happy and do well while they live. That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil- this is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

There are small group gatherings bubbling up among us- women's walks, backyard meals and happy hours, and there are individuals expressing their love of our community- sidewalk chalk artists leaving surprise messages, writers sending notes, callers checking in. It is not just the Deacons doing this work- it is many of you.

The Deacons hope all of you find moments and emotions to treasure and share. Please reach out to one of us if you too, need a Zoom call, a walk, or some other form of connection.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN UPDATE



As of Oct 20, we received 51 pledges for a total amount of \$229,474.00. Thank you for your generosity. If you have not yet submitted your pledge, please consider doing so that we may support the church's good and visionary work. Remember, the pledge will inform us how much

of a budget we will have for the year 2021, allowing us to plan for the future faithfully.

[Click here to view the Stewardship Video.](#)

Our 2021 Stewardship Campaign begins October 11 and continues through Nov. 11. Due to the Covid-19 virus, we are emailing Stewardship packets instead of mailing them, offering a Stewardship video instead of a brochure, and asking for [pledge cards to be completed online here](#). (You may also download this [2021 Pledge Confirmation Card](#), complete, sign, and return it to the church by regular mail.)

This year, we give thanks to God for sustaining Forest Hill Church throughout 2020 and for your faithful partnership during an unprecedented time. Our 2021 stewardship theme—Generosity in Hardship—is informed by Hebrews 13:16, “*Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*”

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Each year the Forest Hill Church Worship Committee orders Poinsettias. This year we will continue that tradition. Friends, if you would like Poinsettias, please place your order by December 7, 2020, at 8:00 am; please email the church office: office@fhcpresb.org.



TWO-PRONGED EARTH CARE MESSAGE



By the time you read this, many if not most or all of you have probably already voted. But maybe you haven't got around to it yet. You shouldn't need to be reminded of what's at stake regarding the decisions we make as to who is going to be our governing fellow citizens. Decisions made—or not made---by them regarding how we tackle dealing with climate change has crucial impacts on our national---and international earth. Combatting pollution, gaining greater clean air and water, lessening our dependence on fossil fuels and increasing our usage of green energy, stopping unnecessary deforestation, maintaining biodiversity, and achieving far more equity for our own and other peoples of the world are absolutely necessary to leave our succeeding generations with the better world which God intends for us. **VOTE YOUR CONSCIENCE ACCORDINGLY!**

On a more personal level, as we enter into the coming winter season once again, here are a few simple reminders of what we can do within our homes to achieve better Earth Care:

- Provide food the birds, and habitat for backyard wildlife.
- Insulate windows to conserve heat and maintain better energy efficiency.
- Close off unused rooms and electrical outlets to conserve heat
- Wear warmer clothing and layer, to lower the thermostat.
- Shut off external water pipes to prevent freezing and thawing which might result in flooding. ---Since re-usable plastic bags are banned in Cuyahoga County, collect the “disposable’ bags and recycle them to your local grocer or other recycle depository.
- Continue to recycle aluminum beverage cans. Creating new-use aluminum by recycling takes only 5% of the energy required to smelt new aluminum.
- Avoid purchase of food in plastic containers as much as possible. While some plastics are recyclable, most are not economical.

Dave Neff
Earth Care Leader

RACIAL EQUITY BUDDIES

Racial Equity Buddy learning events build personal connections. These events keep the fires burning for racial equity through learning opportunities where folks can also meet others who are interested in racial equity as possible buddies. All are welcome!

Date	Content
7:00 pm Monday, October 26	https://www.ted.com/talks/baratunde_thurston_how_to_deconstruct_racism_one_headline_at_a_time?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r
7:00 pm Monday, November 30	https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r&language=en#t-5176
7:00 pm Monday, January 25	TBD Short Reading/Article
7:00 pm Monday, February 22	TBD Reading/Article

Committee Members:

Lisa Vahey (Co-Chair), Chiquitia Montgomery (Co-Chair), Quentin Smith, Elizabeth Shaw, Kermit Lind, Mark Joseph, and Vikki Nowak

ADULT EDUCATION

Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study, led by Pastor Veronica Goines

**Sundays, November 29 through Sunday, December 20, 2020,
9:30 – 10:30 a.m., via Zoom.**

Be sure to register for the upcoming Adult Ed course: **Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study**, authored by Walter Brueggemann. This course delves into the royal designations given for the Messiah as written in the divine utterance in Isaiah 9:6: *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace*. The course investigates the royal titles to determine relevance to the first readers, and it considers whether or not Jesus fulfilled the titles, and how Christians interpret Jesus as representative of the Messianic designations. Brueggemann tackles the questions: “What were these expectations?” and “Did Jesus fulfill them?” Come and see. Join us for this thought provoking course.

Course curriculum, *Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study*, by Walter Brueggemann is available in paperback and on Kindle through Amazon and the PC (USA) Store.

Please contact Antoinette Richardson in the church office to register for this course: via office@fhcpreb.org, or via phone: (216) 321-2660.

Registration deadline: November 19.

IRIS CIRCLE – WOMEN OF FOREST HILL CHURCH

Iris Circle of Forest Hill Church is a group of women supporting each other, supporting the church, and supporting various projects in our community and the world. We have enjoyed the fellowship of other women, good food (great Pot lucks), and also programs that were informative and thought provoking. Some of our recent programs included a woman speaking about being Muslim and a trip to a Mosque, a movie – Knives Out, about EDWINS, book reviews, bible studies, service projects for first-year college students from FHC, and Christmas Angels for Boulevard School.

Due to COVID, we have not been able to meet, enjoy our great food and fellowship. Each year, Iris Circle chooses several projects and makes donations to support their excellent work. Recently we have supported with financial gifts, EDWINS leadership, FHC Food Pantry, and YWCA for women who age out of foster care. We want to continue this support at the end of 2020 and send each of them a donation.

If you have not made your Iris Circle/Presbyterian Women donation for this year, please do so. Be sure to place Presbyterian Women/Iris Circle is noted on the memo line. You may check your FHC statement. A current one will come out at the end of October or call the financial office at FHC 216 321-2660 and ask Nita about your donations. finance@fhcpresb.org.

~Nancy Burcham and Cathy Ghiandoni

Staff Emails

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Rev. Dr. John Lentz Jr.	Co-Pastor	pastorlentz@fhcpresb.org
Peg Weissbrod	Outreach/Breeze	pegw@fhcpresb.org
Dr. Amy Wheatley	Family, Youth, Children	CE@fhcpresb.org
Dr. Qin Ying Tan	Music	music@fhcpresb.org
Rev. Carol Wedell	Parish Associate	

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Email: office@fhcpresb.org Website: www.fhcpresb.org

Rev. Dr. Veronica R. Goines, Rev. Dr. John C. Lentz, Jr., Co-Pastors
Dr. Amy Wheatley, Dir. of Family, Youth & Children's Ministries
Dr. Qin Ying Tan, Interim Director of Music
Rev. Carol Wedell, Parish Associate

Next TOWER deadline: 8 am on November 19
Custodians' cell phone: 216-217-5257

Giving/donation options- Friends of FHC, during this time, you may give monetary gifts/donations by texting 216-400-5300 or give online using either [our BREEZE Giving Page](#) or via [PayPal](#). You may also mail in a check to the church bookkeeper (3031 Monticello Blvd. Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118).

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Regularly scheduled events: meet every week unless noted	6:00 pm -AA: Progress not Perfection 7:00 pm -Al Anon: Now There's Hope -Book Group 7:30 pm -AA: Borton Group -Boy Scout Trp. #403 -QA Big Book	11:00 am -Abundance Pantry 5:00 pm -Fitness Fusion exercise class -Bulletin and Weekly email Deadline	7:30 am -Bible & Bagels (virtual) 12:00 pm -Staff Meeting (virtual) -AA: Wednesday Women's Group 7:00 pm -Guest Group: Speak Life Bible Study	1:30 pm -English Dance 5:00 pm -Fitness Fusion exercise class 6:20 pm -Voices in Bronze 7:30 pm -Chancel Choir	9:30 am -Al Anon: Hand in Hand	
November 1 All Saints Day!	November 2	November 3 Election Day!	November 4	November 5	November 6	November 7
November 8	November 9	November 10	November 11 Stewardship Campaign Ends	November 12	November 13	November 14
November 15	November 16	November 17	November 18	November 19 TOWER DEADLINE	November 20	November 21
November 22	November 23	November 24	November 25	November 26 Thanksgiving Office Closed	November 27 Office Closed	November 28
November 29	November 30 7:00 pm: Racial Equity Buddies Program Happy Birthday Antoinette! Antoinette will be out of the office!	December 1 Antoinette will be out of the office!	December 2 Antoinette will be out of the office!	December 3 Antoinette will be out of the office!	December 4 Antoinette will be out of the office!	December 5

November 2020