

--- River's Edge Echo ---

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June 2022

Pastor Steve reports on benefits of recent study leave; next sermon topic

One of the advantages of being ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is the denomination's value of promoting continuing education for the clergy. There is a standard requirement the presbyteries across the nation have, that lists one of the minimum terms in the call of a pastor is a minimum of two weeks of study leave. (Along with a minimum dollar amount in the budget to pay for the study leave.)

One study leave opportunity that I try to attend is the West Coast Presbyterian Pastors Conference (WCPPC), held in the Santa Cruz mountains. It is an easy conference to put on the calendar as it always starts 8 days after Easter. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, in 2020 the conference was cancelled and in 2021 it was held via Zoom. (I did not find the idea of attending a conference via Zoom appealing.) This year I was relieved when the conference was able to be held in person, albeit along the shores of South Lake Tahoe instead of the normal location. Like the other WCPPCs Emily and I

have attended, the conference was a great time of learning and networking with other Presbyterian pastors throughout the nation.

At this year's conference, all three speakers were excellent. One of the presenters provided a series of lectures concerning major changes that took place in the first century of the church. He started by providing a list of characteristics of the Christian "church" immediately after the resurrection (somewhere around 30-33 AD) and then provided a list of characteristics of the church in the year 100 AD. During that 70 year period, there were some major changes that took place. (Examples include primary language being used, which day of the week worship took place, and meeting in houses instead of the Jewish synagogues.) Yet while these monumental shifts took place in the style of worship, surprisingly there was little change in substance. The other fascinating observation is that by approximately 50 AD all but maybe one of the apostles and all 12 original disciples were gone and we have very little knowledge concerning the church leaders in the second

half of the first century of the church. That got me thinking. We are going through a major shift in our culture today. How can we be like the leaders of the church universal around the year 100? Can we be like these unheralded leaders who can navigate through the change currently taking place in our time without changing the substance of the message?

For the month of June; after finishing up our sermon series on the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday (June 5), I will be starting a new five week sermon series. While on vacation I read an interesting essay by N.T. Wright concerning the new Heaven and the new Earth. While nothing in his essay was new to me, it made me re-examine my views about the end days. I hope this upcoming sermon series, based on this essay, has us thinking about heaven and earth in a new light.

—*Blessings, Pastor Steve*
1N.T Wright "Jesus is Coming -- Plant a Tree," *Surprised by Scripture* (2014) pp. 83-107

Sermon passages for the month of June

June 5—Acts 2:1-21 Pentecost Sunday Color of the day is red.

June 12—Genesis 1:24-2:1

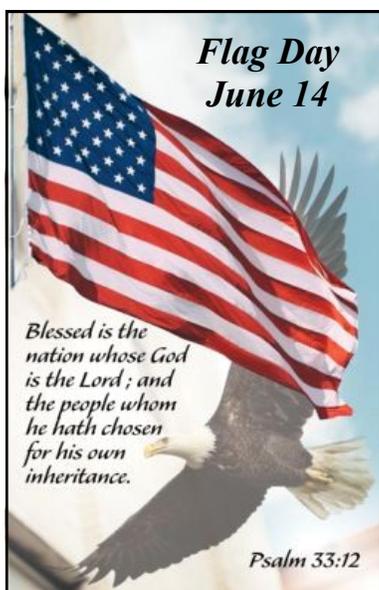
June 19—Genesis 3 (exact verses to be determined)

June 26—Isaiah 65:12-25

Upcoming Summer Bible Study

Starting on June 21, Pastor Steve will lead a Bible study and discussion on some of the lesser-known women of the Bible. Current plans have us looking at the following women: Hannah, Rebekah, Delilah, Joanna (along with the other women at the tomb), Phoebe, and Priscilla. This will be a six-week study (with a possible break on July 5). We will be meeting at 2:30 every Tuesday. If there is interest in having an evening class or classes meeting on other days of the week, we can make that happen.

There is no cost for this study, so it is a great chance to bring your friends to join us. All that Pastor Steve requests is that you sign up in advance so that we can print off enough copies of the study guide.—*submitted by Pastor Steve Niccolls*



a godly Father is:



Faithful, to God and Family.
Able, to discern God's will in trying times and good times.
Thankful, for all the joys and trials of life.
Happy, no matter what the life brings.
Enthusiastic, about a life lived with purpose.
Righteous, rock-solid in heart and mind, from a growing relationship with Jesus.

Happy Father's Day!

For these things and so many more we praise God for our Fathers, this Father's Day and always.

‘Gather At The Table’ group organized to continue church’s Evangelism

An organizational meeting of “Gather At The Table”, a community dinner planning group, took place at the First Presbyterian Church office in Saratoga on Tuesday afternoon May 24, 2022 at 4:00.

Partial minutes of the meeting reported:

Those in attendance and duties were: Herman Strickland, Session member in attendance; Becky Strickland, fundraiser; Lori Erhart, secretary; Cindy Kessler, treasurer and Dick Perue, outreach person, along with Pastor Steve Niccolls.

Herman opened the meeting by asking Pastor Steve for prayer and then thanked all for attending and clarified how this group will operate under the church’s jurisdiction.

First order of business was establishing details of how the meetings should be conducted under church policy. It was agreed that this board will serve as a sub-board under Evangelism and Membership of this church.

Intended purpose of “Gather At The Table” is to help full-fill the mission of First Presbyterian Church of Saratoga by reaching out to people in the community and surrounding area by providing a free hot meal for anyone who desires fellowship with openness and love. This will start by serving a hot meal once a month on the first Tuesday of each month using donations of food, supplies, monies, and labor. The initial soup kitchen serving is scheduled for Tuesday, August 2, between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

Fourth order of business was how to raise the funding to get the needed supplies for the start-up. The initial fund

raiser is a Bake Sale set for June 11 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the church Fellowship Hall. Dick volunteered to publish the information in the River’s Edge Echo and print, plus distribute, posters in the community.

A Labor Day Silent Auction was set for Saturday, September 3rd.

Further details will be released following the next meeting of the group.—submitted by Lori Erhart, edited by Dick Perue



**Fundraiser
BAKE SALE**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 11,
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Fellowship Hall**

All proceeds benefit
“Gather At The Table”

**We need your HELP with donation of
ALL TYPES OF BAKED GOODS
Plus workers. Please sign up to volunteer.**

The poster features illustrations of a cupcake with white frosting and a cherry, a slice of cake with yellow filling and purple frosting, and a chocolate chip cookie.

The Third Beatitude: A New ‘Take’ on Inheriting the Earth

Aside from the first set of Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai, few things are “set in stone” – certainly not what I write in these articles! I love to find references or passages that expand on – or even contradict – previous writings, because above all, I want to portray the Word of God and its’ meaning accurately.

We have been talking about the beatitudes as characteristics of those in the Kingdom of God. Most of the “rewards” for those having these characteristics were relatively self-explanatory – until we came to “the meek (or humble) shall inherit the earth.” Shortly after writing last month’s article, I came across an insight that was so simple yet so profound that I had to include it this month, before we move on to the next beatitude.

We said last month that the meaning of “inheriting the earth” varied from the ancient Israelites to modern-day Christians. It could either refer to the Israelites’ inheritance of the Holy Land, as promised by God to Abraham in Genesis 17:8. Or, it could be a reference to Revelation 20, when all the redeemed will return with Christ for His thousand-year reign on earth. Both of these interpret “inheriting the earth” literally, with the word “earth” meaning “earth” or “land”.

But here is the new insight. Luke 12:32 says: “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure **to give you the kingdom.**” [NKJV] A similar passage is found in Matthew 6:25-34, part of the Sermon on the Mount from which come the Beatitudes. Dr. David Jeremiah, in his monthly magazine “Turning Points” (April 2022), points out that “in Luke’s version of the same teaching [from Matthew 6] an additional insight from Jesus is recorded: **‘Your Father has chosen to give you the kingdom’** (Luke 12:32, NASB). We have **been made** [note the past tense] participants in God’s Kingdom and all its resources...”

For “the meek shall inherit the earth”, therefore, we could read: **“The meek shall inherit God’s Kingdom.”** Remember, though, that *all* the beatitudes describe characteristics of Kingdom citizens, and that meekness is just *one* of those characteristics.

–Virginia Senne



Dixie Rae (McKee) Johnson passed away May 12; services at later date

Dixie Rae (McKee) Johnson was born May 5, 1938 in Purcell CO to Clyde and Lottie McKee. On May 12, 2022 she was released from her earthly worries and cares and went to be with the Lord.

Dixie began life in Colorado and moved with her family to Elk Mountain, Wyo. when she was nine years old. She attended school in Grover, Colo., then Elk Mountain through high school. After graduation she went to Central Business College in Denver and worked as a secretary at the University of Colorado Medical School until her marriage. During this time she boarded with one of the doctor's family.



Dixie married the love of her life, Bert Johnson, on June 25, 1958, and set up house keeping at the A-1

ranch near Elk Mountain. They had two children, Donna and Clyde.

Dixie became a ranch wife and help-mate to Bert. The coffee pot was always on and no one ever went away hungry. She loved to have a beautiful yard and flower gardens to welcome folks that came by. She took pride in having a tidy, welcoming home. She drove the school bus for the ranch route and activity trips in all sorts of weather. Helping the school kids with numerous activities was special for her. During the summer months she worked endlessly doing everything from cows to hayfields, any task that needed done. Whatever she did was done in a meticulous manner to make the A-1 ranch the very best it could be.

She was active in the Elk Mountain Homemakers club, Carbon Co. Cowbells, served on the Deacon Board of Union Presbyterian Church, worked with the Make It Yourself With Wool contest and the Carbon Co. Fair. She served as an election judge for many years.

She and Bert often attended the First Presbyterian Church of Saratoga and were great supporters.

She is preceded in death by her parents, sisters Helen Addison, Charlotte Orton, Hazel Larson and brothers Pete McKee, Bob McKee and Al McKee.

She is survived by husband, Bert Johnson; brother Bill McKee, sister Blanche (Richard) Gunderson and sister-in-law Kaye McKee; children Donna (Cecil) Schiltz and Clyde (Bobbi) Johnson; grandchildren, Tyler (Amy) Schiltz, Elysa (Schiltz) (Klay) Nelson, Seth (Cara) Johnson, Shane (Kassie) Johnson; great-grandchildren, Logan,

Blake and Gabe Schiltz, Nash Nelson, Liam, Lina, and (soon to arrive) Athena Johnson, Kodi and Tristan Johnson.

Dixie was a small package of dynamite! Always full of energy, quick to smile and ready for any challenge. She loved her family very well and was a true friend to so many. A great void is left in our lives that will be difficult to fill.

In lieu of flowers, gifts can be made to: The Dixie Johnson Memorial Fund, RNB State Bank, P.O. Box 1290, Saratoga WY 82331.

A memorial celebration of life will take place later on July 9, 2022 at the ranch.

"I look up to the mountains and hills, longing for God's help. But then I realize that our true help and protection is only from the Lord, our Creator who made the heavens and the earth. Psalms 121: 1 & 2 TPT—submitted by Dick Perue from information obtained from Jacoby Funeral Home website

Highlights of May Session Meeting

The Session held its monthly meeting on May 19. The following actions were taken by the governing board: 1) They voted to approve Ken Swanson to become a member of the church. Ken will be officially recognized as a new member on May 29. 2) They approved a request by Pastor Steve for a vacation day on July 7 to attend a football clinic in Rock Springs. 3) They also voted to hold a special congregational meeting on June 9, immediately following the worship service. The sole purpose of this meeting would be to amend the requirements for the treasurer to be consistent with the requirements of the *Book of Order*. (Wording of the proposed change is found below.) The Session also received reports from the Board of Deacons, from the treasurer and the chairpersons of the various committees

The next Session meeting is scheduled for June 16.

Proposed change to the By-Laws

The current by-laws require that the treasurer be an active member of the church. The proposed change would read, *"The session shall elect a treasurer for such term as the session shall decide and shall supervise his or her work."*

The reasons for this change are two-fold. First, it would align with the language found in the *Book of Order*. The other reason for the change is that it will give the session flexibility to appoint a treasurer who is a regular attendee of the church, but is not a member. The session currently requires the treasurer to submit monthly reports and does supervise the work of the person serving in this position.—*submitted by Pastor Steve Niccolls*



DEACONS' DOINGS

The Deacons still have a few all-occasion, home-made greeting cards for sale in the church Narthex. You get 6 cards in a package for \$6.00. So, be sure to get yours before they're all gone!

The Deacons met after worship on Sunday May 15, 2022. We have been quite busy developing a yearly budget to work from (which we have never had before). We have also been developing some Congregational Care Guidelines and some Memorial Reception Guidelines. We are hoping these guidelines will help us to treat everyone in our church family equally and yet stay within our limited budget.

As usual, the Deacons do not hold formal meetings during the Summer months of June, July, and August. However, we are always "on-call" if situations arise in the church. So for now, our next formal meeting is scheduled for after worship on Sunday, September 11, 2022.

Meanwhile during the Summer, we are asking everyone to prayerfully consider becoming a Deacon in the future. We may need as many as four new Deacons to replace those who are completing their terms this December.—
submitted by Anne Wickstrom and Susan Collamer

**WE WISH EVERYONE A SAFE, HEALTHY,
HAPPY, RELAXING, BLESSED SUMMER!!!!**

Ways to contact Pastor Steve

Normal drop-in office hours at Church are

Monday-Thursday 8:00 - 12:00

Meetings and Appointments at Any Time

Office phone is 326-5337, Home phone 326-3163,

Cell phone (510) 825-3721

srrnicolls@att.net or *1pcsaratoga@union-tel.com*

Or leave note on white board on office door or on desk



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Adult Bible Study

Sunday morning, May 22, 2022 the adult Bible Study class began their study of the Book of Romans, it promises to be an interesting and challenging exploration of the Apostle Paul's theology. We began by exploring some basics about this important Book. We found that it was written to the Church in Rome in the first century (57 A.D), probably when Paul was in Corinth on his third missionary trip. Paul was looking forward to a long awaited visit to Rome on his way to a proposed missionary trip to Spain.

Paul's purpose for writing the letter were varied, he wrote to prepare the way for his coming visit to Rome, to present the basic system of salvation to a church that had not received the teaching of an apostle before, and he sought to explain the relationship between Jew and Gentile in God's overall plan of redemption.

This letter has some special characteristics that are not found as much in his other letters;

- This is the most systematic of Paul's letters. It reads more like an elaborate theological essay than a letter.

- There is an emphasis on Christian doctrine. The number of theological themes touched on is impressive.

- Widespread use of OT quotations.

- Deep concern for Israel.

None of Paul's other letters state so profoundly the content of the gospel and its implications for both the present and the future.

We read the first two chapters of this important Book and would love to have you join us in the Fellowship Hall at 8:15 Sunday mornings as we continue our study of Romans.—*submitted by Sonja Collamer*

Prayer Chain No. is 326-3369