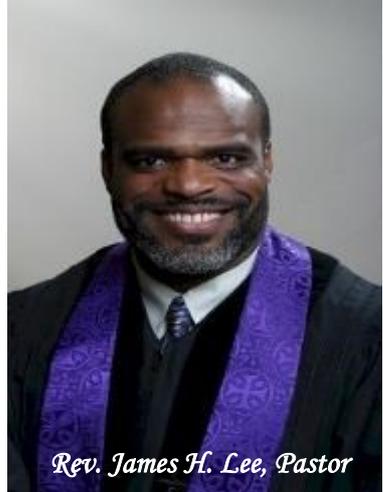
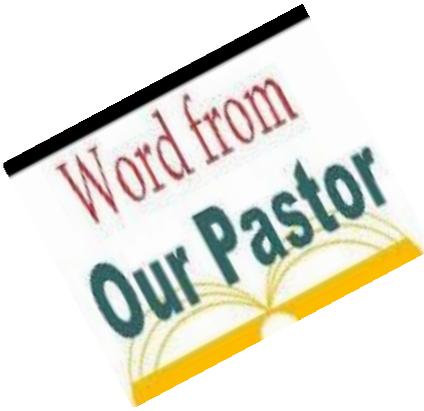


October 31, 2014



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

Stewardship Dedication Sunday November 2, 2014

“Partnering with God for the Sake of Others”

Philippians 1:4-5 ⁴I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel.



*Praying, Persistence,
Partnering, and Participating.*

Please bring your pledge cards so that we may gather together in unity to ask the Lord’s Blessings!
Thank you for your trust and generosity and for believing in our ministry.

Congregational Meeting



November 2, 2014

Immediately following worship service. We will elect new Elders and Deacons



October 31, 2014



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

NCFA

SUNDAY MORNINGS

NCFA Sunday Schedule

8:15am - Worship Service
Waller Creek Chapel
41st St. and Red River

10:15am - Worship Service
1507 Wilshire Blvd.
9am Adult Sunday School
10am Fellowship

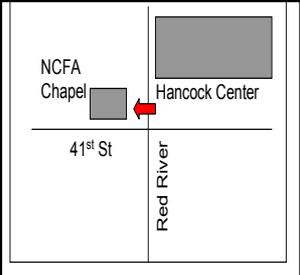
10:45am - Children's Church

**NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 8:15am --
Waller Chapel**

Come rise and shine with us
at our **8:15am** chapel service
where we glorify God
through the Word, Prayer, Hymns,
and Communion.

41st and Red River, entrance gate on 41st.

In the words of Phillips, Craig & Dean,
"Come, just as you, to worship."
All are welcome to this traditional,
intimate style of worshipping our Lord.



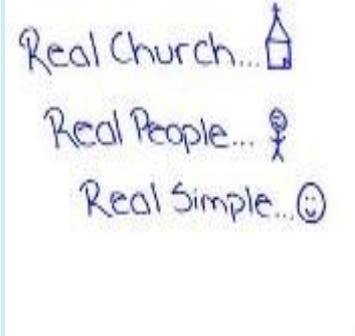
NCFA Waller Creek Chapel — Upcoming Preachers

- November 2 - Rev. Irish Holland*
- November 9 - Roberta Parrillo*
- November 16- John Harrison*
- November 23- Rev. Jeff Saddington*
- November 30 - Danita Nelson*

**NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT
10:15am**

We would love to have you and your family
come share in the **CELEBRATION OF
THE GOOD NEWS!**

We are worshipping in the Fellowship Hall of
Genesis Presbyterian Church on the Wil-
shire Campus starting at 10:15 a.m.



New Covenant Fellowship of Austin PC(U.S.A.) is a racially diverse community informed by the Bible, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and motivated to share God's love with all. In response to God's love, we are called to equip disciples to faithfully serve, to encourage seekers to joyfully commit, and to implore all to worship our Lord, as we love our neighbors, grow in grace, and live by faith.

October 31, 2014



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

"Loving Beyond Words"

**Deuteronomy 34:1-12:
Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:34-46**

Pastor James H. See

**New Covenant Fellowship of Austin
20th Sunday after Pentecost—October 26, 2014**

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

¹Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ²all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. ⁴The LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.” ⁵Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command. ⁶He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. ⁸The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended. ⁹Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses. ¹⁰Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹²and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Philippians 4:1-9

¹You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, ²but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. ³For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; ⁶nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, ⁷though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. ⁸So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

Matthew 22:34-46

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” ⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴²“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” ⁴³He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, ⁴⁴‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”’? ⁴⁵If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” ⁴⁶No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Today is Reformation Sunday, when we celebrate the fact that the “95 Theses” were nailed to a door one day as a way to declare the beginning of the Reformation, when no longer would it just be religion and the law of the land tied together. No longer would we have to focus so much on a priest to get to our Lord and our God. We celebrate the *priesthood of believers* because of what Christ did on our behalf. We’re part of the Reformed tradition because of that work, and so we celebrate Reformation Sunday. It’s a good thing. As we’ve been working through our Stewardship campaign, the very first thing we focused on was prayer. We get to go before the throne of mercy and grace and find it right in the time of our need. With just the Old Testament, we wouldn’t have been able to do that; we would have had to have a priest to do that, and bring in the sacrifice. Once a year, the high priest would come and go into the Holy of Holies and present all of the sins and the cares of the world before God. But because of our Lord, Yeshua, we get to come before God in prayer.

Last week we talked about persistence as a part of our stewardship. Persistence is needed as we continue to live out our faith, some days up and some days down. Some days encouraged as you’re walking in the faith, and some days you’re wondering “How long, God?” and “Why, God?” But yet continuing to persist in the faith. It’s a powerful thing in the Old Testament as they were following the Lord by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. They persisted in their journey.

October 31, 2014



NCFA CONNEXION!

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"Loving Beyond Words"

Deuteronomy 34:1-12:

Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:34-46

Pastor James H. See

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

20th Sunday after Pentecost—October 26, 2014

Today I want us to think about how we partner with God. The audacity of us human beings to think that we can partner with God, or that God would choose to partner with us. A lot of audacity...but God chooses to do it. God can do anything God wants, but God chooses to use human agents to bless other humans so that we would have a way of understanding who this God is and what this God is trying to do in our lives. Not just good enough to be the immovable God who is sovereign and sits in some other place but who becomes human to live and comes to experience joy, comes to experience pain, suffering, and disappointment, so as he sits on the right hand, he can make intercession for us, and we can be in relationship with one another. Awesome God!

Today I want to lift up three things: [Choices, Challenges, and Care](#)

[Choices](#)

The *Deuteronomy* text—you read it, and you read it, and then you think “Okay, that’s a good word, a lot of things I don’t really understand...” But something powerful is happening. God calls Moses to liberate his people from Egypt; and we love hearing about the Red Sea, and we’ve heard about the struggle in the Wilderness. But God has Moses up here on Mt. Nebo looking into the Promised Land. What is significant about that are some choices, or one huge choice that Moses made. See, all of us as leaders are going to have to make some choices, and there are consequences to our choices. I don’t care how we wordsmith it, there are consequences to our choices. The first time the folks were thirsty and needing help in the Wilderness, they spoke to Moses, and Moses went to God. God told him to take his staff and smite the rock. What did Moses do? He hit the rock, and water came out! Everything was great—blessing from God. They kept on going, kept on living, and after awhile started complaining—murmuring. And Moses got frustrated with the people. Anybody ever get frustrated with those that you love, those that you’re called to lead? Yes! So what does he do? He goes to God. Know what God has him to do this time? He tells him to speak to the rock. Speak to a rock? You know God can’t really tell me to speak to a rock, can he? I’m going to stop there for a second. There are some hard places, and some hard, solid things that seem immovable. Speak to the rocks. Speak. Paul would say speak to those things that *are not* as though they *were*. Speak to some rocks. Jesus had the audacity to say speak to a mountain and say *“Thou be removed and cast into the sea.”* Speak to the rocks.

Our words have power. Life and death are in the tongue. Think about how many times you have blessed somebody in your life and said a good word to them...And all of a sudden their head went up, and the frown on their face turned into a smile. It makes a difference how we speak. The Lord said *“Speak to the rock.”* And Moses, like some of us, we think that didn’t make sense—God really didn’t want me to speak to the rock. But he also made a choice out of frustration, and guess what he did: He hit the rock, and the water came out. So everyone would say, he hit the rock, the water came out, so it’s all good. It was all good in that neighborhood, but it wasn’t all good in God’s neighborhood! God said, “Didn’t I tell you to speak to the rock? Well, in pride, you got the pleasure and all the approval of the people; you let them know that you were the man...But I want to let you know that the consequence of your choice will be that you will be able to lead them to, but you will not be able to enter into the Promised Land.”

That has been my leadership prayer and plea. Lord, please don’t let me smite the rock. That’s the King James version. Don’t let me get so caught up in my leadership, caught up in trying to please the people that I don’t listen to You and follow a pattern that I just think has to be the right way.

Other choices—You see a choice in the Gospel reading as you see one group is seeing another group quieted, and they make a choice and the lawyer comes and he wants to ask Jesus a question to test him. So he asks him a question. It was a choice. He could have learned from the lesson that happened with the others and said “Okay, this guy is all right.” But they didn’t see Jesus as Messiah, they just saw him as another man, another prophet, and in some cases, someone who was a little bit off his rocker. And so they had to keep on challenging him because of his choices; and they made choices.

I want us also to hear in the Epistle reading in *Thessalonians* there were some choices. Paul said we suffered, we were put to shame, but we still came. There will be times in this faith that you have that you will be knocked down, you will be talked about; and I pray that you will keep on choosing, moment by moment, sometimes hour by hour, day by day; stay on the journey with your hand in the Master’s hand. We have the assurance of knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God, but if we can choose to say, “Y’know, God, not today...” then that’s your choice.

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New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

20th Sunday after Pentecost—October 26, 2014

Challenges

Challenges will come in different ways. Some are external, some are internal, but they're going to come nevertheless. Did you hear that? Challenges are going to come nevertheless. And there was a time when we thought that challenges meant that we weren't of God. We get a confirmation of knowing that it rains on the just as well as the unjust. But what makes a difference is where's your foundation. Our foundation is in our Lord, our God. And so the challenges will come and they will go, but we can keep on trusting in the Lord.

Why focus about this challenge that takes place in this Gospel? Because again, if you have one group that is focusing on the ***Pentateuch***, the first five books of the Bible, anything outside of it for them is heresy. And then you have another group that says their focus in here is on the ***Psalms*** as well as the ***Pentateuch***. See, they would sing the ***Psalms***, a way of telling the story, and the theology would come—something wonderful that would have been written by David. King Saul was the first one, then King David, he was the psalmist.

When he was challenged, Jesus didn't do what some of us would do—fight. What does he do? He comes at it with the Word. And so he goes back to what they would have known to help answer a question. He goes back to the ***Shema*** that they would have recited at least twice a day, about "***loving the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.***" (N.B., In ***Deuteronomy***, the ***Shema*** uses the phrase "***and all your might***" (meaning "***strength***"). As Jesus reinterprets the ***Shema*** in ***Matthew***, he uses the word "***mind.***" The emphasis of the ***mind*** is that we have the free will to choose. As modern day saints, the Spirit will help us to make the right decisions.) Then Jesus takes them over to ***Leviticus*** where it says to "***love your neighbor as yourself.***" We must choose to love. Right there, all the law and the prophets are locked in there. If you go to ***Exodus 20*** with the Ten Commandments, the first five are vertical to help us understand God. The second five are horizontal; that's how we learn to love our neighbor as ourselves. That's what Jesus was letting them know. Hit that. Live by that and you'll be all right.

Challenges....Last week we learned that it can help us to clarify things, it can help us to understand things anew. There's an opportunity for Pharisees, Sadducees, anybody else who wanted to see that he wasn't just a man, that he was the Messiah. You know what he does next? He asks them a question; he says to them that the Spirit says to him, "My Lord, sit here until I place things under your feet." He asks them a question we really don't understand. "Who wrote the Psalms?" David. "Who would have been the King?" David. "Who would they have understood was going to have a kingdom that would reign forever because of the promise that God made in 2 Samuel?" David. And he says, "If the psalmist and the king from whom the Messiah would come says that to my Lord, and the Lord says "Sit here," he's asking them the question, and they were challenged. And we're challenged. What he was trying to say is that God moves outside of us; and sometimes we get so caught up on one piece here, one piece here, we lose the forest for the trees. Their Lord was right before them, but it wasn't one that they could receive. Yeshua was right before them. And so that challenge could have been a clarifier, but it was not.

I want to ask you, cause I know you're facing challenges. Are the challenges you're facing bringing you closer to God? Or are they moving you away with fists, with disgust and disdain? "So why didn't you provide for me if you provided for them?" Complain, complain. Are they helping you to clarify? "This time I trusted; that time I didn't." "I was glad the Lord hooked me up there." "I was glad the Lord listened to me there—but not there." "You know, Lord, I think you can do this all by yourself, and I'll just to choose to partner. So when you say 'Go,' I'll go. And when you say 'Stay,' I'll stay; and we'll do this thing together. What do you think, God?" That's the one I try to go with because my mouth gets me in trouble; my actions get me in trouble. I have to pray, confess, and just call upon the Lord and trust that God is going to be gracious.

I am blessed today, my brother-in-law and his father are here, and they made a choice. This whole time of worship could be a challenge, but they chose to come. So I'll say this as best I can, "L'chaim," which would be a toast to you for choosing to worship with us. Thank you.

You see, we have to take advantage of the moments that are before us. And sometimes some laws get in the way. You've heard me say that we go legal when relationships are lacking. See somebody get rigid, there's something lacking in the relationship. "***Love***," the Word of God says, "***covers a multitude of sins, and perfect love casts out all fear.***"

October 31, 2014



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(1 Peter, 1 John) It's that kind of love that Jesus reminds us that we need to have. Not just quoting the *Shema*, not just quoting *Leviticus*, but loving enough to move just beyond the few to the many. Who is God calling you to love? I want to invite you in a different way because there's a selfishness in us; but I can say even in our selfish nature, we still don't know how to love ourselves! So I want to invite us first to call upon the Lord: "Lord, help me to love me enough, so I don't have to have this other stuff." And then I want to invite us to begin loving others in a new and different way. ***1 John 4:20*** would ask how can you say you love a God whom you can't see but you can't love those whom you do see? Love.

Care

While I was playing with the care/character piece, I was just reminded of Martin Luther King, who would let us know, "*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*" Not when everything is perfect but when it's tough. That's when you learn a lot about your character. In that Epistle reading in *Thessalonians* we learned something—the apostles letting them know we're partnering with God for your sake. And even when we were suffering, even when we were put to shame, we came on, to proclaim the Gospel to you. Why? Because there's life in the Gospel. We need to know we're forgiven. Anybody need to know you're forgiven? Anybody need to know you're loved? Anybody need to know when everybody wants to exclude you, God says, "Come on, baby; you're mine, let's get in the house!"? Yes!

And when some would say, "Well, the only way they can come in is if the men are circumcised..." No, we're not going there; we're not going to put law over grace. It's by faith. Jesus loved, and his love overcame the law—because you can't learn from the law. All the law can do is tell you you're wrong. Now, my brothers in the back with the APD, they're like, "Yeah, you're right." But grace and mercy, we *rely* on that. But if you don't have a standard, grace can't be extended. If you don't have a standard, mercy can't be extended because you won't appreciate it—because you think you're all right anyway. But when the law says you're wrong, and the law says death is the result of the wage of your sin, and someone shows you grace, you say "Thank you." When someone shows you mercy, you say "Thank you." But if you think you're all that and a bag of chips and you think you do nothing wrong, and there's not a standard, and someone says "You're forgiven"—you think, "For what? I didn't do anything to you." But when you see that, you know that, and you understand that, and then you can be grateful, you can be appreciative, and there will be an attitude adjustment.

And I love the last part of the *Philippians* reading. Paul says it wasn't just enough to share this Gospel. They were struggling because they were coming; other people were competing; they were talking about the ministry...second-guessing the ministry. And what does he let them know? He says,

"⁵As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; ⁶nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, ⁷though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. ⁸So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us."

Paul not only expressed a joy in partnering with them in ministry and sharing the Gospel, he also meant sharing his life. It means we are called to not only to share the Gospel and the good stuff but also that bad stuff—ourselves.

Who do you care about? How are you sharing your life with them? I will tell you, folks who know me, there's only so much of me you get, and then I shut it off. And others who have more. Part of it is that to share our lives makes us vulnerable. If you've already been rejected or experienced betrayal, it's hard to say "Do it again....Yes!" No. But I can tell you, if you don't, you won't live. You'll be bound in your fear. And God called us to live. He says not only to share the Gospel but also ourselves. I love the old saying from the Clint Eastwood movie, "*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.*" ("*But I can tell you, if you don't, you won't live.*")

We are called to share our lives—all of it. Why? Someone needs to hear how God brought you through your experiences so they can believe that what God did for you, God can do for them. I'm just crazy enough to believe that God is not a "respector of people" so all of us have access to the blessings of God through Christ Jesus. Not to be ashamed but to celebrate the victory that we have in the Lord and our God.

October 31, 2014



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Now the last part: Moses and Joshua.

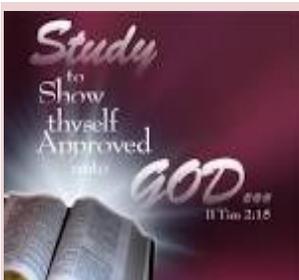
Moses is being the great liberator, and Joshua is the one who does get to enter in. Both of them were symbols of our Lord and our God. But watch what happens as we read that text in *Deuteronomy*, because I need us to hear that, this word that I'm about to share, because if we're not careful, we'll say we care, but we'll do everything for ourselves and not the other people. I believe that you care because you pass over plenty of other churches to come here. I believe that you care because you allow me to show some YouTube, some hymns, last week some rap, a little bit of contemporary gospel, and other genres. I believe you care because our little babies were up here singing—the older ones to the little ones and then together. *Care*. An instructor who wants to make sure when the life of this church goes on, that every 15 minutes after worship, the Youth Choir is here rehearsing. *Care*. *Care* when we have theological battles within the church, and you choose to stay. That's *care*. Because you're moving beyond yourself for the sake of others. In this Stewardship season, I need you to keep on caring, and choose ways that you can care that will feed you and will feed your family so that you can stay on the journey with our Lord and our God.

Watch this: In the 9th verse Moses had died. "*Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom...*" Well, why was he filled with the spirit of wisdom? "*...because Moses had laid his hands on him...*" Blessed him. What does it mean when one generation blesses the next generation? It says there is life in you. There is potential in you, and I see it. And I'm blessing you. So that we don't have to have an Esau and a Jacob where only the oldest one gets to be blessed and there's trickery going on. I want us to be a liberal people, blessing people all over the place! We have the Abrahamic covenant as a part of our core values, in which we are "blessed to be a blessing."

Keep being a conduit of God's blessing. Care for those outside of the things that you care about, because they mean more to you than the things, than the things, than the things....

Let us pray:

God, we thank You, and we praise You for Your love for us. We thank You that through an Old Testament lesson, Gospel, and Epistle lesson, we get to learn how You worked through all circumstances and all situations to allow us, Your people, to be included in Your purpose and Your plan for this world. Lord, thank You for giving us the capacity to choose, the freedom to choose, and thank You for showing grace and mercy based upon some of the choices we have made—have mercy, Lord. Lord, sometimes we look at challenges and think that You have left us; but You gave us assurance in knowing that You will never leave us or forsake us. So help us to trust those challenges as clarifiers, helping draw us closer to You. And finally, thank You for caring enough to give up Your divinity to become a human and give Your life so that we might have life; and help us to love and care for others as we care for You and as we learn to care for ourselves. It's through the glorious name of Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.



*Scripture Passages for
21st Sunday after Pentecost*
(From the Revised Common Lectionary)

November 2, 2014

**Joshua 3:7-17;
Psalms 107:1-7, 33-37**

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13; Matthew 23:1-12

October 31, 2014



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

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PRAYER AND PRAISE



“We live, move, and have our being because of the Lord our God.”

- ⇒ Lift up Pastor Lee for successful shoulder surgery on Monday; prayers for his medical team in their decision-making and for his caregivers throughout the healing process. Celebration for the love our congregation has for our pastor!
- ⇒ Praise for all doctors, technology, and God’s healing power.
- ⇒ Lift up our Session.
- ⇒ Prayers for our country and all nations.
- ⇒ Lift up the hard work of reconciliation taking place locally this week.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving for the blessing of Doris and Vernon’s visiting grandchildren who are doing well.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving that the way was made clear for Nancy and Richard to attend her father’s memorial service last week and for time with her brothers and sisters.
- ⇒ Traveling mercies for:
 - George, Grace, and the twins on their return from Mississippi;
 - Doris, Vernon, and grandchildren when they return to Dallas;
 - Matthew A.’s trip to Florida;
 - Sam Okyere Mireku returning from St. Simons, GA, and thanksgiving for his opportunity to meet another young man from Ghana who was ordained by Sam’s father.
- ⇒ Prayers for a good medical report for Vernon.
- ⇒ Lift up Nancy H. for continued healing in the aftermath of her car accident.
- ⇒ Praise for “the beauty of the earth” (sung in chapel service) and in particular our great weather this weekend.
- ⇒ Praise for Jeff’s safe travel to west Texas to view the incredible astronomical wonders of God’s creation continuing to be revealed through the powerful telescopes at UT’s McDonald Observatory.
- ⇒ Lift up all school children who go through a lot of things at home that are carried over into the classroom, and prayers that they and their teachers and aides may be given the strength to deal with them and make a difference in their lives.
- ⇒ Joyful thanksgiving for many answered prayers and especially that:
 - Caly’s daughter Jae will join the large family gathering for Thanksgiving;
 - Young DJ’s pathology report indicates the absence of both tumor and scar tissue;
 - Cyrus is being discharged to outpatient therapy for several more months.
 - George H.’s test for melanoma is clear.

October 31, 2014



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

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PRAYER AND PRAISE



- ⇒ Thanksgiving for an opportunity last week to show our beautiful city to friends who were first-time visitors to TX.
- ⇒ Lift up Mike, Misti, and others who have been part of our church family but whom we don't see often.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving that Jesus died on the cross for us and that he cares for us.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving that Tracey's friend Laura can return home from her role as her father's caregiver; praise that although not cured of his illness, he is regaining strength and self-sufficiency. Prayers for Laura's difficulty reentering her family's life.
- ⇒ Lift up all caregivers.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving for Tracey's sister's husband Pat's successful knee replacement surgery; prayers for swift healing with minimal pain.
- ⇒ Praise the Lord for Patricia's opportunity to continue her mission in South Sudan on November 3rd. Prayers that her preparations will be completed in time.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving for children's happy anticipation of Halloween.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving that Jacob's mommy's knee is better this week.
- ⇒ Praise for Tamara's new opportunity to work at IHOP and for Ernest being accepted for an internship in Wisconsin with Head Start.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving for the PCUSA bookmarks that Trish discovered and shared, which not only list the books of the Bible but also contain descriptions of their content.
- ⇒ Prayers that the Lord may bless Shannon D., a former member of our men's group, who found a job selling Subarus in Madison, WI and is seeking a church family. Lift up his relationship with his brother, a member of the Bahá'í faith.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving for the prayers of our church family during Uly's interview process, which he felt went well.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving for the Caregivers class (offered through St. James' Episcopal Church) that 8 folks are attending and for the uplifting opportunities for sharing and support.
- ⇒ Prayer of praise for Lydia's safe travels and return to Austin after a four-day meeting with the National Presbyterian Hispanic/Latino Caucus and the National Hispanic Men's Meeting in Las Vegas.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

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NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

"The Face, the Grace, and the Race"

Exodus 33:12-23; Matthew 22:15-22

John Harrison

*New Covenant Fellowship of Austin-Chapel
18th Sunday after Pentecost—October 19, 2014*

Exodus 33:12-23

Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth." The Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

Matthew 22:15-22

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" ²¹They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away "The Face, the Grace, and the Race"

I have a friend at seminary named Miss Marsha Clarke, and she's a tiny African American woman with a big, powerful voice and the face of an angel. Every time I see her, I say, "Hi, Miss Marsha, how are you doing?" and she replies, "I'm blessed and highly favored"—each and every time. Think about what that does to your day when somebody asks you how your day is, and you respond, "I am blessed and highly favored!" She shouts it at me almost every time, and it shows! She glows with the Lord's Spirit.

And that's the voice I hear in my head as I read our passage from Exodus.

"How you doin', Moses?"

"Blessed and highly favored!"

"For real?"

"Yes, it is written *'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.'*"

That feels good to hear! And that's what Jesus is preaching. But when he started preaching that in the temple, the Pharisees want to rain on our parade. When they say "**Teacher, we know you teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and do not regard anyone with partiality.**" What they're really saying is God shows no partiality. One could read that to rebut all the parables Jesus has just preached.

"You all have hope that the last shall be first and the first shall be last? Well, you know God shows no partiality, right? You know that VIP banquet you all got to sit in on because none of the invited guests showed up? Well, how can there be a VIP if God shows no partiality?" "It's first-come-first-served. Take a ticket, pay your temple tax, and we'll call your number when you're ready since God shows no partiality." The NIV translates this as "**God shows no favoritism.**"

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So the question becomes, how can I be blessed and highly favored if God doesn't show favoritism? I'm a sinner—I need grace! I need the Lord to look upon me with favor. And God does look upon us with favor. As we understand how that is, I want us to think about three words: **Face, Grace, and Race.**

Face:

If you look at the Greek for when the Pharisees say **“you do not regard people with partiality,”** what they are literally saying is **“you don't see faces.”** So what they're saying about God is that God does not see faces. And they're not making that up. That's a description of God that's all over Scripture.

In the book of **Acts**, Peter opens his sermon at the house of Cornelius with the words **“God shows no partiality”** to show that the gospel no longer just belongs to Israel but that it's open to all the nations. It's God saying, **“What I have made clean, let no one call unclean.”** Clean and unclean, God shows no partiality.

In **Galatians**, Paul uses this phrase **“God shows no partiality”** to say that he doesn't need a reputation in Jerusalem to be an apostle of God. Peter, James, and John might be the pillars of the church, and Paul might be crazy Pharisee preaching that you don't have to be circumcised to get into the kingdom of God, but they can't claim to be better than he is because **“God shows no partiality.”** Circumcised and uncircumcised, let no one exclude whom God has included.

First Samuel puts it most plainly: **“for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”** That's how I end up understanding the words **“God shows no partiality,”** that God doesn't get distracted at the appearance of things, that God can't be fooled, that God sees to the heart of things. And that's Jesus's whole message back to the Pharisees in the book of **Matthew**: You're not fooling God with your loud prayers or your public piety, because God sees straight through to the heart.

And this is how we recognize God in Jesus, because he doesn't see faces but sees straight through to the heart of things. If you think of the word “hypocrite” as meaning “two-faced,” Jesus doesn't see the face they put on. But it means more than that here. He walks among people whom the temple has told are too unclean to come in. He eats with sinners and tax collectors, people the Pharisees say are too unclean to sit at table with. Jesus sees right through all the grime and muck, the sins and the sorrows, the wounds and the bad blood, the body odor, the prison uniform, and he sees the beautiful child God stitched together in the mother's womb. Whatever people see when they see you, whatever might keep us out of the temple, Jesus sees right through it. Anything we can think of that might separate us from the love of God, Jesus can see right through.

There's hope in the idea that the Lord doesn't see faces, but there's even more hope that we might someday see the face of God. When I was working in the jail last year, they would begin every worship service with the song “There is nothing like the presence of the Lord, the presence of the Lord, the presence of the Lord.” And it builds up to a chorus: “As we seek his face, he is here in this place.” It's a powerful message, and it gets everyone amped up.

And the cool thing is, if you look at the Hebrew word for “presence,” it too literally means “face.” So when the Lord says, **“my presence will go with you”** it literally means **“my face will go with you.”** That's where the words come from in the blessing you all have heard before: “May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine upon you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” The face of the Lord is where we find our blessings, and where we find our rest.

The Pharisees would probably rain on this parade, too, because our **Exodus** passage ends with the words **“No one shall see my face and live. You can see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”** [portrayed in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*] The Pharisees look at God with a veil over their faces. They keep a curtain between us and the holy of holies. They knew those words **“I know you by name, and you have found favor in my sight”** were only spoken to Moses, who interceded on behalf of an errant people. Only through following Moses could they get to God.

The Pharisees were saying we needed to follow the law to experience the presence of the Lord, but Jesus came to say, **“No, you've got it backwards. You need the presence of the Lord to follow the law. Your sins are forgiven, I know you by name, and you have even found favor in my sight. Stand up and walk. Follow me, and I will show you the ways of the Lord.”** Jesus was extending hope to people who had no hope, that they too were invited to come into the presence of the Lord.

Grace:

For our second point, the message of grace in this passage and the message of blasphemy in the Pharisees' ears is that in Jesus we can experience the presence of the Lord. In Jesus the Lord's countenance is lifted up upon us. In Jesus we can even hope to see the face of God.

One of my favorite mentors says the **Bible** is a dangerous, revolutionary document. And he's right. This is a dangerous message, that everyone who's on the outside has access to the inside and should pursue that access with the boldness of a favored child of God. That boldness has the potential to cause some trouble, and the Pharisees knew it. It could destabilize their interests with the emperor who lets them be in charge, who lets them have a temple at all. However nice the Lord's face is, it's the emperor's face on our money. It's the emperor's graces we need to worry about.

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The emperor's face declares the emperor's domain. Whose face has the greater power over us? Whose image is on us? If the money belongs to Caesar, who do we belong to? Who does Jesus belong to? Imagine him turning to you and asking, ***"Who do you say that I am?"***

In the end, the Pharisees rendered Jesus up to Caesar, saying, ***"It is better to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."*** They said, ***"This man doesn't belong to us, and he doesn't belong to God."*** And when Jesus was hanging on the cross, they looked up at him and said, ***"How can this man belong to God?"*** And that is the threat of the cross that the emperor holds over anyone who would claim to belong to another master. What good is divine favor when the emperor can hang the son of God on a tree to die? What good is the face of God when it is twisted in anguish, crying out, ***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*** ***"My people, why have you forsaken me?"*** What good is the face of God when we stand at the foot of the cross? And that's exactly what the cross is designed to make us think. It's the empire's cruelest way of saying it owns you.

And the empire will always try to own us. But as Christians, we have faith that we belong to God. And we know this because we know that the cross did not have the final word. Jesus got rendered up to Caesar, to the cross, to death, and even unto the gates of hell; and yet we know that that's not where the story ends. God raised Jesus from the dead and rendered him back to us. And when Jesus ascended into heaven, he was rendered back unto God. In life and in death, we belong to God, and not even death on a cross can take that away from us.

In the movie *"The Shawshank Redemption,"* a prison warden hands each new inmate a ***Bible***, and says, "Put your trust in the Lord; your butt belongs to me." What does it mean to belong to God when our bodies are subject to the powers of this world? How do we hold onto hope in the grace of God when the empire uses every tool at our disposal to crush that hope out of us? What does it look like to belong to God?

That takes us to our third point: in the face of God and the grace of God, we become the race of God.

Race:

In *Exodus*, Moses says ***"How will it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."*** Paul talks about a third race of people who are neither Jew nor gentile. In the words of Peter we are ***"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."*** We at New Covenant know all about being a peculiar people. We're a motley crew! And we come together as the image of exactly what God is calling us to be under Caesar's rule.

In a country with a deep history of racism, enforced by the federal government, we are interracial. In an economy that tries to separate out people of different economic statuses into different markets of consumers, we worship, rich and poor together. In a world that tells us some faces are more beautiful than others, we know that there's nothing more beautiful than the face God gave us, and that we are beautiful in the sight of God and in the sight of each other.

But the race of God means something even deeper than that. Have any of you ever had the experience of recognizing the Spirit of Jesus at work in someone else? When you are in need of some help and someone actually responds with joy at the opportunity to help you? When someone is trying to con them, and they can look right through it and say, "I love you anyway"? When they're out there working, and tithing, baking communion bread, sewing banners, mopping floors, staying up all night in a homeless shelter, all with a smile on their face? When you see eyes that know how to see you, to accept you, to love you exactly as you are?

That's something I'm going to call Jesus eyes. I see that a lot here at New Covenant. We've got a glow that comes from worshipping in the presence of an awesome God, and no matter who we are, people know whose we are. People can look at us and see through our faces to know that we belong to Jesus, that we are filled with the Spirit, and that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Paul talks about the glory of people who have seen the veil that separates them and that God removed. He says that "all of us with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of God as if reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image."

God looks past the face we put on, to see us in our hearts. We see God's grace face to face in the form of Jesus, and we are transformed in the glory, a peculiar people, a third race, loving and serving other people with joy; and in the Spirit, our face blends with the face of Jesus.

Beloved, the next time you look in a mirror, behold the child of an awesome God, with God's image stamped upon you, liberated, redeemed, and rendered up to God holy and without blemish, rejoicing in the presence of the glory of the Lord.

Amen.

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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

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All-Church Retreat at MO-Ranch

Friday, November 14th

Through

Sunday, November 16th

Join us for our ALL-Church Retreat
for fun and fellowship!

We will enjoy group activities,
family-style food, and the beautiful
amenities and scenery at MO-Ranch.

This event is for the **WHOLE** family
and it's **FREE!**

For more information or to sign up
please email Elder Mary Mojica —

maryjomojica@yahoo.com

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Nananananna...
I am the first to church
this Sunday!



Job Opportunities

DO YOU WANT A NEW JOB OPPORTUNITY?
Check out this free job-finding service!

Goodwill Industries provides Austin residents with a free job-finding service involving many companies in the Austin area.
If you need work, please look into this opportunity.

Here is a link with more detailed info:

<https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job>

For more information contact the Goodwill intake number, [512-637-7580](tel:512-637-7580), to begin the process and learn what the next steps are.

NCFA Women's Ministry

Important Dates and Opportunities

November 4-20 Synod of the Sun Global Exchange Trip, "One Heart, One Love, One Community—Visions of Hope in the Islands of the Sea." Synod of the Sun is blessed to have two participants going to the Caribbean.

November 6, Thursday The Thursday Noon Women's Bible Study will continue with the *Horizons* study of 2 Corinthians, meeting at Connie Jones' home, 5107 Edenborough Lane.

November 7, Friday Church Women United, World Community Day, Friday, 9:30 AM, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 1711 East Oltorf. Yearly dues are \$10.00.

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We Care Kits

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” 1 Peter 3:15

We are currently accepting the following donations

Food/Drink Items:

Granola Bars
Peanut Butter Crackers
Trail Mix
8 ounce size water bottles

Hygiene/Personal Items:

Travel Size Toothbrush
Travel Size Toothpaste
Travel size soap or bodywash
Travel size shampoo
Pocket size Kleenex
Pocket size comb (no pointed handle)
Chapstick
Adult white ankle crew socks – size large

All donated items should be placed in the donations box located in classroom 7. If you have any questions please email me:

calyflower2020@yahoo.com or call me at (512)228-4712.

NCFA Evangelism Committee and the Children and Youth Committee will schedule a date in November to put the kits together and kits will be dispersed after Sunday services in November.

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- 4th Cathy Trautman
- 7th Brandi Palacios
- 7th Doris Bailey
- 9th Larry Mack
- 16th Misti Herrington
- 17th Tom Coffman
- 18th Kyrie Grace Aldas
- 23rd Tiffany Cox
- 24th Angela Unegbu
- 29th Sam Mancillas
- 30th Lileisha Daniels



27th Charles and Stacy Robinson



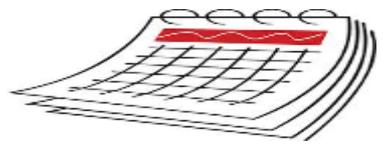
Session Members

- *Rev. James Lee
Pastor/Moderator
- *Elder Kathy Smith
Clerk of Session
- *Rev. Bill Harris
Administration & Personnel
- *Elder Tim Lenz
Buildings & Grounds
- *Elder Mary Jo Mojica
Congregational Life
- *Elder Randy Mojica
Children and Youth
- *Elder Cathy Angell
Discipleship
- *Elder Caly Fernandez
Evangelism
- *Elder Tracey Lenz
Finance & Stewardship
- *Elder Robert Booth
Lay Ministry
- *Elder George Washington IV
Men's Ministry
- *Elder Vernon Bailey
Missions
- *Elder Jane Mack
Women's Ministry
- *Elder Charles Robinson
Worship & Membership

Deacons

- Connie Jones, Chair
- Jimmy Bohn
- Ulysses Cox
- Katie Harris
- Naomi Jones
- Samuel Okyere Mireku
- Lucy Oglesby
- Kathy Smith
- Carol Saddington

NOVEMBER



- 2nd 21st Sunday after Pentecost
8:15-9am Worship at NCFA Chapel
at Waller
Rev. Trish Holland, *preaching*
9-10am Adult Sunday School
10:15am Worship—1507 Wilshire
Blvd.
Pastor James Lee, preaching
Sunday School—K-5th
during Worship
12:15pm Youth Choir Rehearsal;
ages 3-20 welcome.
Dedication of 2015 Pledge Cards
Congregational Meeting to elect new
Elders and Deacons.
- 4th Men's Bible Study: Dinner at
6:30 and Study at 7pm.
- 5th Ministry Meeting Night: Dinner at
6:30pm; Meetings at 7pm.
- 6th Noon Bible Study at Connie Jones's
home; all welcome.
- 14th—16th
All-Church Retreat at MO-Ranch