

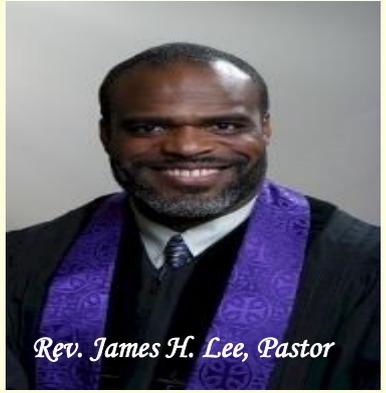
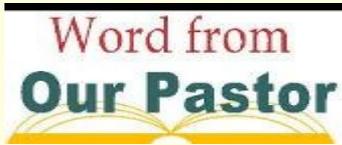
June 26, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

WWW.NCFAUSTIN.ORG

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

Dear NCFA Family and Friends:

My heart is full and my mind is racing.

I find myself in so many different circles, which allows me to hear different conversations and points of view. As you know, it takes every effort and the hand of God to keep my mouth shut sometimes. I still hear some of my teachers telling me, “James, God gave you two ears to listen and one mouth to speak; listen more and speak less.” I also hear the words of Stephen Covey, “Seek to understand, then to be understood.” However, I wonder how often are we listening to each other and actually responding to what we hear from another person’s perspective. It feels like we are working so hard to “be right and do right” that the right things are not accomplished.

On Saturday morning I met members from the San Jacinto High Rollers Motorcycle Club, whose group donated \$40,000 to the Texas Lions Camp. As we eyed each other, they were struggling with the press from the biker situation in Waco and the shooting in Charleston. I was struggling with racial tension in America, the Mission Presbytery meeting, and the shooting in Charleston. But God gave us all the capacity to find a mutual ground to have a conversation—you guessed it—children from the Texas Lions Camp. I learned about the Texas Lions Camp, and I got a chance to share the good news and extend blessings. Furthermore, God gave me a new picture. I got a chance to see big burley men with long beards playing with physically challenged kids.

Also on Saturday, the Presbytery Youth Connection was responsible for our morning worship. They focused on the text from *Habakkuk 2:1-3*, which says:

¹I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. ²Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. ³For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

The prophet was looking out to protect the people, waiting to hear from God, while confused by God allowing Israel’s enemies to discipline Israel. God gave the prophet a word of hope in the midst of despair. The Youth Connection picked up on the message and used a “visual sermon” as encouragement and affirmation to help people who were frustrated, hopeless, and in despair. You might say, “James, it was just teenagers putting together a puzzle; learning how to play the guitar; gaining test-taking skills; or learning to trust God after the devastations from the floods and the killings.” You are correct, but the YC let us know that all of us, young and seasoned, are affected by what’s going on around us. What I appreciated about their presentation was that after each encounter, the individuals joined together as a team to affirm the next situation. They came together to problem-solve rather than “one up” each other or tear each other down.

We have done so much and yet there is so much more work for us to do....Amen?! Remember: What are you seeing and hearing? What are you doing about it?

On Sunday Rev. Trish Holland will preach at our 8:15 service, and I will preach at the 10:15 service, which will be our Family-Friendly worship service. Michelle Walker of East 19th Street MBC will be our guest soloist at 10:15. After worship we will have a Congregational Meeting to vote on our two representatives from the congregation to serve on the 2015 Nominating Committee. Our joint chairs, two Ruling Elders from our Session, are Randy and Mary Mojica. Carol Saddington is our Deacon representative, and we look forward to adding two more to the group. Please prayerfully consider serving on the committee or discerning the call to serve as a Ruling Elder or Deacon in the fall.

Even as we celebrate Matthew Aldas, our current seminary intern, we also celebrate Jacqueline Williams, recent graduate and last year’s intern, who will be ordained at New Creation Fellowship on Thursday, July 2, at 7pm in San Antonio.

Special thanks to everyone associated with our 2015 VBS, whose theme was “G-Force: We live, move, and exist.” I plan to reinforce the key words and concepts “Move, Act, Care, Follow, and Share” on Sunday during our Time with Children.

Finally, please pray for our nation, our world, and all of our leaders. You are a leader, and so we also pray for you.

1 Timothy 2:1-4: ¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

God Bless

Pastor James Lee

June 26, 2015



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June 28, 2015

Congregational Meeting



Immediately following worship service to elect members to the Congregational Nominating Committee



NCFA CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY



VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

YOU ARE NEEDED

PLEASE CONSIDER WAYS YOU CAN HELP SOLIDIFY OUR MINISTRY:

- ASSIST UTOPIA IN THE NURSERY
- ASSIST TEACHERS IN CHURCH SCHOOL
- BRING CREATIVE IDEAS
- SERVE WHEREVER YOU ARE NEEDED
- VOLUNTEER FOR OUR 2015 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (JUNE 14TH-17TH, 21ST)

June 26, 2015



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**Breakthrough
Austin**

CREATING FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATES

MINUTE FOR MISSION



WHEN:
Sunday, June 28
10:15am Service

Breakthrough Austin provides a path through college, beginning in middle school, for low-income students who will be first-generation college graduates.

WHERE:
New Covenant
Fellowship

On Sunday, July 28, Breakthrough's Senior Director of Development and Communications, Grace Washington, will share meaningful ways to make a difference in the lives of Central Texas students who need it most. Please join us!



MOBILE LOAVES & FISHES
Miracles on Wheels

Opportunity to Serve Our Neighbors

You are invited to reserve a spot **July 3**, or the 1st Friday of each month when it is NCF's turn to team up at **5:30pm** and ride in a **Mobile Loaves & Fishes truck** to deliver food and clothing to folks in our community who need this blessing.

RSVP Jeff Saddington by next Sunday
426-8805 / jeffsaddington@gmail.com

June 26, 2015



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Jane's Circle



We are back in full gear -
every 4th Saturday at 8:30 am.

Jane's Circle will meet in the classroom at 8:30 am
on Saturday, June 27th and we will continue with
the study on Paul and Corinthians.



Our very own Nikkie Shubitz is a volunteer at Green Gate Farms, which provides organic fruit and vegetables to our communities. As a result of her volunteering, the farm is offering a \$200.00 scholarship for Kids from NCF to attend their camp, which is usually \$400.00. Should you be interested in sending your child to camp, please contact Nikkie Shubitz or register directly at www.greengatefarms.net

Using the code FARMFRIEND. The Children and Youth committee are considering ways to work with families to ensure that interested children are able to attend the camp. Families and the committee will work together to address financial concerns, etc.

At Farm Camp, children ages 5-15 learn firsthand where their food comes from. **Every day, your campers will work with farm animals and eat freshly harvested organic food.** In addition, there are weekly themes with featured guest speakers and activities



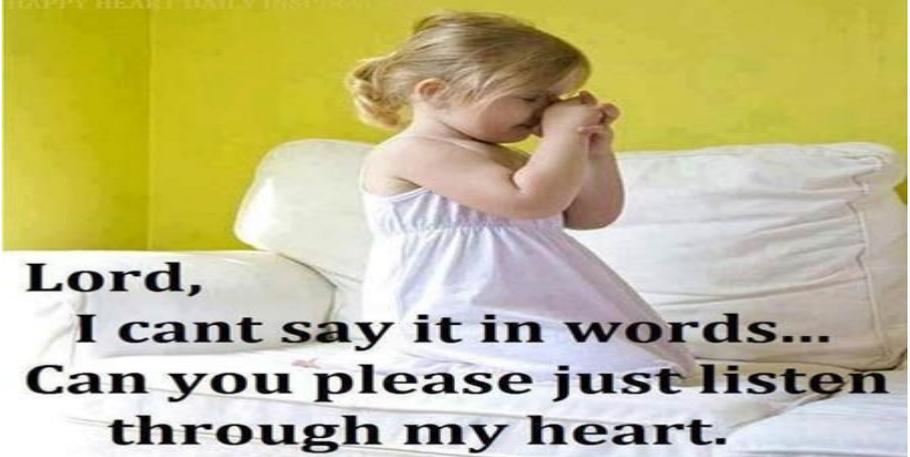
ARE YOU A MUSICIAN??
A pianist? A guitarist? A soloist?

**Our 8:15 am service at the NCFA Chapel
on the Perry Estate 4100 Red River
is in need of a musician.**

**If you can help, or know someone who might be able
to, please contact Trish Holland, 512-461-6250 cell
or 512-892-0680 home.**

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

PRAYER AND PRAISE



- ⇒ Praise for the men of NCF! We women love, respect, and appreciate you.
- ⇒ Praise for Pastor Lee's sermon reminding us that Jesus is with us through the storms that come in life. And for reminding us that storms often come from the enemy to thwart our development as Christians.
- ⇒ Where there's a will, there's a way! Vi praises the Lord for getting her through several event filled days and allowing her the joy of worship with her NCF family.
- ⇒ Lift up travel mercies for Caly as she goes to Houston for a conference—Healthy Mother, Healthy Babies—with more than 500 attendees.
- ⇒ Praise for the overwhelming support from her Board of Directors that caused Tiffany to pass on a new job opportunity.
- ⇒ Praise that a foster-to-adopt baby was successfully placed with a family. Lift up Kimberly and Jimmy as they move forward in the fostering process.
- ⇒ Praise for the safe arrival of a friend and his wife from Nigeria. Lift up God's provisions for their future endeavors.
- ⇒ Thanks be to God for another opportunity to trust him. Thanks for the support of friends.
- ⇒ Lift up all those directly affected by the slaughter of nine believers in their Charleston church. Lift up racial reconciliation in neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries worldwide. Praise for the church members' strong faith that enables them to forgive the perpetrator and hope for his repentance.
- ⇒ For some people racial reconciliation isn't easy; for some it is. Lift up the work for betterment that will come.
- ⇒ Praise for people who have obeyed the Lord's command to be fruitful and multiply, bringing forth generations of families. Pray that information and wisdom are passed along in the correct way. Pray that we can all get along.
- ⇒ Lift up continued improvement for Kathryn's father who is out of the hospital and busy teaching four courses. Lift up her sister Dana who is moving to Charleston with a church plant group. May she be able to spread the Gospel and be part of the needed healing.
- ⇒ Lift up intentionality of people coming together in racial reconciliation. Lift up the continued efforts of the NCF congregation to set an example of being a loving multiracial community.
- ⇒ Praise for Jenny's mother being in worship this morning.

June 26, 2015



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- 12th Charles and Pat Nemir
- 18th Ulysses and Gina Cox
- 20th Tim and Tracey Lenz



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 & Women's Ministry
- *Elder Caly Fernandez
Evangelism
- *Elder Tracey Lenz
Finance & Stewardship
- *Elder Robert Booth
Lay Ministry
- *Elder Benton Hooks
Men's Ministry
- *Elder Vernon Bailey
Missions
- *Elder Charles Robinson
Worship & Membership

Deacons

- Connie Jones, Chair
- Kathryn Aldas
- Ulysses Cox
- Naomi Jones
- Samuel Okyere Mireku
- Lucy Oglesby
- Ashley Phillips
- Carol Saddington
- Cathy Trifiro
- Roxann Vallejo

- 1st Eli Smith
- 2nd Trish Holland
- Aria Ella
- 4th Becca Weaver Longino
- Dana Williams
- 7th Edna Parrish
- 12th Scott Phillips
- 13th Nancy Harris
- Penelope Booth
- 14th Justina Okyere Mireku
- 15th Madison Lopez
- 20th Richard Tallman
- 22nd Eddie Daniels, Jr.
- 24th Jane Mack
- 25th Alice Hernandez
- Heather Oglesby
- Robert Booth
- 29th Ulysses Cox, Jr.

BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR MADISYN

Sunday after worship, we will be celebrating our new member Madisyn H. 5th Birthday.



Come out and help us make this a very special birthday for Madisyn. Please plan on bringing all the kids under age 9 for some games, refreshments and gifts.

Maddie loves Frozen and Disney princess.

JUNE - JULY 2015

- 28th 5th Sunday after Pentecost
8:15am Waller Creek Chapel
Rev. Trish Holland, preaching
9-10am Adult Sunday School
10:15am Worship at 1507 Wilshire Blvd.
Pastor Lee, preaching
Sunday School – K-5th during Worship
- 30th 6:30pm Men's Ministry
Dinner, Study at 7pm
- 1st 6:30pm Wednesday Night
Dinner;
First Wednesday Ministry Meetings
- 5th 6th Sunday after Pentecost
8:15am Waller Creek Chapel
Rev. Trish Holland, preaching
9-10am Adult Sunday School
10:15am Worship at 1507 Wilshire Blvd.
Seminarian Matthew Aldas, preaching
Sunday School – K-5th during Worship

June 26, 2015



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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

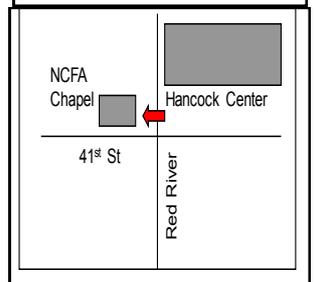
10:45am - Children's Church

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 are, to worship."
All are welcome to this traditional,
intimate style of worshipping our Lord.



NCFA Waller Creek Chapel — Upcoming Preachers

June 28 — *Rev. Trish Holland*

July 5 — *Sam Okyere Mireku*

July 12 — *Central Presbyterian Interim Candidate*

Prayerfully seeking a musician called to join this worship service.

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
Wilshire Campus starting at 10:15 a.m.

Real Church...
Real People...
Real Simple...

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 encour-
age seekers to joyfully commit, and to implore all to
worship our Lord, as we love our neighbors,
grow in grace, and live by faith.

JOIN US IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE GOOD NEWS

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

MISSION STATEMENT

New Covenant Fellowship is a racially diverse community informed by the Bible and empowered by the Holy Spirit. 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.

VISION STATEMENT

NEW COVENANT FELLOWSHIP IMPLEMENTS OUR MISSION BY EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS TO LIVE FOR CHRIST AND MINISTER THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

FOUR AREAS OF FOCUS FOR 2015

1. **Retain and minister to visitors and members through personal contacts, strengthening families, ministry-driven events, and identifying and utilizing the numerous gifts of our members.**
2. **Better utilize social media and other modes of communication to celebrate our ministry, share resources, and organize ourselves.**
3. **Enhance our Children and Youth ministries through mentoring, attending their extracurricular activities, utilizing their gifts in worship, and assisting in the Nursery and Church School.**
4. **Continue emphasizing Marketplace Ministry, celebrating the various ministries within our church and community, and reaching out into the community like the Community Garden and our Health Fair in November.**

The Six Great Ends of the Church

The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. (Book of Order G-1.0200)

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Café Justo

**IF YOU LIKE COFFEE OR
KNOW SOMEONE WHO DOES**



Consider supporting the NCFA Evangelism Committee and its partnership with Café Justo to bless this coffee grower's cooperative.

Café Justo is a coffee grower cooperative based in Salvador Urbina, Chiapas, Mexico. They market a pure organic coffee which is grown, harvested, and marketed in the spirit of justice. Our goal is to provide incentives for people to remain on their family lands.

Orders will be arranged through NCFA's Evangelism Committee. Please see Caly Fernández to place an order. Coffee is available in 1- and 5-lb. bags. The cost of a 1-lb. bag is \$9 and a 5-lb. bag is \$35. Dark roast, medium roast, and decaf are available in ground or whole beans. Coffee will be delivered biweekly to NCFA

Contact Caly to make your purchase today! 512-228-4712

NCFA FOOD PANTRY

All are welcome to participate in our *FOOD PANTRY*, a crisis ministry initiative of the *Deacons*.



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“Love Thy Neighbor”

If you or someone you know needs food, please take some.

**If you can help replenish our supply,
*UNEXPIRED NONPERISHABLES ARE WELCOME.***

Presbyterian Women

August 15, Saturday Austin Cluster Gathering, San Gabriel Presbyterian Church, Georgetown. Details will follow in newsletter.

September 4, Friday Church Women United will celebrate with an Ecumenical Action Emphasis theme, meeting 9:30 AM-11:30 AM, New Covenant Fellowship of Austin, PCUSA, 1507 Wilshire Blvd.

June 26, 2015



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Dear Friends,

As human beings, we are all creatures of contemplation, some of us more than others. Whether we are working, running errands or just relaxing, we think about our lives and their meaning. Contemplation, when we make room for it, can be the driving force behind how we choose to live our lives.

Why is it a part of human nature to reflect upon the world around us? Do we truly pour out in love that which we take in by contemplation, as Meister Eckhart believed? What do you spend most of your time contemplating?

I invite you to join us **Tuesday June 30** from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at **Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun Temple**, located at 6720 N Capital of Texas Highway, as we reflect upon and discuss the concept of **contemplation**. We look forward to hearing what you have to share.

The event is free and open to all. A light vegetarian meal will be provided. **Please RSVP** if you are attending.

What a man takes in by contemplation, that he pours out in love. - Meister Eckhart

Austin Area Urban League 2015 Summer Internship Program

The Austin Area Urban League is looking for six dedicated college students who want to learn the fundamentals of a non-profit organization. The Austin Area Urban League Summer Internship Program provides an insight into the world of non-profit management for college students in the Austin area. This program is a ten week unpaid internship where you will be required to work a minimum of 20 hours a week with a flexible schedule.

If you are interested, please call the AAUL at **(512)-478-7176** during our normal office hours.

The following internships are available:

- ◆ AAUL Summer Associate (2)
- ◆ AAUL Marketing (Graphic design) and Social Media Intern (2)
- ◆ AAUL Video Editor/Producer (2)

Additional benefits for interns:

- ◆ Lunch with the President & CEO of the Austin Area Urban League
- ◆ One-Day Leadership Retreat
- ◆ Developing a network of professionals for the future
- ◆ Gain valuable work experience that will look great on your resume
- ◆ Development of strong people skills whether it be in person, on the phone, or through emails and social networking sites.

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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

"What Does Your Faith Look Like?"

Psalm 20:1-9; Mark 4:26-34;

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

Pastor James H. Lee

June 14, 2015

Psalm 20:1-9 ¹The Lord answer you in the day of trouble! The name of the God of Jacob protect you! ²May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion. ³May he remember all your offerings, and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. ⁴May he grant you your heart's desire, and fulfill all your plans. ⁵May we shout for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions. ⁶Now I know that the Lord will help his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand. ⁷Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God. ⁸They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright. ⁹Give victory to the king, O Lord; answer us when we call.

Mark 4:26-34 ²⁶He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." ³⁰He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

2 Corinthians 5:6-17 ⁶So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. ¹¹Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. ¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

June 26, 2015



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“What Does Your Faith Look Like?”

Psalm 20:1-9; Mark 4:26-34;

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

Pastor James H. Lee

June 14, 2015

Today’s sermon title is “What Does Your Faith Look Like?” So folks are remarking that I am wearing burnt orange and then they noticed the song of Grace and Blessing had a lot of energy....I feel like attacking the sermon today! Sometimes preachers, you know, got to hold back and get the gate in front of you because you're ready to roll. And that's kind of how I am today.

I want to know what our faith looks like. So often you hear that we walk by faith, and we read it in the Corinthians text just now. Then we are told you have to have faith. A lot of times when folks are talking about faith, they know what it looks like for them and you know what it looks like for you—and sometimes they don’t look alike, but it’s faith. You had faith enough in the chairs to sit down today; up, down, up, down. You had faith to think that a line in the middle of a road would keep one car from crossing over to the next lane and hitting you head-on. You had faith. You have faith in the folks you're in a relationship with. ***“Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)***

For those who are Christians, for us there is faith in the One who gave us life, faith in the One who has purpose for all of us. And it's in that context that faith starts to get molded in different ways. It's still fluid, yes. But nevertheless it's still a call for us to move beyond where we are to where God would have us to be on this side of glory and on the next. Even with the imagery we see in the Corinthians text as they would say to be ***“in the body,”*** we would much rather be in the other body—to be in the very presence of God. For us to live as Christ and then also for us to be called home to glory is a gain.

There used to be an old joke that preachers would say, “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die.” And that's reality. I want to be with God; I want to be in the presence; I want to receive the reward. I want to be in the very presence of God, to be before the throne rejoicing with those who have gone before. But there's purpose, there's life here on this earth, there's joy yet to be experienced. There’s life that is yet before us, and so we want to be all that we can be but also do all that God would have us to do on this earth.

In these three texts we have a way of seeing how our faith makes a difference. Will we find faith in the chariots? Will we find faith in the battle-axe? Will we find faith in war, or will we find our faith in God? Faith in the Provider, the Protector, the Preeminent One, that's who I am calling us to call our faith back to.

“But James, I'm here in the church, I am a child of the Living God. What do you mean call my faith back to?” We are ever being called back; God is ever beckoning us back. You say “Yes”...but let something happen and then you say “God, I got this.” Or you say “Yes”...but let the storms come in your life and you’re like “Where are you? I don't trust you. I'm going back over here.” God is ever calling us back, and so from the Psalm reading again we're asked will you trust in the chariots or in the trust in God the one who answers in the time of our need (v. 7)? It is that Preeminent One, that Provider that gives seeds to the soul. Oh, the sower sows the seed, and I really wanted to jump up to the pericopes right before the text, but today it is important for us to understand that the sower sows, and then the sower leaves, and then the sower comes back.

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Psalm 20:1-9; Mark 4:26-34;

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Pastor James H. Lee

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You know it's so easy when we hear the parable to put God in with the action of the sower, but no, God is the one who gave seeds to the sower. That's a good thing because God is providing in ways that we cannot even imagine. Some of us try to compare what we have with someone else; but I want you to know God has been good to us all. Amen?! God has provided in the way that others look upon us and say, "If I could only have what she has, what he has"; and yet we're looking and saying, "You know, God, can you do a little better with this?" And there are others who will say to me how blessed they are. I just want us to be the people who are called back to say "God, thank you for being my provider, my protector, for being the one who does for me what I can't do for myself—and I think I'm doing it, but it is really you."

So it is this God who gives seeds to the sower, and the sower sows the seeds. I want you to know God wants you to be a seed sower. A seed sower! I want you to think about what seeds you are sowing and what seeds we need to be sowing as sowers of the Lord. Is that in the text? No! Am I a pastor trying to invite us to recognize that this faith journey isn't about what's in a book, but it's about our life and how we're called to live in 2015? And the answer is Yes. I want to invite you to sow some seeds, and you may say, "But I sowed some seeds and I am not getting the fruit; I didn't get the produce." Keep sowing seeds. Sow seeds. Going to the earlier periscope, you'll see you can sow some good seeds in good soil, bad soil, grainy soil, and weedy soil. The seeds are going to produce, and so you just keep sowing. Amen!

Then I want us to think about the process. We have a Preeminent One who provides the seeds and then calls us to trust that One to then sow. So the sowing takes place, and in this example of the text, the ground is good soil, and it produces. The seed produces. The same way God would have the seed do, it does. But the ground is only able to do what God enables the ground to do. So the ground functions like the ground is supposed to function; the seed functions the way it's supposed to function, and it germinates. And that's an amazing process!

And it doesn't happen overnight. We want it to happen overnight, but it takes time. As a pastor in counseling and walking with families, I hear them say they are trying to solve a problem. Well, did the problem just happen like this? No! Well, if it took time for the problem to come, it will take a little time for the process of moving from where you are to where you need to be. But you just stay engaged in the process and let God do something wonderful. Sow your seeds, sow your seeds, sow your seeds. Let seeds do what they do, let the ground do what the ground does.

As you read in the text, you know what happened to the sower? The sower couldn't explain how the seeds did what they were doing. The sower could not explain how this process worked. I know there's some horticulture folks who will say, "Well, I could tell you how it works." But who gave you that knowledge, who allowed us to really understand the intricacies of how it all worked out? God! And then who could explain why it works sometimes here and other times that not here? See, every now and then when we get to where we think we know, God will let us know "Baby, this is much higher than you." *Isaiah* would tell us that.

June 26, 2015



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But the process... there's a process, and I love just watching how slowly it can go. You all know that personally I didn't really like how slowly it came out, but I'm just watching—when the seed is scattered on the ground, he ²⁷*would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.* ²⁸*The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.* ²⁹*But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.* A process, and it takes time. In this church we have said we want this church to be a place where people belong, and then after belonging they will find themselves in a place where they can what? Believe... because it's a process.

Many people have been surrounded by other people but still found themselves alone. A lot of folks don't like doing the Passing of the Peace, but I love it. I want the music moving, I want us to move, and I want everybody saying “The Peace of Christ be with you” “and also with you.” I want a handshake or a hug. I want us to practice doing it here. So when we're out in the world you can say “Peace be with you” and “What's up?” Doing something to let someone else know “You are loved.” Moving beyond folks is like, “Ooooh, I don't want to move, I don't want to go anywhere, I don't know all these folks, and I don't like them coming to shake my hand or give me a hug or tell me ‘Peace’ or ‘God loves you.’ I don't want to hear that.” Why? Because every time you move from a place where you are stuck, it requires faith. And being hurt requires faith, trying to trust again requires faith, or choosing to sow again requires faith when you haven't seen the product you wanted to, it requires faith. Why is it taking so long for that seed to germinate to produce the harvest? It requires faith. But every time we go around, we keep giving each other what the world isn't giving, and we start to have a little more hope and start to believe a little bit more in the process.

Is the process the earth's process, humans' process, or is it God's process? God's! We keep trusting in ourselves, but go back to that *Psalm* reading; will you trust in the chariots or are you going to trust in God? God's ways are not like ours, so trust the process. I've got to ask you even though I know you are intelligent folks and you already know, but I still have to ask the question: If the seed's been sown in the ground, and the harvest that comes out of the ground and it's had its sickle and all that, are they the same? No! The substance is, but they're not the same, are they? A miracle is taking place, and a little seed produces a harvest. When you're in Christ, you are a new creation of the same substance but of something new. Anyone in here find themselves doing things a little bit differently than they used to do?

When I was in the country, they used to say, “I looked at my hands and they looked new, I looked at my feet and they did too—a change has come over me.” There's that imagery of the lepers, the one who when Jesus tells him “You are cleansed, go show yourself,” and he starts run and starts to look at the transformation. And then he comes back grateful because of something that took place. I've got to ask you, and I have to ask us because as much as we say we're not “works righteousness people,” as much as we say that we're people who are grace people, how much work in the text did we see that the sower had to do for the harvest to be produced? He just sowed, didn't he? I'm saying that not because I want us not to be people who live by faith or not to be people who work. But sometimes we get back to trusting in our abilities, our intellect, our work, time spent, what we produce on this side. We can get to doing that so much that we devalue our own gifts. Now y'all know I am stepping on my own toes while I'm preaching this. It's an Ouch, Amen, and Halleluiah all at the same time.

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I don't like it sometimes when I am preparing the sermon and I'm saying, "God, this is a good one." And God says, "Well, did you get it?" I'm saying that because sometimes we are working so hard to do it the right way. We line it up and do it over and over and over and over and when you do it the right way and you don't get the product, the harvest, you're like, "Oh, why should I keep doing it?" Because you're not trying to do it just for that sake. You're a Kingdom person. This is God's way. Let God produce a harvest, and sometimes the harvest isn't in the seed you just sowed. I've gone to get my haircut and run into the guard that was at the attorney general's office some 20 years ago, come to tell me that he remembered our conversations and how it blessed his life. There are times I'm going places and I'm seeing people who I haven't seen in years and they say, "I knew!" "You knew what?" "You had a call going in your life. "I'm glad you saw, but I didn't. I was running from that joker." Twenty and thirty years to see the product, to see the harvest.

But what I want us to do is to trust God for the process and the product that will come out on the other side. Because if it's all about the numbers, it's all about the money, we're going to get let down. But if it's about being present with God, to be a partner with God, say "You give me just seed. I'm going to sow. You ask me to be a part of the process. I'm reporting for duty. Lord, there's a harvest up there; what do you want me to do with it? Get the sickle, start pulling it up, and let's share. Let's share. That's what the Kingdom of God is about. Partnering with God, sharing the good news, watching God produce, seeing the harvest, and sharing with other people. "But God, if I do, that if my stuff might run out." God says, "Well, if you were using the earth's system, yes, it would. I'm a God of abundance! Y'all have scarcity because you're trying to work with the market to make sure you get paid and somebody else gets paid. I'm not trying to subsidize; I'm trying to provide. I provide for all my babies. Now I just need you to be the vessels that will sow and be open to all that I have for you." Amen?

So the apostles say to the folks that one day we'll have to give an account before Christ. I had to play with this just a little, just meddle just a little bit. You know it's important to me to be a child of the Living God; it's important for me to be a Christian, not so I can be exclusive but because I recognize everything that Jesus did for my sake. To give up his divinity for my sake. To choose to partner with God for my sake. To choose to sacrifice for my sake. To choose to love me with all of my mess. To choose to say "I am not going to wait till you get it right before I love you, before I give up my life for you." He said you can't get it right until I give everything I've got for you. That's why it's important for me to be a Christian. And His death, His burial, His resurrection....Call me close-minded, ignorant, whatever you want to call it, but I believe in His death, His burial, His resurrection because it's important. That he would not leave us orphaned so that when he is resurrected the Holy Spirit would come to rest, rule, and abide with us....I love it! Because we've got a God who cares for us even when we don't understand it and can explain it. I'm just grateful because that provider God who called me in partnership had me hear some old fellows, those old barbershop singers, and they would say, "What is this, you know, that makes me love my enemies makes me love my friends? What is this?" Well, whatever it is, it won't let me hold my peace. But you know what that "whatever it is" was? The Spirit of the Living God who rests, rules, and abides with us.

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As we leave today, know that you are a new creation. You are not the same, you are not the same. People around us, we are not the same. In the text it says that ***"we no longer regard each other according to what we see but according to the spirit"***—that is tough stuff, but that is what we're called to do. "Oh no, she said that to me. He did that to me. You can talk all that stuff when you're at church and that's good for the Bible, but a person did that to me." You're right, but we battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, things of high places. What moved that person to do with they did? What was in them that caused that to take place? And if you are who you are and you're part of God's process, will you apply a spiritual principle to what seems to be an earthly experience, or are you going trust in the chariots and allow war to beget war? Or allow love to overcome hate and the balm of Gilead to bring about a healing that no one else can bring about? Amen?!

The Preeminent One calls us to be a partner, and there's a process that takes time. It's not instant, but oh, when the produce comes, the harvest comes, it's a beautiful thing. You're a new creation; the seed that is sown and the harvest that comes on the other side, they're not the same, even though the substance is.

Let's pray:

*God, I pray you'll take these words, you'll take our lives, and you'll continue to keep unfolding your masterful plan in us; that you'll keep letting us know that you love us, that you will never leave us nor will you forsake us; and that even when we don't understand your word and don't always agree with it, it has life-producing principles in it that reveal who you are and what you're doing in it through us. God, when we get a little frustrated sowing seeds and are not seeing the produce as quickly as we'd like, help us to keep trusting in you and not in chariots. And God, when we're exhausted because we're doing things in our own energy and trying to keep working and working so that we can either satisfy ourselves or satisfy someone else or satisfy you, help us to remember the words that Paul would have shared—which some would have said they are of Apollos and some would say they are from him—but he said that one would sow and one would water, but God, it is only you that gives the increase. May you increase in our homes. May you increase in our community. May you increase in our marketplace ministries, our jobs. May you increase in the church so we will quit trying to do things in our ways and would do it according to yours. To you be the glory for the harvest that is yet before us. And Jesus said, ***"the harvest is plenty but the laborers are few."*** We pray to you, the one who is the Lord of the harvest, that there might be more laborers. So we're praying for more laborers, God, and I pray for the laborers who are tired, who are worn out, who are burned out, that you would renew in us your joy, renew in us that the right spirit and enable us to go forward and share the good news in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*