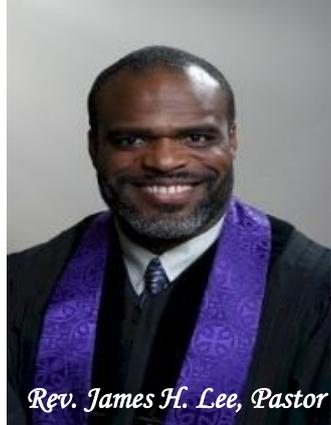
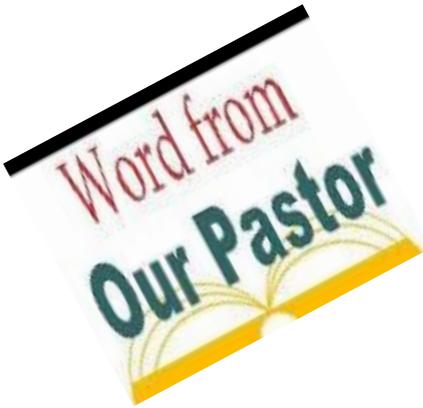


February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

Dear NCFA Family and Friends,

I pray that your first week of Lent has gone well. The celebration is that you have completed a week. I pray that the experience is bringing you closer to God and enabling you to learn more about yourself. For the most part, life would be pretty easygoing if we were not in relationships with other people. No matter how wonderful our relationships are with one another, there are still moments when we have to count to 10, forwards, backwards, in Spanish, and in German. Please know that our relationships help to form us, protect us, care for us, counsel us, correct us, and encourage us. Our relationships with other people remind us that we are not perfect and that God, who began a work in our lives, is still working things out. Below you will find the image of rocks in a tumbler. In order to transform rocks with jagged edges into smooth rocks, place the rocks into a tumbler and spin it. *Ta-da....smooth rocks!* I pray that you will not lose heart in the struggle but rather gain hope in the outcome, as a shiny smooth stone or rock.



On Sunday, Deacon Sam Mancillas will be preaching at the NCFA Chapel at 8:15am. Then at 10:15 at the Wilshire campus, please welcome the Rev. Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo, our guest preacher and Director of Alumni and Church Relations at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Lemuel has been a blessing to me since his days as the Associate Executive for Multicultural Ministries for the *Synod of the Sun*. He is standing in the gap for me as I travel to Dallas to serve and worship with Glendale Presbyterian Church.

Next week, please remember our First Wednesday Ministry Meeting night and come to the meetings. Please contribute by sharing your ideas during the meetings, and please commit yourself to areas of our ministry that ignite your passions for the Gospel and help us to make relevant improvements.

I also encourage you to participate in the Lenten Study hosted by Genesis and led by seminarian Cliff Frederick. The studies are taking place in the GPC Library on both Thursday mornings, 10:30-11:30am, and Tuesday evenings, 7-8pm.

Next Sunday, March 8, we will Celebrate the Gifts of Women with the Rev. Lydia Hernandez preaching at the NCFA Chapel and CRE Estela Sifuentes preaching at the Wilshire campus.

Finally, as many of you know, we endeavor not to make NCFA about agendas. Our goal was and remains to glorify God through the diversity of gifts represented in our church and the people we partner with for the sake of the kingdom of God. Our focus on being racially diverse is to help us to remain faithful to racial reconciliation in our community of faith. Because of this stance, I have been criticized for not being more outspoken about various issues. *It is a legitimate criticism, but it is one I accept because I believe we have chosen a more difficult path and are doing the greater of many goods.*

As Black History Month comes to an end, I encourage us to look at the many ways that African Americans have contributed to the greatness of the United States. Below are a few quotes just to whet your appetites:

- *"The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression."* – W.E.B. Du Bois
- *"Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us."* – Wilma Rudolph
- *"Surround yourself with people who take their work seriously, but not themselves, those who work hard and play hard."* – Colin Powell

Please remember to pray for the best good of everyone in our lives. God is making us shiny smooth stones to reflect God's glory.

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11 ¹⁰ *He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.* ¹¹ *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNE^XION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE BELHAR CONFSSION

Sunday March 1
12:30 – 2:00pm

A lively study of the “Belhar Confession”
Deacon Ashley Phillips, Convener
Lunch and childcare provided.

The “Belhar Confession” is the first confession from the Global South to be considered for inclusion in *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church USA. For a copy, see pcusa.org/resources/belhar.

Childcare will take place in Pastor Lee’s office. NCFA, we need to make sure that we picked up our children and cleaned the Nursery prior to 12:30 p.m.

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL STUDY

**Six-Week Study Hosted
by Genesis Presbyterian Church**

**Curriculum: Austin Seminary
Lenten Devotional
Led by: Seminarian Cliff Frederick
cliff.frederick@student.austinseminary.edu**

**Where: GPC Library
When: Morning/Evening options
Thursdays, 10:30-11:30am
Mar. 2, 12, 19
OR
Tuesdays, 7-8pm - Feb. 24,
Mar. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31**

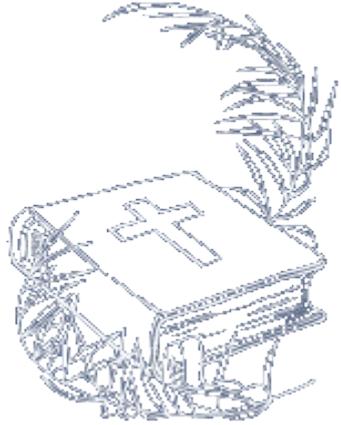
Please note: These events will not have child care or meals provided. Please plan accordingly.

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



To ensure that we best support the Lenten Devotional hosted by Genesis and led by Cliff, the Rev. Jeff Saddington will offer the 6-class series on the Gospel of Mark after Easter and starting April 9th.

He will facilitate the class using the book Mark's Gospel from Scratch, by Griggs and Myers.

The study will take place on Thursday evenings April 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th, May 7th and 14th.

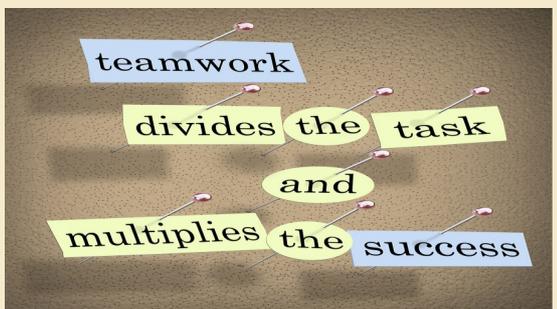
Please express your interest so that we can coordinate space with Genesis. Please note, this event will not have child care or meals provided. Please plan accordingly.

"You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things."

— Mother Teresa

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. Continuing to emphasize Marketplace ministry and identify the various ministries within our church and community.



February 27, 2015

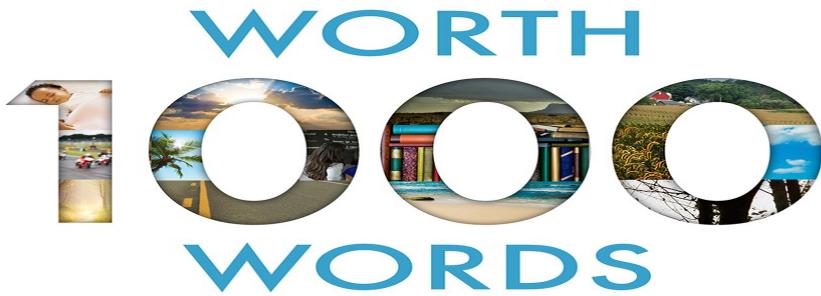


NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Leaders from 10 of the Austin area Presbyterian Churches have been working on a sermon series for the Lenten Season. The theme is "Worth 1000 Words." As Pastor Lee and others preach sermons throughout the Lenten Season, please consider images that help you express your faith, illustrate your emotions, and draw you closer to God.

Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words." - Francis of Assisi



A VISUAL JOURNEY THROUGH LENT



In an effort to promote racial reconciliation as leaders in the body of Christ, Round Rock area churches are invited to participate in a march over the Mays St. Bridge in Round Rock to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the day when 600 civil rights marchers were attacked as they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge leaving Selma, as portrayed recently in the movie "Selma."

You can read about the historic event at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al4.htm>. Bloody Sunday occurred on March 7, 1965, making next Saturday, March 7, the 50th anniversary of this pivotal event.

The march will start at 12noon on March 7 from the corner of Cushing Dr. and E. Logan St. and finish with a program in downtown Round Rock at the Sharon Prete Main St. Plaza.

Leading the march will be Mayor Alan McGraw, Police Chief Allen Banks, members of the Round Rock City Council including former Councilman Carlos Salinas, the Round Rock Black History Organization, and local clergy. March participants are requested to line up on the bridge behind the lead group by 11:45am. Since all lanes of traffic will be closed, groups should line up 20 across.

The distance is approximately a half mile, including a steep incline for part of the bridge, so that those who may have problems completing the march may choose to go directly to Prete Plaza at 221 E. Main St.

Additional information is available online at <http://www.statesman.com/news/news/local/entertainment/nkKr4/>

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

N C F A

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

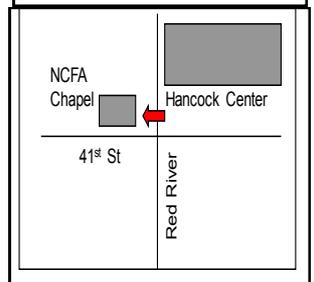
10:45am - Children's Church

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

March 1 – Sam Mancillas

March 8 – Rev. Lydia Hernandez

March 15 – Estela Sifuentes, CRE

March 22 –

NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 10:15am

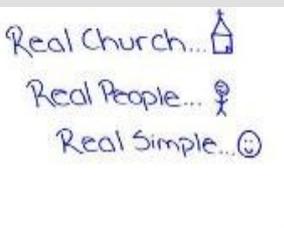
We would love to have you and your family
come share in the CELEBRATION OF
THE GOOD NEWS!

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.



JOIN US IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE GOOD NEWS

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



- 1st Nancy Tallman
- 5th Kali Christman
Rev. Lydia Hernandez
- 5th Matthew Aldas
- 7th Kwasi Agbottah
- 11th Gianna Mojica
- 12th Nhyira Okyere Mireku
- 17th Jason Lee
Christopher Davis
- 19th Hosea J. Lee
- 20th Sam Buford
- 22nd Crystal Unegbu
Jacob Pan Lew
- 23rd Nina Buford
- 29th John Harrison
Jessica Lee
Almari Alvarez
- 31st Jumarcus Daniels
Debbie Saddington

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

New Covenant Fellowship

MARCH



Study of the
Belhar Confession
Sundays March 1
12:30 – 2:00pm

March 1
2nd Sunday in Lent
Rev. Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo,
preaching.

March 3 6:30 –9:00 pm
Men's Ministry Dinner and Bible
Study, in the NCFA Kitchen

March 4 6:30pm
Light Dinner,
in the NCFA Kitchen
Ministry Meetings at 7am

March 5 12noon Bible Study
at Connie Jones's home

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

PRAYER AND PRAISE

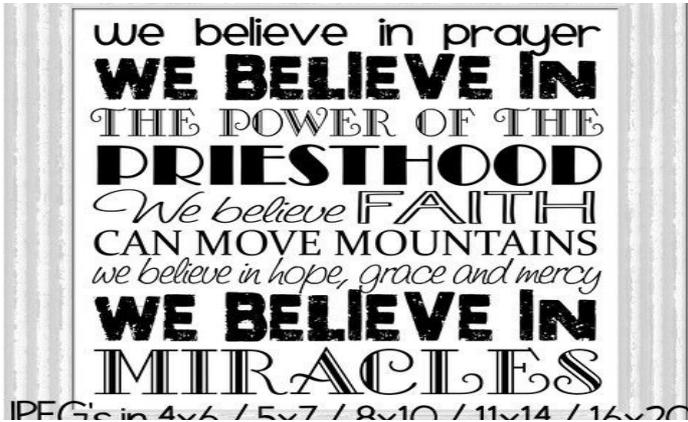
- Praise God for the beautiful life and ministry of Jerry's mother Mary Ann who entered the Church Triumphant early Friday morning, 2/27, in Kansas. Lift up Jerry, Christine, family, and friends who will miss her dearly.
- Thanksgiving for Sam O's chapel sermon, "Christ Our Example," and the reminder Christ is the example for our lives--in our own baptism; in our own temptations; and in our own proclamation of the Word. (Mark 1:9-15)
- Lift up the new believers among the Toposa people in Sudan for strength and courage as they trust God to transform them from their former ways of witchcraft and the persecution they face for turning from that lifestyle. Lift up eyes to see what God is doing in their midst so that they will not become discouraged:
- 1 Peter 13-18 Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,
- Lift up Richard's mother Pauline for health. Praise that her situation was not as bad as it first appeared and she was released from the ER.
- Lift up Ben as he cares for his mother Ann who has been re-hospitalized.
- Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! P-r-a-i-s-e t-h-e L-O-R-D! Whatever comes in life, we still give praise. Lift up Aisha as she grieves the recent death of her second father. Lift up her family back home.
- Lift up John's Aunt Judy who, at 65 years young, was tooling around LA on her electric bike and suffered an accident in which she was badly hurt.
- Prayers for the death penalty issue and prison reform--for the inmates, facilities, guards, officials, those in office who can effect changes, and voters who can also effect changes.
- Lift up the Mayan people who are being forcibly evicted from their homes by the Chiapas paramilitary. Pray for the putting down of arms and for Christ's Peace to pervade all hearts.
- Praise for Lenten spiritual disciplines; lift up believers who are being faithful.
- Lift up Peace in the world.
- Thanksgiving for Black History Month and the opportunity to remember all who contributed to the development of our country.

**FAITH and PRAYER
both are invisible,
but they make
impossible things
possible.!!!**

NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

PRAYER AND PRAISE



- Lift up peace and health for the people involved in a motor vehicle accident on Parmer Lane this morning.
- Lift up healing from an upper respiratory illness for Saul.
- Lift up Stacie, her mother, and Pastor Lee for strength, understanding, patience, love, and healing.
- On Fat Tuesday, Kyrie shared exciting news about her upcoming plans to visit family in Virginia. Praise for this child's continued enthusiasm as she looks forward to a fun time with her Aunt, Grandma, and Grandpa. Lift up traveling mercies for the family.
- Praise for Robert's family, especially his beautiful wife Genevieve who is an awesome mom. Praise for baby Jade's first two full nights of continuous sleep which has made Jade and her parents very happy!
- Lift up Genevieve's sister Christine who lives in Canada. She had her identity stolen by someone she knows. Lift Christine up for peace and prayers the unfortunate situation will be taken care of soon.
- Lift up recovery for Doug's mother Juanita who is in the hospital following a slight stroke.
- Praise that Catherine will be presenting Doug and Patricia with another grandchild. Lift up a healthy pregnancy and baby.
- Lift up the City of Austin which has experienced too many deaths recently.
- Praise and thanksgiving for supporting prayers for Vernon and family. Lift them all up as they care for his ailing sister Eunice. Praise for the good news that the Waco extension of the family is doing great! Lift up Jumarcus as he faces surgery.
- Lift up traveling mercies for Caly as she travels to a Community Health Worker Conference in McAllen. Praise for the provision of clothing and blankets to take to Sacred Heart Relief Center.
- Praise that Daisay came through surgery well last Thursday. Lift up her continued recovery.
- Lift up Scott for personal and professional refreshment as he attends a conference this week. Lift up Ashley and Charlie as they hold down the home front this week.
- Lift up the discussions of the Belhar Confession. Lift up clarity of the ramifications of PC(USA) presbyteries voting this spring on whether to include this confession in The Book of Confessions and courage for the voting representatives to vote their consciences.
- Praise and thanksgiving for Masa and Schuyler's baby shower, along with their/Danita's excitement of expecting a new child/grandchild!
- Lift up George's mother as she recovers from the flu. Praise for a renewed focus on The Word and the blessings that brings. Lift up the family and the kids.

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Helping Others

**IN THEIR
GREAT TIME
OF NEED**



Friends, we need your help. We are our best when we serve together. Please consider ways you can help our ministry leaders and ministries.

- **Buildings & Grounds** is in need of persons to help one or more days a month with light cleaning and set up for Sunday worship. This would typically be done on a Friday or Saturday and require between one and two hours of your time. *For details see Tim Lenz, Chairperson Buildings & Grounds*
- **Congregational Life** is in need of folks with the gift of hospitality and/or planning events. Contact Mary Mojica at maryjomojica@yahoo.com

After worship: Enjoy fellowship. Put away the Bibles and Hymnals. Collect the brown baskets and attendance sheets. Throw away our trash. Empty waste baskets in the classrooms, restroom, and kitchen.

**Coming together is a
beginning;
keeping together is
progress;
working together is
success.**

Henry Ford



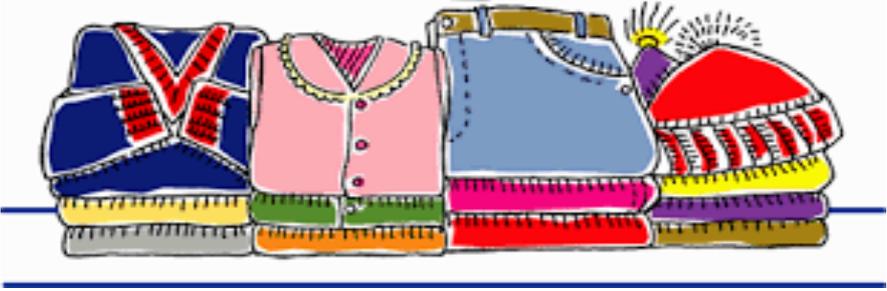
February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Clothing Drive



Greater Hope Center

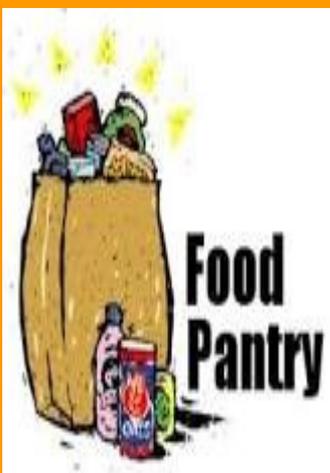
Clothing donations can be delivered to our boutique located at 4136 E. 12th, Austin, Texas 78723.

We accept all clothing donations during the hours we are open: Tuesday and Thursday 4:30 p.m. until 7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

We will also make special arrangements for donations at other hours.

Free clothing for those who need it.

FOOD PANTRY AVAILABLE TO ALL



The New Covenant Fellowship Deacons are now providing a free to all food pantry each Sunday. This is to help anyone who needs a little help in the obtaining of groceries. The table at the back of the church will have canned goods and other non-perishable food each Sunday. If you or anyone you know needs some help with groceries, please feel free to partake of the items available.

If you are able to donate food items to this table, please feel free to do so and bless you for your contribution. Paper bags with handles are also needed and if you have extra ones of these, please put them on this new food table.



February 27, 2015

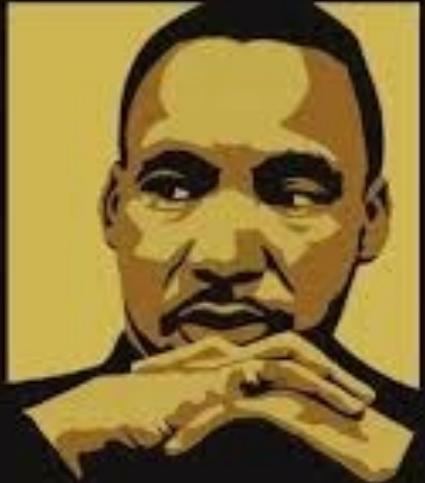


NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think.

• Martin Luther King, Jr.



Did you know the most effective Christian education takes place in homes where the adults are growing in their faith?
Check out one of these opportunities for growing in 2015:

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study - 6:30pm - Kitchen

Men are finishing up a study on the book of Judges by Tim Keller. The next topic will be selected by the Men's Ministry.

Thursday Noon Bible Study, 12 noon –1 pm at the home of Connie Jones – 5107 Edenborough Ln.

(north of 290 East, just past Springdale) A study of the writings of the Apostle Paul. All welcome, bring a bag lunch as desired.

4th Saturday Adult Bible Study, 8:30 am

Chapter 3 of "Reconciling Paul: A Contemporary Study of 2 Corinthians" by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty

Sunday Morning Adult Sunday School - 9:15am - Rm. 7

This class is studying a book by Bill Hybels and John Ortberg on the Sermon on the Mount, the Passion story, "The Lord's Prayer," and several parables. The scripture is read together and then questions in the guide are discussed, making it real to current life.

NCFA Women's Ministry

Important Dates and Opportunities

February 28, Saturday The 4th Saturday Morning Bible Study group (formally the 4th Wednesday Evening Bible Study) will be held in the kitchen at 8:30 A.M. Lesson 4 of *Horizons*, "Reconciling Paul: A Contemporary Study of 2 Corinthians" by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty will be studied.

March 1, Sunday CROP Walk, Camp Mabry.

March 6, Friday Church Women United will meet at 9:30 AM at Crestview United Methodist Church, 1300 Morrow. The program will center around World Day of Prayer.

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Blessed Stressed, and Yes”

1 Peter 3:13-22; Mark 1:9-15

Pastor James H. Lee

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

February 22, 2015—First Sunday in Lent

1 Peter 3:13-22 ¹³Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Mark 1:9-15 ⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” ¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. ¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

These are powerful texts, aren’t they—a wild extreme in many ways. In working with other Presbyterian pastors throughout this city, the word for today was “wild.” The picture of that could be of a lion with a mane and being able to see the wildness of the eyes. The wildness could be our week we’ve just had, or the wildness could be me wearing a bow tie on a Sunday morning—wild!

This morning’s sermon title is “*Blessed, Stressed, and Yes.*”

Blessed: ¹³Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord.

In this Epistle reading there is a wording of the fact that we are blessed. Even when we suffer and struggle, we are blessed. We hear in **Romans 5** there is a way in which you move through going from one place to another so that the process ends in a way of maturity, a spiritual growth. You go into **James**, and it says you count it all joy when you find yourself in diverse trials or trials. Count is as joy? Really? But yet, at the end there is a maturity that takes place in the Child of God. When we think of suffering, we say that we are supposed to be protected from suffering, that we shouldn’t have to suffer, and why is it allowed? It is natural to say, “I don’t want to suffer, to go through.” But the reality is that on this side of glory we will suffer.

Our Lord and our Master emulated for us a way in which that can take place. In the Gospel reading we have his baptism and then what takes place afterwards. In the Epistle reading we get an opportunity through the Apostle Peter to see how they speak to the church community that is going through a place in which they will suffer for their faith, for expressing their faith, and how it is that they’re supposed to model that and live through that oppression and those challenges...and even through that go back all the way to Noah’s days, even tie it in with the Old Testament. So, we have “Blessed, Stressed, and Yes.”

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Blessed Stressed, and Yes”

1 Peter 3:13-22; Mark 1:9-15

Pastor James H. Lee

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

February 22, 2015—First Sunday in Lent

Sanctify: Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated,¹⁵ but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you;¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.

Here in the Epistle reading it says we need to ***“sanctify Christ as Lord.”*** Some would say, “Is sanctifying like washing? like cleansing?” No, in this way sanctify means to set apart – to *know that you know that you know that Jesus Christ is Lord.* Why do I need to sanctify and set apart that Jesus is Lord? Because what you’re about to go through may make you question whether he is Lord or not. And if he is Lord, why do I have to go through? Remember that our Lord and our Savior suffered, and that because he got up, we can get up; and because he got up, we’re not alone. Remember that he gave us an example of doing it by sanctifying him as Lord; you now know you can do this with God’s help.

You have to do it beforehand—you have to know beforehand and set your goals, determine what it is you’re going to do. That is why before Lent I asked you to go ahead and do this. I told you that you can choose something that does not cause you to struggle—You can say, “I’m gonna fast for these next 40 days,” when all of a sudden it’s gonna be, “I just gotta have it.” You go from not wanting it to not having it to now that you can’t have it, you just gotta have it. And so you sanctify in advance what it is.

In the Gospel reading, the sanctifying Christ is a powerful thing, setting him apart. John lets everyone know there is one who is going to come, and then what happens? He came. Then, when he came, he got in the water not because he needed to get in the water. He got in the water for you; he got in the water for us that we might be sanctified, that we might be set apart, that we might be included. So he who knew no sin became sin for us. So he gets in the water and he’s baptized; and do you know who sanctifies or sets him apart? It says the skies opened up, and you hear a voice, ***“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”*** Sanctified, set apart...that’s my baby...well pleased. And it says the Spirit descends like a dove, descends upon him. Set apart, and I hope you heard it in the Prayer of Confession that the image of God is in each one of you. In the same way God says about you, “That’s my baby in whom I’m well pleased.” You may wonder, “But what about all of my stuff? I’m glad you asked. We have all been are being sanctified, set apart, made righteous through Christ. Isn’t that wonderful? Powerful things!

So the affirmation of Christ occurs before something terrible happens. A powerful thing, and you need to know that.

This morning I’m wearing this new bow tie, and I’m so thankful for the gift. It’s a wonderful gift, but I could fail to appreciate the gift if I focus on why the gift was given to me. My friends could have been tired of seeing my old ties—“Brother, can you move from 1980 to 2015?!” Brothers and sisters, we have to go through something to get something. Whether our things are appreciated or not, whatever we have is going to be judged. The judging, challenging, and visualizing of our things can result in new things happening, blessings happening, and gifts can happen — so sanctify the process. Jesus is Lord, and it’s all right. It’s an accessory; the tie doesn’t make the shirt, the shirt doesn’t make the pants, and all of three of them don’t make the man, right? (Smile) I want you to feel that way about yourself. We spend too much time, energy, and money buying clothes, colognes/perfumes, and accessories to feel a certain way about ourselves when...God made you fearfully and wonderfully. God set you apart from every other creation on this earth. Be glad about it! Rejoice in it! Amen?!

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Blessed Stressed, and Yes”

1 Peter 3:13-22; Mark 1:9-15

Pastor James H. Lee

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

February 22, 2015—First Sunday in Lent

Set Jesus apart as Lord. Sanctify Jesus as Lord in your heart and mind. Peter wanted to make sure that the people did this in advance. He knew that the people were facing persecution and were going to face even more challenges. At Jesus' baptism, God knew it was important to affirm Christ, set him apart, and to sanctify him before the people. Why? Because Jesus is about to be led out into the wilderness. Huh? Wait a minute. The Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness? The Spirit leads Jesus into a season of suffering? The Spirit would do that to the Son of God? Why would the Spirit do such a thing? Because he had to suffer for our sake. You may think that sounds sick, but we need to know that God identifies with us in our suffering. We also have an example of our Savior who does and will suffer.

We'll learn later on, but while Jesus is in the wilderness, the enemy started challenging Jesus; however, every single time the enemy gave him a challenge, Jesus brought the Word with him. Not the word that was in the Bible; it was in his heart and it was speaking about him. The enemy said, "Now brother, I know you're hungry, so why don't you take these stones and make yourself some bread?" And Jesus replied, "No, one should not eat by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Then the enemy tries to offer Jesus what he already had—the splendors of the land—and Jesus answered him by saying "You're not supposed to test God; you're supposed to worship and serve the Lord your God." Every single time there was a temptation, it was to offer him a counterfeit of what Jesus already had. *I want you to be aware of what you already have in the Lord. Because we spend so much of our time worrying about what we don't have, we forget what we do have and don't value it. I want us to be steadfast.*

Steadfast:

Be steadfast. Steadfast is important during this Lenten season. You might say, "Oops, I messed up, and it's Day 1 of 40 days!" Confess it; acknowledge it and let God forgive it; and get back on the path. Amen?

Be steadfast. When it's hard, be steadfast. When you're struggling, be steadfast. Keep going through. And here's the other thing: Did you all see who ministered to Jesus in the wilderness? Angels. There's a text in the Scriptures that says ***“Be careful how you treat other people because there are angels among you.”*** Friends, it was hard to go into the store and to receive the gift of clothes and this bow tie. But my angels, they said, "We want to take you shopping" As I am working with the salesperson, I am trying to keep all of my clothes closer to my budget. While the angels are trying to bless me, I'm still trying to push their blessing away or to limit its effectiveness. *Why? I was locked into the mindset that by receiving the blessing, I was rejecting what I had or I was affirming their judgment of what I wasn't... instead of receiving their generous gift as a result of who I am to them.* I need us to hear that not just with our ears. When we work together, sometimes we're focusing so much on the insult and hearing what we're not that we fail to appreciate our gifts or to hear someone saying "You are special to me, and that's why I'm doing this for you. It's not because your ties are all in 1980 and we'd like to get you in the 21st century, ***it's because you are that we are.***"

The process of recognizing our value and how others value us makes it easier for us to receive gifts and to be blessed. It makes it easier for each of us to be blessings to each other. Why? We are blessed to be a blessing. Now that you appreciate the process of receiving blessings; how do you now hear these words? Peter says, "Is there a chance that you could suffer for doing the right thing?" Everybody says "I don't know about you, but I can answer this question! I've been trying to do the right thing and had to suffer for it." Christ came to his own, and they received him not. He was doing the right thing, and they received him not.

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

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He was doing the right thing, and they received him not. So the answer to the question is “Yes.” Yes, you can suffer for doing the right thing; but you could also suffer for doing the wrong thing. So it’s just to remind us of ways that we can do this. What are ways that can help us? And this is why I needed us to be steadfast, okay, because some days we can do this, and some days we can’t.

Then it says, ***“Keep your conscience clean.”*** Then the other part is when he says we’re supposed to do this with gentleness: ***“yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”*** Tell people why it is that you believe what you do, why you’re standing where you’re standing, why you’re doing what you do, but with gentleness and with reverence. That’s hard...that’s hard. But we’re learning how to be steadfast and immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. The Word of God says that ***“If we do that, we will reap if we faint not,”*** because a lot of times we say, “Well, Lord, what about me? What about mine?” And the Lord says, “You just do what I’m asking you to do, and you’re going to reap if you faint not.” Be steadfast.

So during this season be steadfast. You’re going to find out more about yourself than you ever wanted to find out, and that’s a good thing because it reminds you of something else: You need to ask the Lord to help you so that we can be all that which God has called us to be.

Forty days and 40 nights wasn’t easy, but Jesus did it. And he did it for us. That 40 days and 40 nights was a symbol of the children of Israel as they went through the wilderness for 40 years. It was also a symbol of what Noah had to do on the ark....All of these Old Testament references leading here as to what would happen and the great promise that would be fulfilled.

I will forever be grateful to God for a wedding that happened in July some years ago, when at the end of the wedding we took a picture of this couple, and there they were, husband and wife, and there was a rainbow. I said, “Good God Almighty!” It was so amazing to see that rainbow of promise over this husband and wife in the beginning of their journey, not knowing all the challenges that they will face; there was just a sign of promise, a covenant sign of God letting the children of Israel know during that time that “I won’t do this by flood anymore.” But for me and for this family, it was just an honor for them as they’re going through. If you ask them today, did the rainbow keep them from going through some struggles? No, but the promise is still true. God is with them throughout the process.

Signs....That rainbow was a perfect sign, but I want you to not look at struggles that you’re facing as a sign of whether you’re a child of God or not. There’s a time that we used to say “If you’re this, If you’re sick, it’s because of that. If you’re not this, it’s because of that. And looking for signs of separation instead of looking for signs in which God is at work in our lives. Because one could say if Jesus was the Messiah, if he was the Son of God, and I’m looking at these signs, I’m thinking I can live with that; but the text didn’t end there, did it! The text said he was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness, and so we’ve got to hear those other signs as being present to help us to go.

The other sign was that John is arrested and then Jesus proclaims good news. Huh? Why couldn’t he and Jesus go on side by side and rustle up some great things together? No, he said ***“there’s one who comes after me, I baptize with water, but he baptizes with fire and the spirit,”*** and so John is set aside so Jesus can come in. You may say, “Well, why can’t I have my junk and Jesus too?” Because we put our junk before Jesus. Who needs to be Lord of lords, King of kings? Jesus. Does it mean my stuff is bad? No, God gave me the capacity to get it, but it doesn’t mean it has to be Lord. So some of the things we’ve got to put to the side. You can have it, but don’t let it have you. And a great sign that it’s starting to get you is when you can’t do without it. So you can have it, but don’t let it have you.

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

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Last piece. What I love about the end of the text, it talked about Jesus, and it talked about Noah and what he did. But our baptism—this is a sign. This is why we keep these symbols around us. Here at the baptismal font we are washed, cleansed, called, claimed, signs of an inward transformation, but it starts from an outward situation that takes place.

The bread and juice—signs of Christ who suffered for us. It is during this season that we identify with Christ and his suffering as we go through Lent. As tough as it gets for us, remember all of the abuse Jesus took as he goes to the cross and gives his life for all of us. Bread, juice, body, blood, signs of our Savior’s love and his suffering. Even on the Communion table we have symbols or signs. Lit, we find candles symbolizing God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have the cross, which symbolizes hope and shame.

Friends, in next week’s text, we are going to hear Jesus remind us that some of the very things that give us life are the very things causing death in us. Jesus says if you want to live, give up your life. Furthermore, we learn that when we are willing to give up our lives, we are in place to enjoy our lives. It is not that Jesus doesn’t want us to have life or things; he doesn’t want our possessions to possess us or our things to have us but rather he wants us to enjoy our gifts and rule over them or keep them in proper perspective.

Blessed, Stressed, and Yes:

Blessed: At the very beginning of the text, it says, ¹³*Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good?* ¹⁴*But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed.* Doesn’t sound right! I’m blessed and I’m suffering? It’s not that you want to go around and suffer and get beat up and knocked down, or misused and mistreated. No, it’s saying you need to have a different mindset about this. There were disciples who were beaten for the sake of Christ, and they left the jailhouse rejoicing because they identified with Christ in his suffering. There’s a difference between saying “God, I’m going through, but I’m going to honor you through the process” and “God, I don’t like it; I don’t want to be in it, but if you called me to be in it and you’re going to be with me in it, then together we can do it and I’m blessed because I’m not alone in this process.” The blessing comes not in the suffering but in being in partnership with God for something good that’s going to take place and choosing not to do the bad thing and suffer for what is bad but suffer for what is right.

Stress: There’s value in stress. Stress can move you beyond where you are, and it’ll give motivation to do it. But guess what, we’re not supposed to stay in stress mode all day long high! Go run your engine on high octane and high RPM, it doesn’t matter how much oil you have, pretty soon you run out. If that can happen to an engine, what do you think it’s going to do with your body? With the stress, deal with a little bit of it, get it to move you from beyond where you are, and then give it to God. Start getting rid of some of your stress.

Yes: Yes, you’re a child of God; yes, you will suffer; yes, God is with you; yes, there is life after the struggle, and yes, I too don’t want to suffer, but I do too. God is going to bring us through process.

February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNE^XION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

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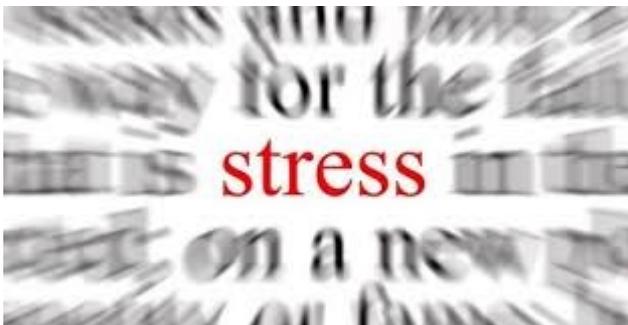
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February 22, 2015—First Sunday in Lent

Let us pray:

We thank you and praise you, God, for our time together. We thank you for the affirmation of seeing Christ himself be baptized, how you affirmed him, and how you blessed him, and how you sent him to suffer so that we would know that if he suffered, we will also suffer. We don't run to suffering, God; but it's good to know that in the midst of it, we have a God who understands not only the one who creates but the one who is our Savior and the Holy Spirit who sustains, to go alongside us in our suffering and in our trials and tribulation, causing us to be steadfast, immovable, abounding in you, Lord, abounding and abiding. We find ourselves turning our back on you because we believe you turn your back on us. Help us to rely upon you in the good times and in the bad. Finally, Lord, the signs Thank you that the signs are just little symbols to help draw us back to you and let us see your faithfulness and not just signs for the sake of signs so that we're looking for miracle after miracle and we don't live. Help us to live in you, by you, for you, and let the signs be those little things that help us get over the hump. We love you for loving us. Bless every family that is represented here today and those that are not. Sow into us your word, your purposes, your plans for each of our families individually and collectively. And God, be honored by us, we ask, as you make us who you would have us to be in your timing. Lord, help us to love the way you love; help us to forgive the way you forgive; help us to show grace and mercy the way you do. We ask humbly, Amen.

Blessed



February 27, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

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Mexico-based coffee cooperatives empower growers, eliminate need for migration

January 31, 2015



Office of the General Assembly
Toya Richards Jackson
Director of Communications and Assistant Stated Clerk
Agua Prieta, Mexico

“Journeying in Hope”
Also check out the [“Journeying in Hope”](#) video documentary.

There is a common perception that many United States immigrants—documented and undocumented—come to the U.S. chasing the “American Dream.” Ask some of the people who formed and maintain the Mexico-based coffee company Café Justo and they’ll tell you otherwise. “Unification of the family, I think that’s the dream,” said Daniel Cifuentes, a manager at Café Justo in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico, and one of the founders. “I think that’s the dream of all of us, to be united with our families.” “To be able to go forward in life ... to see our children grow,” whether in the U.S. or in Mexico, he said.

That’s why he and his cohorts at Café Justo are working to empower Mexican and other coffee growers to earn a fair wage. Formed in 2002 by members of Lily of the Valley Presbyterian Church in Agua Prieta, Café Justo is a network of coffee grower cooperatives that grow, roast, package, and ship their own coffee. “We started with two workers here in Agua Prieta and now we have seven working here ... and three more in the state of Chiapas” said Cifuentes, whose family has been growing coffee since they were indentured by Germans in the early 1800s.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Mission Co-worker Mark Adams, with Presbyterian Border Ministry in Agua Prieta, was instrumental in the co-op’s founding, and today both he and his wife, Mission Co-worker Miriam Maldonado Escobar, continue to work collaboratively with Café Justo. Over the years Café Justo also has received support from the PC(USA)’s Self-Development of People program and Presbyterian Women.

“The idea was to share the experience that we were living as farmers, as an organization, with other communities in Mexico, but also outside of Mexico,” Cifuentes said, adding that Café Justo’s work extends into Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Haiti as well.

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

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He said when they began Café Justo, many families were leaving their communities and heading for the United States. “Now, with what Café Justo is doing, we’ve seen the return of some of those families.”



Members of Café Justo cooperatives are paid roughly three times the amount that growers are typically paid by standard commercial operations.

“We at Café Justo have adopted a vision, and the vision is to reduce the percentage of migration of farmers to the United States,” Cifuentes said. “We think that this is the best way, and helps families be able to stay in their place of origin.”



Café Justo’s Carmina Sanchez said in the past when there wasn’t work, she had thoughts of going to the U.S.; but she’s very content now working with the coffee co-op. “That possibility of crossing into the United States has gone from my mind.”

For consumers of Café Justo coffee, “Each time you drink a cup of coffee, have in your mind that you are helping a family,” Sanchez said. “You can be sure you are helping those families remain together, and they don’t have to separate.”

February 27, 2015



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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

