

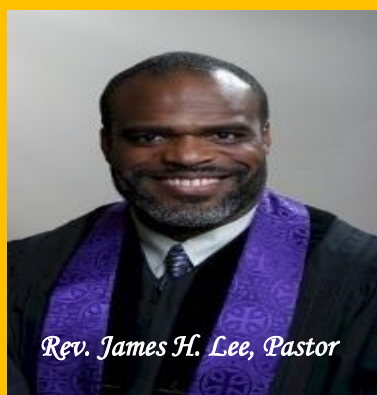
September 19, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

WWW.NCFAUSTIN.ORG

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

Dear NCFA Family and Friends:

Our Lord did an amazing thing with Gideon and the soldiers (Judges 7). Who would have thought that clanging jars and light could have led to a victorious battle? God chose the simple to confound the wise. This would be a perfect segue for Sunday's sermon on wisdom; however, I wanted to use it as a reminder that the world is clamoring for our attention. We have so many obligations with our jobs, our community, and families at home that it's hard to stay focused on life and even harder on God and church matters.

Our salvation is secured by Christ Jesus and sealed by the Holy Spirit; however, as we prepare for a new year of school and season for church life, I am beckoning you to consider tithing your time to NCFA and your prayer and worship time with God. We are blessed with 168 hours per week. Will you consider dedicating 16.8 hours? You could allocate 6 hours to Sunday worship and committee meetings. By committing 30 minutes in the morning and evening, you could allocate 7 hours for prayers, singing, and reading. The remaining 3.8 could be committed to serving others, small group studies at home; or intentional family time. Not only will you be blessed but you will bless our church and others. Great stewardship as we plan to start Stewardship in October.

Thank you for affirming the decision to reduce the number of Elders and Deacons. We celebrate the new class of both boards: (Session) Benton, Bill, Kathy, Matthew, Mary, Oliver, Randy, Robert, and Vernon; (Deacons) Ashley, Carol, Cathy T., Kathryn, Roxann, and Scott.

Please answer the New Beginnings questions or survey. As we move forward with recommendations on September 27th, your participation in the previous sessions and the remaining two (20th and 27th) validates your commitment and right to be heard.

Plan to attend the All-Church Retreat at Mo-Ranch November 13-15; sign-up begins tomorrow.

We hope to begin our 2016 Stewardship Campaign on October 11th, and we applaud the \$1,000 donated to match the \$15,000 raised for this year's matching grant.

On October 2nd-3rd you are invited to participate in the seminar "Preferred Pathways" on collaboration and conflict resolution in light of biblical principles, being hosted by Westlake Hills Presbyterian—details included in this issue.

Sunday, October 4th, is World Communion Sunday, when we will have a joint worship service with Rev. Nancy Reeves at Grace Presbyterian Church in Round Rock. Please plan to attend. While there will be no service at Wilshire, there will be the 8:15am Chapel service, with Rev. George Holland preaching.

God bless and keep you.
James

September 19, 2015



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All Welcome

NEW

PSALM 150 PRAISE TEAM REHEARSALS

**THIS SUNDAY
IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL
9:30AM**

**Just one requirement:
A LOVE OF GLORIFYING GOD
THROUGH MUSIC!**

JANE'S CIRCLE

BIBLE STUDY

**SATURDAY, SEPT. 26
9 AM - 10:30 AM**

CHURCH KITCHEN

September 19, 2015



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NCF



READY TO

GET ROLLING

The rehearsals take place in Room 7 during the first 10 minutes of the time when the youth have been dismissed from the church service to go to their classes.

These Sunday rehearsals culminate in a once a month performance that is always on the last Sunday of the month which is known as Family Sunday.

The NCF Youth Choir is open to participants from age 3 through age 20.

The September song will be a modern version of "We Are the Church!" and contains a verse done in rap. Both young children and the older youth will find this song fun to perform!

If more information is needed, please call Connie Jones at 512-947-2869.



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

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



- ⇒ In remembrance of September 11, 2001, prayers for peace and healing in our nation and in our world.
- ⇒ Lift up Laura's father in ICU for relief from pain and for peace and comfort through his illness.
- ⇒ Praise the Lord that Tiffany accepted Justin's marriage proposal!
- ⇒ Lift up Dwight and Ivy's 10- year-old niece Dejah recently diagnosed with Lupus in the ICU at Memorial Children's Hospital and also her medical team. Prayers for her serious condition, including organ failure and her ineligibility for a heart transplant. Prayers for healing relationships in Shane's family after a long history of his hurtful behavior.
- ⇒ Lift up Roy who asks that we pray for a turnaround in his life. Lift up all who are struggling just to get by in life.
- ⇒ Lift up Caly's mother for safe travels in the Dominican Republic and healing of her relationship with her older sister.
- ⇒ Following a rent increase, prayers for Caly's search for affordable housing.
- ⇒ Lift up Jimmy's college roommate and all who are having marital difficulties.
- ⇒ Prayers for all who are grieving.

*¹³ I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living. ¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;*

be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

- Psalm 27:13-14



September 19, 2015



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3rd Greg Buford
4th Sofia Bohn-Hall
5th Kathy Smith
8th Dorrette Ayensu
12th Joe Parsons
Miranda Cortez
16th Charlie Shin
17th Kim Parsons
18th Ricky Palacios
Jace Lopez
20th Paula Akujor
Paul Akujor
22nd Juan Ortiz ("Junior")
24th Precious Hernandez
25th Carol Nemir
26th Clarke Spinks
Kellcee Justice
27th Cheyenne Hernandez
28th Elena Endres
JoJo Akujor
29th Erin Grisdale

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 Comfort Agbahu and Kofi Vida-Torku
2nd Lucy and Ellis Oglesby
5th Jimmy Bohn and Kimberly Hall
14th Clarke and Maggie Spinks
15th Matthew and Erin Grisdale
26th Doug and Patricia Caroom
28th Bill and Edna Parish

SEPTEMBER 2015

20th 16th Sunday after Pentecost
8:15am Waller Creek Chapel
Shane Blackshear, preaching
9-10am Adult Sunday School
9:15am Deacons Meeting
9:30am Psalm 150 Praise
Team Rehearsal
10:15am Worship at 1507 Wilshire
Pastor James H. Lee, preaching
Sunday School during worship;
Ages 3-5-Rm 1, Grades 1-5 -Rm 7
12:15pm New Beginnings

22nd 6:30pm Men's Ministry
Dinner, Study at 7pm

23rd 6:30pm Dinner.
7pm Prayer and Praise

26th Jane's Circle Bible Study
8:30-10am—Kitchen

27th 17th Sunday after Pentecost
8:15am Waller Creek Chapel
Shane Blackshear, preaching
9-10am Adult Sunday School
9:15am Deacons Meeting
9:30am Psalm 150 Praise
Team Rehearsal
10:15am Worship at 1507 Wilshire
Pastor James H. Lee, preaching
Sunday School during worship;
Ages 3-5-Rm 1, Grades 1-5 -Rm 7

September 19, 2015



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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

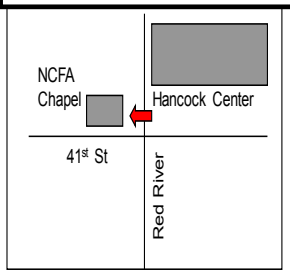
1507 Wilshire Blvd.
9am Adult Sunday School
10am Fellowship
10:45am - Children's Church

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 worshiping our Lord.



NCFA Waller Creek Chapel — Upcoming Preachers

September 20 — *Shane Blackshear*

September 27 — *Shane Blackshear*

October — 4 *Rev. George Holland*

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

September 19, 2015



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SALSA...SALSA...SALSA



**Come on out and join us for some fun, fellowship,
and fancy footwork. Each Saturday in September
from 6 to 8pm, here in the Fellowship Hall.
Lead by Elder Robert “Fancy Footwork” Booth.**

presbyterian Women

**October 2, Friday Church Women United will meet at 9:30 AM at
Olivet Baptist Church, 1177 San Bernard. The meeting emphasis
is Human Rights Day Celebration: “Journey Toward Peace.”**

An offer to our youth:

***I would like anyone under the age of 18 to know that I have
\$10 for any child who can recite a Psalm in worship.***

—Ellis Oglesby



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 are delivered biweekly to NCFA

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

September 19, 2015



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

A SPECIAL INVITATION to:



*The
Preferred Path[®]
Ministry*

All Churches in the Austin Cluster, Mission Presbytery (MP) Staff, General Council, and All Committee Members (both incoming and outgoing)!

You are invited to Mission Presbytery's inaugural Preferred Path skills training, to be held October 2-3, 2015, hosted by Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX.

This course will be led by Dr. Karl Slaikeu, psychologist, mediator, formerly Transitional Shepherd of MP (2014), and founder of the Preferred Path Ministry (www.preferredpathministry.com), a program that has been in place at Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church in Austin since 2008.

Course summary: This course provides an introduction to collaboration and conflict resolution in light of biblical principles, and provides practical experience with tools for communicating, building consensus and resolving conflict in church, family, work, school, and neighborhood settings.

Key words: Strengthening relationships, positive communication, respectful listening, dialogue, consensus building, reconciliation, unity, conflict resolution, mercy, justice, peacemaking, community life, discipleship, spiritual disciplines, and tools for living.

Format:

Experiential Learning Model (ELM), begins Friday, October 2, 5:30 pm with a light supper, program 6:30-9:30 pm; Saturday, 9 am – 2:30 pm, with lunch at noon.

Topics:

- 1 – What is the Preferred Path (and do I really need this)?
- 2 – The Conflict Grid (a tool for every step of the way).
- 3 – Communicating well (strategies for difficult conversations).
- 4 – Poles apart ('You'll never get these two together!').
- 5 – Resolving conflict (standard solutions in interpersonal peacemaking).
- 6 – Integrating the Preferred Path into Church and Family life (how to keep denial, court, and power plays from ruining your life).

Course Fee: This training is offered at no charge to MP staff, General Council, and committees as a part of MP's enrollment in the Preferred Path Ministry (www.preferredpathministry.com).

A limited number of slots will be available to members of churches in the Austin community for fee of \$25 per person (reduced from \$95 per person) to cover meals and materials.

Registration: Go to this link to sign up: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040c45a8a82fa75-preferred>

Course Materials: Each participant receives course manual and access to on line follow up tools.

Questions: Rev. Nancy Reeves (Mission Presbytery Transition Team rep-grace.nereeves@gmail.com, or 512-517-7181)

Please be sure to share with all leadership in your congregation!.

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)

September 19, 2015



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

***“Do Your Words and Actions
Match Your Testimony?”***

Isaiah 50:4-9; Mark 8:27-38; James 3:1-12

Pastor James H. Lee
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin
September 13, 2015

Isaiah 50:4-9

⁴The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he awakens—awakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. ⁵The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. ⁶I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. ⁷The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; ⁸he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. ⁹It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

Mark 8:27-38

²⁷Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” ³⁰And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. ³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” ³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

James 3:1-12

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. ⁴Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, ⁸but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

September 19, 2015



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***“Do Your Words and Actions
Match Your Testimony?”***

Isaiah 50:4-9; Mark 8:27-38; James 3:1-12

Pastor James H. Lee
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin
September 13, 2015

About three weeks ago I had an opportunity to go to the University of Texas and attend the leadership meeting for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Our hope was to affirm the new and existing leaders as they prepared for the upcoming year. We also wanted affirm them for living out their faith in their area of sports as student athletes and leaders. After the meeting I was asked by a guy who was supposed to be my friend who worked with FCA to do the chapel for the Rice Owls....And I said, “Wow, I am honored just to have that opportunity....” but then something inside me caused the honor and the joy of the privilege to start to dissipate. I started thinking, “Wait a minute, Rice is playing Texas! I don't know if I can do that, and I don't know if they're going to accept me, and I don't know if I can control my tongue,” and so I had said Yes, but I wasn't really sure. Then the Lord helped me contemplate some things: Who are you? I am your servant, and I'm called to proclaim the Good News. Called to point others to you. Called to lift you up. And so I was convicted. Contemplation and conviction, yet I still said “But Lord, I'm struggling because there are some other issues going on here that you may not understand in your glory—but here I struggle with it. It was a whole process of conflict.

There's conflict within us when we want to do the right thing, and we find ourselves doing the wrong thing. Paul said something about that in the seventh chapter of Romans. And so I still said Yes, but all these things were going on inside of me. On Wednesday night before the game, I finally went through a process of capitulating, acquiescing, submitting, and saying “Yes, Lord, to your will and to your way.” And I want to tell you, when I walked into that hotel and met with the coaches and individual over operations, it was wonderful. God was in house. When chapel time came, I had butterflies like I did before games, but I found myself in a room full of respectable young men and Christians. I found some guys who were hungry to hear the Word and play the game. I found a kindred spirit among those who were accepting of me, and it was wonderful. And Saturday night I praised God that the Longhorns won because I could still hear what would have happened if we had not! I'm just playin' with you guys.

There are times you get tired of hearing sports illustrations, but they are a part of me as a person and preacher. As a matter of context, I wanted us to see beyond today's texts being relevant in a distant time far away and having nothing to do with us in our hearing today. I want us to think about this: ***“Do Our Words and Actions Match Our Testimony?”***

Do our words and actions match our testimony of who we are as Christians, who we are as Christ followers, who we are as those who will point others to Christ, and who will be reminded, as he said, ***“If I be lifted up, I will draw all humanity unto me”***? That is the one in whom we are called to serve, and so our testimonies and our words need to match who we say we are. As Jimmy and Kimberly led in their song *“Words,”*

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New Covenant Fellowship of Austin
September 13, 2015

*“Words can build you up,
Words can break you down,
Start a fire, or put it out.”*

I was like “Yes, words matter!” Words matter. I remembered when I was little watching the T.V. show where you would see two faces and one would say: “B...ar...bar, C...ar...car, F...ar...far, T...ar...tar.” They would say all of these things that bring the two things together to make a word, and that's important because it helped us with phonetics and helped us to learn. You probably remember that old saying “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”—and how many of us know that *that's not true*. Words can hurt, but also, words can help and give us hope; and I pray that today we get a little bit of hope out of these words that come forth. I want to talk a little bit again about the Contemplation, about the Conflicts and Challenges, and then the Capitulation that will come forth out of that

Contemplation:

As we heard in the word from *Isaiah*, it's so important for us to understand that these words draw us closer to that **53rd Chapter** where we know that our Lord and our Savior will come as a lamb before the shearer and who is not going to utter a word. It also lets us know that the prophet, again telling the story of our Savior, is aware that it is God who allows him to be that servant to declare the word or to teach the word in such a way that it would help sustain others who are living in the world to the point of being *awakened* by the word and hearing the cares and the concerns of other people and finding ways in which it can give life and hope.

The prophet is also aware of the fact that he not only must speak it or share it but also must listen and learn. We're called to be disciples. Every leader ought to be a learner and ought to be one who follows. It teaches you better how to teach and lead others. Why? Because when you follow, you can say, “Well, I would have done it this way,” or “I would have done it that way,” and “I really don't like the way he did that or she did that”....And then when you get to lead, you then get hear somebody else say the same thing that you said. There is a powerful lesson there.

There's also an awareness that we have, according to *James*, that if you're going to be a teacher or a leader, there's a stricter accountability on you. When God's calling upon my life was apparent at the age of nine, I said “No way!” and I ran. I didn't have Nike's back then, but I wasn't about to “Just Do It”; and so I was running from it, and the last thing I wanted to do was to take on the responsibility of proclaiming God's Word. I didn't want the responsibility or want to think about what could happen with my words. At that age and even now, it is mind-blowing to see how God's Word impacts our lives. I felt like there was a responsibility that I had that I wanted nothing to do with. I wanted to play ball and that was it. But the call, as Seminary President Stotts would say, is like a hound dog, you can hear it howling as it keeps coming after you.

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Others in the Reformed Tradition would say that the call comes from or is affirmed by the community—it's not just your own. It's one that just beckons you there. Even in Pop Warner football, basketball, soccer, and baseball, my coaches would ask me to lead the Lord's Prayer, and internally, I am screaming, "I'm trying to run *from* a call, not run *to* a call!!!" The call was ever present. Anybody out there feel this way? Have you felt like everyone else sees your gift and knows how you should use it? Internally, you just want to tell them, "I'm trying to keep the gift undercover, I'm trying not to share this thing right now, can you leave me alone?"

Well, here's the other side of the call process. The prophet also knew as he said ***“I put my face to those who pulled out the beard”*** that suffering comes from being a leader; suffering comes from being one who would be a witness, one who would testify. And so there's that other reality that comes, the price that must be paid. You will find Christ, as he's calling others, will call us to count the cost for discipleship. A week or two ago when he spoke a hard word and the folks said “This is a hard word, who can live by it?” – and they jetted; and then he turned around to his disciples and said “Will you leave also?” It's a choice we make. It's a commitment we make every single day, and so I invite us to contemplate who we are in Christ and what we're called to do as those who are Christ followers. Amen.

Conflicts and Challenges:

Years ago there was an old basketball player named Charles Barkley, and he had the audacity to say “I am not a role model,” and there was an uproar. How dare he say ‘I am not a role model’? And he meant it, but folks said, “Well, we're paying you a whole lotta money to entertain us, and you have a whole lot of money, and it sounds like you're trying to escape responsibility. Because we're finding out that our kids are impacted by you athletes, and so whether you want to be a role model or not, you *are* a role model.” But Charles said that there's a mutual responsibility, so don't just say it's for us and it's not for you. Understand the challenges we all face as leaders.

Please remember that we are supposed to be concerned with everyone, especially those in the household of faith. It is reinforced in during our baptisms when I walk our babies up and down this aisle talking about how quiet, loving, and cute they are right now; but one day that will change. They'll be making a whole lot of noise and running around and around, and folks will wonder “Whose child is that? They don't know how to care for their baby!” No, it's *our* baby, it's *our* child and *our* responsibility because we're called to help the parents bear them up and bring them up in the fear and the admonition of the Lord. And someday they'll become teenagers—O Lord, my God—and we're still called to walk with them. And then some adults who think we know it all and can do it all somehow find out we can't either, we need help, need to be shown to the cross, need to be shown grace, need to be shown love, need to be shown mercy. So all of these are part of our reality. There are challenges, there are conflicts, and at times it's glorious while other times it's “O God!” In one part you're happy, and in the other part, “Oh no, help!”

September 19, 2015



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

***“Do Your Words and Actions
Match Your Testimony?”***

Isaiah 50:4-9; Mark 8:27-38; James 3:1-12

Pastor James H. Lee
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin
September 13, 2015

The prophet says I did not turn back even when you were there and you were calling on me; I did not even when they were about to strike me as your leader. I did not turn away. I put my face forward and I even gave them my back when they were going to strike it. So when you say Yes, there are going to be some times you're going to face some hardship because you said Yes to the Lord; and I pray you keep saying Yes. Because what does it matter for us to gain the whole world and lose our soul?

What does it matter to keep compromising, and I don't mean compromising so that there can be some wholeness. I mean what's the overall value of compromising to the point that you can't stand for anything? There is one who said *“If you can't stand for something, you'll fall for everything.”* And so we hear that there's conflict, the challenges that we face within ourselves; but we need to be telling others about Christ and the goodness of who he is.

Christ Jesus did something in the Gospel lesson. We read aloud the Old Testament lesson and then the Gospel followed by the Epistle, which is out of our normal order but done for a purpose. Christ Jesus does something. As a rabbi, you know they would've asked questions and been debating back and forth. But Jesus, instead of telling an answer like a teacher would—and we'd expect he does what teachers do—he gave them a pop quiz: ***“Who do they say that I am?”*** And so what do they say? You're a prophet; you're a good teacher. Good leader. It sounds good. All of those are honorable, but then he asks, ***“But who do you say that I am?”*** And that's when Peter makes this confession, and it's powerful because in making that confession, he recognizes that Jesus is the Lord, the Messiah, the anointed one. For us, it's a no-brainer. But for them that meant the Messiah has come. And what that also meant is that that warrior is here and things are about to change. We've been going through it, the heavens have been shut down, but the warrior has come.

Good news, but what does Jesus then say? Don't tell anybody. What? You come and you want us to say nothing, don't tell anybody? Then what does Jesus do, he then tells everyone that he's going to be a suffering savior. What? You're going to be a suffering savior instead of a warrior that helps bring us to victory, to get the Romans off our backs in Caesarea and Philippi? Excuse me, Jesus?

Peter said “Come on over here and let's have a talk. I know you're the Messiah and all, but that's not a good move! When you've got momentum, you're supposed to build on it. You're supposed to run with it, and if you look at the word that we've been studying, this stuff leads to you coming through and bringing us the victory.”

Prior to addressing the "come to Jesus" conversation that Jesus has with Peter, I want to remind us that in ***Matthew 16***, the parallel to this situation, Jesus told Peter that his answer was not revealed to him by "flesh and blood but from something divine.” In ***Mark*** Jesus rebuked Peter saying ***“Get thee behind me, Satan.”*** See, what you're doing is talking about the things that happen in this world, and this is divine thing.

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Even now, we do the same things. We keep believing that war will bring peace. That hurting people will help tear them down so they can be built up. That's not a God thing. What he did is he flipped the script on all of us when we say “How dare you forgive somebody who did us wrong, who did what he did? How dare you pay the price of your life for someone who called you guilty and you weren't...who beat you down when you did nothing...who talked about you and yet you're going to pay with your life, you're going to give yourself for them? You came to your own and they received you not?”

That's mind-boggling, but that's the God we serve...the God who loves us, because in this world we don't really know how to love, but we come to a place of learning how to love somehow through relationships, and God supersedes it all and shows us how to really love. Loving us in our best, loving us in our worst, that's the God we serve.

And we struggle with that. It's challenging, but that's what he's calling us to do, and he says it in a different way: ***“If you want to follow me, deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me.”*** Boy, that sounds good in church, but in their day....“Rabbi, we were glad you came into town. Glad you came in with this new thing, and we wanted to be your apprentice. I gave up fishing and gave up my family to follow you, but you want me to do *what?* The ‘deny myself’ would have been the first thing, you know, because we tend to like ourselves and kinda like life a little easier. But then, to ‘take up my cross’—a symbol of sin and shame. Really, do you know what they have done with crosses? They have put people on the cross to die and to suffer, and you want me to deny myself, sacrifice myself, and then to suffer? Yeah? Really? And then ‘follow me.’ It means submit, move away from the way I want to do it and then do it the way you are asking me to do it.” Some tough stuff.

As I was preparing the sermon, I said, “Well, Lord, I’m trying to come up with a unique sermon title, but you’re really challenging me.” Will my words and my actions live up to the testimony of who I say I am? Now that doesn’t call all of us to go working for our righteousness—I gotta plow something here, I gotta do something there.... But what it should call us to do is say, “O God, this is who I am; this is who you are; and I’m so grateful that I can be a part of this process. Thank you for being so patient and loving and kind to help lead me through the process.” Amen.

Capitulation:

The last part, capitulation, comes out of verses beginning with ***James 3:5*** because he talked about that little pink tornado, the tongue that is a reflection of what's in us. Sharing from some of our gospel readings, it would tell us in ***Luke 6:44-45***, ***“for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.”*** ⁴⁵ ***The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.***

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I want you to start listening to some of the things that you're saying. Are you building people up or are you tearing them down? Are you loving them with your words, or are you listing things that they need to do so that they can be worthy of your love? You see, it's out of the mouth we really say what's here in our heart. See, we can find ways to say some things, but at the end of the day, we really just say 'I want you to do what I want you to do, and if you don't, then I don't love you/or love you enough/or I don't want you to be or do something else.' No, build up, don't tear down. Don't be the fire that destroys, be that which quenches the fire and gives life, and as Smokey the Bear would say, "Only you can prevent forest fires/wildfires." Bridle our tongues. Capitulate.

The last thing I wanted to do was to say Yes to God; the right thing for me to do was to say Yes to God. While I was up in Colorado, it was wonderful and great. But at 9,200 feet above sea level, my lungs were saying "Are you out of your mind?!" And I had to capitulate to the atmosphere and the altitude and go get some oxygen and be on it for the whole time. And God said, "Baby, you see what happens when you submit and you capitulate? See, you can breathe up here, and you can see the wonders of what I have."

Someone else would say that if you had capitulated, you would have never gone. But I needed to see this wonderful place, and while I was there, there were folks who were serving pastors and their spouses. It was hard for all of us to accept being served, but they said, "If you don't allow us to serve you, we can't fulfill our purpose." That was hard, and so it wasn't until about Tuesday or Wednesday when we were able to feel that being served was a blessing. Not that they had to do it, but they wanted to do it. They submitted unto the Lord, and we submitted unto them, and blessings were had all the way around.

There was a young man there who was struggling with his call, and as we were talking, I said, "Brother, I understand." And he said, "Well, how could you? You're a pastor." And I told him I ran for 15 years, and as I was sharing it, he said his heart was bursting because he wanted to say Yes, but he wasn't ready. He said, "Can you pray with me?" And you know what I said, "Yeah, because I want you to be ready so when you are, nothing will turn you around."

I'm going to end the sermon with a testimony that happened with a cowboy name Nick. Cowboy Nick had two horses in the corral there; one was a new mare, and the other one was Cactus. Cactus had been ridden hard and had gone through a lot of stuff; but when Nick was talking to us, he had such a gentleness about him that Cactus started to come over and follow Nick. Nick says there's something special when the horse will come to you because then you can do some things with the horse. Then Nick got his brushes and as he started to brush Cactus, he said it's not just a brushing. His mane started to look different, and Nick said it's cleaning him off from life because he's been ridden hard and had some conflicts. Anybody had any conflicts in life? And he just brushed him underneath and all over, saying "I want to remove anything that will hinder him from working with me."

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Sometimes God is trying to say “I want to brush you clean, I want to remove the hindrances.” And we can feel like “God, you're trying to keep me from having fun, from having something that I want.” And God's like “No, will you trust me?” Cactus trusted Nick. Now Nick had this flag that he would use to help train with by waving it abruptly. And whenever you do that, most horses would be afraid. But as he was flipping it around, Cactus trusted him so much that, even when the distractions were there, even when the noises were there, Cactus did not respond. Why? Because he had his eyes on Nick and trusted him.

I pray we will have our eyes on the Master so that when the distractions come, they won't cause us to go and to be afraid, that the fear that is so easy to rise up in us won't rise. Cactus, even when Nick put his foot into a looped rope, and he held onto one foot and Cactus didn't want to do it, he was submitting to Nick. He was trusting Nick who was trying to walk him around and lead him. Then Nick said the hardest thing to do is to make a horse go backwards because the horse wants to go forward. And Nick brought that one leg back, and Cactus bent over and went backwards! I was watching and it was awesome!

But I'm going to tell you what was the biggest thing that blew me away. Two things: When that mare saw what was happening, there was something in her that was like telling Cactus to “get away from that man, quit capitulating, and come join me over here.” She even kicked Cactus, and you know what Nick did? Nothing; he kept doing the presentation. You know what Cactus did? Kept focused on Nick. You know what the mare did? She thought she was in trouble, so she jetted. He did not overreact.

Pastoral Care—We are called to have the presence of nonanxious presence. When we overreact, we cause those around us to overreact.

Nick didn't overreact, Cactus didn't overreact, and it was powerful. But then Nick did the next thing that just blew me away: He gave a command, and Cactus laid down like a dog! That big, powerful beast laid down and had its feet up!! Now God has brought me to my knees with some situations in life; but it's another thing to submit to the Master and lay down. And I said “I've got a sermon illustration!” If Cactus can trust and submit to Nick who is just a cattle hand, what can we do to the One who gave everything for our sake? Can we commit? Can we choose to say Yes even when the conflicts and distractions are around us? Say “Yes, Your will.” “Yes, Your way.” Yes, Lord, I will obey, even when I really don't want to.

Amen.