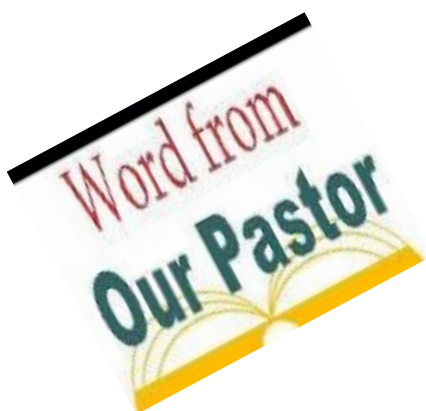


March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

Dear NCFA Family and Friends,

I am grateful for the way that you cared for the Rev. Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo and for the message he shared with you on Sunday. My time with Glendale Presbyterian Church was very fruitful. Like NCFA, Glendale is a fantastic church that doesn't always acknowledge the ministries flowing out of it and into the community, etc.

As I write you, I am in Corpus Christi for our Presbytery meeting. It is important for us to remember that we have a voice and the capacity to impact change by being involved. It is too easy to sit around and to complain rather than to get involved and represent the change that you want to see. Yes, there are times when things do not go the way that I want them to go; however, my participation matters. I am a member of Mission Presbytery the same way that you are members of NCFA. Being engaged in ministry within and outside Mission Presbytery is similar to the commitment you make in your marketplace ministries, within the NCFA's committees, volunteering in the Nursery, preparing the elements for Communion on Sunday mornings, and teaching in our Youth Church School Classes.

This year we were given two commissioners to coincide with the number of members we have in the church. We are blessed to have Elder Caly Fernández and Elder Kathy Smith as our commissioners. Caly and I are serving on the Transition Team for Mission Presbytery, and we will also represent Ruben Armendariz, Jack Kern, Kay McCloskey, and Mike Murphey as we make a presentation regarding the Cuba Mission Project.

On Sunday, please remember that it is Daylight Savings Time, and we will lose an hour as the clock springs forward. You don't want to miss the worship service led by the women of the church as we Celebrate the Gifts of Women. The Rev. Trish Holland will preach at the 8:15am NCFA Chapel service at the Perry Estate, and CRE Estela Sifuentes will be preaching at our 10:15 worship service on the Wilshire campus. We will also be blessed by Mrs. Nohe-mi Cuellar, who will sing a solo during the worship service.

I thank Ashley Phillips, who served as facilitator, and the Belhar Conversation Team. You had important conversations, where every voice could be heard, even when there weren't enough chairs and there was not consensus among the leaders. This is what we are called to do as the body of Christ.

Friends, I need us to keep our eyes on the prize. With a lot of different things

happening, it is too easy for us to major in the minor issues and minor in the major issues. Let's stay focused. When the children of Israel were called to rebuild the walls, there were those who were armed and looking outward to protect those who were focused inwardly and working on the walls. Right now I need you to care for yourselves and your families first. Then, with some time and energy allotted to NCFA, we need to be focused on doing the work in our committees, filling in the gaps wherever you see them, and caring for each other.

Finally, reflect on these words from **Romans 15:1-7**....

¹We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ²Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. ³For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." ⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

God Bless,

Pastor James H. Lee

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

On March 15th, the members of NCF will be "prayer walking" in the community around the church and handing out door hangers to invite the community to our church for our Holy Week activities culminating with our Easter Sunday Service.



Please consider helping with this project. Pray for our time in the neighborhood and for those participating in this effort. Participants will head out right after church in cars or walking nearby. It shouldn't take too long with many working together. Encourage our children and young people to participate with you.

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.

March 29, 2015

***Pastor Lee will be preaching at His Highest Praise located at 100 W. Pflugerville Pkwy.
Unit 107, Pflugerville Texas.
All are welcome.***

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

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.

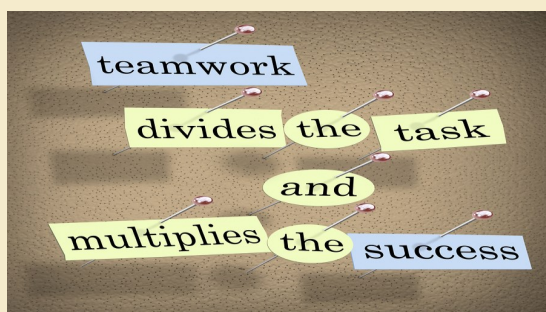
The study will take place on Thursday evenings April 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th, May 7th and 14th.

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.



March 6, 2015

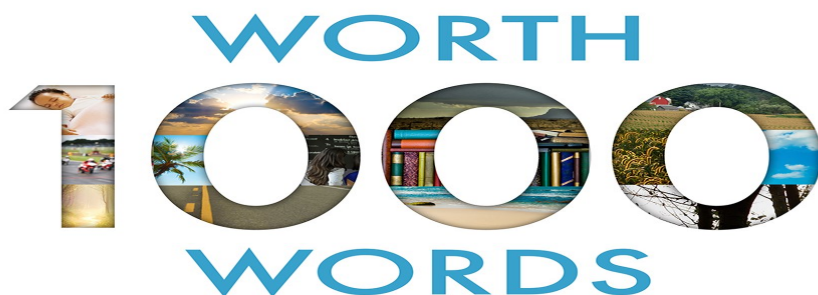


NCFA CONNEXION!

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/>

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

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

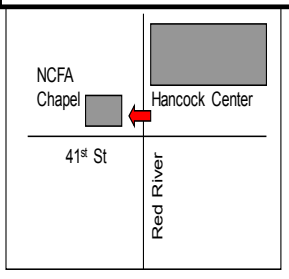
10:15am - Worship Service
1507 Wilshire Blvd.
9am Adult Sunday School
10am Fellowship
10:45am - Children's Church

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 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

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



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

Session Members

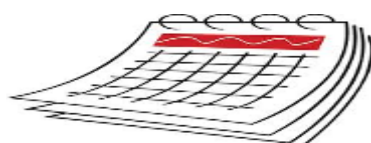
***Rev. James Lee**
Pastor/Moderator
***Elder Kathy Smith**
Clerk of Session
***Rev. Bill Harris**
Administration & Personnel
***Elder Tim Lenz**
Buildings & Grounds
***Elder Mary Jo Mojica**
Congregational Life
***Elder Randy Mojica**
Children and Youth
***Elder Cathy Angell**
Discipleship & Women's 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



March 8
3rd Sunday in Lent
Celebrate Gifts of
Women Sunday.

March 10 6:30 –9:00 pm
Men's Ministry Dinner and Bible
Study, in the NCFA Kitchen

March 11 6:30pm
Light Dinner,
in the NCFA Kitchen

Tuesday Mar. 10 - 7-8pm or
Thursday Mar. 12 - 10:30-
11:30am
Lenten Study Continues in
Genesis Library-Come!

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

March 15
4th Sunday in Lent
Door Hangers in the community
immediately following worship

NCFA CONNE^XION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

PRAYER AND PRAISE

Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

John 11:35 *Jesus wept. Remember—we are not alone. God is always with us.*

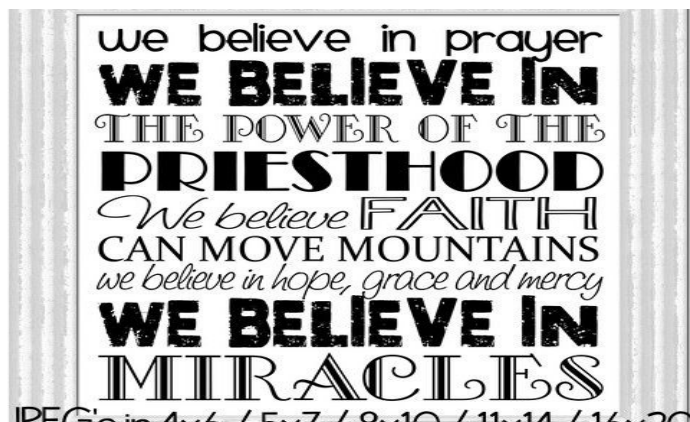
- ⇒ Thanks to God for Aisha who constantly ministers to others and shares delicious meals from Ghana.
- ⇒ Lift up the many caregivers in our congregation.
- ⇒ Prayers for Jerry and Christine as they grieve the death of his mother Mary Ann in Kansas. Thanksgiving for the opportunity to spend time with his family.
- ⇒ Lift up people in Chiapas being forceably removed from their ancestral lands and being bound up by racism. There are 200,000 Mayan Presbyterians who need our prayers.
- ⇒ Lift up people who are suffering, who are trying to recover from serious health issues, and also their caregivers, that they may be surrounded by love and that angels may attend them, including: Stacie, her mother, and James; Daisay; and Rick and his family.
- ⇒ Praise that Michelle has just one more test in her second year of med school; prayers for her transition to studying 8 to 10 hours per day for her April board exams and for her continued drive and confidence to succeed.
- ⇒ Lift up a woman on death row who earned her theology degree while in prison and who has been a light of hope sharing her testimony with her fellow inmates on death row; prayers that she may receive a stay of execution. Help us to trust in God's power and grace, knowing in life and in death we belong to God, and thanksgiving that this woman knows this as well.
- ⇒ Lift up Vernon's family, especially his sister Eunice in her distress.
- ⇒ Thanksgiving for Sam M.'s chapel message in which he shared his favorite Scriptures and for his mother Esther's calling him last night to share hers too.
- ⇒ Lift up Danielle's grandmother-in-law as she approaches her death. Lift up comfort and peace for all who love her. Also, lift up Danielle so that everything will go well in her life.
- ⇒ Lift up a friend who is in labor delivering her son. Lift up another friend whose son was born one week ago. Lift up all new mothers as they adjust to the demands of a newborn upon their time and energy.

**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 Becky who on her birthday is driving to her grandmother's funeral in Los Angeles. Lift up traveling mercies and comfort for the family and friends who will gather for this event.
- ⇒ Lift up innocent children who are adversely affected by bad decisions made by their parents.
- ⇒ Continue to lift up resolution for Genevieve's sister whose identity was stolen. Praise that the thief has moved out of the apartment complex.
- ⇒ Lift up all people who may not have a loving shoulder to lean on in times of trouble.
- ⇒ Lift up the new Christian Toposa people who are facing persecution. Pray for their courage, strength, endurance, perseverance, and surety of belief. Pray for protection from attack. Particularly lift up Lucia, the first Toposa woman to be baptized. She has seen God work miracles, but she wearies under the weight of the persecution.
- ⇒ Thanks be to God for Christians around the world who continue to witness. Lift up their faith. Especially pray for the Coptic Christians who are being abducted and killed by radical Islamists.
- ⇒ Lift up hope for DeeDee as she faces obstacles in her life.
- ⇒ Praise that "Workers to Work," with support from NCF, has blessed a young woman named Nikki with a used car so she can work and support herself.
- ⇒ Lift up Stephanie whose mother had a stroke six weeks ago. Lift up a change of heart for her insurance company which has decided she is well now.
- ⇒ Lift up Alex for continued recovery from the flu. Lift up protection from the flu for Grace, Carver and George. Praise for Grace offering to stay home with the children (Carver refused to leave his sister) so George could come to worship.
- ⇒ Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! With God all things are possible.

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!



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



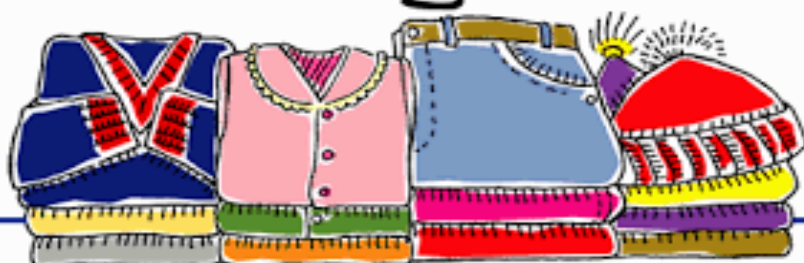
March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Clothing Drive



Greater Hope Center

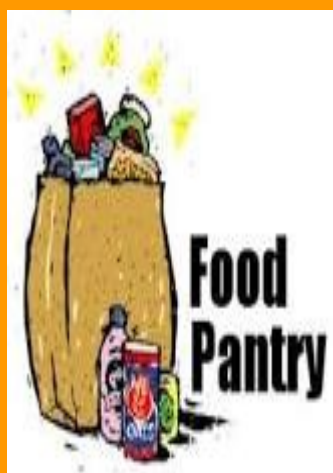
Clothing donations can be delivered to our boutique located at 4136 E. 12th, Austin, Texas 78723.

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.



March 6, 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

March 8, Sunday Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday; women will take leadership roles in worship. We honor women who contribute and lift up the bond between young and senior women in God's household. Resources are available.

March 20-22 PW Spring Gathering, Covenant PC Girls Getaway Weekend, Hunt, TX, with NCF PW ladies invited to attend. Sponsored by Mission Presbytery with First Presbyterian Church PW of Seguin as hosts. Keynote Speaker will be Rev. Kathy Anderson, Director of John Knox Ranch. The theme will be "Peace Within the Storm."

April 3, Friday Church Women United will meet at 9:30 AM at Austin Mennonite Church, 5801 Westminster Dr. Ecumenical Development Forum: "Economic Justice" will be the program.

May 1, Friday Church Women United will meet at 9:30 AM at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 3208 Exposition Boulevard. The program is Friendship Celebration: "Journey of the Caregiver."

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Words to Live By”

Proverbs 1:20-33; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38

**Rev. Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin**

March 1, 2015—Second Sunday in Lent

Proverbs 1:20-33

²⁰ *Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.* ²¹ *At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:* ²² *“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?”* ²³ *Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you.* ²⁴ *Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,* ²⁵ *and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,* ²⁶ *I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you,* ²⁷ *when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.* ²⁸ *Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.* ²⁹ *Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord,* ³⁰ *would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof,* ³¹ *therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.* ³² *For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them;* ³³ *but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.”*

James 3:1-12

¹ *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.* ² *For 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.* ³ *If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies.* ⁴ *Or 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.* ⁵ *So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!* ⁶ *And 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.* ⁷ *For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species,* ⁸ *but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison.* ⁹ *With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God.* ¹⁰ *From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.* ¹¹ *Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water?* ¹² *Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.*

Mark 8:27-38

²⁷ *Jesus 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?”* ²⁸ *And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”* ²⁹ *He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”* ³⁰ *And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.* ³¹ *Then 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.* ³² *He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.* ³³ *But 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.* ³⁴ *He 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.* ³⁵ *For 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.* ³⁶ *For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ *Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ *Those 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.”***

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Words to Live By”

Proverbs 1:20-33; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38

Rev. Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

March 1, 2015—Second Sunday in Lent

Buenos días, mis hermanos y hermanas. Que la gracia de nuestro Señor Jesucristo sea con ustedes. (Good morning, my brothers and sisters. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.)

Our lives are filled with words, in written form, in social media, and in everyday speech. Despite how irrelevant or unimportant a conversation may seem, the words we use when we talk, text, or write are meant to have a meaning that is conveyed by the symbols, ideas, or images these words represent (icons). That is, words are a way of referring to one thing in terms of something else we have either imagined or actually experienced. When a word is used, a picture or image is formed in our minds. If I say “church,” for example, what we see in our minds are not the individual letters that spell the word c-h-u-r-c-h. Rather, the image that comes to mind may be that of the church where we were raised, or the church which we joined for the first time, or this particular congregation, New Covenant Fellowship of Austin, TX. The word “church” may also mean the Presbyterian Church as in our denomination, PCUSA. Because there’s always the possibility of misinterpreting words or being misled by them, we make every effort to clarify and be specific about what we mean.

Our Scripture lesson in James warns us that not many of us should become teachers (or preachers, for that matter) because we make many mistakes in speaking. When it comes to speaking, I have to acknowledge I have made my share of mistakes in my years in ministry. As one who speaks English as a second language, I’m mindful that a word I may be thinking of in my mother tongue may not translate the same way in English. And sometimes I find myself scratching my head, wondering “Cómo se dice? How do you say that?”

Twenty-three years ago when I started seminary, I had a very challenging time trying to learn Hebrew and Greek via the English language. James’ background as a Jewish Christian, also known as a Judeo-Christian, was probably behind his warning alluding to the utmost importance of teaching and the use of the right words. As we know, in the Jewish culture at the time, the relationship between a rabbi and a disciple was very intimate and considered almost sacred. There was an understanding that the disciples were not merely acquiring knowledge but also having experiences that would lead them to know what the rabbi knew and to become as much as possible like the rabbi. Teachers or rabbis, therefore, had to be extremely careful with their words because they would be judged by them.

James uses the metaphor of the tongue as fire that can burn out of control. Have we ever left a heated conversation or a meeting thinking “I can’t believe I said that!” “I don’t understand what came over me!” Or have we heard a public speaker delivering a speech before a crowd using inflammatory words that couldn’t be further from the truth? We are aware that political discourse, both at home and abroad, hits the media and the airwaves constantly; and it is not uncommon that words used in those statements and declarations may contain inaccuracies or may be misleading, to say the least. But let’s take a look at our gospel story and hear words to live by in the midst of our culture and society loaded with words that are not necessarily used for edification.

In today’s gospel we find Jesus the Teacher giving instruction to his disciples. It is a lesson about life in Christ and the call to be Christian disciples. When Jesus the Teacher poses a question to his students, one of the students thinks he’s got it all figured out, and so there he is raising his hand. Yes, we know Peter well and know how his impulsiveness can get him in trouble. Somehow I find this comforting, as I know what it is like putting one’s foot in one’s mouth. What a relief it is to receive Jesus’ grace and forgiveness when our words are misspoken, when our words are not life-affirming.

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Words to Live By”

Proverbs 1:20-33; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38

Rev. Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

March 1, 2015—Second Sunday in Lent

Mark’s gospel shows Jesus taking his disciples away from the crowds into a time of retreat. Jesus and the disciples would be by themselves and Jesus could pay attention to their instruction. Let’s just say this was part of their seminary training, “Introduction to Theology 101.” As a seminary theology professor would say: “All good theology is Christology.” That is, if we can begin to understand the identity of Christ, the rest of theology may not be as difficult to get.

It would appear that Jesus thought along the same lines because here he’s teaching the disciples about the nature of the Christ, teaching them about himself. Jesus begins by asking the disciples what people are saying about him: ***“Who do people say that I am?”*** The disciples come back with all kinds of answers: “John the Baptist”; others say “Elijah”; and yet others, “one of the prophets.” Then Jesus moves on and asks the disciples, ***“But who do you say that I am?”*** Jesus wants to hear their personal confession of faith. Of course, Peter was the first to put into words what the other disciples were thinking: ***“You are the Messiah”*** ... “God’s Anointed King” ... “The One who commands authority, reverence, and respect.” In this case, Peter got the words exactly right; Jesus is indeed the long-awaited ‘Messiah.’

Unfortunately, he would be the star student for only a few short verses. We quickly learn that even though Peter got the words right, he didn’t really understand their true meaning. At this point in his ministry, Jesus knew that the disciples did not properly understand the meaning of Peter’s confession. I think that is the reason he tells the disciples to keep quiet about it for the time being. And this is also why Jesus begins telling them about the true meaning of Peter’s confession. Jesus wants to make sure that the disciples understand his teaching that ***“the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”*** And Jesus says all this quite openly. That is, he speaks these words loud and clear with no possible room for misinterpretation.

The reaction is not unexpected: The disciples find the Teacher’s words to be very upsetting. Peter, especially, takes issue with Jesus’ teaching. Peter asks to speak to the teacher in private and begins to rebuke him. Peter strongly disapproved of and criticized Jesus’ choice of words. If we could imagine it, the scene may have gone something like this: “Jesus do you realize what you just said? We know you are the Messiah who will bring us deliverance; you are supposed to be our role model and strong leader. You are supposed to solve all our problems. Instead, when you speak about suffering, rejection, and execution, you are showing weakness and not strength. You’ve got to remember you are powerful and successful. Nobody can do the signs that you do. You heal the sick. You drive out demons. You perform great miracles. Look, I think you’ve been working too hard and are feeling confused. You just need a little rest and everything will be alright. But listen to me: You just can’t go around saying crazy words like that about betrayal, suffering, and death. Hey, you are our hope and salvation. Please come to your senses, would you?!”

Of course, Jesus loves Peter too much to let him get away with that. Jesus turns to the other disciples, and using some very strong words himself, now he is the one rebuking Peter: ***“Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things.”*** Jesus could be gentle, but not this time. Jesus is speaking with great urgency, too, when his disciples fail to fully understand that the way to life in Christ is through denying oneself and taking up one’s cross. Jesus then delivers words that are both challenging but also words to live by. These are words that Christian disciples today would do well to hear and act upon: ***“Follow me.”*** Jesus’ words essentially echo the words of Wisdom in the *Book of Proverbs* as Wisdom cries out openly and calls us all ***“to give heed to her reproof and counsel,”*** (*Proverbs 1:23, 25, 30*) so that we could ***“be secure,”*** not in ***“dread of disaster.”***

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How difficult this Christian discipleship can be—how much instruction and discipline is required. But Jesus the Teacher offers himself as a guide and help, one who is trustworthy, certainly one who is facing death but also assuring the disciples that death doesn't have the last word. Jesus also promises security to those who follow: *"... those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."* (Mark 8:35) We have heard it already in *Proverbs* that the *"Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom."* And this time the disciples are called to take hold of "the fear of the Lord" as the beginning and the end, as the way to life for those who know as the Teacher knows and also do and as the Teacher does.

And it is precisely when we follow Jesus in word and deed that we begin to comprehend what Jesus' life and death and resurrection are meant to say to us in the most crucial moments of human existence. By Jesus being obedient to die on a cross, salvation has been brought to humanity. There cannot be better news than knowing and experiencing these two things:

- (1) that Jesus walks in solidarity with us in a world where pain and suffering and rejection are part of our journey of faith, and
- (2) the joy of salvation and life transformed in the power of the resurrection. (*Philippians 3:10*)

What do we as Christians have to offer a world saturated with words that tear apart and destroy? Let us use words that really matter, words that become embodied and enacted in our lives as we encounter the Wisdom of God, as we are claimed as God's own by the very Word of Life dwelling among us, living within us. And it is through the living Word that we can share life with Christ, and follow the Lord together with the community of those with whom we are called to identify our lives, with those whom God so loves. Those are words to live by.

Allow me to close by paraphrasing *Psalms 19:14*, a verse frequently quoted right before a sermon:

May the words of our mouths be life-giving to all...
May the words of our mouths, the meditation of our hearts,
and the way we live our lives be acceptable unto you, O LORD,
our Strength and our Redeemer.

Thanks be to God.

March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

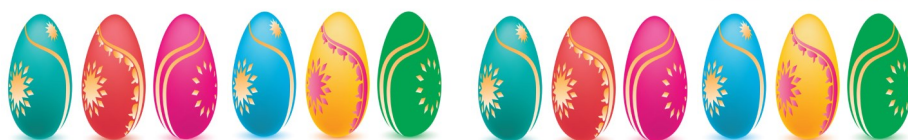


Easter Eggs

It's time to bring in filled Easter Eggs for the Grand Easter Egg Hunt! Fill 'em up with candy, small toys, stickers, etc. But no chocolate, please; it gets all ooey-gooney (*yes, that is an actual word*) and messy in the Texas sun.

Then, after church on Easter Day, stand back and enjoy the mad scramble as the kids from Genesis and New Covenant dash around finding them all.

(Or we hope they find them all, anyway. I just found one of last year's eggs a few days ago. The bubblegum in it wasn't really all that flavorful anymore.)



To prepare for the Grand Easter Egg Hunt, please bring plastic Easter Eggs filled with candy, toys, stickers, etc. to the Narthex. No chocolate, please -- the sun just loves to make it all goopy.



March 6, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

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.

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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.”

March 6, 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

