



FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

December 2018



FROM YOUR PASTOR

“...To you this day is born in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” (Luke 1: 11-12)

“If we confess our sins to God, then God will be faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1: 9)

Ten years ago, I used a story to point out how important Christmas is to all of us and to the world. It’s a good story and I hope that you don’t mind my using it again.

There was once a man who owned a Rolls Royce. He decided to put his car on a ferry from his home in England and take it to the European continent for a vacation!

While he was driving around Europe, something happened to the motor of his car. He contacted the Rolls-Royce people back in England and asked, ***“I’m having trouble with my car; what do you suggest I do?”***

Well, the Rolls-Royce people flew a mechanic over to Europe immediately to where the man and the car were located. The mechanic fixed the car and left without giving the man a bill.

The owner began to wonder, ***“Wow, when I get back to England, I wonder how much Rolls-Royce is going to charge me for sending a mechanic all the way over here to Europe to fix my car?”***

When he got back to England, he heard absolutely nothing from the Rolls-Royce company. So, he wrote them a letter and asked them how much he owed them for the mechanic’s travel and repair costs.

Just a few days later, he received a letter back from Rolls-Royce stating the following:

“Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that indicates that anything has ever gone wrong with your or anyone else’s Rolls-Royce. Thank you.”

To God, we are all like Rolls-Royce cars...the best...the most beloved...the most precious creations that God has ever created.

Doesn’t that make you feel good? I know it makes me feel GREAT!

Still, even Rolls-Royces break down once in a while. And, so do we. St. Paul writes in Romans 3 that, ***“All (of us) sin and fall short of the glory of God.”*** We all sin and we ***“break down”***.

We do things that we should never do. We say things that we should never say. We hurt others and ourselves. We want more treasures in this world than we do in the next. And, in doing so, we ***“break down”*** and literally risk our eternal salvation!

But God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to “*fix*” us...to forgive us...to make things right again. When we confess our sins to God through Jesus Christ, the answer we receive is ALWAYS:

“Dear Blessed Child of Mine:

There is no record ANYWHERE in My files that there is ANYTHING wrong with you. I love you. You are completely forgiven. Love, God.”

This is why Christmas is SO important. **Without** Jesus Christ, there is no complete forgiveness...no repair for our souls...no guarantee of eternal life...no relief from guilt and sorrow.

But, **with** and **because** of Jesus Christ, all of our sins are forgiven through Him, who loved us enough to give His life for us on the cross. Jesus Christ was born, lived, died, and rose from death so that there would be no permanent record of our sins as far as God is concerned. By the power and love of Jesus Christ, *“God (has been) faithful and just, forgiving ALL our sins and purifying us from all unrighteousness.”*

This is the greatest Christmas present of all. It always has been and it always will be.

Genny, Ben, Sam and I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Your Friend and Pastor,



PREACHING SCHEDULES FOR DECEMBER 2018

Sunday, December 2, 2018 (10:00 AM)

Service of Holy Communion

Scripture Lesson: Luke 3: 1-6 (NIV)

Meditation: "A WONDROUS LIGHT"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

Sunday, December 9, 2018 (10:00 AM)

Scripture Lesson: John 1: 1-14 (NIV)

Sermon: "WHO'S AFRAID OF A LITTLE BABY?"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

Sunday, December 16, 2018 (10:00 AM)

Scripture Lesson: Micah 5: 2-4 (NRSV)

Sermon: "A SMALL-TOWN SAVIOR"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

Sunday, December 23, 2018 (10:00 AM)

Christmas Carol "Sing Along" Sunday

Our pastor, Dr. Looker, and organist, Felipe Dominguez, will lead a Christmas Carol "Sing Along". All those present will be asked to suggest their "favorite" Christmas Carols and we will sing selected verses, all to the glory of God!

Monday, December 24, 2018 (7:00 PM)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Sunday, December 30, 2018 (10:00 AM)

The Rev. Bill Jokela, Preaching

PART FIVE. THE INTELLECTUAL LAWS

13. THE LAW OF MINDFULNESS

Introduction – I have been writing a series of articles based on Greg Anderson’s book entitled **THE 22 (NON-NEGOTIABLE) LAWS OF WELLNESS: *Feel, Think and Live Better Than You Ever Thought Possible***. Greg Anderson is a cancer survivor. In 1984 his doctors told him he had 30 days to live. His cancer had spread and his doctors had surgically removed one of his lungs. He was in such bad physical condition his doctors had given up on him and told him to prepare himself for his death. Yet, as Anderson writes, he knew others had survived cancer so he set out on a journey to find out what these cancer survivors had in common.

While on this journey of discovery about the common characteristics of cancer survivors he began to write. His books include **THE CANCER CONQUEROR, THE TRIUMPHANT PATIENT, 50 ESSENTIAL THINGS TO DO WHEN THE DOCTOR SAYS IT’S CANCER, HEALING WISDOM**. Notice that these books were written over an extended period of time and that he did not die as his doctors had predicted. His books are based on his findings and his own personal lifestyle that evolved as a result of his findings. This book, **THE 22 (NON-NEGOTIABLE) LAWS OF WELLNESS**, is a summation of the principles on not only how he lives his life but they also serve as a guide for wellness for us all. Please note that he is not just writing about surviving cancer but he is talking about the idea of “wellness” as it applies to all of life. The subtitle of this book is *Feel, Think and Live Better Than You Ever Thought Possible*.

In the *Introduction* to The 22 Laws, he says that the term *wellness* is one of the most powerful words in the English language and one of the most important ideas of our time but it is also one of the least understood words. He says that wellness is more than a “medical fix” but is a way of living – *a lifestyle sensitive and responsive to all the dimensions of body, mind, and spirit, an approach to life we each design to achieve our highest potential for well-being now and forever*. This reminds me of the words of Jesus who says, “...The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10 (Modern English Version)

I mentioned earlier that Anderson structures his book around eight different groups of laws: Part One. **THE UNIVERSAL LAWS**. Part Two. **THE PHYSICAL LAWS**. Part Three. **THE EMOTIONAL LAWS**. Part Four. **THE SOCIAL LAWS**. Part Five. **THE INTELLECTUAL LAWS**. Part Six. **THE VOCATIONAL LAWS**. Part Seven. **THE SPIRITUAL LAWS**. Part

Eight. **The Greatest Law.** This article will be on the first of the three **INTELLECTUAL LAWS**, the **LAW OF MINDFULNESS**. Before addressing this particular concept I want to reinforce what the entire book is about as described in the **INTRODUCTION**.

INTRODUCTION – Anderson introduces the concept of *wellness* and describes it as a way of living that calls for continuing improvement and self-renewal in all areas of life – body, mind and spirit. He says it is one of the most important ideas of our time but also says it is one of the least understood. He says this book describes the fundamental rules of the wellness pursuit and says that these are the rules he has learned over the years that helped him recover and live after being given a death sentence due to metastasized lung cancer. And so, the **LAW OF MINDFULNESS** is another of the many facets of the whole concept of *wellness*.

The following quote is actually the opening paragraph to the chapter:

Only one thing has to change for us to know happiness in our lives: where we focus our attention. The good news is that we can choose! I will elaborate by saying that we can choose our thoughts, we can choose our actions, we can choose our self-talk. Mindfulness is being aware of what we are thinking, or doing or what we are saying to ourselves.

I am reminded of an incident that happened during my training at Georgia Mental Health Institute in the late 1970's. One of the students said to a supervisor that the supervisor made him angry. The supervisor gently replied, "I can't make you angry but you can choose to be angry." I've thought about that exchange many times over the years; "I can't make you mad; it's your choice to be mad." So often we just let out thoughts and feelings just flow, totally uncontrolled or unchecked by ourselves.

Anderson shares his experience with one of the residents of an assisted- living retirement community. He said that F had severe arthritis and constantly complained that she couldn't walk. He observed that she could actually walk, sometimes with a cane or a walker, but she could walk, albeit not with the agility that she had in her youth.

In a conversation that Anderson had with F, he gently told her that her problem was actually not in her inability to walk. He thought she was making herself miserable by "...wishing she could walk as easily as before." He says, "As soon as F's mind had begun to relating to her intense desire for things to be different, life for her had become miserable. She had felt overwhelmed by self-pity, anger, and fear." He said that together they, "...worked to identify what she might be able to do to break out of that thinking pattern and learn to live with her impaired ability to walk." I have learned over the years as an Army Chaplain that it's important for one's mental health to make peace with

reality. I don't say that you have to like it but to make peace with it. Sometimes it takes a while to determine what reality is in a given situation.

I think it's important to be clear what Anderson is trying to say here so I will quote him verbatim:

F had trapped herself in self-made prison—always wishing for things to be different. It's a jail of the highest and most effective order and is a sure formula for intense suffering. In fact, a constant longing for life to be different is an excellent definition of suffering. We undermine our life process in this constant longing for things to be different. Desiring things we don't have, or endlessly worrying about the things we do have, absolutely contaminates all the good with which we are blessed. This unsatisfiable wish for things to be different is at the very heart of mindlessness. Its opposite is embodied in the Law of Mindfulness.

Anderson here talks about how easy it is for us to take away from our enjoyment of some pleasurable activity by fretting over what we **should** be doing. He illustrates using a personable experience. He said that he loves listening to music and totally getting into enjoying the moment. He says his mind is at peace and he is happy. But.., he says his mind kicks in and reminds him that he has work to do, that he is wasting his time and his life and he needs to get busy.

He asks, What happened? And then answers, Mindlessness! He is no longer enjoying the moment but his mind is off and running. He then asks the reader, Does this happen to you? And suggests that it does all the time. Anderson elaborates on the solution:

Mindfulness means being truly present with life and allowing it to unfold without judging it. This does not mean that one does not set, move toward, and achieve goals. But it means that the actual achievement is secondary to the moment-to-moment experience of pursuing the goals. That requires a massive change in attitude.

As Miguel de Cervantes said, "The road to the inn is much better than the stay," Anderson says, "The Law of Mindfulness reminds us to focus on the journey, not the destination." He says that joy is found not in finishing an activity but in actually doing it. He talks about being aware of what's going on and enjoying it. "Mindfulness means finding the incredible in the commonplace." Anderson does not mention the old cliché about taking time to smell the roses but I think he would agree with that. He does mention, for example, actually taking time to taste and enjoy one's food instead of just gobbling it down.

He also says that we can know happiness by disciplining and training our minds to let go of worries and desires and only returning to them when the time has come to do something about them. Anderson makes the following powerful statements:

The LAW OF MINDFULNESS draws our consciousness to a central choice: we have the power to determine what we focus our attention on. Even our first baby steps in the right direction are to be celebrated. Mindfulness says, 'I will become aware of my thoughts. I will exercise my power to choose my thoughts, and I will choose thoughts that bring happiness and contentment.'

He talks about his daily walk that takes him by a day-care center and taking the time to enjoy watching the children playing outside. He says that many of the children when they go outside head straight for a big sandbox. He has observed that playing there with their pails and shovels seems to be a new and fresh experience every time they do that. He then states, "Mindfulness would have us see that freshness and newness in our own daily life experiences." He concludes the chapter with the admonition to choose our focus carefully and focus on thoughts that nurture and concentrating on what we have and not what we've lost.

I would like to conclude this article by briefly reflecting theologically on the ideas presented here. The creation story in the Old Testament reminds us that we all are created in the image of God. Part of that means that God has given us the autonomy to choose our thoughts, to choose our actions (or inactions), to choose our self talk. Perhaps you are hearing this for the first time. Perhaps you have heard this before but either don't believe it or need to be reminded of it. (It is easy to slip into negative or destructive thought and behavior patterns. If this negativity has been routine for us then it can be difficult to change our ways especially negative self talk.)

The New Testament reminds us that we are not alone in our challenging walk of faith. Scripture reminds us, "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." (II Timothy 1:7) We just need the faith to believe that

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." (Philippians 4:8 New International Version) You can do this!

My next article will be on the second of the three Intellectual Laws, **THE LAW OF CREATIVITY.**

Submitted by Bill Jokela, Parish Associate, FPCA

MEET FELLOW CHRISTIANS

Meet My Dear Mother, Anna Havas

By Marta Strada

In the year 1901 a new century started—that's when my mother started her life, on December 2. She was born in Prague, a city ruled by the German government, for which my grandfather, Joseph Schopf, worked. He was a veterinarian, taking care of the horses of the ruling class., horses being very important for transportation. My mother, Anna, was the youngest of four children, one boy and three girls. She was still a little girl when my grandfather was transferred to Munich, Germany. That's where my mother went to school. She was a good student, speaking "Hochdeutsch" – the literary German, not a local dialect. Her family did well, and my mother liked to remember those good times. When she was a teenager, her father was transferred again, this time to Linz, Austria. They lived in a condominium, and a "Gimnasium" (high school) was nearby. When I visited Linz some years ago, one of the teachers remembered her, as they had attended the school at the same time.

Unfortunately, the first World War brought changes to the life of the Schopf family, and about 1920 my mother moved to Vienna where her brother worked as a veterinarian. She got a job in a jewelry factory, where she met a Hungarian artist, Laszio Havas, who designed jewelry. This was the beginning of many happy years. In 1923 they decided to get married in a Roman Catholic church in Linz, and the newlyweds moved to Hungary, settling down in Győr, my father's home town. They wished to have kids, but nothing happened. After seven years of married life, my father got a job in Pecs, a city near the southern border of Hungary, where he taught art. This move was a blessing! A year later I was born! The birth was difficult, and my parents were happy that she had survived. After my birth, the doctors strongly urged my parents not to risk having any more children. However, when she confessed to a Roman Catholic priest that she wanted to avoid having any more children, she was told that not trying to get pregnant was a sin which could not be forgiven. My mother stopped attending Sunday mass, but did send me to a Catholic school so I got a good religious education! Yes, faith was very important to her, even if she disagreed with her denomination's teachings.

In 1944, when the Russian army began to conquer Hungary, my parents were willing to lose everything in order to protect me, and we fled, keeping only the clothing

we were wearing. We walked many miles, we rode on German military trucks which picked up refugees, and finally landed at my grandmother's condo in Linz, where we knocked at the door at 1 AM....surprise!!! The three of us lived in my grandmother's dining room for seven years, surviving bombing attacks, food shortages, and other difficulties. My great mother put up with everything, grateful that she had saved me!

In 1951 my parents decided to emigrate, and we came to the United States. In school my mother had learned French, but English was a new language. My father got a job in a factory, and my mother in a department store--of course, not serving customers. When she finally retired, she was happy that she and my father had provided me with a good future. She was upset when I married Frank, who was not Roman Catholic, but a member of the Hungarian Reformed Church. But she did come to the wedding!

Years went by. My mother's only child moved to Alexandria, Virginia, with her family. My mother was still in close contact with her sister in Austria, but only by mail. When she retired, her main responsibility was to take care of my father, but he passed away in 1981. My mother found a new way of living for a purpose. She attended a club of retirees who helped others. When she was physically unable to live by herself, she moved to a nursing home where she spent the last years of her blessed life, which came to an end in November 1997, just a couple of weeks before her 96th birthday!

I can only thank the Lord that He gave me such an honorable mother, a great fellow Christian!

TRUNK OR TREAT

The children, dressed as Moses, popcorn, fairy princesses, etc., came to the FPCA church parking lot for the "Trunk or Treat," on Sunday, October 28th. The event, hosted by First Presbyterian Church of Annandale and FPCA Christian Childcare Center, consisted of lines of decorated vehicles. The event brought in more than 30 children and family members from the Annandale neighborhood. We appreciate all the people who participated in the event, as well as all the volunteers who decorated their vehicles and handed out candies. More photos are available on the church Facebook. Thank you!

Stella Lee, Director of Family Ministries



THE POTTER'S HOUSE SHOW PAST, PRESENT, OR FUTURE?

When do you read your First and ForMOST newsletter? If it's Friday, the pottery show is imminent; if Saturday morning, it's time to come on over to see the bowls and vases, socialize and enjoy coffee and cookies; or, if later, it's history!

As this article goes to press, Dr. Chris Looker and Elder Carol Gage are quite excited about the Bowl and Vase Show, scheduled for Saturday, December 1, 2018, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. They hope you'll look at the online catalog, or leaf through the printed catalog on the table in the rear of the sanctuary. They hope you'll like what you see.

Both potters are pleased to be able to present this array of bowls and vases for you to enjoy. They hope the Holy Spirit of God will guide your generosity as you donate through the Silent Auction to the Mission Fund to help those in Guatemala still recovering and rebuilding after last June's devastating volcano. All donations will be used for this purpose. So, anyone who takes home a bowl or vase is not "buying" that piece of pottery, but, rather, is serving God by contributing a donation to provide relief for God's children in Guatemala. Same bowl or vase, same donation, but what a different perspective!

While you may say to yourself that you have no need of any bowls or vases, that your house is sufficient unto itself, or that it is even overflowing, you may recall that the day following the Show is the First Sunday in Advent. This wonderful beginning of the Christmas Season also reminds us that Christmas Day is only three weeks and two days away! Thus, the Show is a wonderful opportunity to select that unique, one-of-a-kind,

present for someone you love. Hand-thrown, hand-glazed, no two alike, these bowls and vases have been made in joy and love, and donated by the potters to the glory of God.

The potters feel they have been “making tomorrow’s antiques today,” and that, in future years, someone may very well look with awe on a precious bowl or vase and exclaim, “This has lasted over a hundred years! I am so fortunate that my great-grandmother or great-great-uncle took this home and passed it along for future generations to enjoy.” Yes, the potters have high hopes for their pottery! But, only **YOU** can help make this happen!

If you are reading this article after the fact, the Show will have been a wonderful success, or a great learning experience, OR perhaps both! The January issue of First and ForMOST will let you know!

BOWL AND VASE SHOW
Saturday, December 1, 2018
11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Sanctuary

Thank you!
Elder Carol Gage

TWO BELOVED MEMBERS

It is with sorrow, for ourselves, and joy, for them, that we announce the recent passing of two of our beloved church members:

Bob Logwood October 31, 1930 – November 5, 2018

Joseph Patrick (“Pat”) Hickey March 25, 1925 -November 17, 2018.

We do not say, “Good-bye,” but “Au revoir,” for we trust that we shall meet again.

Rest in Peace

A service was held for Bob Logwood on November 12, 2018, and a memorial service is tentatively scheduled for Pat Hickey for March 2019.

THE FPCA MEN'S BREAKFAST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale
Saturday, December 1, 2018, at 8:30 AM in Room 105
Come One, Come All to this
GREAT FUN AND FELLOWSHIP EVENT !

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

October 21, 2018

The Rev. Bill Jokela opened the meeting with prayer, asking God's blessing on us and asking for God's guidance as we seek to do God's work here on earth.

Director of Family Ministries Stella Lee reported that plans for the upcoming Trunk or Treat children's event on October 28, 2018 are progressing well. She is also planning a children's Christmas event/party in December.

Director of the Christian Childcare Center (FPCA-CCC) Merlin Berganza reported that two teachers have been hired, bringing the total to six. Total enrollment in the CCC will be 21 children by February 19, 2019. Weekly income now exceeds expenses.

Reporting for Building and Grounds Commission, Elder Roger Stevenson told the session he has received bids and estimates for changing the locks on the six outside doors. He plans to coordinate the work with Stella Lee in January 2019.

The Rev. Bill Jokela reported that he hired a man to edge the FPCA campus curbs and sidewalks as a one-time autumn clean-up and is happy to donate that work.

Elder Carol Gage reported that the Administration and Finance Commission has asked that Session provide 2019 budget requests for planning purposes.

Elder Josh Musih reported that plans for a Thanksgiving Day (November 22, 2018) potluck lunch are progressing well, and that a potluck lunch is planned for Christmas Day, December 25, 2018.

Elder Josh Musih offered the closing prayer, thanking God for God's wisdom and guidance.

ATTENTION!

Deadline for the January 2019 issue of FIRST and ForMOST is December 19, 2018.

Please e-mail your announcements and reports to the Editor, Marta Strada, LUXI7777@verizon.net, or put them in the FIRST and ForMOST drawer in the church office. Kindly copy the Administrative Assistant: office@fpcannandale.org, and Elder Carol Gage: clgage@runbox.com. Thank you!