

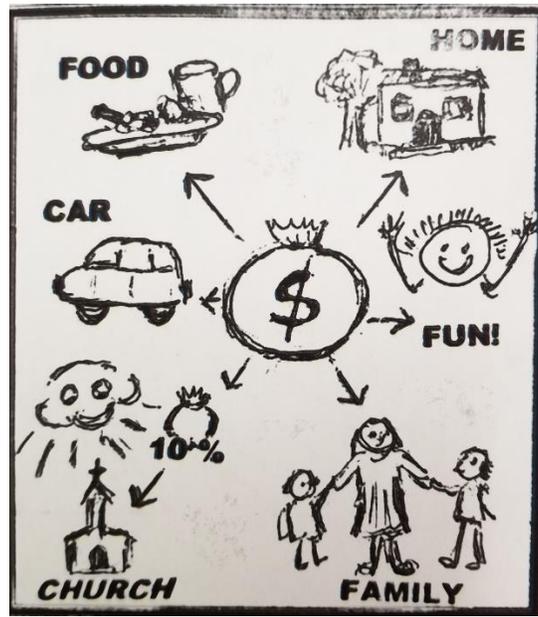


FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

November 2019

Note: With neither Dr. Looker's knowledge nor permission, as he is away for a class, we are printing this article, written 10 years ago: still relevant!



FROM YOUR PASTOR

“Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me – the whole nation of you! Bring a full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house of worship, and thus put Me to the test, says the LORD: see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. (Malachi 3: 8-10)

In a sermon I preached on this very difficult Scripture passage three years ago, I said, “*Many Americans do not tithe 10% of their income to their churches, as God commands us to do in the Scripture. And, there are many credible (and also many not-so-credible) reasons why this is so. However, if you believe that tithing 10% of your annual income to the church is truly God’s will for your life, like I do, then the best way to increase your giving is to do it gradually. Let’s say*

*you give 2% of your annual income to the church and you believe that the Holy Spirit is moving you to increase your giving to reach a full tithe (10%). What do you do? Well, I suggest that you figure out what percentage of your annual income you are currently pledging to the church; then, begin increasing your pledging by ½% of your annual income each year thereafter. A person who starts at 2% of their annual income will be able to achieve a “**full tithe to the Lord**” (10%) in just 16 years.”*

In my 21 years of ordained ministry, I have struggled greatly with the whole concept of tithing. Though I know it to be Biblical, I believe it to be God’s Word to us, and personally practice tithing 10% of my annual income to Christ’s Church. I have the utmost respect for those who cannot or choose not to tithe.

First of all, it’s hard to give 10% of one’s income to the church! Many people simply cannot afford to do so. To do so would put themselves and/or their families at great risk of not having enough money for food, shelter, and other basic needs.

Secondly, most Presbyterians were never taught to tithe to their church. Though tithing is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments as being the minimum offering that we are supposed to dedicate and give to God and His Church, the whole subject of tithing has been avoided like the plague by pastors and elders for years. Perhaps we pastors have thought that we would offend too many people if we mentioned tithing. Perhaps we thought people would leave our churches if we even broached the subject. After all, I have to admit that asking my friends in Christ for money is about the most difficult and anxiety-producing thing that I do as a pastor! Frankly, it scares me to death!

Thirdly, the more money and time that a Christian gives to Christ’s Church, the less that that same Christian will have for his/her wants. By ignoring this Biblical teaching, generations upon generations have gotten used to a lower standard of giving to our churches. And, there is no one to blame more for this than pastors like myself. Frankly, we have been afraid to talk about tithing for so long, that to do so now is almost a taboo in our present-day society.

Yet, that does not change the fact that tithing 10% of one’s income (whether it be of one’s net or gross income...which is one of the questions I have been asked a million times...and to which I don’t even pretend to have an answer) **is what God commands us to do in both the Old and the New Testaments of Scripture.**

So, what’s a pastor to do? Well, I think there is only one way that I can possibly be true to God’s word as a pastor and still effectively teach Christians to tithe to Christ’s Church. And that is to lovingly and humbly suggest the Biblical, gradual, sensible, and realistic way that I preached three years ago from FPCA pulpit.

If you are not currently tithing to Christ's Church and wish to do so, I would humbly suggest that you do it slowly and in reasonable increments, by ½% to 1% of your annual income per year. That way, you'll eventually make your goal of 10% and achieve a **"full tithe to the Lord"** in a decent, orderly, Biblical, and reasonable period of time.

This is how I did it when the Holy Spirit of God convinced me that I should tithe to Christ's Church. Sure, it took me a few years. But, with each passing year, I felt more and more satisfied that what I was doing really was God's Will.

To this day, I have never met a person who tithes to Christ's Church and is unhappy. Now why do you think this is so? Maybe Jesus was right when He said, **"It is more blessed to give than to receive."** (Acts 20:35)

May God **"bless"** you during the upcoming Thanksgiving holidays with **"overflowing blessings."**

Your Pastor and Friend,



PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR NOVEMBER 2019

November 3, 2019 Service of Holy Communion

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 5: 1-12 (NIV)

Sermon Title: "ARE YOU HAPPY?"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

November 10, 2019

Scripture Lesson: Luke 20:27-38 (MSG)

Sermon Title: "A CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

November 17, 2019

Scripture Lesson: Luke 21:5-19 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Title: "THE BAD NEWS BELL"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

November 24, 2019

Scripture Lesson: Luke 23:35-43

Sermon Title: "DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN? I THINK NOT."

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

THE GOD WITHOUT—A THANSKGIVING MESSAGE

By Jack Kelley

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. . . . Enter his gates with thanksgiving . . . ; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (excerpted from **Psalm 100**)

Each year on the 4th Thursday of November we celebrate Thanksgiving Day. It's a holiday begun by the early settlers to express their gratitude to God for a bountiful harvest, and it's patterned after the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. After the harvest, Israelites from all over the country would gather in Jerusalem for a week long celebration. This was to commemorate the time God had spent with them in the wilderness and to give thanks for another good harvest. All year they saved up their tithes, the first born of their flocks and herds, the first sheaves of grain, the first grapes, . . . and other fruit and vegetables and brought it all to Jerusalem in the fall where they cooked and ate in a national celebration of praise ([Deut. 12:5-7](#)). After a very difficult year in the new world, the Pilgrims of New England instituted a similar thanksgiving feast, again with the intent of praising God.

My parents made sure we never forgot that it was the Lord who provided for us and so Thanksgiving was a religious observance in our house. Prayers were offered and each family member gave thanks to the Lord for all the good things we had received.

We believed that even though my parents worked hard all year, it was the Lord who had given them their strength and ability and created opportunities. After all, lots of people work hard and never seem to get anywhere. We weren't well off, but we gave thanks for what we had because we knew where our blessings came from.

As an adult I got involved in the self-development field and began learning about the "god within," (*which*) I could use to maximize my "creative potential," This made me seem like the master of my own fate. I forgot all about the Lord's admonition to remember Him. When I was born again at age 40 I finally saw that this "god within" was my own self-determination. It was the "God without" who had been blessing me all along. I asked the Lord to forgive me for giving myself credit for things that were gifts from Him. As I was praying, the phrase "God Without" kept repeating itself in my mind. What was the Lord trying to tell me?

I believe He was saying that the word “without” applies to lots of things where He is concerned, and as I continued to pray several of them came to mind:

Love Without Limits ... *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believed in Him would not perish but have everlasting life* ([John 3:16](#)).

Forgiveness Without Question ... *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* ([1 John 1:9](#))

Mercy Without Measure *It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion fails not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness* ([Lamentations 3:22-23](#)).

Faithfulness Without Failing ... *Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands* ([Deut. 7:9](#))

Salvation Without Merit ... *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.* ([Titus 3:4-5](#)).

Grace Without Guilt ... *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.* ([2 Corinthians 5:17-19](#))

So in a time when mankind has all but forgotten that the Lord is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, the Author of all our victories, who arranges every opportunity and fashions every blessing, these “withouts” might serve as good reminders to give thanks where thanks is due.

And now may “*The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.*” ([Numbers 6:24-26](#)) Happy Thanksgiving.

Jack Kelley's article is printed here by kind permission from his wife Samantha, who manages their web site. Space constraints required omitting portions of the text; the full article containing all ten “withouts” may be found at www.gracethrufaith.com

FAMILY MINISTRIES
Reformation Sunday Plus Last Sunday of Month
Special Family Worship

We celebrated Reformation Sunday on the 27th of October as we welcomed children and their families to our ongoing “Last Sunday of the Month Family Worship.” Next monthly family worship is **Sunday, November 24th**.

Following the worship service, we had a special event: grilled hot dogs and lots of games in the newly-renovated Activities Building. As you can see in the pictures below, everyone had a great time!

Now we anticipate Thanksgiving Day, that great American holiday at the end of November. We have so many blessings throughout the year, so it is good to have this extra-special day set aside to praise God and thank God for blessings received.



THE POTTER'S HOUSE MINISTRY



Time has flown! The Second Annual Pottery Show and Silent Auction will soon be here! Everyone in the Potter's House has focused on "playing clay," with resultant gorgeous covered casseroles, bowls, and vases in various sizes and shapes. It's a glorious sight, and we can hardly wait to show you! That's a little sneak preview above, a teaser of what to expect. If you like what you see, just know there will be lots more at the show.

All pieces are donated, having been made for the Glory of God. Proceeds this year will benefit local and regional missions. We trust the Holy Spirit will touch everyone who attends the show with a spirit of real generosity for this good cause.

So, save the date: Saturday, [December 7, 2019](#), from Noon to 1:30 p.m. in the sanctuary.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

October 20, 2019

Dr. Chris Looker opened the meeting with prayer, asking for God's guidance and blessing on our meeting.

The session approved for the record the Covenant with Iglesia Fuente De Verdad.

Dr. Looker closed the meeting with thanks to God for this meeting and for God's guidance.

Carol Gage
Clerk of Session

LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME

October was another exciting month for everyone in the Christian Childcare Center, culminating in our participation in the now-established “Last Sunday of the Month Special Family Worship” here at First Presbyterian Church of Annandale.

The church celebrated Reformation Sunday the final Sunday of October. Following the worship service, everyone from church members to friends of the church (and we hope you count yourselves among these), devoured grilled hot dogs’n’all the fixin’s.

Children thrilled to activities and games in the Activities Building and carried home as much candy as parents allowed. You’ll find pictures of this happy event on the Family Ministries page in the newsletter.

November is already shaping up to be a memorable month, especially for the toddlers. Thanksgiving Day is a BIG celebration, and the curriculum leading to it focuses on both thanks and giving. Plus, it’s such fun to draw turkeys by outlining an outstretched hand, with thumb for head and fingers for feathers.

A SPECIAL NOTE TO CCC PARENTS

You are invited to our FPCA Thanksgiving Day Potluck Dinner
November 28, 2019; Noon, in the sanctuary
Bring a dish to share; enjoy good fellowship
Everyone is welcome!

Jennifer Stoy (AKA Miss Jennie)
FPCA-Christian Childcare Center Director

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAY
Happy Birthday to You !!!

Connor

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD

As seems to be the case each month, it's SO hard to choose *only* three of the children in our Christian Childcare Center for the focus of this article. So, when I saw two "curtain climbers" (AKA "walkers") and one "carpet creeper" (AKA "crawling") interacting a few days ago, I knew those were the three for this month.

The first, a little girl who is walking quite confidently, grinned at me from the middle of the room and thrust a tissue at me. When I smiled back and said, "Oh, no, Lovey, that's okay, I don't want your tissue," she immediately dropped it and trotted away to the shelves of toys. Of course, she had to look back over her shoulder to make sure I was following every step of the way.

The second of the curtain climbers, busily banging 2 blocks together and sliding them apart on the carpet, dropped both blocks as her friend passed by and hopped up, grinning at me. She toddled as fast as she could go, safely reached her buddy by the toy shelves, and then both looked expectant, waiting for my reaction.

"Oh, you're good walkers! You are both so great! I didn't know you were walking so well already!" If you've ever seen complacent toddlers, who know they've impressed a grown-up, you'll know exactly the expressions I saw.

Not to be outdone, the carpet creeper of the three, who is quite a bit younger, looked up from her "tummy time" stance and beamed, first at me and then at the two walkers. This little one is progressing so quickly in her attempts to crawl that she surely must be learning from watching all the other babies in the room.

These babies, as well as the younger and older toddlers, bless all of us here every day. Caring for them is so much more than "just a job" or "just volunteering." They are precious beyond belief; we are daily grateful to have them in our care and to be able to nurture them in God's Love. It's a delight to watch each one grow and thrive, even if they all seem to be growing up wa-a-a-y too fast!

Thanks to the parents of these children for bestowing the blessing of their care on us. We love them so much: "Of such is the Kingdom of God," indeed!

Carol Gage
Volunteer

MEET FELLOW CHRISTIANS

JOHN W. PETERSON

By Marta Strada



On November 1, 1921, the hymn writer John Peterson was born in Lindsborg, KS. During World War II he served as an Air Force transport pilot, flying the notorious "China Hump" route over the Himalayas. After he returned from duty, he enrolled at the Moody Bible Institute, and in 1953 graduated from Chicago's American Conservatory of Music. He settled down in Pennsylvania, launching his songwriting career. Peterson published more than 1,000 contemporary hymns and spirituals.

Among his 35 cantatas and musicals are "*Heaven Came Down*," "*Jesus Is Coming Again*," and "*Surely Goodness and Mercy*." Peterson spent over a decade as president and editor-in-chief of Grand Rapids, MI-based sacred music Singspiration. He moved to Scottsdale, AZ, and founded his own Good Life Productions. In 1967, Peterson received the National Evangelical Film Foundation's Sacred Music Award. At that time, he published his autobiography, *The Miracle Goes On*, and in 1986 he was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. Peterson died in Scottsdale on September 20, 2006

A BIT ABOUT A BOOK

Finding Catherine Marshall's "Meeting God At Every Turn" this past month showed me once again how wondrous is the guiding of the Holy Spirit: last summer, I began reading "Christy," also by Catherine Marshall. However, I had not yet completed it, for it's the sort of book I like to savor slowly, when I picked up "Meeting God" and found myself fascinated from the first page.

This self-told story of Catherine's growth as a Christian woman is nothing less than amazing. She details her childhood, noting the strengths of both mother and father, then blossoms into college life. It is there she meets her future husband, Peter Marshall, 12 years her elder and already a well-known pastor. She shares the angst of her college years: "he loves me, he loves me not," followed by their shared delight that God has meant them for each other, which occurs just before her graduation

Catherine and Peter Marshall share only a dozen years and one son before Peter's heart attack ends both his earthly life and their marriage. Catherine faces widowhood bravely, determined that she never will feel destitute. Led by the Holy Spirit, she is able to edit a number of Peter's sermons for publication. She grows spiritually all the while

For years, Catherine thinks she will never remarry, but remain true to the memory of Peter. Prayer gradually allows her to open her heart to the leading of God. After a number of encounters with men who do not measure up, she is led to Leonard (Len) LeSourd, then executive editor for "Guideposts." Their subsequent marriage lasts, and, as Catherine finishes her story, they are celebrating their 20th anniversary, complete with her son and his daughter and 2 sons.

A heartwarming, encouraging, and uplifting book, written in an engaging and listen-to-my-story mode, this book has won my heart. If you choose to read it, may it also speak to you.

Bookworm

ORGAN DEDICATION CONCERT



Get ready to welcome the Seipp/Sheets Trumpet & Organ Duo for our Organ Dedication Concert, the first in this season's Concert Series. Circle Sunday, November 24, 2019, in red on your calendar; concert begins at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Our beloved tracker organ has been newly refurbished, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor. The work was done in October and our congregation immediately noticed an improvement in sound.

Both the organist and the trumpeter for this concert are local men: Trumpeter Chuck Seipp retired in 2012 from the U. S. Army Band "Pershing's Own," ending a 32-year career. Randall Sheets has been the Ceremonial Organist at Arlington National Cemetery for 20 years, and plays 1000 services per year.

While the music selections will be a surprise until the concert, there's word that we'll hear about the Lunar Landing of 50 years ago!

SAVE THE DATE: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019; 7:00 P.M.

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Saturday, Nov. 2, 2019, 8:30 AM, Room 105
Come one, come all to the Monthly Men's Breakfast!
GREAT FUN AND FELLOWSHIP!

BELLS CHOIR

Tuesdays, 7:00 PM, Sanctuary
New ringers welcome!
Dr. Betty Clark, Director

SUNDAY SCHOOL: THE WIRED WORD

Sundays after Morning Worship
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM, Room 105
Sandy Mori, Moderator

BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, November 5, 2019, 1:00 PM, Library
We will discuss Helen Thorpe's "The Newcomers"
We welcome new members!

SHEPHERD'S CENTER NEWS

Lunch'n'Life: Pianist Peggy Newhall
Thursday, November 14, 2019, 11:30 AM
St. Alban's Episcopal, 6800 Columbia Pike
Reserve by Nov. 11: 703 941 1419 (cost \$10)

SECOND ANNUAL POTTERY SHOW AND SILENT AUCTION

Saturday, December 7, 2019
Noon-1:30 p.m.
Sanctuary
Proceeds benefit local and regional missions

PRISCILLA CIRCLE

Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 2:00 p.m., Memorial Chapel (aka Prayer Chapel, Parlor)

Join us for “Love Carved in Stone,”
an in-depth study of the Ten Commandments

ORGAN DEDICATION CONCERT

Sunday, November 24, 2019
7:00 p.m.; Sanctuary
Trumpet and Organ Duo
Chuck Seipp, Trumpet; Randy Sheets, Organ

THANKSGIVING POTLUCK DINNER

Thanksgiving Day: November 28, 2019
Noon; Sanctuary
Bring a dish to share
Everyone welcome! Bring a good appetite!

LOOKING AHEAD TO DECEMBER

ADVENT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

December 1, 8, 15, and 22; 11:30 AM
“Jesus among other Gods,” by Ravi Zacharias
Senior Pastor Dr. Chris Looker, Teacher

Due Date: November 20 for December 2019 FIRST and ForMOST. Email your submissions to Carol Gage, clgage@runbox.com AND to Stella Lee, office@fpcannandale.org.