

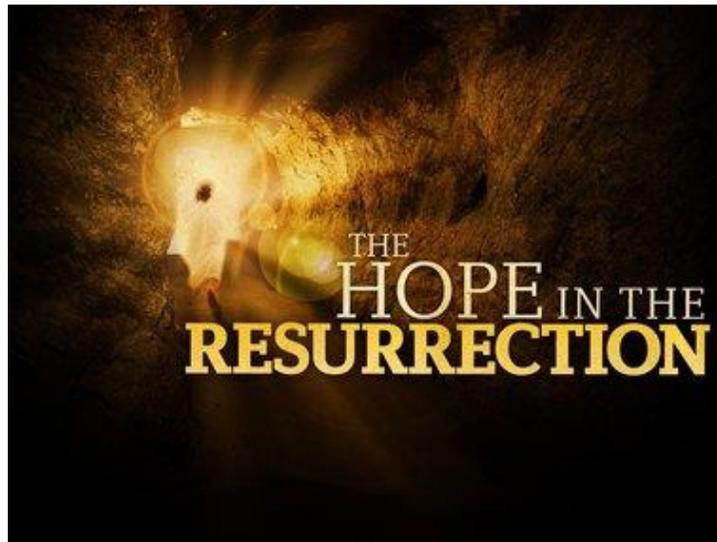


# FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

May 2020

## FROM YOUR PASTOR



*“(After the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus from the tomb), a meeting was called by the religious leaders and they came up with a plan. The plan included bribing the soldiers to tell lies (about Jesus’ resurrection), giving them a large sum of money.*

*They told the guards to say to everyone who asked, ‘What happened to the body of Jesus?’”*

*You will tell them, ‘His disciples came in the night and stole the body while we were sleeping.’*

*In addition, they assured them that if the governor heard about their sleeping while on duty, they would make sure they did not get blamed.*

*The soldiers took the bribe and did as they were told. And that lie...that fairytale story...cooked up by the High Priests...is still being spread around today.” (John 11: 12-15).*

and,

*“Jesus said...’I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though they die. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.’”* (11: 25-26, Common English Bible Translation).

\*\*\*\*\*

Although P.T. Barnum didn’t invent the phrase, he sure was fond of saying it: *“There’s a sucker born every minute!”*

It seems that there are gullible people everywhere in our world today...and, if the truth be told...we are **ALL** sometimes gullible to false rumors and gossip to the point of our own embarrassment. I know I’ve fallen for some REAL doozies myself!

**Today, some people talk about “FAKE NEWS” as if it is SOMETHING NEW!** But, fake news is ANYTHING but new. As a matter of fact, it’s been around since the human beings first began talking!

There’s an old adage that speaks to this kind mistaken logic: *“Those who do not study history are destined to repeat its failures.”*

Let me give you an example of fake news that occurred in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **DID YOU KNOW** that the body of President Abraham Lincoln’s body was exhumed in 1901...to make sure that it was REALLY him?

It is true that there had been an attempt by criminals to steal Lincoln’s body from his coffin in 1876...and hold it for ransom...but it did not succeed. But, it did cause many Americans to wonder about whether or not the body in Lincoln’s casket was really his!

As is almost always the case, this false rumor persisted and even grew over time. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were so many people in our country who believed that Lincoln’s casket contained the body of someone else OR that Lincoln was somehow still alive, that on September 26, 1901, Lincoln’s body was finally dug up and legally identified by 23 eye-witnesses. It **was** his body, of course.

After his identity was identified for certain, his body was placed into a new tomb, placed into the ground, and COVERED WITH 10 TONS OF WET CONCRETE! **Of course, this was done to make sure that he was dead and buried once and for all!**

\*\*\*\*\*

In the United States of America, we have a constitutionally guaranteed and God-given right to free speech. And, that means that our citizens are free to tell the truth AND free to lie. And wow, are some people ever GREAT liars!

Freedom is **NOT** an easy thing to preserve. **But, it is DEFINITELY worth preserving...at all costs!** Yet, with this divinely ordained and inalienable right, I guess it could be argued that in the United States of America, there is **MORE** Fake News (and always has been) than elsewhere in the world. In most other countries in our world, if one writes or says something negative about a leading politician, they can be thrown into prison! But, not here! At least, not yet.

I shudder to think about what our blessed nation would be **WITHOUT** freedom of speech...freedom of religion...and all of the other rights guaranteed to all of us in the Bill of Rights and Amendments to the Constitution.

As a former missionary to Egypt in 1986, I was detained by the police for just talking to a non-Christian about Jesus Christ. I was released. But wow, was that ever a wake-up call for me! I'll take freedom of speech...with all of its Fake News AND Good News...over living in a land where I can be arrested for what I say any day of the week!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Which brings me to my main point: THE NEWS ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD WAS NOT "FAKE NEWS."** It was 100% real and 100% true! How do I know that?

In I Corinthians 15, St. Paul tells us that over 500 people who had known Jesus before He was crucified, physically met Jesus **AFTER** His resurrection from the tomb on Easter!

As a Biblical Hebrew and Greek scholar myself, I find that it is very interesting that St. Paul uses the Greek word, "*ὄφθη*" to describe Jesus' resurrection appearances. This word in the original Biblical Greek does **NOT** simply mean "*something that appears*". Rather, in ALL of its uses in the Bible, this Biblical Greek word is used to clearly describe "*something that appears, is recognized, perceived as real, and confirmed*".

So, St. Paul is definitely NOT saying here that "*someone who looked like the Risen Jesus APPEARED to more than 500 witnesses.*" What St. Paul is clearly saying here is that the one and only Jesus Christ whom these real people had personally known and loved **BEFORE** His crucifixion and death **was the same Jesus Christ whom they personally met AFTER His resurrection!** And, there were over 500 of these eyewitnesses.

No Biblical scholar that I have ever known has ever questioned whether St. Paul was a real and historical person. And, no one I have ever heard of or read has

ever questioned whether or not St. Paul wrote 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians or that what he wrote was not true as well. So, if St. Paul was real, the contents of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians is true, and St. Paul knew over 500 eyewitnesses who had personally and physically met and confirmed that the Jesus Christ they knew and loved was alive again after His death, **then Jesus Christ must have factually, historically, and really risen from the dead.**

This is a very important point because it makes it a matter of reason and fact, and not just a matter of faith, that the real Jesus Christ who lived and died on this earth also physically and really rose up from the dead and was alive again after His death! And, not only that, the Risen Jesus Christ physically appeared as a very real living person...the same as when He was alive...to at least 500 very real people!

\*\*\*\*\*

There's an old saying: "***The greatest blessing God can give us is not an easy life. Rather, the greatest blessing God can give us is the knowledge that God is with us in all our challenges and struggles.***"

The valley of the shadow of death that all of us are walking through right now as the destruction of this Coronavirus Pandemic continues is testing and challenging all of us in ways that we have not been before. There is NOTHING fake about it! It is very real and very frightening.

Yet, we have a very real Savior, Jesus Christ, who not only defeated sin, but conquered death!

Jesus Christ has never been, is not now, and never will be FAKE NEWS. Rather, Jesus Christ is the living embodiment of GOOD NEWS. And, He will eventually save us from this Coronavirus Pandemic, just like He has saved all of Humanity over and over throughout history.

You see, Jesus Christ is not just a Savior for Christians. He is the Savior for all of Creation.

And so, let us keep our eyes upon the Risen Christ...let us worship and praise Him because He is God Incarnate...and, let us trust in Him as He will once again be the One who will lead us out of the "***valley of the shadow of death***" into a glorious place where "***goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives.***"

Your Friend and Pastor,



Dr. Chris Looker

**ONLINE PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR MAY 2020**

*First Presbyterian Church of Annandale*

May 3, 2020

*Service of Virtual Holy Communion*

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

\*\*\*\*\*

May 10 2020

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

\*\*\*\*\*

May 17 2020

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

\*\*\*\*\*

May 24, 2020

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

\*\*\*\*\*

May 31, 2020

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

\*\*\*\*\*

**REST IN PEACE**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

It is with great sadness that I bring you the news of the death of our dear sister in Christ, Pat Pascoe. After unfortunately suffering from Covid 19, she passed away, to inherit eternal life with our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, on Sunday morning, April 19, 2020. A private graveside service was held later that week, with a Celebration of Pat's Life Service to be held at our church once the Covid 19 epidemic comes to an end. Please keep the members of Pat's family in your prayers.

Agape, in Christ,

Dr. Chris Looker

## NO ANXIETY ABOUT ANYTHING?!

The Bible makes some very seemingly outlandish claims at times. One that has always gotten my attention is, "...Have no anxiety about anything..." (Philippians 4:6) I first really noticed this passage when I was training as a Chaplain at Georgia Mental Health Institute in Atlanta, Georgia. I trained there for a year from Fall of 1978 through Summer of 1979.

For six months I served patients on an Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Unit and for six months I served patients on an Adult Psychiatric Unit. Part of our training included preaching in the chapel and then having our sermon carefully scrutinized in our group seminar on Monday, the day after the service. I remember selecting the text above about anxiety for two reasons. One, many of the patients at GMHI were experiencing considerable anxiety in their lives. Two, I had always been a rather anxious person myself. I thought that maybe by doing Bible study to prepare a sermon on the subject I might be able to help the patients and help myself learn to deal with it. In preparing the sermon I entitled it, "No Anxiety About Anything?!" I said that the Bible makes the bold claim that we can be free of anxiety in our lives (or at least learn how to get a handle on it and deal with it so we're not crippled by it.)

Preaching in a mental hospital is not the same as preaching in a regular church. Sometimes you did not know if a person was just going to get up and walk out or conversely, have someone come walking in right in the middle of the service. Also, one learned to be careful about asking rhetorical questions. Often, if you did that someone in the congregation would answer. At first, that was a little disconcerting but after awhile it lost the element of surprise. Having said that, it was generally a good idea not to pose some kind of question that might cause someone to become upset. I should also mention that occasionally an alarm would go off and all the units would get locked down. The units and the buildings on campus were connected with underground tunnels. If the alarm went off everyone was supposed to scurry back immediately to his or her unit. That was just another one of the characteristics of serving, and preaching, at a mental hospital.

For me, it was anxiety producing to attend the seminar the next day after I had preached and have my sermon critically analyzed and sometimes taken apart by my peers and our supervisors. For example, if you made some kind of claim you were frequently asked to demonstrate or illustrate that claim. If I had said that having faith in God frees a person from all anxiety then that claim would be challenged and discussed. In one way it was like an argument where you had to defend your position. The idea was not to tear you down or ridicule what you were saying but to really have you think about what you were saying and perhaps learn

how to better express your point in a way that would have better meaning for your listeners. Regarding this particular passage, as a result of my training, I have come to believe that it is possible to face almost any situation without anxiety or terror. Often it takes prayer for that particular situation to experience peace but that's exactly what the entire verse says. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, 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."

Jesus tells us that we don't need to be afraid. He went so far as to criticize his disciples for their terror while they were all in a boat during a storm on the Sea of Galilee. In that amazing story Jesus was asleep during the storm. He gives a clue how; freedom from fear is related to our faith. But, faith in what or whom? We are an Easter people. The disciples had not experienced Jesus' death and resurrection yet. We have. We know that death is not the end. And, throughout our life on earth, the Psalmist reminds us that God is with us wherever we go and in whatever we go through. (Psalm 139) I suspect that most of us memorized or at least are familiar with the words of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm when David says, "Even if I go through the valley of the shadow of death, literally, the valley of deep darkness, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me."

I've chosen the theme of dealing with our fears because of the particular fearful period that we are currently in. If we don't yet know of anyone who has been infected with the Corona virus or who has died from it there's a good chance that we will before it's all over. Part of the challenge is we do not know when it will be over. But remember, David says that even if we go through the valley of the shadow of death we do not need to fear because God is with us. Psalm 139 tells us that God is with us wherever we go and in whatever we go through.

Jesus frequently told His followers to "Fear not". Other biblical writers encourage us and our faith. Peter tells us to, "...cast all your anxieties on God for He cares about you". (I Peter 5:7) This is a theme throughout the Bible, that God loves us and cares about us very much and that God never leaves us alone. God does not wish for us to live in fear.

Submitted by Chaplain Bill Jokela, Parish Associate, FPCA

## MEET FELLOW CHRISTIANS

### WARREN WENDEL WIERSBE



Do you want to meet a “Fellow Christian” in May? I recommend you meet Warren Wendel Wiersbe, who was born May 16, 1929, and passed away May 2, 2019, two weeks before his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is remembered as a pastor, Bible teacher, conference speaker and the author of theological works. He wrote a series of 50 books known as the "BE" series: *Be Real, Be Rich, Be Obedient, Be Mature, Be Joyful*, etc. and other theological pieces.

Warren Wendel Wiersbe was born in East Chicago, Indiana. He graduated from the conservative Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was an avid reader of books in his school years, and left an impressive legacy of teaching, preaching, and mentoring pastors. He wrote over 150 books trying to influence people to read and understand the Bible.

Wiersbe grew up in East Chicago, Indiana, a town full of blue-color workers. Even as a youngster, he was active in his church, volunteered to participate in the Youth for Christ (YFC) rally, which gave him the chance to listen to Billy Graham’s sermon. He responded with a personal prayer of dedication.

In 1947 Warren Wendel Wiersbe graduated from high school as valedictorian, and went to college, earning a Bachelor of Theology degree at Northern Baptist Seminary in Chicago. While in seminary, he served as pastor of Central Baptist Church in East Chicago, where he stayed until 1957. He even became a popular YFC speaker, which led to a full-time position with Youth for Christ International in Wheaton, IL.

In 1956 Wiersbe published his first article for *Moody Monthly* magazine, in which he discussed Bible study methods. He expressed his ongoing writing philosophy, saying “*This is more of a personal testimony, because I want to share these blessings with you, rather than write some scholarly essay, which I am sure I could not do anyway.*”

Wiersbe’s career as author was developing. He was invited to get involved in possible book projects which led to the publishing of a series of books, like

*Byways of Blessing* (1961), an adult devotional, *A Guidebook for Teens* and *Teens Triumphant* (both published in 1962). He published 14 titles with Moody, including *William Culbertson: A Man of God* (1974), *Live Like a King* (1976), *The Annotated Pilgrim's Progress* (1980), and *Ministering to the Mourning* (2006), written with his son, David Wiersbe.

In 1961, Wiersbe joined the staff of Calvary Baptist Church in Covington, Kentucky, where he stayed for 10 years. His Sunday sermons were broadcast as the "Calvary Hour". From 1971 to 1978, Warren Wiersbe pastored Chicago's Moody Church, and was doing radio ministry. Between August 1979 and March 1982 he wrote articles for *Christianity Today*, and taught practical theology classes at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. During the following years he worked for Back to the Bible radio broadcasting network. Writing books was always an important activity in his life, completing more than 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible. Wiersbe wrote about 200 articles for the *Moody Monthly* while he served at the Moody Church.

We get a good picture of Warren Wiersbe in our mind when we think of his way of describing Heaven as "*not only a destination, but also a motivation. When you and I are truly motivated by the promise of eternity with God in heaven, it makes a difference in our lives.*" The promise of eternity became Wiersbe's motivation for his ministry as a pastor, author, and radio speaker. Billy Graham called him "*one of the greatest Bible expositors of our generation*".

Warren W. Wiersbe's life ended on May 2, 2019, in Lincoln, Nebraska, just a few weeks before his 90th birthday. His grandson Dan Jacobsen shared with us that pastors often tell him, "*There's not a passage in the Bible I haven't first looked up what Wiersbe has said on the topic.*" Wiersbe felt to be a bridge builder, spanning the gap "*from the world of the Bible to the world of today so that we could get to the other side of glory in Jesus.*"

Marta Strada

## **PLEDGES**

Our empty donation envelopes are crying, because they have no way to jump into the donation basket each Sunday. But we have pledged to donate a certain amount of money for 2020! Do we have a chance to keep our pledges, now that we don't even have our great Sunday Worship Services? Yes, we do! We can donate parts of the promised amount later, like in the Summer, when we have our beloved Sunday Worship again. Our church is waiting patiently!

Submitted by Marta Strada

**LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME**

After closing our Christian Childcare Center for four weeks from March 16, 2020, through April 10, 2020, because of the COVID-19 emergency, we were glad to open our doors once again on April 13, 2020. We had missed our babies and toddlers very much!

Thank you, parents and friends, for your loving support at this time. We appreciate it.

“Miss Jennie”  
Jennifer Stoy  
FPCA-CCC Director

**CCC MAY BIRTHDAYS**

**Isaac May 16**



**MAY BIRTHDAYS**



## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **SUNDAY WORSHIP ONLINE**

Sunday worship is online each week and may be viewed on YouTube

Go to our church site ([www.fpcannandale.org](http://www.fpcannandale.org))

Click on “Worship” at the top

A list of devotions and worship services will appear

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL: THE WIRED WORD**

Sandy Mori leads each week’s Wired Word lesson

11:00 AM via ZOOM online

Check with Stella Lee for details

([Office@fpcannandale.org](mailto:Office@fpcannandale.org))

### **SHEPHERD’S CENTER OF ANNANDALE-SPRINGFIELD (SCAS)**

The Shepherd’s Center remains closed

Rides are still being offered

Friendly visitor phone calls are being offered

Call 703 941 1419 for information

### **THE RESURRECTION IS EVERYWHERE!**

Rejoice! Look up! Look down! Look around! Rejoice!

The resurrection is everywhere!

REJOICE!

**DUE DATE: May 20, 2020**, for June issue of FIRST and ForMOST. Submissions:  
Email to [clgage@runbox.com](mailto:clgage@runbox.com) AND [office@fpcannandale.org](mailto:office@fpcannandale.org)