



October 2025



**From
Pastor
David's
Heart,**

Our nation and the world is increasingly mindful of the evil

that lurks in the hearts of those who choose not to value human life and choose to kill and destroy those who take a stand for biblical truth. These demonic actions are increasingly taking place, in the "Last Days," as the Bible predicted they would.

While driving home yesterday, I saw an American flag at half-mast in memory of Charlie Kirk. As you know, Charlie was a follower of Jesus who had his life snuffed out by a hater of those who are Christians, especially if they took a stand for biblical truth in the public and political arenas of our culture.

What happened to Charlie and others like him is a reminder that we are all engaged in spiritual warfare. If we don't realize this truth, we can easily be deceived by those who Satan uses to come against us. After all, Satan is the mastermind behind all that is evil in our world.

While we can't banish all of the world's evil, the Apostle Paul, in closing his letter to the Galatian believers wrote these words of warning and wisdom: *"Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap*

destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers". (Galatians 6:7-10)

Paul took Jesus' counsel even further when he said: *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.* (Matthew 5:43-45)

But let us also remember a day is coming when Jesus will judge the works of everyone and we can be sure his judgement will be perfect; because he knows us perfectly.

Let us also remember, God loved us while we were yet sinners. His love is unconditional and as those who are created in His image we will one day give an account of how well we showed the love of Christ to others, regardless of how they treated us.

Love for God and others, also created in His image, is the power that breaks the strongholds of our enemy. Satan is determined to destroy us, while God is determined to rescue us from Satan's lies, deceptions and bondage. We can make a choice to love as God loves or choose a self-centered life that leads to destruction. Yes, God loves us enough to give us the freedom to choose life

or death. In spite of life's challenges, hardship and troubles, those who love, obey and live for God's glory are promised a glorious future with him when all things will be made new and perfect, forever. *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Remember, child of God, in spite of all the dangers life can hold *"we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."* (Romans 8:37b)

Yours in this victorious life,
Pastor David

**Wednesday's Word:
A Weekly Devotional**

From Paul Tripp
PaulTripp.com



Last month, I wrote about practical atheism and how Christians, myself included, live in moments of everyday life as if God does not exist. As long as sin exists inside of us, it is true of every believer, no matter how long we have walked with the Lord.

Maybe it's a moment when we give way to lust or make ourselves the center of attention, boasting to

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Pastor David Missel

585-658-1197 Residence
djmguided1947@gmail.com
585-382-3311 Church

It is our desire to assist anyone who is seeking help, if possible, whether it be spiritual or otherwise. Please contact Pastor David or any Session Elder if you would like us to be of help.

When Pastor David is unavailable:

Pastor David is presently scheduling Fridays as his day off so matters of less urgency could be left on the church office answering device, or call one of the Ruling Elders:

George Briggs	585-382-3038
Patty Gregg	585-245-1311
Carol Griffen	585-382-3681
Shirley Matthews	585-382-3171
Cathy Mlyniec	585-322-6669
Leo Richardson	585-382-3153

(Clerk of Session)

Other Contacts

LEPC website:

www.seekinggodtogether.com

LEPC Email Address:

grichardson001@rochester.rr.com

LEPC Food Pantry:

(by appointment only)
585-245-3448

Sunshine Person:

Cathy Mlyniec
cmlyniec@gmail.com

LEPC Mission Statement:

We at Leicester Evangelical Presbyterian Church, confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We prayerfully seek to do His will through the power of the Holy Spirit in our worship, discipleship, ministry, mission, fellowship and continually strive to make this church one that glorifies God and is pleasing to Him.

Taken from:

Our Daily Verse

today@ourdailyverse.com

Today, be reminded that even your smallest prayers tap into the immeasurable power of God, who is at work within you, ready to do more than you could ever ask or imagine.

Verse of the Day

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Ephesians 3:20, 21

Reflection

Sometimes, it's the quietest prayers that echo the loudest.

The whispered, "Help me make it through today." The tears that fall between "I can't" and "Please." The dreams we hold so close we barely dare to whisper them. In these raw, honest moments, we often hold back, don't we? We ask for just enough—just enough grace to survive, just enough light to see the next step.

But tucked within Ephesians 3:20 is a promise that shatters our small expectations. The same power that ignited the stars, that burst forth from the grave, that holds every galaxy in place—that very power is alive within us. Not just beside us, not just for us, but in us.

Right now, in your waiting, in your uncertainty, in your impossible—that power is at work. Where you see dead ends, He sees doorways. Where you see barriers, He sees breakthroughs.

Today, let this truth take root in your heart: Every ending in your

hands becomes a beginning in His. Your impossible is just the opening chapter of His miracle story. And right now, even as you read these words, He's already writing the next page.

Ask Yourself

- What prayer have I been afraid to voice because it seemed too big?
- Where in my life do I need to trust God's power rather than my own limitations?

Prayer of the Day

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for hearing even the faintest whispers of my heart—the dreams I barely dare to speak and the fears I struggle to release. When I feel weak and weary, remind me that Your power—the very power that ignited the stars and conquered death—lives within me.

I lay my impossible at Your feet, trusting You to do immeasurably more than I could ever ask or imagine. Where I see dead ends, open my eyes to Your new beginnings. Write my story, Lord, according to Your perfect will.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Submitted by Carole Missel



Photo by Sharon Richardson



Present with the Lord

James L. Cochrane, a beloved brother in our family of faith, joined the Church Triumphant on September 9, 2025.

Prior to his retirement, Jim was a teacher at Mount Morris Central School for over 35 Years. He was a member of the National Education Association and former member of the Leicester Presbyterian Church. He was a HAM Radio operator and enjoyed wood working.

His generous and encouraging character made him a beloved friend in the Leicester community, church, neighbors and students at Mt. Morris.

Please keep his entire family in your prayers during their time of loss.

Fatu Thoronka

Please continue to pray for Fatu Thoronka, our EduNations Sponsored Student, and the rest of the students and

teachers at Sierra Leon, as they start the 2025-2026 school year.



Monthly Celebrations October Birthdays

6 Doug Welch
31 Bill Radley

Anniversaries
(none listed)

Liturgists Signup for October

For those who want to read scripture during Sunday worship, please remember to sign the "Volunteer" list on the Bulletin Board in Fellowship Hall. Thank you! May God Bless!

Please Pray for Israel

OneforIsrael.org

- Pray for Israelis to look to God — and to find Him!
- Pray for broken hearts to be comforted and healed — both Jewish and Arab.
- Pray for unity to grow and strengthen between Jewish and Arab believers.
- Pray for protection, deliverance, and salvation.
- Pray that they would not be overcome with evil, but that they would overcome evil with good, that God may be glorified.

Prayer Shawl and Lap Robe Ministry

If you know of someone who has serious health problems and would find some encouragement, warmth and comfort from receiving a handmade shawl or lap robe, please contact Carole Missel.

**GENESEE COUNTRY
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**
CHICKEN BBQ
NOVEMBER 1, 2025
3PM-6PM

**Dinners
\$15**

- HOSTED IN OUR GYM,
OFFERING TAKEOUT OR
DINE-IN
- PRESALE & DAY OF TICKET
OPTIONS
- PRESALE DINNERS HELD
UNTIL 5PM

FOR TICKETS OR
MORE INFORMATION
📞 585-243-9580
4120 Long Point Rd. Geneseo, NY 14454
office@geneseecountrychristian.org

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others and taking credit for what only God could produce. Perhaps you functionally worship a created thing more than you do the Creator. It could look like buying something we don't need, and because we have, we then have little to nothing left to contribute generously to God's kingdom work.

Maybe it's a moment of road rage in traffic, where you believe you are the most significant person in the universe and all other created beings should make way for your triumphant entry. Perhaps it's interacting with a fellow human being, made in the image of God, and you act as if you are their god and they are your subservient slave, and you are ungodly in your communication and treatment of them.

Perhaps it's being selfishly demanding with your spouse instead of sacrificially serving them. Maybe it's permitting angry outbursts against the children you were called to patiently and faithfully nurture.

If you're still living under your parents' authority in the home, it may be a moment when you decide that the acceptance of your peers is more important than honoring your mother and father through obedience, as they protect you with the law from the Word of God.

We must remain humbly aware of our tendency to drift into practical atheism because it shapes everything we think, say, and do. Especially as we live in a culture that drifts further away from belief in the existence of God, it becomes easier to point the finger at those without faith who publicly declare their lack of belief and think that we, with faith, are spiritually safe.

In fact, we are in daily danger. And the enemy would love to lure us into believing that we are okay.

That said, we need to be increasingly aware that those of us who do believe in God's existence are generally no longer in positions of cultural influence. At least in the 21st Century West, we now live on the fringes.

Our culture now not only argues against the existence of God, but they disrespect and mock those who believe it.

We should not live in discouragement, fear, or defeat because God's holy plan still marches on. Nor should we separate ourselves into a monastic echo chamber. Jesus calls us to be *"the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden"* (Matthew 5:14). We are to be "in" the world but not be "of" the world.

But we should be aware of the distorted story of reality that is told to us repeatedly by people of the world who have closed their minds to the primary fact of human existence—the existence of God.

I want to conclude with a specific application to parents, grandparents, or those who have any influence over a child's life. The young people in our homes and churches are now being influenced by a culture that thinks we have evolved beyond any need to hold on to the unprovable tenets of ancient religion.

The next generation of Christ-followers is being entertained, educated, and informed by a culture that has little to no time for the existence of God. That means you have a heightened position of responsibility for interacting with and filtering what your children are exposed to.

Every generation from the beginning of time has denied the existence of God (see Genesis 6:5,

Psalms 14). However, perhaps more than ever before, due to the constant messaging and media on our digital devices, guarding your kids from voices of influence is crucial.

To help equip you for that responsibility, I recorded a three-part teaching series appropriately titled *Voices of Influence*. The videos and study guide are available entirely for free at PaulTripp.com/Voices.

What could be more important in your life than being one of God's tools to influence a human soul by telling them that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him?

Reflection Questions

1. What areas would you say you live in discouragement or fear about the state of secular culture right now? What are the specific areas you'd say you're afraid of? Why do you think you're afraid of those areas?
2. What do you think it would practically look like for you to be a person who lives in the world but not of the world? How might living as a city on a hill play out day-to-day for you?
3. What are the specific voices of influence in your life and are those voices ones that honor Jesus and a biblical way of living? If there are certain voices of influence in your life that don't honor God, what might be the best course of action to take so that those voices no longer control you and your decision making?
4. Who are the young people in your life who you can be intentional with as you think about influencing the upcoming generation for Christ? What might you specifically say or do to influence them? Who can you be praying for in the next generation?

Submitted by Leo Richardson

Voice of the Martyr's:
icommittoprayer.com

August 14, 2025 | Laos

**New Christian Faces
Harassment in Hometown**

A newly Christian woman is facing expulsion from her village because of her faith. ThaoSeng, 51, became a follower of Christ in 2024 through the witness of a cousin she was visiting in another city. When she returned to her hometown a few months later, she remained faithful and worshiped at a church in a nearby village. Her family and the village elders became aware of her new Christian faith and began to persecute her, threatening to kick her out of the village if she would not renounce Jesus Christ. Pray that ThaoSeng will endure, be strong in her faith and find joy in sharing the gospel with her family and neighbors.

August 21, 2025 | Burkina Faso

Six Killed in Islamist Attack

Six Christians, including a pastor, were killed in an Islamist attack. On May 23, 2025, shortly after noon, a large group of Islamists riding on motorbikes invaded a village and began searching for the local pastor. They rode to his house while he was meeting in his courtyard with several other Christians. Hearing the roar of the motorbikes, the Christians fled on foot. The Islamists chased them and captured six, including the pastor, and shot them to death. The attackers then invaded numerous homes and set them on fire, forcing Christians from that village and another nearby to flee. According to front-line workers, 1,036 Christians, mostly women and children, were displaced in the attack.

August 28, 2025 | Iran

**War Increases Risk, Also
Opportunity**

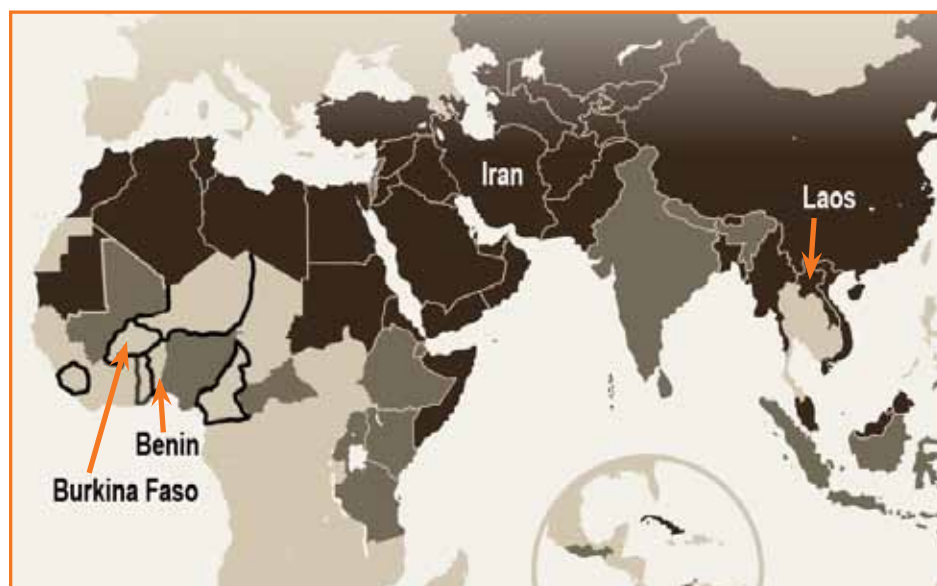
Front-line workers have reported that the risk of advancing the gospel in Iran has increased since the Twelve-Day War in June of 2025 — but so has the opportunity to advance it. “In the past, if Christians were arrested for distributing Bibles or Christian literature, they were typically charged with unauthorized possession and distribution and ‘actions against national security,’” said one front-line worker. “Now, they fear being charged with espionage, which carries an automatic death penalty.” Despite this pressure, Christians say there are new opportunities to share their faith. “Some Christians reported taking shelter in a bunker outside Tehran with around 20 Muslims,” said the front-line worker. “The Christians boldly shared their faith with them, and several committed their lives to Christ.” Christians in Iran request prayer for protection and more opportunities to witness to Christ.

September 4, 2025 | Benin

**Abandoned by Husband,
Supported by Body of Christ**

Despite her suffering, a Christian woman is standing firm in her faith and discipling others as well. Lenna was raised as a Muslim in northern Benin. When she came to faith in Christ a few years ago, her Muslim husband abandoned her and her three children. Not long afterward, Lenna was in a motorcycle accident and lost her right hand and part of her arm. She then struggled to support herself and her children. After learning of her situation, VOM helped her start a small business selling basic food items. Lenna also uses her business for kingdom purposes. “She is full of joy and faith in Jesus,” said a front-line worker. “In her work at the shop, she is consistently sharing the gospel with other women.”

Lenna is meeting with other persecuted women and discipling them in the Lord. The front-line worker added that VOM is currently working to provide Lenna with a prosthetic hand.



The Seven Species of Israel

OneforIsrael.com

God was delighted to tell the Israelites what was waiting for them in the Promised Land: Water, natural resources, and seven species of plants that produce delicious food:

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

(Deuteronomy 8:7-10)

WHEAT AND BARLEY

Wheat and barley sustain life, and are used in many parables. Wheat is spoken of by Yeshua several times, particularly in the context of threshing and sifting the wheat from the chaff. Barley is used as a practical demonstration in stories of victory in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, such as in the stories of Ruth, Elisha, and feeding the 5,000. They produce bread, which is used as a metaphor for life, sustenance and fellowship.

VINES - Grapes

Vines represent joy, for the most part and is a deeply symbolic part of most Jewish holidays, including Shabbat. Every Friday night, blessings are made over bread and wine, thanking God, creator of the fruit of the vine, and the One who



The Seven Species: From top left clockwise: wheat, barley, dates, grape, fig, pomegranates, and olives.

Photo from Wikipedia

brings forth bread from the earth. Of course, wine also represents the blood of the New Covenant. It was when Yeshua was celebrating Passover with His disciples, blessing a ceremonial cup of wine according to the Jewish tradition, that he said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28)

FIGS

Figs are a symbol of prosperity, wellbeing, and security. To sit under the plentiful shade of your own fig tree is the epitome of safety, peace and wellbeing in many biblical passages. Like vines, these plants don't grow overnight, and it takes time to culture and nurture them—their maturity indicates that the gardener has been continuously and steadfastly there, tending to their growth over the years. For Israel, exile and wandering has been a byword for punishment and so sitting under your own vine and fig tree is a sign of blessing and security. The fig tree

in the Bible is also symbolic of Israel itself—it often symbolized the health of the nation both spiritually and physically.

POMEGRANATES

Pomegranates are an unusual fruit in that there is no flesh – only seeds, speaking of the blessings and commandments of God. They are not for our own selfish, fleshly desires, but for blessing others because once flesh is gone, it has gone forever, but when a seed dies, it produces a whole load of new life. They remind us that we are living for the benefit and blessing of others. Pomegranates are sown to the hem of the robe of the high priest in Exodus 28 and are equated with fruitfulness, blessing and prosperity as the twelve spies bring back enormous grapes with some figs and pomegranates from their reconnaissance work (Numbers 13:23), showing the Land to be bursting with promise, just as God said. We also see that pomegranates

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were used to decorate Solomon's temple, declaring God's goodness and blessing to his covenant people. Battered and bruised though they may be, the people of Israel have carried great seeds of blessing to the world in the very words of God to us, and the most holy seed of all – Yeshua the Messiah, seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, King of all the world.

OLIVES

Olive branch symbolism appears throughout the Bible starting with the dove brining an olive branch to Noah, a sign that it was safe to venture out of the ark and that God's wrath was spent. However, some of the most key passages about olive trees concern the nation of Israel... and the church. In a vision, the prophet Zechariah sees a heavenly menorah, symbolizing the light of the world, flanked by two olive trees which gave oil to keep the lamp burning bright. In Romans chapter 11, Paul expounds on the idea of a cultivated olive tree with a wild olive branch grafted into it, as a metaphor for Jews and Gentiles in the Messiah. We are one, we draw from one root, yet one is wild and the other is native. The Apostle Paul has a lot of wonderful things to say on the matter, but both the Jewish olive branches and the wild Gentile ones have been forgiven and entered the covenant of peace with God through Yeshua.

DATE HONEY

The "honey" spoken of in Deuteronomy 8 comes from date palms. Palm trees are also full of prophetic symbolism pertinent to Israel. Palm leaves were used to celebrate at the Feast of Tabernacles mentioned in Leviticus and Nehemiah, as

decoration in both Solomon's temple and the third temple in Ezekiel's vision. The woman in Song of Songs is twice likened to a palm tree and it is used to describe the righteous in Psalm 92. Palm leaves are waved in victory and praise, as Yeshua entered Jerusalem, and also in the book of Revelation. Broadly, palm trees represent victory, uprightness and righteousness and featured strongly in early Christian art to symbolize spiritual triumph and heaven.

All of these seven species, the wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates appear each year at Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, as Jewish people give thanks to God for His generosity and goodness. And remarkably, all seven of the species are still cultivated and thriving in Israel today, thousands of years after God promised Israel what was waiting for them in the Promised Land. In an astonishingly successful experiment, an ancient palm seed from 2000 years ago was found and planted, and not only has it grown into a tree but it is actually producing fruit!

Similarly, grape seeds found by archaeologist dating back to the time of the early church have been found in a cave in the Negev desert and successfully regrown.¹ Now, two years after planting, the grapes are ready to be harvested.

The fact that these seven species still thriving in Israel are something of a parable for us: When God makes a covenant, He keeps it.

He really did bring Israel into the Land, there really were the seven species waiting for them, and they are all still there today. God's promises are trustworthy and true.

¹ <https://allisraelnews.com/ancient-wine-flows-again-as-1000-year-old-grape-seeds-revive-in-israels-negev>

Submitted by Sharon Richardson

Days of Praise

Day of Praise

August 29, 2025

His Master's Crib

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isaiah 1:3)

What an indictment this is—not only against the people of Israel but against men and women everywhere. All were created and made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) for fellowship with Him, but even His own chosen people rejected Him, and most people everywhere

all but ignore Him in their daily lives.

The Hebrew word translated "crib" can also be translated as "manger," and when God became man, His human parents "laid him in a manger" (Luke 2:7) since there was no room for Him anywhere else. The animals knew Him, and so did the angels, but His people were unconcerned. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10).

When He came into Jerusalem offering Himself as King of Israel, He rode on an unbroken colt, "whereon yet never man sat," and the little "foal of an ass" (Luke 19:30; Zechariah 9:9) willingly

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Frequent Church Attenders Are Trending Younger

Barna's research in 2025

These are trends Christians have been praying to see. And now, Barna's research in 2025 reveals unexpected—and hopeful—shifts in faith and culture.

Frequent Church Attenders Are Trending Younger

For the first time, Gen Z Christians set the pace for frequent churchgoing. This isn't just a demographic blip—it may signal renewed spiritual curiosity and a desire for conventional congregational engagement. However, even the most active churchgoers only show up about half the weekends in a month. Check out the website for more details.

Commitment to Jesus Surges

In a rebound, two in three adults say they've made a personal commitment to Jesus that is still important in their life—up by nearly 30 million people since 2021. Again, we find that younger adults—and men—are driving this resurgence, marking one of the clearest signs of spiritual renewal in America.

These are exciting times for the Church—the days many of us have been praying for. Barna is grateful to join you as you lead with clarity and hope.

With you for a thriving Church,
David Kinnaman
CEO, Barna Group

www.barna.com/research/young-adults-lead-resurgence-in-church-attendance/



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submitted, knowing his divine Master and Maker. But the people of Jerusalem as a whole joined in clamoring for His crucifixion just a few days later.

The indictment against Israel could be lodged with even greater justification against America today. *“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth:...I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me”* (Isaiah 1:2). The morals of our people seem to have

been turned upside down, and God would say to us also, *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness”* (Isaiah 5:20).

Yet—in modern America, as well as in ancient Israel—*“as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”* (John 1:12).

Submitted by Leo Richardson



Session Meeting Highlights of September 11/2025

Sharing Life, Spiritual Focus and Prayers for the Church: Prayers were lifted up for the family of James Cochrane at his recent passing, for the Charlie Kirk family, and prayers of thanksgiving were offered for those whose health is improving and continued supplication for those who still suffer, for comfort for those affected by the hatred in the world, for the health of the local church, direction as a Session, and for increase in our local faith community.

Pastor's Report: Shut-in Communions served: (1) 9/9 Toni Yunker. Christine Drew requested a delay in use of LEPC for piano lessons. Pastor scheduled study leave and vacation for the remainder of 2025. Shirley Siniapkin is no longer at her last address, and because of privacy laws, Pastor will investigate her whereabouts.

Witness Report: The pantry received a donation from St. Luke the Evangelist Church in Geneseo. Two requests and provisions made for food in July. Carol will attend a “Food Insecurity Meeting”.

Missions: An EduNation's letter was received about staff misconduct in Sierra Leon. EduNations assured us that proper action is being taken. Session approved a donation to The Voice of the Martyrs Global Ministries, David Kuehl, Southeast Asia EPC World Outreach Missionary, and to John and Barb Barber, EPC World Outreach Missionaries in Thailand.

Property: Ol' Smokey Trucking and Excavation has been paid and the drainage job completed on the sledding hill at Starr Park. Patrick's Projects Company was paid and the job completed replacing the railings on the LEPC front porch. A. Davis Concrete LLC has been paid in full and steps completed on the front of LEPC. Church gutter cleaning, repairs or replacement discussed and research to be done.

Next Regular Session Meeting Date was scheduled for 10/9/2025 at 3:00 p.m.



Gifts: What He's Given

Inspiration comes from: The Weekly Gratitude Project

Looking ahead to what He has promised can help us. It can center us in the good to come, no matter the bleakness that sometimes darkens our hearts or fills our days. But we don't have to look ahead.

Good things are all around you right now!

What He's already given is more than what He's promised to give in the future. Consider, for instance, the gift of grace, which Paul said *is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* — Ephesians 2:8-9

This grace is already yours in Christ. You are already a new creation because of it, able to live a better life and make better choices than you've ever made before.

Consider the gift of hope. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he said we could *"rejoice in hope"* (Romans 12:12). This reason to rejoice is not yours to come. It's yours now. It's why you can open your eyes right now — in this day — with a smile on your face and joy in your heart.

Consider what Paul described as *"the greatest" gift of all* (1 Corinthians 13:13). If God's love is already — and always — for us, what other gifts could we possibly need?

When packing your bags for a vacation, you're likely to include a camera, or at least, you're sure to pack a phone. This is because you anticipate seeing something worth capturing, something worth turn-

ing into a memory because of its uniqueness or beauty or both.

What if we approached every day this way? But, instead of with a camera, what if we approached each day with a focused heart? What if we adjusted our lens so we could see the gifts God has placed all around us — little and big, invisible and visible, spiritual and physical, recurring and unique to today?

We have countless reasons to be thankful — but do start counting! Open your eyes to all He has given and give thanks.

Grace

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

— Ephesians 1:7 NIV

Grace — it's the best gift we have and maybe the hardest gift to understand because it's so unlike anything else. It never wears out. It never quits working. It's ours, even though we don't deserve it. It's ours, even when we forget we have it. It's the ultimate reason to be grateful. Describe "God's rich grace." What is it? What has it done for you? What does it continue to do? Is God's rich grace a gift you can share with others? How?

Hope

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three. — 1 Corinthians 13:13

Hope is fuel. It's what keeps us going when the days are hard. It's what keeps us believing when valleys are

long. It's why we get back up, pushing on in faith, expecting better days to come. And they will. Because our hope is anchored in the One whom hard days and long valleys can't touch:

In Christ we have hope. — 1 Corinthians 15:19

The book of Hebrews talks about all the "better" things Christ brings to life — both here and in heaven. How has Christ already made your life better?

What's something in your life that you hope is made better in the future?

We don't know how some things will turn out, but we do know about others. What do you hope for that's "sure and steadfast," promised to come about in Jesus (Hebrews 6:19)?

Love

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. — 1 Corinthians 13:13

Hope is fuel to carry us to tomorrow; love is a gift to carry us through today. Whatever we're facing, whatever we wish we had or wish we didn't have, whatever trouble or pain comes today, love comes too. It's higher, wider, and deeper than any other thing.

And it's here to stay (Romans 8:38–39).

Why do you think Paul said love is *"the greatest"* in 1 Corinthians 13:13?

What are you facing today that's troubling you? Write about it, and then on top of what you've written, around and all over it, write the words "I am loved."

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Submitted by Carole Missel

When Fishermen Don't Fish

Inspiration comes from:

In the Eye of the Storm

by Max Lucado

*They were like sheep without a shepherd.
So He began teaching them many things.¹
When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd,
He had compassion on them and healed
their sick.²*

It's a good thing those verses weren't written about me. It's a good thing thousands of people weren't depending on Max for their teaching and nourishment. Especially on a day when I'd just heard of the death of a dear friend. Especially on a day when I wanted to be alone with my friends. Especially after I'd gotten into a boat to escape the crowds. Had that been me in Jesus' sandals on that Bethsaida beach, the verses would read something like:

They were like sheep without a shepherd. So Max told them to quit grazing on his pasture and to head back to their pens.

When Max landed and saw a large crowd, he mumbled something about how hard it was to get a day off and radioed for the helicopter. Then he and the disciples escaped to a private retreat.

It's a good thing I wasn't responsible for those people. I would have been in no mood to teach them, no mood to help them. I would have had no desire even to be with them.

But, as I think about it, Jesus had no desire to be with them either. After all, He did leave them, didn't He? He had every intention of getting away and being alone. So what happened? Why didn't He tell them to get lost? What made Him change His mind and spend the day with the people He was trying to avoid?

Answer? Take a look at five words in Matthew 14:14:

He had compassion on them.

The Greek word used for compassion in this passage is *splanchnizomai*, which won't mean much to you unless you are in the health professions and studied "splanchnology" in school. If so, you remember that "splanchnology" is a study of the visceral parts. Or, in contemporary jargon, a study of the gut.

When Matthew writes that Jesus had compassion on the people, he is not saying that Jesus felt casual pity for them. No, the term is far more graphic. Matthew is saying that Jesus felt their hurt in His gut:

- He felt the limp of the crippled.
- He felt the hurt of the diseased.
- He felt the loneliness of the leper.
- He felt the embarrassment of the sinful.

And once He felt their hurts, He couldn't help but heal their hurts. He was moved in the stomach by their needs. He was so touched by their needs that He forgot His own needs.

He was so moved by the people's hurts that He put His hurts on the back burner.

Maybe that's why God brings hurting people into your world, too. All solitude and no service equals selfishness. Some solitude and some service, however, equals perspective.

Here's a story to illustrate my point.

When I was in high school, our family used to fish every year during spring break. One year my brother and my mom couldn't go, so my dad let me invite a friend. I asked Mark. He was a good pal and a great sport. He got permission from his parents, and we began planning our trip.

Days before leaving, we could already anticipate the vacation. We could feel the sun warming our bodies as we floated in the boat.

We could feel the yank of the rod and hear the spin of the reel

as we wrestled the white bass into the boat. And we could smell the fish frying in an open skillet over an open fire.

We could hardly wait. Days passed like cold molasses. Finally spring break arrived. We loaded our camper and set out for the lake.

We arrived late at night, unfolded the camper, and went to bed — dreaming of tomorrow's day in the sun. But during the night, an unseasonably strong norther blew in. It got cold fast! The wind was so strong that we could barely open the camper door the next morning. The sky was gray. The lake was a mountain range of white-topped waves. There was no way we could fish in that weather.

"No problem," we said. "We'll spend the day in the camper. After all, we have Monopoly. We have Reader's Digest. We all know a few jokes. It's not what we came to do, but we'll make the best of it and fish tomorrow."

So, huddled in the camper with a Coleman stove and a Monopoly board, we three fishermen passed the day — indoors. The hours passed slowly, but they did pass. Night finally came, and we crawled into the sleeping bags dreaming of angling.

Were we in for a surprise. The next morning it wasn't the wind that made the door hard to open, it was the ice!

We tried to be cheerful. "No problem," we mumbled. "We can play Monopoly... again. We can reread the stories in Reader's Digest. And surely we know another joke or two." But as courageous as we tried to be, it was obvious that some of the gray had left the sky and entered our camper.

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I began to notice a few things I hadn't seen before. I noticed that Mark had a few personality flaws. He was a bit too cocky about his opinions. He was easily irritated and constantly edgy. He couldn't take any constructive criticism. Even though his socks did stink, he didn't think it was my business to tell him.

"Just looking out for the best interest of my dad's camper," I defended, expecting Dad to come to my aid.

But Dad just sat over in the corner, reading. Humph, I thought, where is he when I need him? And then, I began to see Dad in a different light. When I mentioned to him that the eggs were soggy and the toast was burnt, he invited me to try my hand at the portable stove. Touchy, touchy, I said to myself. Nothing like being cooped up in a camper with someone to help you see his real nature.

It was a long day. It was a long, cold night.

When we awoke the next morning to the sound of sleet slapping the canvas, we didn't even pretend to be cheerful. We were flat-out grumpy. Mark became more of a jerk with each passing moment; I wondered what spell of ignorance I must have been in when I invited him. Dad couldn't do anything right; I wondered how someone so irritable could have such an even-tempered son. We sat in misery the whole day, our fishing equipment still unpacked.

The next day was even colder. "We're going home" were my father's first words. No one objected. I learned a hard lesson that week. Not about fishing, but about people. When those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight.

When energy intended to be used outside is used inside, the result

is explosive. Instead of casting nets, we cast stones. Instead of extending helping hands, we point accusing fingers. Instead of being fishers of the lost, we become critics of the saved. Rather than helping the hurting, we hurt the helpers.

The result? Church Scrooges. "Bah humbug" spirituality. Beady eyes searching for warts on others while ignoring the warts on the nose below. Crooked fingers that bypass strengths and point out weaknesses. Split churches. Poor testimonies. Broken hearts. Legalistic wars. And, sadly, poor go unfed, confused go uncounseled, and lost go unreached.

When those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight.

But note the other side of this fish tale:

- when those who are called to fish, fish — they flourish!

Nothing handles a case of the gripes like an afternoon service project. Nothing restores perspective better than a visit to a hospital ward. Nothing unites soldiers better than a common task.

Leave soldiers inside the barracks with no time on the front line and see what happens to their attitude. The soldiers will invent things to complain about. Bunks will be too hard. Food will be too cold. Leadership will be too tough. The company will be too stale. Yet place those same soldiers in the trench and let them duck a few bullets, and what was a boring barracks will seem like a haven. The beds will feel great. The food will be almost ideal. The leadership will be courageous. The company will be exciting. When those who are called to fish, fish — they flourish! Jesus knew that.

When He arrived at Bethsaida, He was sorrowful, tired, and anxious to be alone with the disciples.

No one would have blamed Him had He dismissed the crowds a second time. No one would have criticized Him had He waved away the people. But He didn't. Later He would. Later He would demand their departure and seek solitude.

But not before He "healed their sick"³ and taught them "many things."⁴ Self was forgotten... others were served... and stress was relieved.

Make a note of that. The next time the challenges "outside" tempt you to shut the door and stay inside, stay long enough to get warm. Then get out.

When those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight.

¹Mark 6:34

²Matthew 14:14

³Ibid.

⁴Mark 6:34



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Submitted by Carole Missel

Our Mission

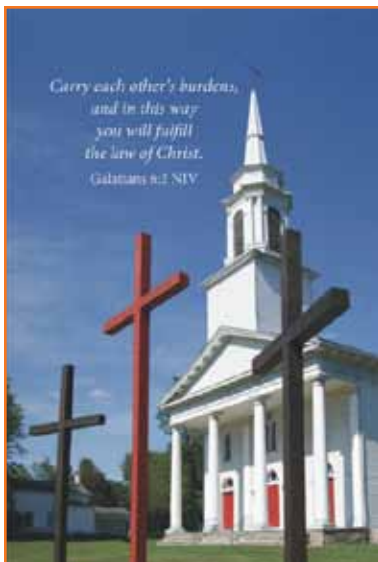
The EPC exists to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus as a denomination of Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical, and Missional congregations.

Our Vision

To the glory of God, the EPC family aspires to embody and proclaim Jesus' love as a global movement of congregations engaged together in God's mission through transformation, multiplication, and effective biblical leadership.

Our Motto

*In Essentials: Unity.
In Non-Essentials: Liberty.
In All Things: Charity.*



EPCConnection

EPCConnection is the news and information service of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a denomination of Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical, and Missional congregations. To the glory of God, the EPC family aspires to be a global movement of congregations engaged together in God's mission through transformation, multiplication, and effective biblical leadership, embodying Jesus' love to our neighbors near and far.



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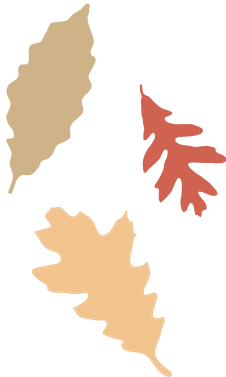
Everyone is Welcome!

Sunday morning Worship

9:15 - 9:30	Prayer and Share
9:40 - 10:20	Berean Sunday School
10:30 -	Traditional worship (Hymnals/piano)
Communion	First Sunday of the month
Dish-to-Pass Luncheon	2nd Sunday of the month after church



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Steeple Submission Deadline: The 3rd Sunday of the month.

Contact:

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 Leo Richardson
 grichardson001@rochester.rr.com

Staying Connected: If anyone does not receive the Steeple Newsletter, participate in Prayer Chain Activations, receive church updates by e-mail, or has a change for the "Birthdays and Anniversaries" and wants to be included, please contact Leo Richardson.

