



October 7, 2020

FPC ENews

The Marks of a Spiritually Healthy Church

As a pastor, I have often asked myself this question: what are the marks or indicators of a spiritually healthy church? I know that I am not the first to ask this question and will not be the last. Yet the question is valid and needs to be considered. While there are a number of sources to turn to and many opinions can be examined, I believe the Scriptures are where we must look.

In Acts 2:42-47, Luke writes about what is often referred to as the fellowship of the believers- a description of the gatherings and actions of the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem who made up the church there. Within these verses a number of indicators can be drawn out to give us an answer to the opening question. As I read through these verses, I would like to point out four that I believe are necessary for a church to be considered spiritually healthy.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching...” V. 42

In a real sense, we could say the first mark of a spiritually healthy church is that it is a learning church. These believers recognized that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, had placed men over them with the authority to preach and teach the Word of God and the “Good News” of Jesus Christ.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” V. 42

The second mark is that this church was a worshipping church. They gathered together as a community. They broke bread together, and they prayed. This in all probability is a reference to formal gatherings for worship, like sharing communion, and also informal gatherings of sharing meals together in fellowship. These believers understood the church of Jesus Christ is truly a community of faith and worship.

“And awe came upon every soul...” Vs. 43-47

The third mark is a sense of awe. An awareness of the presence and power of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the source of the church’s power, its ability to draw believers together. As Christians, we should be a source of encouragement, of witnesses to the power and awe of God through his church and his people. The world around us is in great need and we have the spiritual ability to provide people with a purpose greater than themselves.

“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” V. 47

Our fourth mark: This church was an evangelistic church. This church was not just a community club for a certain type of people. It was not just inwardly focused on its own needs or the needs of a chosen few. This church was an active, faithful community with an inward and outward sense of mission. They understood the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 and desired to live them out on a daily basis. They understood their need to live within the context of the Scriptures and community. They understood the influence they had on the lives of others, that all they had to do was make themselves available. The Lord would continue to add to their number.

I encourage you to read the second chapter of Acts. May you be blessed by how the early New Testament church lived and served. ~Pastor Mike

SUNDAY SCHOOL BEGINS OCTOBER 11

We are excited that Sunday School will be starting up on October 11th at 9:15am. Cindy and Chip Wilson will be teaching Grades Kindergarten through 3 again this year in the same room as last year (third floor of CE Building) and look forward to helping your children better understand and remember the stories from the Bible. This year David Kolator will be teaching Grades 4 through 8. They will initially meet in the same room as last year (third floor of CE Building) and he looks forward to helping your children better understand the Bible.

As most things are these days, Sunday School will be a little different this year. Masks will be required for the entire Sunday School period. Music will start off the hour as usual, however, the children will sit on cushions so that they are apart from each other. During class time, each family unit will be seated together but be distanced from others. The church will supply a box of individual markers/pencils for each child to be used each week. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Cindy Wilson through the church office, David Kolator at Kolator.ri@gmail.com or either Mikyong (mikyong@uri.edu) or Daryl Kolator (dg.kolator@cox.net).

Sunday School for adults will meet in the Lynch Room. John Wicks will be leading a discussion on 1 John. Please wear a mask and properly distance from other families.

We look forward to seeing you!

Pastor Mike is preaching out of the New Testament book of Romans, the most complete book on theology in the New Testament. The author, the apostle Paul, lays out how the Old Testament and New Testament forever tie together through faith in Christ. Pastor Mike has been on fire as he preaches boldly about themes such as justification, reconciliation, peace amidst suffering, and most importantly, salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Here's how you can access his most recent sermons:

The church website: fpcnewport.org

Facebook: [facebook.com/fpcnewport](https://www.facebook.com/fpcnewport)

Instagram: [fpcnewport](https://www.instagram.com/fpcnewport)

YouTube:

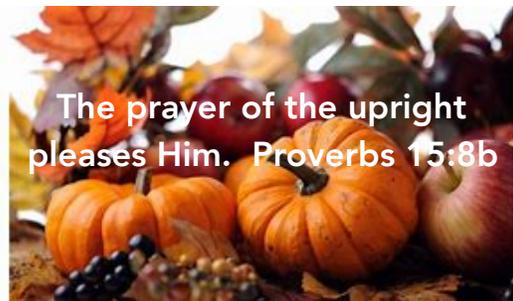
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRsZk0Ncjjc&t=8s>



PRAYER REQUESTS

- Praises that we are able to worship in person!
- Diane, Brian Petit's sister, who has cancer and is undergoing surgery in Houston
- Lori (Alice and Ralph Thomas' daughter) doing Hospice at COVID Specialty Nursing Home
- Heather (Nancy and Ed Burgess' daughter) taking care of patients on the COVID Ward at Mass General
- Danielle (Dick and Cindy Price's daughter) working with COVID patients
- Charis and Joshua (daughter and son-in-law of missionaries Larry and Linda Jones) are safely returned from Bangladesh and living in Washington State awaiting the Lord's call to their next mission.
- That people would turn to Jesus Christ in this time of crisis
- For our military, serving at home and overseas

The prayer of the upright
pleases Him. Proverbs 15:8b



Office Hours are flexible. If you can't reach the office by phone, please e-mail @ secretary@fpcnewport.org
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401-847-1749

WE'RE OPEN SUNDAYS FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL AND WORSHIP!



We are preparing our 2020 Advent Booklet and need your help!

We are asking you to spend a little time putting together a devotional to share with our congregation. Please consider sharing some special event or meaningful experience in your life when you knew the Lord was at work or when His Spirit was revealed. The size and format of the booklet will be the same as in previous years:

- 400 word limit
- One entry for each of the days in Advent.
- Page size is half a regular sheet of paper.
- Begin with a scripture verse or scripture reference.
- Main story or content of one to three paragraphs (total no more than 400 words).
- End with a short prayer.
- Entries may be based on personal Christmas events, scripture, how God has worked in your life, or inspiring stories or poetry you have heard.

We will type, proofread copy, assemble, and mail the booklets. In order for our church members to receive the booklet by November 29, the first Sunday in Advent, **we need your submission no later than November 02.** Of course we will gladly accept earlier submissions. Submissions may be given to Don Estes, or dropped off at the church office, or e-mailed to donaldestes@aol.com and secretary@fpcnewport.org or mailed to Don Estes, 66 Bliss Road, Newport, RI 02840.

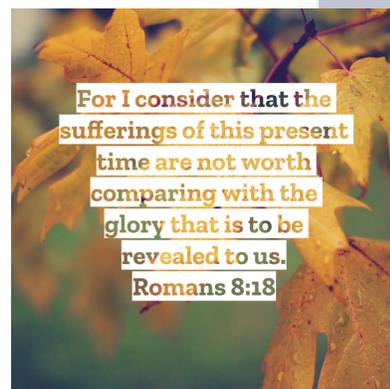
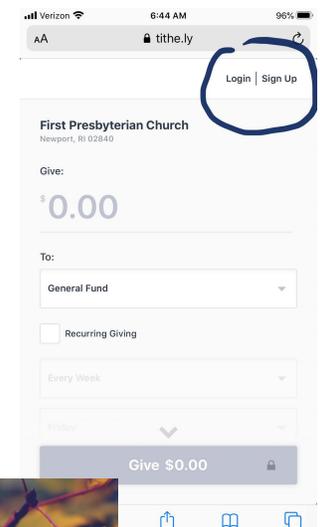
- Sunday School begins at 9:15am and the Worship service begins at 10:30am.
- All who enter the church must wear a face mask during the service.
- At this time, no nursery or fellowship time will be offered.
- Pew Bibles will not be available so you will need to bring your own Bible.
- Hymnals will not be available so we will have printed music sheets in the bulletins.
- We will practice social distancing in sanctuary seating.
- Offering plates will be placed in the front and rear of the sanctuary for your convenience and will be collected during the designated offering time.
- There will be no children's sermon.
- No activity bags will be provided, so children may want to bring similar items of their own.

These guidelines/restrictions allow us to continue to worship together. Even with the restrictions, we have enjoyed meeting together to worship and hear preaching and encouragement through the Word of God.

Finally, remember there is hand sanitizer placed throughout the church for your use. We encourage you to bring your own as well. Also, if you are sick or running a fever, please remain at home. We can't wait to see you!

You can now give online!

Go to the church website fpcnewport.org and click on the far right GIVE tab on the main menu bar. You can then create an account by clicking on "Sign Up" in the top right corner.



The View from My Window

Have you ever looked at a solar eclipse through a pinhole? You simply use a pin to make a hole in a standard sheet of paper, place another piece of paper below it, and angle it toward the sun. The result is the shadow of the portion of the moon that has covered the sun on the lower piece of paper.

Many of us have resigned ourselves to look at 2020 through that pinhole. We see only the shadow that has covered the sun. Oh, I have had a few people say to me that they are enjoying the slower pace of life, that they have learned a new skill or enjoyed their family more. But for most people, 2020 has become a joke of a year that is fraught with disaster after disaster. Laughing is definitely good for the soul, and yes, sometimes if I didn't laugh I would cry. What, though, if we stopped looking at life through a pinhole?

I have been spending more time than I would like to looking through our bedroom window because of a leg injury. I have had to lay a certain way in order to abate the pain, which, thankfully has improved. It's actually been a few weeks now. At first, I only noticed our dogwood tree, its leaves green, our resident chickadees and wrens often gathering in its branches to socialize. But over the last couple of weeks, I have observed the leaves change to a deep auburn, heard the sound of rain filtering through them. And then our neighbor's trees across the street caught my eye. A maple in the distance looking as though it were catching on fire, an oak changing its summer cloak for an autumn one. I began listening and heard runners, dog walkers and the distant yip of a coyote. I saw the man in the Harvest moon wink because the sun was in his eye.

What if we began to look for the beauty of 2020? The beauty that God creates?

In Romans 5:3-5, the apostle Paul writes:

"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance proven character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Rejoice in suffering -> suffering produces endurance in us -> endurance produces proven character -> character produces the anchor of our soul, hope -> hope does not put us to shame, because of God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

I had an insightful conversation with the physical therapist last week. We talked about how recovery is at least 50% mental. If I keep thinking about and lamenting about how "it used to be," it will impede me moving forward. And I have wallowed sometimes. My life changed overnight, it seems. One day I was exercising and looking forward to a trip, to hiking, and the next day I was in excruciating pain. We have all experienced some such kind of life changing event, some may be emotional or spiritual as well, where **what was** is now replaced by **what is**. And **what is** seems sometimes unbearable. But is it really?

Here are snippets of well meaning "Christian" proverbs that we like to dole out:

- God disciplines us through suffering.
- God doesn't give us more than we can handle.
- God knew you could handle this, so that's why He chose you to go through this.

God disciplines us in a way that is tailor made. But what does discipline really mean? Discipline has become a negative term, when biblically, discipline is the method in which God sanctifies us. His purpose is to move us from glory to glory to become more like Jesus. We rob ourselves of His grace when we fight the process.

God definitely gives us more than we can handle. In fact, **God wants us to depend wholly on Him. He does not tailor make our lives to fit what we CAN handle. God tailor makes our lives to fit what we CANNOT handle.** Someone else's difficulties may even seem much harder, but God knows best how to give grace and strength to each person in time of need. That's the beauty of grace, a grace that sanctifies.

God allows in His wisdom what He could prevent in His power (one of my favorite quotes!) So, I ask Him to show me His view. Often we pray for *God's will* according to *our will*. We say we are praying for *His will*, but are we really? Or do we have some preconceived idea of what God's will for our life and others should look like?

My prayer for all of us is that we see that life is more than a pinhole of a shadow across the Son.

What's the view from your window?

~Irene Herring