

# Words of Faith

THE NEWSLETTER OF FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Volume XV, Number 2  
Winter/Spring 2019

## Inside This Issue

Ask a pastor, 12  
Bible reading, 8  
Business as discipleship, 14  
Community discipleship, 2  
Hospitality, 1  
John Fiedler, 13  
Magno Tulfo, 5  
Rachel Nicoletti, 10  
Shame, 9  
Small groups, 6

## The way to a man's heart

by Nathaniel Gutierrez

“Let’s fire up the grill...and be more intentional about spending time with one another.”

Learning a new culture can be a very daunting experience. While you can study culture through books, videos, and classrooms, there is no substitute for moving to another country, plunging into language learning, and immersing oneself in everyday activities. Being thrown into that “sink or swim” situation forces learning at lightning speed in order to survive. But the truth is, even with the best training, your chances of survival are still very low if you go it alone. If no one walks with you through the cultural minefield, you will most likely fail.

Jesus did this for his disciples. He disciplined them in all spheres of life. He taught them while they sat in the synagogue, and as they walked down the street. He helped them deal with their real-life situations and showed them the way to minister to others in their difficult scenarios. Teaching them how to engage with the false religious traditions of their time and showing them what it meant to suffer and sacrifice for the sake of the gospel must have been difficult, but it was precisely what they needed. The Scriptures show how Jesus took his disciples through everyday life, getting away to pray, loving the outcast, caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, and embracing the pariahs of society. He even taught them over meals, breaking bread and teaching them around the table. He spoke into their hearts and showed them the importance of forgiveness and the circumcision of their hearts. Through his example, he teaches us to slow down, to sit, and to live with our true brothers and sisters.

When we think of discipling someone, we often jump to the idea that we must have it all together. We have to be experts so we can set

out upon our goal to teach them. In my years of being a missionary, I learned that is not the case. I taught and preached to hundreds of people. I had Bible studies, men’s discipleship groups, and Sunday school classes. And when people share what they learned from me, it is not what I expect. I naturally assume that their nuggets were gleaned from moments of genius in my sermons or lessons, but surprisingly this is not the case. They were most often the moments they shared with us in our home. It’s as if somehow in our home, the rubber hit the road, and all the dots connected. Doctrine met practice. Sometimes it was something as small as the way I treated my wife and my children, or the way they treated me. I think, other times it was the attitude I had toward them as our guests or the joy and peace they found in our home.

I must admit, I sometimes get frustrated with this. I work hard to teach, and to think that people gain more from just being with us? But why get frustrated? I like food, and I like having people in our home. If an informal and enjoyable gathering in our home is one way in which God is helping us build each other up, let’s fire up the grill, or the new Sous Vide recipe and be more intentional about spending time with one another. Hospitality is a beautiful thing because it gets our guard down and lets us truly walk and grow in ways that connect all those lessons we’ve been hearing at church. And even though we don’t know it, we are growing and developing our faith. We are discipling one another and practicing those survival skills needed to face this world’s challenges. ♦

# Community discipleship in the body of Christ

By Rev. Steven A.  
Nicoletti

When most of us think about discipleship in the church, I think that more often than not what comes to mind is instruction and prayer: giving and seeking instruction on how to live the Christian life, and praying with and for one another that we might follow that instruction. Some of this takes place in formal settings, and some in informal settings. But in either case we tend to conceptualize discipleship in two steps: we receive instruction from others (through a relationship, a sermon, a lesson, a book, etc.), and then we go off on our own to work it out and apply it to our own lives. Community has a role in the first step, but in practical terms, we think of the second step as mostly a private affair.

When we try to live out that two-step model and find ourselves struggling to grow or to overcome a particular area of sin, we then often begin to see the role that accountability can play in discipleship, and so we add that component as well. And so when we think of what our church community contributes to the discipleship of an individual, it is these three things that I think most often come to mind: instruction, prayer, and accountability.

Now, those three components are of course crucial to our discipleship. But they don't give us a full picture of how Christ has established his Body to grow us as his people. There are other vital ways that Christ is at work in the community of the church, and if we want both to grow ourselves, and to help others grow, then we need to pursue those other means by which Christ is at work making and maturing disciples in his Body, the Church. What, though, might some of those ways be?

I saw a rich example of community discipleship recently in the intensive care unit of Tacoma General Hospital. As I write, one of our church members, Laurel, is still a patient in that unit (though doing much better now). Less than 24 hours after she had been admitted, Laurel was to undergo a risky surgery to try to aid her recovery. When the doctor (our own Dr. Lee) came out from the successful surgery to update the fam-

ily, he stopped suddenly after turning the corner into the ICU waiting room. "Oh," he said, "The whole church is here." In only the time that I was there on just that first day of her hospitalization, I counted 23 different brothers and sisters in Christ who had come to talk with, be with, and pray with Laurel's family. And that represented only a portion of those who came on that day and in the days that followed.

We tend to think of such actions within our congregation in the categories of acts of love and mercy, and as deeds that are the *fruit* of Christian character and growth in discipleship. And they certainly are those things. But what I want to point out here is that these interactions are not just the fruit of discipleship, but they are themselves disciple-making and disciple-maturing acts. They are examples of community discipleship – how Christ works through his Body to make his people more and more like himself.

We might start by considering the most obvious way this was happening first: In those interactions in the ICU waiting room, members of the church community were discipling Laurel's family. Moments like this—times of pain, of loss, or of potential loss—can be times of serious temptation. C. S. Lewis put it well in *A Grief Observed*. He wrote: "[It is] not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God's really like. Deceive yourself no longer.'" This was, in many ways, the temptation that Job faced. It can be a dreadful temptation to face alone, with none to guide and help. I do not know if any of Laurel's family felt that temptation while sitting in that waiting room, but I do know that if they did, they did not have to face it alone. Christ's Body surrounded them and directed them again and again to Christ's love for them and for Laurel, countering any lie the Devil might have been whispering in their ears. Some did this by praying aloud with them and for them, again and again. Some did it by embracing them, serving

“Our church community contributes to the discipleship of an individual: instruction, prayer, and accountability.”

as the arms of Christ, communicating his love and comfort to them. Some did this by gathering around a hymnal one woman had brought and singing “Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting” right there in the waiting room for all to hear. Some did this by bringing food and drinks, and placing them in the hands of family members, showing the Lord’s ongoing provision and care for their needs even when they themselves could not give them a thought. Each of these acts and more were not only acts of care, but they were acts of discipleship. As the Body of Christ, each act was a display of Christ’s love for Laurel’s family at the very moment when they might be tempted to doubt that love.

But that was not the only direction that discipleship was happening on that evening at Tacoma General – because Laurel’s family was also discipling all of us. By sharing their needs, whether by asking us to pray, by looking to one of us for a comforting embrace, or by confessing their fears to us, they were calling us to follow Jesus and be his disciples in that moment. Through them Christ was calling us to follow him in acts of love and compassion. We may not think of those moments in those terms, but it is interesting to note that many of the early Church Fathers did. Jerome, reflecting on Psalm 1:2 and the blessed man (of whom we are told that his “delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night”) wrote “Meditation on the law consists not in reading but in doing. For it is said in another passage, ‘Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything in the name of the Lord’ [1 Corinthians 10:31]. If I give alms, I meditate on the law of the Lord; if I visit a sick person, my feet meditate on the law of God; if I do those things that are commanded, I meditate in my body what others meditate in their mouths ... Our work is our meditation.” Indeed, those who bring their needs to the people of God are performing an essential act of discipleship for them, for, as Jerome puts it, we cannot meditate on the law of God with our whole being unless such needs are openly shared. The church father

Basil of Caesarea similarly stressed the importance of shared needs in the Body for spiritual growth, and he made the point against those who would portray the ideal life of discipleship as one of solitary prayer. For if you pursue your faith alone, he asked “Whose feet will you wash? For whom will you care? In comparison with whom will you be the least?” Making a similar point, one collection of the sayings of the Desert Fathers records the following story: “A brother questioned a certain elder, saying, ‘Suppose that there are two brothers, and one of them stays quietly in his cell, extending his fasting over six days and imposing heavy labor on himself, but the other one cares for the sick. Whose work is more pleasing to God?’ The elder replied to him, ‘If the brother who keeps a fast for six days were to hang himself up by his nostrils, he could not be the equal of the one who tends the sick.’” According to this Desert Father then, by sharing their need with us and allowing us to come alongside them, Laurel’s family was doing far more for growth in discipleship of each one of us than the most rigorous fasting, reading, or prayer could do. They were discipling us.

And along with the family, Laurel herself was discipling us in more ways than one. First, she was discipling us with her own need, even if she was not aware of it. Peter Leithart reflects on a similar dynamic when he baptized a premature infant with Downs Syndrome in his congregation. “Her mere presence in the church called out expressions of love and practical aid to the parents, and drew the members of the congregation into closer fellowship,” he writes. “She was, however unconsciously, a ‘minister in God’s house,’ edifying the body.” In the same way, Laurel was ministering to us through her weakness and need.

But at the same time, Laurel was also ministering to us through her strengths. For as we gathered there that afternoon, and in the days that followed, we all learned more about who Laurel really is, and we were called to greater discipleship by her example. Her children were struck by all the people who spoke of the

“Indeed, those who bring their needs to the people of God are performing an essential act of discipleship for them.”

## Community discipleship, continued

◀ ways that Laurel had blessed them. “I knew she was amazing” one of her children shared with me, “... but I didn’t realize how many other people saw that too.” Stories were shared of the ways Laurel had loved others. Messages came in from her students the next day. Acts of love and faithfulness that might have remained known to only a few were shared as we were gathered together, and her example called each of us to grow ourselves – to imitate her as she had imitated Christ.

In so many ways, in so many different directions, Christ was discipling his people through the community of saints as they gathered in the waiting room of Tacoma General Hospital’s ICU. All of that was happening, but much of it was easy to miss if you did not look for it.

Of course, we must admit that it does not always happen like that. Sometimes a member of the Body expresses a need and receives little response. Sometimes a member has a need but refuses to share it, and to allow others to serve them. Some of us have painful memories of when the Body was not there for us as it should have been. But the sense of loss that accompanies those times itself points to how the Body of Christ is *supposed* to behave in those moments of

crisis: each person lovingly discipling the other as one shares a need and the other meets it. How we impoverish each other spiritually when we either refuse to share our needs with brothers and sisters in Christ or refuse to respond to the needs of others. We not only miss an opportunity for our own discipleship, but for Christ to use us to disciple others.

And such opportunities do not only arise in the crisis of the ICU but again and again in our everyday lives. Every member of our congregation has long-term and short-term burdens to bear, and when they share those burdens with others in the Body of Christ, and those others help to bear them, discipleship happens. The question each of us must wrestle with is where Christ is calling us to such discipleship. What burdens has he allowed to come into your life that you might bless others with by letting them help you bear them, so that they might grow in their walk with Christ? What burdens do those around you have in which you might come alongside them and show them Christ’s love by carrying for them the weight that they cannot carry alone?

One of the chief reasons Christ established his Church was to make disciples. If we are going to continue to grow as a congregation that makes and grows disciples in the years ahead, then of course we need good instruction. We need to hear from and be instructed by God’s Word. We need to be led in prayer and in worship. We need to be held accountable for our walk with Christ. But we also need to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Or as Jerome put it, we need to meditate on the law of Christ not only with our mouths, but with our hands and feet, and to give others the opportunity to do the same in our lives.

I came away from my time in the ICU waiting room encouraged by how much discipleship goes on in our congregation, and reminded that as important as my role is in our congregation to preach God’s Word to you and lead you in worship, in many ways that is just one component of how Christ is discipling his people through our church. May we continue to be a congregation that more and more stirs one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24), bearing one another’s burdens, and in the process making and maturing disciples for Christ. ♦

### Member Changes

*August through December, 2018*

#### Additions to Membership

(includes people joining our church and children moving from child to communicant membership status)

Finn MacGregor, Thor

MacGregor, 8/19

Dale and Charlotte Palmberg,

9/23

Roy and Stephanie Martin,

Augustus, Dannica,

Gresham, 10/1

Amy Allen, Katherine, 10/4

Mark Lind, 10/7

Katja Whaley, Karena Whaley,

10/28

Claire Lee, 11/4

Rosemary Nicoletti, 11/11

Farnoush Katouzian, Ashraf

Katouzian, 11/18

Kurt Balasbas, 12/30

#### Baptisms

Aaliyah Gutierrez, 8/5

Elliot Lee, 9/9

Zion St. John, 11/25

Dietrich Schlaudraff, 12/30

#### Deaths

Marvin “Joe” Gronewold 10/21

#### Marriages

Ray Burton and Mary Sabetto,

9/29

# Magno Tulfo

**M**agno (Magnum) Tulfo, the beloved husband of Delores, finished his last battle on December 24, 2018. He was a survivor of the Japanese assault on his homeland of the Philippines, a Vietnam war hero, an active veteran retiree, and a late adult convert to the service of our Lord.

It is impossible to think of Magnum without remembering a couple of his distinctive trademarks. The Cavalry insignias he faithfully wore on his lapel or hat in reverent salute to the sacrifices made by the units with which he served were the final touch to each of his carefully selected “uniforms.” And, of course, the enthusiastic thumbs up or scowling thumbs down being his last remaining vestiges of communication also come to mind.

However, behind the veil of crippled communication and deep loyalty to groups few of us know or understand was a man who survived and even overcame the most profound losses that only a world affected by wars could bring. He lost his father, home, and some of his elementary schooling to war. Later, as he embarked upon a college education, he once again faced war, this time on behalf of the US as a drafted Cavalryman.

Lamentably, the post-war difficulties faced and survived by so many of Magnum’s era aren’t the ones for which they received medals. They are, however, the battlegrounds that ultimately defined many men (and women). We can be sure that Magnum’s war experiences, heroic as they were, did extract a heavy toll. But what could have overwhelmed and even destroyed him, actually became, in the hands of our perfect Redeemer, part of the force that softened and even charmed the man.

He became a humble, meek Christian — the one who was always present, the one who cheered for others. He didn’t even back away from speaking into the somewhat reticent teenaged young man who often sat in the pew in front of him considering his own military future. Magnum would grab the youth, ask a few questions, take an interest in his answers, and offer a pat on the back or an encouraging word. Later, he’d labori-

ously write a note and offer up the prayers of a saint. Moreover, there was the cheerful thumbs up — the reminder from Magnum to all around him that even the hardest things don’t have to be the worst things.

Magnum slipped from this earth just in time to celebrate Christmas at the feet of Jesus. Our nation had bestowed some of its most prestigious medals for his service. But his most courageous and valiant fight was during these last years and in his most diminished physical state. It is also the least appreciated by a nation such as ours. What is more, he won the most crucial battle. He faced the enemy’s weapons of despair, self-absorption, and bitterness, and he did not yield. Magnum’s mission is complete, and we celebrate the hero whose grace is sufficient. ♦

*by Katrina Knight*



“He won the most crucial battle. He faced the enemy’s weapons of despair...and he did not yield.”

“I really enjoy getting together with others and sharing life together. It is hard to get to know people very well just interacting on Sundays. But the encouragement I feel, knowing that others are praying for me and that I can pray for others, is very comforting.” —Dawn Darby

“In my small group, I can share things I would not feel comfortable saying in a large group of people. I feel like people are able to concentrate better in a smaller group, and I am better able to listen well.” —Doug Reis

## Small is beautiful

“Our elder group has recently begun meeting regularly with a meal and fellowship together, different members hosting at their homes. I’m happy for the opportunity to get to know and spend time with folks that I can only greet briefly at church on Sunday morning.” —Kim St. John

“Reading in a small group together gives focus, meaning, and beauty with which to build each other up and then an opportunity to pray for each other. The focus allows us to distill things down to be of a better quality.” —Jennifer Sullivan

“Small groups give people a starting place in building relationships and give ownership and loyalty to the church.” —Margo Kelly

By Kimberly Reis



**S***mall Is Beautiful* by E. F. Schumacher and Joseph Pearce’s “sequel” book *Small Is Still Beautiful: Economics as if Families Mattered* deal with the assertion that when national or global economies grow to such immense scale, products are disconnected from the people who create them. Think here of stock values in the millions of dollars, enormous office spaces, massive farming endeavors, colossal square footage of retail stores, or the gigantic scale even of the actual purchases themselves. The disparity between the size of a human being and the modern economic systems we work in creates an imbalance. That disconnect resonates in terms of environmental fallout, a loss of personal pride in workmanship, diminishing the unique expression of the individual worker, the promotion of the disposable lifestyle, and even the cheapening of human life itself.

While I do not claim to know much about Schumacher’s book, and only read Pearce’s long ago when attending a book signing sponsored by The Discovery Institute, I am a fan of the “small” of this world. Take the old hit television series *The Andy Griffith Show*. I know, I know: the show is painfully scripted and often syrupy, no one really gets seriously ill, hurt feelings seem to evaporate within minutes, the out-of-town bad guys get caught by innocent bumbling, and Barney Fife never seems to be hurt by the fact that he is the butt of the *entire* town’s jokes! I am sure, however, it appeals to my longing for heaven; *on The Andy Griffith Show*, it’s all good. That 30-minute utopian vision has a specific setting that pulls at my heartstrings; the characters all live in a safe, sweet, friendly — and most importantly — *small* town. Like the Mitford book series by Jan Karon, the townspeople all know each other. The neighbor owns the gift shop, the mayor is the reunion chairman, the female love interest is a fellow alumna of the town’s high school. I agree; small is beautiful.

Titanic retail stores, gargantuan sports stadiums, expansive restaurants, and vast metropolitan cities are exciting, stimulating, fast-paced, grandiose, and full of choices, but they are not personal, intimate, comforting, or warm. Most people do not want to take a horseback ride through downtown Seattle. It does seem true that the more massive things get, the less they heal and soothe the people for whom — *sup-*

*posedly* — these spaces are built. I saw a connection between *Small Is Beautiful*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and the small groups in our church. I interviewed several friends in our own congregation and heard some of the same desires which are personified in Mayberry, North Carolina. People want to be *known*. In being known by other Christians, we feel as if we are important to someone else. Our sense of value increases and the isolating burdens of daily life decrease.

On these pages are some examples of what fellow Faith Presbyterian Church members say is so appealing about being a member of a small group.

Lo and behold, the Bible knows us all very well! You remember Moses was an extraordinary leader who knew God intimately, but even he grew weary. He needed his fellow pilgrims to come to his aid in holding up the staff of God so that the nation of Israel would continue to be victorious over its enemies. As the day wore on, the battle was fierce, and the staff needed to be held up for a long time. In Exodus 17:12-14 (ESV), it says, “But Moses’ hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.”

Here, we see an active image of faithfulness in these three Godly men — Aaron, Hur, and Moses — combining their strength to remain faithful to God and finding their victory in Christ, not in their own strength or wrought from their own power. Only in holding up the staff of God did God’s people have success, but neither could one man alone keep doing it by himself. While Moses, Hur, and Aaron held up the staff, Joshua was playing his role as a military leader on the field. These four Christians had different strengths and weaknesses; therefore, they also had different roles. Their success was earned first in being faithful to what God had commanded them to do, and then in their interdependence.

If you are not involved with a small group at our church, I urge you act on your desire to be known better and to have help bearing the load God has seen fit to assign to you. Your elder, deacon, or even I would be happy to help you become connected. You will find that small is, indeed, beautiful! ♦

“I’ve found valuable accountability in these groups. I’ve been pleased to be part of an ‘iron sharpening iron’ interaction in which each of the members is not merely looking to his own interests, but also to the interests of the others (Phil 2:4).” — Kirk McMillian

“My small group allows members to feel safe to share from our hearts. So we help each other bear the sorrows, but the joys are multiplied. Catching the eye of someone in your group at church and through the flash of two smiles, knowing she is your friend and you are praying for one another, is a blessing from the Lord.” —Janet Jack

“In a small group I find a deeper relationship with people outside of my normal group of friends. The size of the group centers our attention and focus.” —Micah Tamminga

“Small groups build friendships because of the consistency of their meeting and the weekly updates from other group members allow me to feel like I understand what the other members are experiencing from day to day.” —Nate Shelden

“It’s a privilege to be allowed into the privacy of people’s lives. I enjoy the deeper sense of community in knowing the wider lives of the people I’ve been worshiping with over the past 10 years.” —Elizabeth James

“The small groups allow space for each person to share personal experiences or insights, which is the ‘stuff’ of developing the bonds of friendship and love. The Bible study is unique in that we gather around a common purpose, rather than because of similarities in stage of life, so I have gotten to know ladies across generations that I may not have spent time with otherwise.” —Debbie Mellott

# Reading the Bible: Motivation and method

by Craig DesJardins

One of the main sources of vitality in the Christian life is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit uses the scriptures to strengthen us for our daily tasks and to give us clear thinking about the world in which we live. With this in mind, many Christians make it a habit to read through the whole Bible every year. There is no magic to this goal; depending on your life circumstances, you may be able to read the Bible through even more frequently than once a year, or it may take you many years to read through the Bible once, especially if you have small children or a busy career. George Muller of Bristol read the Bible through 4 times each year for nearly 50 years. Others may find it more spiritually strengthening to read the Bible slowly and meditate thoroughly on everything they find within its pages. Charles Spurgeon put it this way: “Some people like to read so many Bible chapters every day. I would not dissuade them from the practice, but I would rather lay my soul asoak in a half a dozen verses all day than rinse my hand in several chapters.” (Although, you should keep in mind that Spurgeon had a photographic memory.)

There are many Bible reading plans available for you to use. This church offers several, including the McCheyne plan, a chronological plan put forward by Linleigh Roberts, and the Thematic Bible Reading plan, which changes every year. However, if you have never read the entire Bible before, I would recommend that you begin by reading the Bible straight through from start to finish, as most books are read. Although this approach has the problem that some parts of the Bible are quite dry, at least to new eyes, it has the advantage that you get a good overall feel for the Bible’s layout and message. (Reading an average of four chapters a day gets you through the Bible in 10 months.)

Please understand that planning to read through the Bible may cause spiritual resistance. We have an adversary that hates us and wishes the very worst for us. So, you may need to pray in advance that the Lord would allow you to read through the Bible and that any spiritual hindrances would be removed. Beyond this, if you find yourself falling behind, don’t quit. If it

takes you three years to finish a one-year plan, then by all means, take three years. Just keep moving forward. A macabre illustration occurs to me here, but probably an appropriate one. In the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, at the beginning, there is twenty minutes of absolute terror as the men landing on the beach at Normandy are coming under horrific fire from the forces defending the beach. In the midst of this chaos, the movie shows an explosion which leaves a man standing there who has just lost his arm to that explosion. It has never left me that at this point, the man picks up his severed arm and runs forward. This is often what we need to do in our spiritual warfare – regroup, reset our expectations, and then move forward. ♦

## Q&A on Craig’s reading plan

What are the principles governing your approach to dividing up the Bible for daily reading?

The first principle is one of basic math. In order to cover the entire Bible in one year, you must average 85.2 verses per day. I am always checking the verse counts for each day to make sure I am on track in that regard.

Next, I pick certain key points in the year and make sure that I have Scripture connections at those times in particular. For instance, I make sure that the reader will always be reading a resurrection account of one sort or another on Easter Sunday morning.

After that, I try to match books of the New Testament with places in the Old Testament where quotations or similar teaching is found. This usually means that only one chapter in a New Testament book is read on a day when the quotation from the Old Testament is the other day’s reading. (Although Hebrews is often an exception; when it comes to the Old Testament, Hebrews goes well with just about anything!)

What have you learned as the years have passed and how have you changed your approach?

Early on, I was trying to not only make connections between Scriptures, but I was also ▶

Craig’s Bible reading plan can be found in the information section of the church website at <http://faithtacoma.org>.



# Shame and discipleship

What is Satan whispering in your ear? [You LIAR!] What sin have you asked for forgiveness for a million times? [You aren't pure anymore!] Do you find yourself living in shame, despite the fact that you believe in forgiveness? [You are a bad friend|parent|child|sibling!]

Was your "big" sin before you were a Christian? "Well then," some of us would say, "Those sins are easily forgiven. There's no reason to live in shame for those. You didn't know any better." But our past sins know our address. Though we know we are forgiven, they do come back to haunt us. "Shame, shame," they chant. "You'll never be ..." or "You'll always be ... (choose your accusation)."

Was your "big" sin after you became a Christian? Think about how Satan tempts the Christian. In his honeyed voice he whispers, "God knows your situation: how weak|sad|depressed|lonely you are." "It's not that bad, compared to what others do." "Of course God will forgive you." Then, after the sin has been committed, Satan, the Accuser, comes back and harshly shouts in your ear, "You \_\_\_\_\_!" "God will never forgive you for THAT!" "Shame, shame."

When we carry shame in our hearts, it keeps us in bondage. As Jackie Hill Perry says in *Gay*

*Girl, Good God*, "Shame wants us to believe it is accurate in its evaluation of us. That we are too wretched to be made new. Too dirty to be made clean."

Satan lies to us and tells us that we have to keep our sin hidden so that others won't judge us or reject us. Perhaps we have experienced harsh judgment or rejection from family members or friends. Perhaps we have experienced this within the church. Or perhaps it's an imagined rejection that we fear. We don't trust our friends/family/church brothers and sisters enough to risk what might happen.

Jackie Hill Perry reminds us, "You are not what [others] say you are. You are not what your trauma says you are. You are a child of the living God.... God will heal in time.... We are what the cross has declared us to be: forgiven."

As we disciple one another, one sinner to another, we can remind each other that the Church is the Bride of Christ whose shame is covered by His blood. We can encourage each other to step out of hiding and into the light so that forgiveness and restoration can be truly felt. ♦

by Dawn Darby



"Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

—Proverbs 28:13

## Bible reading, continued

◀ trying to produce readings that synced up with the church calendar. For instance, some of my plans had you reading Acts 2 on Pentecost Sunday, or Matthew 1 on the first Sunday in Advent. Other than retaining the resurrection accounts on Easter Sunday, I have abandoned this approach.

What has changed the most over time is how the Psalms are placed. It has taken a lot of study and reflection to see how something in a particular Psalm might contain an idea found somewhere else in the Bible, and so be placed with that other reading for the day. I have developed a Word document entitled "Cross Reference Main List," which contains all of my ideas for possible matches between chapters of the Bible. This document has grown increasingly larger over time, and I don't think I've come close to finding all the possibilities.

What do you think are the advantages of your approach?

The main advantage to the thematic approach is that it causes the reader to pay closer attention to each day's readings, to see if there are connections to be found that day. The other real advantage is that the Psalms are found throughout the year. This was my one complaint with the straight-through-the-Bible approach; I only read the Psalms for about three weeks out of the year, and then they were gone.

What are the disadvantages of your approach?

The disadvantage to my approach is that it makes your reading of the Bible more fragmented. Focusing on the small details of the Bible is good for all of us, but reading straight through whole books gives you a feel for Scripture that cannot be obtained in any other way. ♦

Meet your neighbor

## Rachel Nicoletti

by Jennifer Sullivan

*Our neighbor in this issue is Rachel Nicoletti, whose presence we have enjoyed since 2013. She came with her family from St. Louis as her husband took the position of assistant pastor here at Faith. We are looking forward to sharing many years of Christian community with her as Pastor Nicoletti assumes the senior pastorate of our body.*

Rachel embarked early in life on the quest of faith so aptly called a pilgrimage. Her path has intertwined with the twists and turns of public ministry, as well. Rachel's father pastored a Baptist church in Buffalo, New York, where she was born. Feeling called to missionary work in Germany, her parents, her older brother, and Rachel relocated when Rachel was seven years old. Having a natural sense of adventure, Rachel was excited about the unknown changes. Life in Germany held challenging terrain, though, as the work required the family to move many times. "By the time I was in 8th grade, I had attended eight different schools. I think that factored into my developing a way of thinking about dealing with problems by just moving away from them. It's been as an adult that I have learned to truly value roots." Some of the opportunities and locations they enjoyed during this time were fairly idyllic, though somewhat lost on a young child, such as when they lived on the border of France and Switzerland and had only to walk up the alleyway to visit a vineyard!

Rachel and her brother attended German public schools and learned how to navigate living as a Christian in that secular setting. During middle school, Rachel developed a medical condition that caused her to have seizures. Hard enough on its own, her family had to traverse these waters in a foreign country. With the help of a neurologist friend in the States, they were able to pinpoint a medication that was effective in stopping the seizures. Through this time, Rachel grew in her faith, her spiritual life becoming more real to her.

Her parents were contemplating their next steps when a church in Oneonta, New York, invited her father to become their pastor. Back to New York they went, where Rachel spent her high school years. These were times of ups and downs on her journey. She did well in school

and, "...thrived on being the youth group girl and pastor's kid." She had good friends and positive high school experiences. Her spiritual life was intense and deep-reaching—a defining trait of her whole personality as well. Things shifted, however, when she began coming off her seizure medication. She descended into depression. Though a natural student, she began to do poorly in school and finished feeling alienated and unhappy.

Seeing an opportunity to step into a larger world, she decided to go to Bethel College in Minnesota, hoping the new adventure would lead her out of these shadows. But the struggles followed her. She experienced a Grand Mal seizure at the end of her freshman year, and finally a relationship that proved harmful sent her into "a system crash."

A verse that Rachel connects with her life is Psalm 34:18: "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." The next phase of her life was a journey down that path. Back at home, Rachel's parents gave her the place she needed to work through the life issues with which she was struggling. She went back on her medication and spent time weekly with a Christian counselor. "I had developed an exterior me and an interior me. Working with her helped me understand my feelings and the angst I was wrestling with, providing a way to move forward." She grew again in her faith and decided to finish school at Hunter College in New York City.

This was definitely a larger world, but God provided Christian community and supportive relationships. Rachel majored in creative writing with an emphasis on women's literature and minored in art history and classical studies. Not shaken by the difficult works she encountered, her faith had been reinforced by her past experiences. "God is not afraid to go to the dark places. We can learn to deal with that darkness and not despair because he is present with us."

Rachel's college group at Village Church, a plant of Redeemer Presbyterian, was a Reformed University Fellowship connected with New York University. It was here she met Steven, who was a student at NYU. Though they both had strong

"Her spiritual life was intense and deep-reaching—a defining trait of her whole personality as well."

opinions, they were quite different and at first paid no attention to one another. Steven was the “most likely to become a pastor” type in the group and Rachel was striding out on her own. It was during the process of becoming friends (initiated by a thoughtful reproof from Rachel which Steven agreeably received), that they both saw how they helped each other grow. “I was still distrustful of men, of the authority of men, and had reservations about ministry life. Steven was a male I could trust and that opened the door.” Their RUF leader, Vito, was very instrumental in both of their lives at this time. For Rachel, he “helped me see my gifts for a life in ministry and how to have the courage to trust theologically and practically.” Steven and Rachel were married in 2005. Their “positive effect on each other” blossomed beautifully.

Right after marriage, they moved to Rhode Island, where Steven began an RUF internship at Brown University/Rhode Island School of Design. It was a challenging time as they experienced many of the unique hardships of full-time ministry on a shoestring. After completing the two years, they moved to St. Louis where Rachel began working on her counseling degree at Covenant Seminary.

Again, the promises of Psalm 34:18 were a spur to seek this course of study, training in the skills of helping others as a therapist. Rachel loved school and appreciated the mentorship of the gifted department head. Following her internship, she worked for a couple years as a provisionally licensed counselor. “There is no easy path for becoming fully licensed, which requires 3,000 counseling hours. Getting your feet wet is stressful while your experience is growing and the situations are complex.” One challenging job she faced was working in the foster care system with court-ordered therapy—a situation made discouraging when the families, the system, and the needs of the children seemed at cross purposes with each other.

During this time, they welcomed their daughter, Olive, into their family. With Rachel’s job becoming more draining, and Steven getting his pastoral degree as well as working, they shifted

gears with Rachel taking a position as a nanny. This allowed her to care for Olive alongside her charges so that she and Steven were “no longer passing the baby baton.” Motherhood opened up new avenues of growth for Rachel through joy and sorrow. The happiness of starting a family was also marked by the sorrow of losing three children in miscarriages. Again, in the darkness, Rachel saw God working. Through the tangible love and support of those around her, she realized the healing impact of receiving thoughtful help during grief. “For me, the anxiety surrounding my pregnancies has been a roller coaster experience. I have felt the reality of fear. I have also been brought closer to people as I saw them come alongside to show love. It’s my desire to minister back to others.”

When the Nicolettis moved to Washington to begin their work at Faith in 2013, their daughter Rosemary was just 4 weeks old. Though this required a “survival-mode” living experience for a while, Rachel was definitely up for the move to the West Coast. “Perhaps that’s because of my inborn adventurer. It’s been a surprisingly good fit. I like the trees and the gray skies fit my ‘poetic’ personality!” Steven and Rachel were blessed with the birth of their third daughter, Glory, in 2016. Today, Rachel is busy mothering these three precious girls who are just starting on their own pilgrimage. She also enjoys developing close relationships at the Mother’s Encouragement Group. Excited about the coming years at Faith, Rachel is looking forward to building more relationships and growing together. She feels encouraged by the enthusiasm of the congregation and their support of Steven.

Thank you, Rachel, for sharing your journey with us! As we look ahead down the road, it’s an encouraging picture of the powerful, kind, and ever-present God who walks beside us now and waits at the end of our quest. ♦

“It’s been a surprisingly good fit. I like the trees and the gray skies fit my ‘poetic’ personality!”

# Ask a pastor

Answers by  
Rev. Dr. Rob Rayburn

*The "Ask a Pastor" column considers selected questions submitted by congregants. If you would like to participate, please submit your question either by email to editor@faithtacom.org or to the labeled box in the red narthex.*

What can we, as a church, do to organically and Biblically advance racial reconciliation? I have heard that the most segregated time during the American week is Sunday mornings. Isn't that more because of expressive styles of worship rather than design?

This is a question serious Christians have been wrestling with on both sides of the divide for a long time. Years ago, when both white and black worship were more diverse but at the same time nearer to one another in form and content, it might have been easier to merge them. In the case of a congregation like ours, our way of worship is unquestionably a barrier to black participation (as it is to much white participation!) because it is unfamiliar and because its high-register character is so counter-cultural. The questions 1) how much of the historic liturgical tradition of Christendom may be sacrificed to achieve worthy ends and 2) how likely are such sacrifices actually to achieve such ends are questions for the next generation of Faith Presbyterian Church to ask and answer. The facts that must be faced and considered are that liturgical commitments are hardly the only barriers to genuine racial reconciliation and that imitative efforts by whites have rarely proved effective, even when made by whites to secure greater white participation. Going to a praise band at this point is unlikely to give a congregation such as ours any boost at all! Like virtually every church, ours has features that attract certain Christian people and repel others (even PCA folk try us out and look elsewhere because we are so unlike what they are used to). At this point, I suspect that the most likely way to attract black believers to our congregation will be through a growing interest in African American Christian circles in Reformed theology and historic Christian worship. Whether I will live to see it remains to be seen.

How much should I use scripture in the moment of rebuking my child when he/she does wrong? I worry that I might make him despise God's word.

If discipline is practiced with love and finished with hugs and kisses, biblical explanations will always be not only useful but memorable. Parents have a stewardship from God and their children should know that. If the Bible frequently appears also in both positive instruction and in

the example of the parents' lives, that it is likewise used in discipline will only demonstrate your consistency. You have learned your craft from God himself and are doing what he has taught you to do. Let the children of the covenant encounter the Word of God everywhere they turn and encounter it as the life-giving and happiness-producing thing that it is! Remember, discipline is designed to make them happy, and they should know that too!

I was arguing with someone about death-with-dignity legislation and he pointed out that we take life/death decisions into our own hands all the time. For example, we determine not to have a life-extending treatment, or not to undergo tests that might prevent diseases from developing, or even to take medications which side-effects are known to be hazardous. How should I have answered him?

In general, Biblically minded ethicists argue that end-of-life questions are to be answered according to the principle that while we are not permitted to kill, to take life, we have no obligation to prolong life if God has pronounced its end. There is a great deal of difference between administering a fatal dose of some poison to someone whose life may well continue on its own for some time and removing the ventilator from a now-comatose person whose heart, as a result of accident or disease, cannot and will not continue to beat apart from mechanical support. Saying that, however, hardly eliminates all questions. It is a murky world modern medicine has bequeathed to us. We are rightly grateful for the extraordinary advances in life-saving procedures, but we now face ethical dilemmas unknown even to our parents and grandparents. As John Newton observed with regard to life in general, "love is the best casuist." That is, the person who loves God and others – the person who most sincerely wants to do the right thing – is the one likely to answer such questions as these in the best way. I respect the right of a cancer patient who has already endured two years of misery from the treatment of her disease to say, "No more," when confronted with still another therapy that holds out some small hope of extending life for several months or even some years. To be sure, all manner of situations exist in life in which risks must be weighed against possible advan- ➤

# John Fiedler

**J**ohn Ernest Fiedler, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, was born in Puyallup on August 9, 1925, and departed to await the resurrection on August 29, 2018. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Anne, in 1996, and by his second wife, Rosemary, in 2012. With Anne, John had four children, Mary, John, Paul, and Tom, who still live in the Pacific Northwest, as well as numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

For some years, John told friends that he knew he would die when he reached 93. He didn't know how it was that he knew such a thing, only that other friends and relatives died at 93 and that it seemed a good and fitting time for him to die as well. John passed into eternity just three weeks after his 93rd birthday.

He had only stopped working as an electrical engineer six months before his 92nd birthday, wrapping up a last project for Amtrak and the King St. Station in Seattle. When asked why he hadn't retired sooner, he responded that he had intended to do so when he turned 80 but forgot. The real answer was that he was having fun, loved working on big electrical projects, and loved working with people.

Like some of the Lord's other disciples, John was a fisherman and always reveled in being outdoors in God's beautiful creation. In his last months, when he could no longer see well, he would call to mind scenes of beauty on various

rivers in the mountains of Washington, and even all of the details of a contest with a particular fish.

John considered everyone he knew to be a friend, and never had a critical thing to say about others. In conversation, one would realize that he disagreed with a statement only when he crossed his arms, raised his eyebrows, and said, "hmMMMMmm...." On those rarest of occasions when he wished to express vehement disagreement, some hours later he would say, "Now, when we were talking earlier, did you REALLY mean to say..." John knew that only Jesus was perfect, and he was always prepared to extend consideration and the benefit of the doubt to fellow sinners. He was a Christian gentleman.

John loved Jesus and walked with him faithfully all his days. He loved nothing so much as the Lord's Day worship, being with his brothers and sisters in Christ, singing favorite hymns, and hearing God's Word preached week by week. John loved his family at Faith Presbyterian and lived out Jesus' words in the gospel of John, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." ♦

*by Ryan Gross*

## Ask a pastor, continued

◀ tages. Is mountain-climbing or stunt-flying a sin because it is more dangerous than more pedestrian ways of spending our time? No one can answer such questions by citing a verse from the Bible. God has left much in our hands to decide in keeping with fundamental principles. That may not lead to the same answer in every case. Such is life. So long as we do not transgress God's law, we have freedom to choose the course that seems most prudent given all the facts. ♦



“John considered everyone he knew to be a friend.”

Faith Presbyterian Church  
620 South Shirley Street  
Tacoma, Washington 98465

Phone: 253-752-7601  
E-mail: [editor@faithtacoma.org](mailto:editor@faithtacoma.org)  
<http://www.faithtacoma.org>

Non-Profit Org.  
U. S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Tacoma, WA  
Permit No. 1497

## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

# Business as discipleship

*by Roy Martin*

If you ask someone where discipleship happens, you'll get plenty of great responses: church, Sunday School, men's or women's groups, Bible studies, small groups, and many more of the like. Scarcely will you hear that business is where discipleship happens. This might be the result of the spiritual nature of discipleship, which inadvertently causes us to compartmentalize it apart from business. It might also be because we're "workin' for the weekend." Perhaps it's a combination of both. However, can you be a disciple of Christ on Sunday and a cheat at your business during the week? Certainly not! We are called to take every thought captive and to place every area of our lives in subjection to the Lord, including our businesses.

So, for the Christian, to engage in business is to engage in discipleship. Consider that work was given to Adam in the garden, the cultural mandate given before the fall. The fall made our work harder but didn't take it away. How

then can the call to be disciples exist as something outside of the workweek? It doesn't. When we submit ourselves to Christ as his disciples, we take as our goal to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbor as ourselves. Now consider the proper end of business is to be of service to our neighbor, thereby loving him.

It's precisely in this that business is discipleship. In business, we have a tremendous opportunity to serve the needs of others. Further, we should be free from the thought that loving our neighbor is something only done without pay. In fact, all service to our neighbor is done for payment—some pay is eternal in the form of heavenly rewards and some is temporal in the way of profits.

The existence of a profit motive in business doesn't diminish this service at all. In fact, it enhances our service by allowing our families to eat while we serve. Furthermore, it clarifies our purpose by forcing us to focus on those ser-

vices which we provide efficiently and effectively. The Christian uses profit as a tool to be of service. When we forget profit altogether, we consume too many resources in our service, and our business fails. That slothfulness in business causes us to cease being of service to our neighbors altogether. However, on the other hand, when we put profit first in our businesses, our neighbor becomes a means to a monetary end—an object to consume for our greed.

So how is business discipleship? Because the Christian man of business must glorify God in his business, and he can only do that through faithful service to his neighbor. He must daily mortify his sins of greed or sloth, lead his business with the love for God and his neighbor in his heart and mind, and correctly use the resources at his disposal to love his neighbor. In this way, then, business serves to conform us to the image of Christ. ♦