

The Master's Message

The Newsletter of the Church of the Master

July/August, 2022

Virtual Adult Bible Study
 Wednesday, 7:00 PM
 Saturday, 12:00

2783 Lafayette Avenue
 Bronx, N.Y. 10465
 718-597-6298

Sunday Worship
 Sunday 10:00 am

cotm47@verizon.net

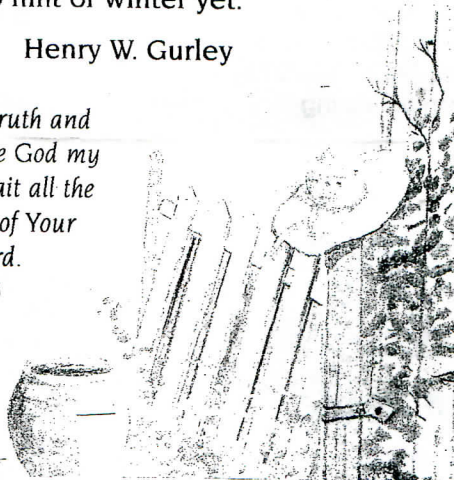
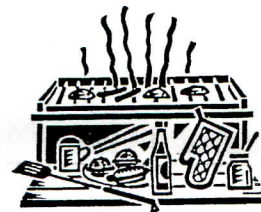
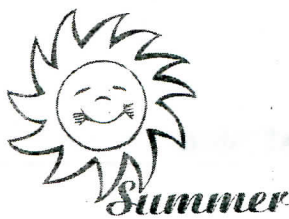
Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor

Wherefore Art Thou, Winter

I'll only dream of Winter when
 Hot Summer days grow near.
 I'll think of blowing winds and snow
 And toasty fireside cheer.
 I'll picture early mornings when
 I build a roaring fire,
 And brew a pot of coffee, yes!
 Oh, that is my desire!
 For now the days so hot and long,
 While nights are sultry, too.
 But I can dream of Winter now;
 There's little else to do.
 And so I go about my tasks,
 Bathed in my dripping sweat.
 It's just the middle of July!
 No hint of Winter yet.

Henry W. Gurley

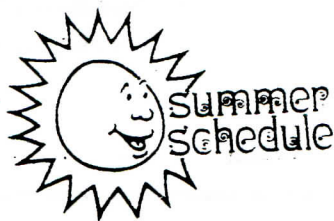
Guide me in Your truth and
 teach me, for You are God my
 Savior. For You I wait all the
 long day, because of Your
 goodness, Lord.
 Psalm 25:5



SPECIAL DATES*

- U.S. Independence Day, July 4th

News From the Pews



Beginning Sunday, July 3rd, our worship service will begin at 10:00 AM.

This schedule will continue thru Sunday, September 4th.



Continued healing for:
Don Fecher, Allen Ford, Carole Mahon,
Loretta Byrd & Alice Rivera

Everyone is invited to join our virtual "**Hour of Prayer Power**" every Wednesday at 12:00. The conference call-in number is 605-475-4860, code: 371231#

Our virtual **Bible Study** meets Wednesday at 7:00 PM and Saturday at 12:00. Contact Ron Rivera (917-716-8273) for information on joining

The oldest computer was owned by Adam and Eve.

It was an Apple with very limited memory.

Just 1 byte and everything crashed!

CHURCH CHUCKLES

One morning a fellow finds himself standing at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter explains that it's not easy to get into heaven. There are some criteria that must be met before entry is allowed. For example, was the man a churchgoer?

No? St. Peter tells him that's not good.

Was he generous, giving money to the poor or to charities?

No? St. Peter tells him this, too, is bad.

Did he do any good deeds, such as helping his neighbor? Anything? No? St. Peter is becoming concerned.

Exasperated, he says, "Look, everybody does something nice sometime. Work with me - I'm trying to help. Think!" The man thinks for a minute, then says, "Oh - I did help this old lady once. I came out of a store and saw that a dozen Hell's Angels had taken her purse and were shoving her around. I threw my bags down and got her purse back, then I called the biggest biker a coward and spat in his face."

St. Peter is impressed. "When did this happen?" he asks.

"Oh, about 15 minutes ago," the man replied.

"The first time I sang in the church choir, two hundred people changed their religion."

Fred Allen



The power of listening

"The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen," says Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen, author and integrative medicine professor. "Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention."

Twice in Mark 4, while teaching, Jesus urges, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen" (verses 9 & 23, NRSV). One way we show what Jesus means to us is by truly listening to his word - not just hearing sounds but being attentive and intentional. Likewise, one way we love and serve others is by respectfully listening to them: not assuming we know what they feel or mean or will say; not planning what to say even as they're still speaking, but listening deeply to learn about them and their experience.

We often think living our faith calls for great accomplishments or worldwide reach. But Remen says, "A loving silence often has ... power to heal and to connect." Don't underestimate something as basic and doable as listening as a way to practice Christlike love.

Dual citizenship

For Christianity and democracy to work, both need responsible citizens. Consider what happens to a republic when its citizens won't run for public office, won't vote, won't work for the common good, duck paying taxes and mistreat others. Now consider what happens when Christians won't volunteer at the church, won't give, won't practice their faith, won't love their neighbors. Both our country and our faith need sincere practitioners. Nationally, we need a citizenry committed to making the ideals of liberty the practices of life in America. Christianity needs followers of Jesus committed to making the ideals of God's kingdom the practices of daily life.

This is not an either-or situation. Christians everywhere are citizens of two countries, one on earth and one in eternity. The kingdom of God is not yet fully come, but it's already in effect. Our two citizenships can neither be fully united nor fully separated. We cannot withdraw from the world and pretend we are somehow dwelling only in the kingdom of God now; nor can we simply embrace the world and assume earthly governments fulfill God's will. Those are extremes, and they are unbiblical.

—from a sermon by Stan Purdum

- "In the cause of freedom we have to battle for the rights of people with whom we do not agree ... If we do not defend their rights, we endanger our own."

—Harry Truman

Liberty through surrender

**"I CAME,
I SAW,
I SURRENDERED."**

To non-believers, talk of finding freedom through complete dependence on Jesus must sound foolish. How can surrendering your desires, time, heart — indeed, your entire life — lead to anything but bondage?

The answer is evident in Jesus' own life and ministry, writes Michael Card in *Immanuel: Reflections on the Life of Christ*. In a twist on Julius Caesar's motto "Veni, vidi, vici" ("I came, I saw, I conquered"), "Jesus lived by the motto, 'I came, I saw, I surrendered,'" Card notes. "By living out this unorthodox pronouncement, Jesus demonstrated that what the world regards as power is really impotence. True victory is only through surrender."

During the 16th century, St. Ignatius of Loyola wrote this prayer of surrender that's still relevant today: "Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess, Thou hast given me: I surrender it all to Thee to be disposed of according to Thy will. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace; with these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more. Amen."

Grins and Snickers

I was in the six item express lane at the store quietly fuming. Completely ignoring the sign, the woman ahead of me had slipped into the check-out line pushing a cart piled high with groceries. Imagine my delight when the cashier beckoned the woman to come forward, looked into the cart and asked sweetly, "So which six items would you like to buy?" (Wouldn't it be great if that happened more often?)

Because they had no reservations at a busy restaurant, my elderly neighbor and his wife were told there would be a 45 minute wait for a table. "Young man, we're both 90 years old," the husband said. "We may not have 45 minutes." They were seated immediately.

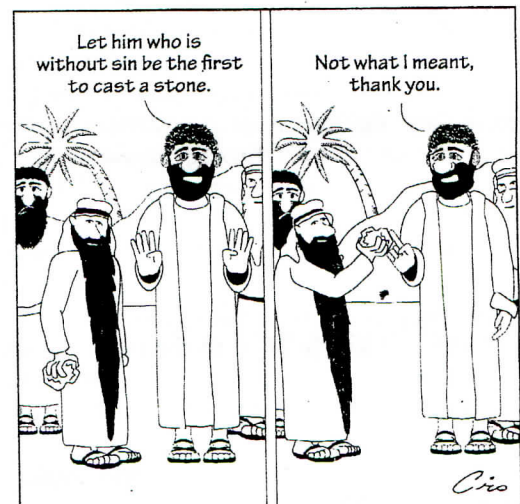
John was on his deathbed and gasped pitifully, "Give me one last request, dear," he said. "Of course, John," his wife said softly. "Six months after I die," John said, "I want you to marry Bob." "But I thought you hated Bob," she said. With his last breath, John said, "I do!"



The power of kindness

No kind action ever stops with itself. One kind action leads to another. Good example is followed. A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees. The greatest work that kindness does to others is that it makes them kind themselves.

—Amelia Earhart

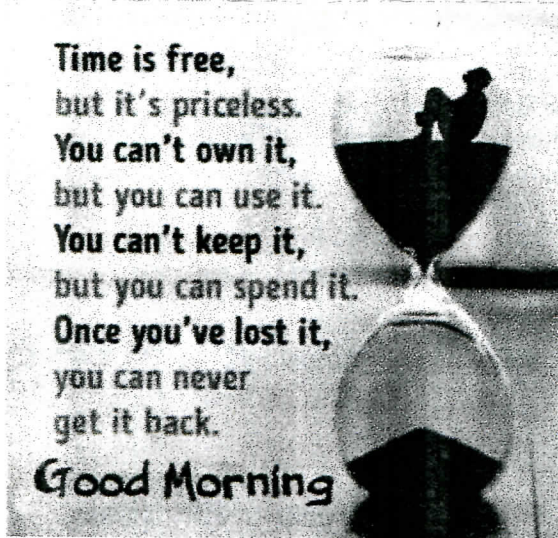


How deep is your faith?

Lyrics to the Bee Gees' 1970s hit song "How Deep Is Your Love" came to mind as I pondered the "depths" of my faith. Sometimes I prefer to stay securely in the shallow end, while other times I fearlessly launch off the diving board, ready and willing to be drenched by God's love.

If you've ever tried to coax young swimmers to jump into the deep end of a pool, you may remember their excitement (and relief) after they finally take the plunge into your arms. To experience that joy in your spiritual life, evaluate your location in your own faith "pool." Are you wading safely in the shallows or exploring the freedom of the depths? No matter where you're at, you can jump confidently into Jesus' outstretched arms. From the edge, hear his promises: "Jump in! I'll catch you! I'll keep you safe! Trust me!"

—Julie Lee



All we need to know

When a loved one dies, we have questions: What caused the death? When will the funeral be? What form will our grief take? Some deaths also bring spiritual questions: Where was God? Is our loved one with God now?

Paul shared deep thoughts about death with the believers at Corinth. His complex ideas might raise further questions, but here's the key: We don't need to understand everything right away — not all of Paul's theology, or everything about God or all the practical matters around a loved one's death. Here, from 1 Corinthians 15 (NRSV), is what we do know: "Christ has been raised from the dead" (v. 20) — death doesn't have the final say. "All will be made alive in Christ" (v. 22) — a loving promise God offers to all. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (v. 26) — in the end, Jesus will destroy all sickness, pain, sorrow, war, poverty, oppression and even death itself. We are in God's loving hands. That's all we need to know.

—Heidi Hyland Mann

Forecast: 100% goodness

While Stan Purdum pastored an Ohio church in 1988, the region suffered a major drought. Congregants who were farmers saw their fields — and livelihoods — dry up and die. "I was impressed that they didn't stop attending church and kept giving offerings," he says. "A cynic might respond, 'Well, the farmers don't want to offend God and cause him to withhold more rain.' But ... I concluded, 'Look at their remarkable faith.'"

During the drought, Purdum gave a sermon about Elijah challenging the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40). "Like Elijah, we need to hold on to our belief in God's goodness," he preached. "God will again send rain on our land. We will continue to pray for it. Perhaps it's too late for this year's crop, and we need to care for the people affected. But we do so while maintaining our faith in God's providence."

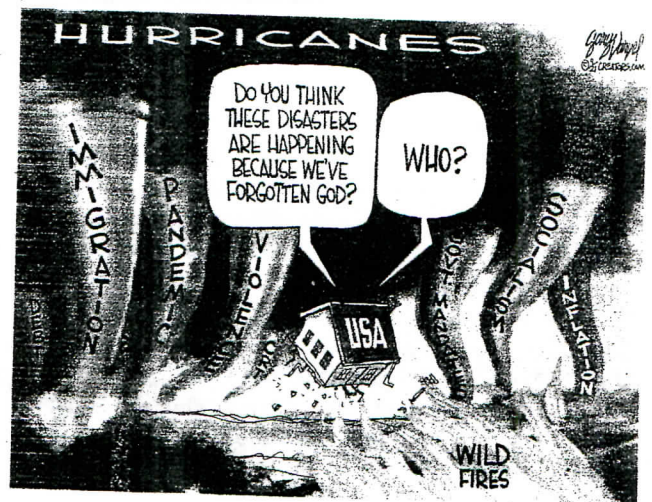
Oxygen for ministry

Flight attendants instruct airplane passengers that if oxygen masks are needed, we should secure our own before assisting someone else. Why? If we aren't getting enough oxygen ourselves, we can't help another person for long.

The Holy Spirit empowers Christians for ministry — the work of loving and caring for our neighbors and God's creation. But if we aren't Spirit-fueled on an ongoing basis, we will soon lack capacity to serve. This may manifest as burnout, cynicism, exhaustion or even lack of faith. So how to ensure we're breathing in the Spirit's energy and guidance instead of poor-quality "air"?

By taking part in corporate worship regularly, immersing ourselves in the Scriptures (devotional reading and Bible study), praying "continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NIV) and spending time with Christian friends and mentors. Opening ourselves to the Spirit in these ways allows the Breath of God to flow into us, which in turn empowers us to reach out to others in love.

—Heidi Hyland Mann





July brings long, hot summer days, fireworks, barbecues, picnics, school and family vacations. But, most of all, it brings us together to celebrate the one thing that makes us all proud to be an American, enjoying our hard fought and won freedoms. Each year, as our nation celebrates the Fourth of July or Independence Day, when the Colonies regarding themselves as thirteen newly independent sovereign states at war with and against British rule, at the Continental Congress, declared their independence with these words (Wikipedia):

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. (Declaration of Independence - July 4, 1776).

These words from the preamble of the Declaration of Independence were written over 200 years ago, but they still resonate with Americans everywhere. However, for far too many people they are aspirational at best and unfulfilled at worse given the recent rise in lack of civility, partisan rancor, discrimination, senseless violence, terrorism and intolerance that threatens our freedom and way of life.

Another great American, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, gave an address in 1941 that is known as his famous "Four Freedoms" State of the Union Speech, when America was about to enter into World War II. "Roosevelt insisted that people in all nations of the world shared Americans' entitlement to four freedoms: the *freedom of speech and expression*, the *freedom to worship God in his own way*, *freedom from want* and *freedom from fear*." (History.com/this-day-in-history).

I contend that all of these freedoms can be summarized in the greatest freedom of all! In the Gospel of John, Jesus, the Great Liberator, said "if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36). He is not concerned with whether we are first, second or third generation Americans, or whether we are recent immigrants, or the sons and daughters of immigrants, or slaves. For, God has no respect of persons and we are one in Christ Jesus.

As we prepare to celebrate our nation's Independence Day, let us remember to give thanks and praise to Jesus first and foremost for purchasing our freedom from sin by the shedding of his precious blood. Then, let us remember to thank God for all of our service men and women, and first responders who paid a dear price for our freedom—those who have given their lives fighting to protect our great nation. May God bless America the land of the free and the brave! Have a Happy and safe 4th of July!

Shalom to you,

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor
Church of the Master

Reprinted from 2021

