



## PASTOR ASHLEY'S MESSAGE

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."  
Matthew 5:38-39*

The passage above is a teaching from Jesus which has challenged us since the words were uttered thousands of years ago during the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is giving his followers a new way of living, and one of the remarkable things is that he seems to be contradicting scripture. In three different places in the Torah, the people are instructed to approach conflict resolution with the solution of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and even a life for a life (in Deuteronomy 19:21). If it seems harsh and violent in our context, that's because it is. It was harsh and violent in Jesus' time as well. The Torah was written in a very different context as the Israelites were settling in the promised land. At that time people lived mostly in rural households and the judges who helped govern were sparse, often coming to judge a situation after it had happened instead of helping to prevent it. Believe it or not, the law of an eye for an eye was actually intended as a limiting measure amongst the families and tribes. It was meant to stop the cycle of retaliation before it escalated. The wrongdoer would lose an eye instead of their life or the safety of their whole village when the victim's family sought vengeance. The intention was to *reduce* violence. So when Jesus reinterprets this law, he teaches another limiting measure that will stop the cycle of retaliation. Though it appears that Jesus is contradicting Scripture, he is showing how its intent is achieved in first century Roman occupied Palestine. When we read scripture, we must take into account both our own cultural context and the context in which the Bible was written in order to understand its meaning for us today. Thank goodness the Holy Spirit guides and strengthens us along the way!

I bring up this example of Jesus reinterpreting scripture to remind us that it is okay and even essential that we examine traditional interpretations of texts we find in the Bible. In fact, my very ordination requires it. Even though my childhood in a PC(USA) church had surrounded me with wonderful examples of female ministers, part of my journey to saying yes to this calling was wrestling with scriptures that seem to prohibit women from pastoring or even speaking in church. Most of these passages were written by Paul and other early church leaders in a context when gender roles and expectations were incredibly different. As I prayed and studied the breadth of scripture in its context, I began to see how revolutionary it was that Paul partnered with women. You can see this perhaps most clearly in the vibrant diversity of gender in Romans 16 which mentions many women, including Phoebe as the letter carrier of Romans (tasked with explaining its contents to its recipients) and Junia who is described as an apostle. At times it seems like Paul is upholding the social system of gender roles while at the same time working against it. I can't know what it was like to live in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but my conclusion after reading and praying and studying, was that Paul would be ecstatic to know a time exists when women are able to participate in all levels of leadership and service. One of my seminary professors, Dr. William Dyrness, actually said that he believed one proof that the Bible has been inspired and maintained by the Holy Spirit is that the words and witness of women have stayed so prominent in the text through so many centuries in which the voices of women were silenced.

*(continued on back page)*

## MAY BIRTHDAYS

Lee Mecum	May 30 (#80)
Janette Dones	May 14 (#101)
Ashley Love	May 15
Bill Buckley	May 19



## FOOD PANTRY

Our food pantry continues to grow. We now have between 40-50 people here every Wednesday afternoon between 2-3pm. We have been blessed with new volunteers—Tom, a neighbor, who is retired and was looking for “something to do”, folks from Service First of Northern California (Darlene, Mark, and Anthony who are veterans, and Shantel, who is married to a veteran), as well as students who are part of InterVarsity at UOP. It is so helpful to have extra hands.

We are thankful to Craig Holmes, who donated fresh chard from his church garden to the food pantry. Our patrons were very excited to receive fresh vegetables! If you have a garden or fruit trees and have more produce than you can use, please feel free to donate the extra produce to the food pantry.

**During May, if you could donate crackers and/or hand-held can openers to the food pantry, it would be much appreciated.** Although we try to always give away canned food with pop-tops, that isn't always possible and some of our guests need can openers.

Thank you for your support.

Tola Eley



## READERS-R-US

For May, Book Club will be reading *Decolonizing Wealth* by Edgar Villanueva. If you'd like to attend, please contact Janet Sepiol.



We hope you'll be able to attend a Presbytery-wide event focused on LBGTQIA+ on June 4th, from 9am-4pm, at Westminster Pres, Sacramento. Stay tuned for more information!

## ACTS BIBLE STUDY RETURNS

Our study of the Book of Acts is back! Join us on Tuesday evenings at 7:00pm, via Zoom. See Kim Roider for more information.



## ACCESS FPC WORSHIP VIDEOS

To access our worship services online, go to our website: [fpcstockton.org](http://fpcstockton.org), click on Ministries, then Worship, and click on the YouTube logo. You'll automatically be directed to FPC's YouTube channel.



## WINTER GARDEN



It's not too early to be thinking about fresh produce from your own vegetable garden. Fortunately we have some beds right here at FPC for those who enjoy growing fresh tomatoes, basil, peppers, eggplant, zucchini, and other winter veggies. They are the perfect solution for those who would enjoy having a vegetable garden but don't have enough space or sun for one at home.

Our beds are 4'x8' just east of the parking lot, by Callistro Park. You can reserve an entire bed or half. There is a drip irrigation system in place and watering takes place automatically three times a week. All you need to do is prep the soil, plant (seeds or transplants), and maintain (weed and fertilize) the plot. The bounty is yours or you can share with friends, neighbors, or your church family.

If you are interested in a plot, or have questions, call Craig Holmes at 209-601-1040.



## VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUR

Please join us for Coffee Hour via Zoom at 1:00pm on Sundays. The meeting ID number is 879 5305 9034 or you can call in using the number 669-900-9128 and put in the meeting ID number just like a conference call. This information is also emailed every week.



## SESSION UPDATE

There was no meeting in April.



We are still on schedule to welcome 1-2 families to share our church space May 8-15. **Deep thankfulness to Tola,**

**Suzi, Kelly, Helen, and Doug** for the hours and thoughtfulness spent in converting the upstairs offices and Sunday School rooms into welcoming, warm, comfortable, safe lodging.

Our goal is that every member of our congregation has a part in supporting these families. We still need volunteers:

- \* to sleep over one night (8:00pm-7:00am) or
- \* to spend time with the families. It's your chance to be "grandparents for an evening" by greeting families home at 5:00, sharing a meal and fun until the overnight support arrives.

We work in pairs. The primary requirements are flexibility and compassion.



## CHURCHES BUILT OVERNIGHT



From Diego: Nuestra eterna gratitud a Vienna Presbyterian Church (David, Joan,) First Presbyterian Church (Chela, Douglas), Rev. Esteban, quienes junto a otros



hermanos y hermanas han llegado a la otra orilla donde no hay oro ni espada. Han trabajado con nosotros la lucha por el bien en el anuncio del Reino de Dios.

**Our eternal gratitude to Vienna**

**Pres, First Pres Stockton, Rev. Esteban, who along with other brothers and sisters have reached the other shore where there is neither gold (wealth) nor sword (power, violence). They have worked with us in the struggle for good in announcing the Kingdom of God.**



Our Little Free Library is up and running and busy! We refill it 2 or 3 times each week.

If you have any children's books that you no longer need, please consider donating them to our Little Free Library. You can drop them off at the Church Office or bring them to worship and leave them in the Blue Room.

We appreciate your support.



## CONGREGATIONAL CARE

We thank God for our Easter Blessings—a beautiful sunny day between days of much needed rain. The Sanctuary was doubly used as Reality Church held their service at 9:00am followed by First Pres' 11:00am service with much singing and praising of our Risen Lord. Our Sanctuary was full of new and old friends and the fragrance of flowers as we resumed the tradition of the flowering of the cross during the service.

Another Blessing will be the May 1<sup>st</sup> restart of home communion now that the COVID restrictions have been relaxed. If you, or anyone you know, would be interested in having home communion please call the church office or Sylvia (209-931-2678).

We ask for prayers and cards for a couple of our members. Frances Mendez-McPherson is still house bound and recovering from foot problems. Mary Lou Hover has returned to Rio Las Palmas following surgery for a broken ankle after a fall. She and Don are both immobile and would appreciate a call or visit. If you know of someone in our congregation who needs help with supplies or rides (to doctor or pharmacy, etc.) or just some cheering up, please call Sylvia (209-931-2678) or Suzi in the office.

May God Bless and keep you in His love,

Sylvia Cavanaugh  
Chair, Congregational Care Committee



*[Pastor Ashley's Message continued]*

That is why I preach each week from the Bible I love even though it contains words that say I should be silent and ask my husband about it later (that's a tough one for us single folks, of course). Like with Jesus and the eye for an eye teaching, the work of reinterpretation is to move closer to both the original meaning and its application for our context. Often it means letting go of the most literal meaning of the words in order to see the deeper truth being revealed.

I write about this process of reinterpretation and contextualization because we are approaching an exciting, presbytery-wide event on June 4<sup>th</sup> that will explore the church's calling to welcome and care for the LGBTQIA+ community. Many of us have heard it said for most of our lives that different gender identities and sexual orientations cannot be blessed by God and celebrated in our churches. It's caused unmeasurable harm to people who have been excluded or forced to hide in Christian spaces. It's also fractured the hearts of many Jesus-followers who feel called to love their LGBTQIA+ friends and family but are told to leave this calling at the church door. We can end up thinking we have to protect God from our loved ones or protect our loved ones from God, which feels both silly and heartbreakingly incongruous with the fundamental truths of our faith. As we continue to discern our church's role in this conversation, I invite you to approach it with an open mind and a heart tuned to the Holy Spirit in prayer. This all-day event in partnership with the Covenant Network will have both an in-person and online option, with workshops on practical and theological topics. I invite you to take this opportunity to listen deeply to scripture and the voices of our larger presbytery community as we wrestle with these questions together. As always, I am so very grateful to walk this road of faith with you!

Blessings and Prayers,  
Pastor Ashley

The deadline for submission  
of articles for the  
June Window is  
**May 20th.**

### WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

May 1	Carol Dietrich
May 8	Bill Alessio
May 15	Sue McCormack
May 22	Janet Sepiol
May 29	Eleanor Lawrence

### Our Mission Statement:

*As God's family, through Jesus Christ, we seek*

- *to know God through prayer, worship, and Bible study*
- *to be open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*
- *to share God's love with each other, our community, and the world*