What Does It Mean to Be God’s Chosen?

What does it mean to be God’s chosen? Much has been written on this topic. But what about the ones God does not choose? The Bible is full of stories about the chosen ones of God. What happens to those not chosen? Are the ones who are not chosen rejected? I don’t think so. God’s choosing of some is not God’s rejecting of the other.

That is a difficult concept for us. If I choose Chocolate Mint ice cream, I have not chosen any of the others. I have rejected them. I live here and not someplace else. I painted my house brown and no other color. For humans choosing one thing means we reject the other choices.

But God doesn’t choose in the same way we choose. The Bible is full of stories where God makes a choice. Very often the story is careful to tell us what happened to the one not chosen. Usually it’s a short statement, after all the story isn’t about the one who wasn’t chosen. But I find it interesting that the Bible does interrupt the story to let us know what happened to the other one.

For example, the story of Cain and Abel found in Genesis 4:1-22. As you remember, Cain and Abel each make sacrifices to God. Abel’s is accepted and Cain’s is not. But notice who God talks to after the sacrifices. God comes to Cain, the one whose sacrifice is rejected. Wouldn’t you expect God to speak with the one who offered the acceptable sacrifice? But God doesn’t. God goes to Cain to warn him about the danger of sin and to encourage him (“If you do well, will you not be accepted?”) The rejection of Cain’s sacrifice is not the rejection of Cain.

Later in the story Cain kills Abel and must leave his home and the presence of God. Nevertheless, God protects Cain by placing a mark on Cain so no one will kill him. Then there are several verses that tell us what happened to Cain and his family. Cain marries, has a son and builds a city.

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His descendants become “those who live in tents and have livestock” and “all those who play the lyre and pipe.” Cain’s descendants also make bronze and iron tools. Cain is not a part of the continuing Biblical story. Seth is the one through whom the Biblical story advances, but Cain’s family line continues and apparently thrives.

There is the story of Hagar and Ishmael later in Genesis—Genesis 21. The child Isaac is the chosen one. Hagar and Ishmael are sent away into the desert. God himself hears their cry, comes to Hagar and promises, “I will make a great nation of him [Ishmael] … and God was with the boy….” Later in Genesis, chapter 25, we are told about Ishmael’s descendants and Ishmael’s death. God’s choosing of Isaac for a particular role did not mean the rejection of Ishmael.

In the Book of Jonah, Jonah is sent outside of Israel to Nineveh to proclaim God’s desire that they repent and be saved. They do and they are, much to Jonah’s disappointment. Here is a story of God’s mercy and care for those outside of the chosen Israel.

God’s choosing of Abraham is not God’s rejection of the rest of the world. God’s choosing of Abraham is God’s way of blessing the rest of the nations.

I’m sure you can think of other examples. They are there if we look for them.

In the Bible, God chooses particular people and communities for particular tasks. But if we read carefully, we find that those not chosen are still provided for. God’s choosing of some is not God’s rejection of others.

There is no particular reason to tell us about what happens to Cain and his descendants, or to Ishmael and his. Their story is not part of what will become the story of Israel. One could argue these stories interrupt the telling of the larger story. So why are they included?

It’s so easy for us to split the world into chosen and not chosen, favored and not favored, blessed and not blessed. But that’s not the Biblical story. That’s not God’s way. And that’s something we have to be reminded of again and again. I think we have these stories to remind us—God’s choosing of some is not God’s rejection of the other.

Remember the gospel of Jesus Christ is an inclusive gospel in an exclusive world.

Grace and peace,

Alan

Lenten Devotional Guide

A devotional guide will be available for the Lenten season on Sunday, February 23rd. If you are unable to pick one up, please call the church office and one will be mailed to you.
We are a Matthew 25 church!

Our congregation has accepted the PC(USA)’s invitation to follow Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 25:31–46 by becoming active disciples and making a difference in our community and the world.

As part of our Matthew 25 commitment, we pledge to embrace one or more of these three areas of focus:

Building congregational vitality by deepening and energizing our faith and growing as joyful leaders and disciples actively engaged with our community as we share the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

Dismantling structural racism by fearlessly applying our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.

Eradicating systemic poverty by acting on our beliefs and working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

To learn more and for ideas on how to get involved and do your vital part as a member of a Matthew 25 church, please visit pcusa.org/matthew25.

PC(USA) - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)
website: http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/pda/

DR000148 — General Relief and undesignated program support: supplements the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering and enables members and congregations to make general designations to use funds where they are most needed as determined by PDA.

DR999999 — International Disasters and Emergencies: supplements the OGHS offering to enable a significant, initial response to major international disasters and emergencies.

DR000015 — U.S.A. Disasters and Emergencies: supplements the OGHS offering to enable a significant, initial response to major national disasters and emergencies.
This year, Ash Wednesday will happen on **Wednesday, February 26, 2020**. Those who plan to get ashes will go to worship and receive the ash crosses on their foreheads. **Our service will be at 7:00 pm**. Ash Wednesday always occurs six and a half weeks before Easter, encompassing the 40 day period of Lent (technically 46, since Sundays are skipped). If you’re wondering when the Easter 2020 date is but don’t want to do the math, we’ll lend you a hand: the holy day is on Sunday, April 12, 2020.

**What is the significance of ashes on your forehead?**

If you’re familiar with Ash Wednesday—also known as the Day of Ashes—then you know that every year, people receive dark ash marks on their foreheads in the sign of a cross. Even if you’re not familiar with getting ashes, you’ve probably seen people walking around the grocery store or your office on Ash Wednesday displaying these black streaks. What’s the reason behind the ashes and why are they given on this day?

The ashes are meant to symbolize both death and repentance in order to begin Lent in a solemn, humble way. This is said to allow people to reflect on their sins throughout Lent before Easter, when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

Most churches use palms from the previous year’s Palm Sunday service to create the ash. When Christians receive ashes, the priest or pastor says, “You are dust and to dust you shall return. Repent and believe the gospel!”

**What is the significance of Ash Wednesday?**

Ash Wednesday is the start of the Easter season as it marks the beginning of Lent. Though the day itself is not mentioned in the Bible, ashes are often used as a symbol of sorrow for sin in the Bible. Because Lent is a time for fasting, self-sacrifice, and repentance, it makes sense to begin the 40 day period with a symbolic gesture of solemnity.

**What is the history of Ash Wednesday?**

Though the holiday isn’t in the Bible, the use of ashes as a symbolic gesture has pretty early roots, all the way back to the 11th Century, priest and assistant professor Lauren F. Winner of Duke Divinity School told *Time*. She points to the book of Daniel where ashes were first associated with penance.  

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The practice of spreading ashes on foreheads became widespread in the U.S. as recently as the 1970s. It was part of a wider trend in American religion of people wanting to connect their physical and spiritual lives, *Time* explains. The mark became an obvious association with religion that people embraced, as they could wear it throughout the day.

**February Worship Themes**

**February 2nd**  
**How in the World Do You Discern God’s Call**  
Isaiah 6:1-13  

**February 9th**  
**In God’s Sight?**  
Jeremiah 17:5-10  
Luke 6:12-26

**February 16th**  
**Destroying and Saving**  
Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
Mark 1:21-28

**February 23rd**  
**Jesus through the Eyes of God**  
Exodus 24:12-18  
Matthew 17:1-13

**February 26th**  
**Ash Wednesday Reflections**  
Transfiguration  
Psalm 51  
Isaiah 58:1–11  
Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

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*Per Capita* is an annual per member fee a congregation pays to their area Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly to support our denomination’s work in mission, evangelism, education and administration. There is a designated amount per member. *In 2020, the amount is $42.00.* There is a line item for Per Capita on the church’s offering envelope.

It would be of immense help to this congregation and our operations budget to please pay your annual membership fee as soon as possible. There are some in our congregation for whom paying per capita is difficult; if you are able to contribute per capita for those who might not be able to pay, your generosity would be greatly appreciated. Thank you to those who have already paid their per capita, and those who have also given an extra portion.

The total amount due is paid whether or not each member contributes their individual amount.
Our Prayers of Sympathy are with

**Frances Carr and family**, upon the death of her brother-in-law, Jack Carr, on November 24.  (Frances Carr, c/o David Carr, 1940 Mulsanne Drive, Zionsville, IN 46077)

**Cathie Cripe-Pepple, Susie Hooley and their families** upon the death of Betty Ann Hathaway, Cathie’s sister (Susie’s aunt), on Sunday, December 15.
  (Cathie:  1434 Hampton Circle, Goshen 46526)
  (Susie:  308 South Main Street, Apt. A, Goshen 46526)

**Sister-in-law Rita Lockerbie.** family and friends of Rosamond “Rosie” Lockerbie, who passed away on Sunday, December 22.  (300 Inlet Way, #6, Palm Beach, FL 33404)

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**Christmas Dinner Thank You:** Thank you so so much for providing this meal and a place to go on Christmas. We are retired and kids are all far away — we enjoy being able to come.

  Thank you:  A great Christmas dinner and for all those who give to the Food Pantry that helps feed our family.  The Jeffrey H. family

  To all the volunteers who helped deliver and serve the Christmas meals.  God bless your servant hearts.  Mine was delivered right to my door.  The food was delicious..  What a blessing you are to so many.  Thank you so much, C. White (almost 83 years old)

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I am planning a **walking group** on **Wednesday mornings** (rain, shine, cold, warm), **8:00 am, at the Reith Interpretive Center**. Walking for about 30 minutes. My phone number is 574-849-0195 if anyone wants to call with questions.

Karen Wellington
Mission Outreach Dinner
Free Community Spaghetti Dinner
Sunday, February 9

The next Mission Dinner is **Sunday, February 9, 6:00-7:00 pm**. Thanks for your donations to our supply of spaghetti and sauce. Monetary donations are always appreciated to help offset the cost of the garlic bread, lettuce, dressing, and other supplies. We will also need desserts the day of the meal. A big thanks to all who have helped make this monthly endeavor a growing success. We continue to see new faces at the dinners, and we are hearing and seeing the positive effect this outreach program is creating. We hope to see you and a friend on February 9.

**Thursday Small Group:** This group meets once a month, usually on the **2nd Thursday**, at 6:00 pm. Meeting sites may be homes, coffee shops, or restaurants, at the option of the group members. The next gathering is tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, February 13, 6:00 pm**. Contact is Julia Stauffer.

For all women at FPC, come join a group for a time of greeting and conversation — a time to get to know one another in a casual setting. We will meet on **Thursday, February 27, 2020, 11:30 am**, **at Angel’s House of Pancakes**. Looking forward to seeing you in January. Judi Sorg, Jackie Kramer and Donna Palacios

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**Bad Weather Cancellation Procedures**

If we need to cancel **Worship and Sunday morning activities**, we will post an announcement on the church web site at [www.discoverfirstchurch.org](http://www.discoverfirstchurch.org). Our primary news media announcement will also be on WNDU NewsCenter 16. We will attempt to post on other news outlets; however, sometimes in bad storms the media gets flooded with calls and it is very time consuming to get the information out. Please check these sources if you want to be sure.

**Worship will not be cancelled unless the roads are closed.**

**Weeknight meetings will also be cancelled on the website and WNDU.** In addition, we will **try** to call or email the known participants of ministry teams, choir, and other regular groups. If you are in doubt, please check the website, or WNDU NewsCenter 16.
February Birthdays

2/1 Marilyn Drummond
2/1 Carol Manahan
2/1 Rita Lockerbie
2/7 James Wray
2/8 Laurie Hardie
2/9 Shaun Paetsch
2/12 Ray Deahl
2/14 Christian Estrup
2/19 Joyce Millar
2/21 Gretchen Wise
2/22 Sarah Becker
2/24 Rhonda Griffin
2/25 Donna Palacios

Please keep in your prayers: Our Armed Forces and their Families; Janice Schult in Freeport, IL (Jackie Kramer’s sister); Susan Long; Jenny Paetsch; Tom Kintigh; Dave Wallace; Loretta Stephens (friend of Jean Wallace); Doris Shank; Dawna Hole; Dennis Huff; Amy Cole; Bob Schlobohm; Ernie Jenkins and son Grant (Jenny Jenkins’ son and grandson in OH); Mary Hoogenboom; Evelyn Johnson (mother of Sandy Kurtz); Martha Hepler; Tomi Griesenauer (Jenny Paetsch’s mother); Don Myers (Helen’s husband); Sarah Miller (David Pepple’s sister); Brad Gilmore (Jenny Albert’s brother); Julie McCally; Tina Cork (David Pepple’s niece)

Change of Address: Eliot and Kellie Tracz
222 GrandeVille Road SW
Rochester, MN 55902

Thanks to everyone who donated packaged food items and canned goods to the church’s Food Pantry over the past year. In 2019, your gifts fed 162 families (312 adults and 124 children). In 2018, your gifts fed 109 families (189 adults and 99 children).

Your donations are welcome at any time. At your convenience, just use the red wagon in Hardie Hall to drop off your donations.

Suggestions for Communion Sunday, February 2: Peanut butter and Saltine crackers, cereal, oatmeal, pancake mix and syrup.
**FEBRUARY 2020**

**Office Hours:**
- Monday-Thursday: 9:00 am-12:00
- Tuesday & Thursday Afternoon: 1:00-4:00 pm
- Closed Friday

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<tr>
<td>2 Communion</td>
<td>3 Pastor's Day Off</td>
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<td>9:30 am Nursery/Preschool</td>
<td>10:15 am Communion @ Greencroft</td>
<td>10:30 am Task Force</td>
<td>8:00 am Weds. Morning Walking @ Reith Center</td>
<td>6:30 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Worship Planning Team</td>
<td>6:00 pm Thursday Group</td>
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<td>10:15 am Sunday School</td>
<td>10:20 am Worship</td>
<td>Fellowship before &amp; after Worship</td>
<td>Fellowship before &amp; after Worship</td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm Free Community Spaghetti Dinner</td>
<td>7:00 pm Notable Women’s Choir (M. Yost)</td>
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<td>22 Transfiguration of the Lord</td>
<td>24 Pastor's Day Off</td>
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<td>26 Ash Wednesday</td>
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<td>10:20 am Worship</td>
<td>10:30 am Session</td>
<td>8:00 am Weds. Morning Walking @ Reith Center</td>
<td>11:30 am FPC Ladies at Angel’s House of Pancakes</td>
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<td>8:00 am Weds. Morning Walking @ Reith Center</td>
<td>7:00 pm Ash Wednesday Service; Choir to follow</td>
<td>7:30 pm Worship Planning Team</td>
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*Note: The schedule includes various community events and church activities.*
First Word

A publication of
First Presbyterian Church
215 East Lincoln Avenue, Goshen, IN 46528-3347

SUNDAY WORSHIP
Nursery/Preschool; 9:30 am
Sunday School 10:15 am
Discover First Worship; 10:20 am
Fellowship before and after Discover First Worship
Pitch-In Fellowship Lunch (after Worship); 5th Sundays
Free Community Spaghetti Dinner (1st Sunday
after 1st Fridays): 6:00-7:00 pm

TUESDAY
Foundation (2nd); 6:00 pm
Session (3rd); 10:30 am
WEDNESDAY
Chancel Choir; 6:30 pm
Worship Planning Team; 7:30 pm
THURSDAY
Thursday Small Group (2nd) 6:00 pm
FPC Ladies of the Church (4th); 11:30 am

Church Website:  www.discoverfirstchurch.org
www.facebook.com/discoverfirst
Pastor: agriffin46528@comcast.net
Secretary: jhickman46528@comcast.net
Treasurer: wkramer46528@comcast.net
Phone: (574) 533-7845; fax (574) 533-4864

Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday: 9:00 am-12:00 noon
Monday & Wednesday afternoon: By appointment
Tuesday & Thursday afternoon: 1:00-4:00 pm
Closed Friday

Church Staff:
Pastor: Alan Griffin
Secretary: Jeannie Hickman
Director of Music: Marcia Yost
Organist: Marilyn Mason
Organist Emeritus: Dennis Huff
Treasurer: Wayne Kramer
Usher Emeritus: Miriam Wellington
Custodian: Betty Barber