



THE MESSENGER

AUGUST 2014



“Wilderness of Words”

I like words. I do; I love words. I’m fascinated by the whole concept of language. When I was young, I seriously thought about a career in science. I was, and still am, fascinated by mathematics—which is its own kind of language. Still, as I got older, I discovered a love of the humanities, the liberal arts. Language is central to the liberal arts, be it history, literature, philosophy, or a number of other fields, including my college major, political science. (That term “political science” is strange to me. I’ve tended to think of it as more an art than a science!)

Unfortunately, no matter how much one may like words, they can prove to be slippery little devils. Words aren’t always the best way to communicate. That’s true, even when we’re careful with the words we use.

In a meditation on “choosing words wisely,” Henri Nouwen underlines the necessity of thinking before we speak. “When we are boiling with anger and eager to throw bitter words at our opponents,” he says, “it is better to remain silent. Words spoken in rage will make reconciliation very hard. Choosing life and not death, blessings and not curses, often starts by choosing to remain silent or choosing carefully the words that open the way to healing.”

But even when we choose our words carefully, there’s no guarantee that the recipient of those words will understand or receive them in the way we intend. There’s plenty of puzzling over what is, in fact, being communicated.

In 1 Timothy 1:1-11, Paul is guiding “his true-born son in the faith” on the pros and cons of using words. He warns him of “certain people” who are “teaching erroneous doctrines and devoting themselves to interminable myths and genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation, and do not further God’s plan for us, which works through faith” (vv. 3-4). You may find this impossible to believe, but there really are people who enjoy using words, not for the sake of clarity or faith, but rather, they’re motivated by listening to the sound of their own voices—or seeing their own words in print or on the internet.

The instruction of the apostle to his younger colleague—which includes correcting those who are disrupting the well-being of the community—“has love as its goal, the love which springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a genuine faith” (v. 5). If this is absent, everything else is useless. We can have true words, but without that love, they become false.

Paul alerts Timothy to those who go off course. It’s easier to notice when someone is spouting

complete nonsense. What's more difficult is when the teaching—or ordinary conversation—is apparently in line with the truth. In verse 6, Timothy gets this caution from his teacher: “Through lack of these some people have gone astray into a wilderness of words.” That's how it reads in the Revised English Bible. I must confess; I believe I have spent some time in that wilderness. There have been times when I was talking about stuff I really didn't understand.

The Greek word *mataiologia* literally means “vain” or “empty talk.” The neglect of love leads to empty talk. When we're more concerned with winning a debate than seeking the truth, we wind up in that wilderness. Paul warns against those who “do not understand either the words they use or the subjects about which they are so dogmatic” (v. 7). Here's how the Good News Bible puts it: those who “do not understand their own words or the matters about which they speak with so much confidence.” Unfortunately, we have no shortage of that.

When love is absent, our actions are worse than useless; they're positively harmful. Jesus is not served through hateful words and deeds. He weeps when we indulge in that spiteful foolishness. And it's especially bad when we do that stuff in his name—when we claim that our Christian faith leads us to do horrible things.

When we yield to the powers of death and hate within us, we have no gospel. We have no good news, for ourselves or for others. We only have bad news. We demonstrate how poorly we know and love Jesus.

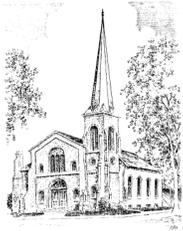
Fortunately for us, Jesus knows all about wilderness—even a wilderness of words. In the wilderness, he is tempted by the devil. And in what form do these temptations come? Don't they come in the form of words that sound true? One of the temptations is even backed up with scripture.

Jesus shows us a world without fear, anxiety, or rejected emotions. He shows us a world where his words bring about the reality of his truth as the living Word. Jesus speaks into the wilderness without his words being a weapon manipulating the reality of love. When we sense that we're lost in the wilderness—even a wilderness of our own choice—we do indeed spend our energy on controlling, oppressing, hurting...without patience, forgiveness, mercy, but only passing judgment.

As I just noted, yielding to the powers of death and hate within leave us with no gospel: no good news, for ourselves or others. We only have bad news. We keep Jesus at arm's length.

But Jesus is the one who leads us to safety. Our job is to fight the appalling appeal of hardening our hearts. Remember that our words alone do not convey truth. For that, we must submit to the living Word who is Jesus the Christ. May he shine in and through our words.

Grace and peace,
Pastor James



CORNERS AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MISSION TEAM

5¢ a Meal

As a reminder, we as a congregation continue to participate in the 5¢ A Meal Program. All monies donated support the Corning Community Food Pantry. The need continues to be great - - - hunger doesn't take a summer vacation.

Any support you can provide is greatly appreciated by the many clients served by the local pantry.



* * * * *



First Family Fall Carnival

The Mission Team is planning the First Family Fall Carnival for September 14th from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Please come and join the brainstorming and planning! Many hands make light work -- we are hoping to make this year's carnival an amazing family day and outreach event! All ages and abilities welcome ... Please come join the fun!! If you have any questions or wish to help, please contact Bonita Coates at 742-1737 or 936-4026.

NEW ADDRESS

Irene Pattison
4560 Nine Mile Point Rd. Apt. 264
Fairport, NY 14450

Barbara Rupert
159 W. First St.
Corning, NY 14830

MAJOR GIFTS & ENDOWMENTS

Monthly Fund Highlight

The Major Gifts & Endowments Committee has highlighted one of our church's funds each month, and last month we highlighted The Landscape Fund. This month, we will highlight the Weekday Preschool Scholarship and Support Fund.

The fund was established in 1991 with money received from members of our congregation and friends of the church. The first priority is for funds to be used for deserving children to attend the school. Funds are also used for special projects, and other school needs. The school offers a program for 3-year olds and 4-year olds and includes non-denominational, faith-based teaching.

PRAYER CORNER



Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! - 1 John 3:1

The simplest truths are sometimes the best. When asked to summarize in one sentence his whole life's work in theology, Karl Barth responded: "Jesus loves me!" Some say he added, "This I know, for the Bible tells me so."

God's love for us is evident. He gave His Son to rescue us from ourselves. Christ died on the cross, taking our burden of sin. Then He rose again, giving us new life in Him. Amazing love! As John tells us: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"

Jesus' love for us isn't a Band-Aid or a cure-all for all of life's problems, of course. But it is the one truth we can always depend on to give purpose to life and peace with God.

I am so glad that our Father in heaven tells of His love in the Book He has given; wonderful things in the Bible I see - this is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Our Daily Bread

THE DISCIPLES WINDOW

The “Disciples Window” in the arch of the east wall of the sanctuary behind the pulpit was given in memory of Laura Tina James by the family of Edwin P. James. The window was conceived, designed, and made by stained glass window artist, Lyman O. Gibbs, of Elmira. The window was dedicated on November 17, 1963.

The original frame in which the window is placed was a natural setting for the window as there were twelve sections in it, which lent itself for one section for each of the disciples. In the center of the window are the Greek letters “IHS” which spell the name of Jesus. In each section there is a symbol which represents one of the twelve disciples.

As you look at the window, think of it as a clock, and following the sections, clockwise, the symbols are:

1. *The Square and Lance* - symbolic of the disciple, Thomas. The “twin” or the “doubting,” also called Didymus, Thomas went to India as a missionary where he built a church with his own hands. As a result, the carpenter’s square is very often used as his symbol, some times alone and sometimes with the spear (lance), with which he met his death at the hands of a pagan priest. He is known as the Patron Saint of Builders.
2. *The Bible and Ax* - symbolic of the disciple, Matthias. Matthias replaced Judas Iscariot and was chosen by lot from 120 in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost. He was one of Jesus’ original disciples and had been with him since his baptism by John (Acts 1:15-26). He is not mentioned again in the New Testament, but his symbol is the ax with which he was beheaded for witnessing.
3. *The Cross Shaped Like an X* - symbolic of Andrew, brother of Peter. Andrew preached in Russia and Greece, and according to legend, died in Greece on this Saltire cross, counting himself unworthy of dying on the same kind of cross as his master.
4. *The Three Purses* - symbolic of Matthew. Matthew was a tax gatherer when called to follow Jesus and was crucified in Ethiopia on a Tau Cross, which is sometimes used as his symbol. However, the three purses are more commonly used.
5. *The Three Knives* - symbolic of Bartholomew, also known as Nathaniel. The flaying knives, always in a vertical position, because he was seized by the governor of Albanonee, Armenia, and was flayed alive, crucified, and beheaded.
6. *The Saw* - symbolic of James the Less, brother of Jude, and son of Alpheus. James worked in and around Jerusalem and was the author of the Epistle of James. At the age of 96, he was pushed off the pinnacle of the temple, stoned to death, and his body was sawed into pieces.
7. *The Ship* - symbolic of Jude who was also known as Thaddeus or Lebbaeus, brother of James the Less, and son of Alpheus. Jude traveled with Simon on missionary journeys, and some say they were martyred together. The only reference to him in the gospels is in John 14:22. He is known as the Patron Saint of those suffering desparate diseases.

8. *The Cross and Two Loaves of Bread* - symbolic of Philip and meaning “lover of horses” in Greek. Loaves of bread are used because of his remark in John 6:7 at the feeding of the multitude. “Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for everyone of them to have a little.”
9. *The Serpent in the Cup* - symbolic of John, brother of James the Greater, son of Zebedee and Salome, and cousin of Jesus. An attempt was made to slay John by giving him a poisoned chalice, but Jesus (and John’s faith) saved him. Various attempts were made on his life, but he is the only one of the twelve to die a natural death. John was in the Garden with James the Greater, and Peter on the night of the betrayal.
10. *The Three Shells or Scallops* - symbolic of James the Greater, brother of John, son of Zebedee and Salome, and cousin of Jesus. John and James are called “Sons of Thunder.” The shell is symbolic of pilgrimage and missionary journeying. James was beheaded at the orders of King Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D. and was the only apostle whose death is recorded in the scriptures (Acts 12:2). James was in the Garden with Peter and John and he was the first of the twelve to be martyred by the sword: beheaded.
11. *The Fish and Book* - symbolic of Simon the Zealot. The fish signifies he was a fisher of men, and the book signifies the Gospel. Simon had belonged to a political faction - the Zealots who were dedicated to the overthrow of the Roman government. Nothing is known for certain of Simon’s career after the beginning of the church, recorded in Acts 1:13.
12. *Two Keys* - symbolic of the disciple Peter. Peter was brother of Andrew, son of Jona, to whom Christ said: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” The crowing cock is sometimes used, signifying his doubt in faith; but more often used for his symbol are the keys and cross, signifying his confession and martyrdom. Peter was crucified head downward, counting himself unworthy to die on a cross in the same manner as his master. Peter, James, and John were the disciples that were with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.



MONTH OF AUGUST

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO

- 1 * Lien Landin
- * Katy Sharman
- 3 * Jenna Morrissey
- 5 Grace Sheldon
- 7 Royal Denson
- 8 Anneliese Shaver
- 9 Lisa Sebelle
- 10 Amy Smaldone
- 14 Michele Johnson
- 15 * Victoria McLaughlin
- 19 Stephen Hevey
- 23 Keith McEwen
- * Victoria Holmes
- 24 Barbara Sammis
- * Bella Beres
- 27 Phil Bradney
- 28 Chris Wightman
- * Kevin Lapham
- 29 Al Johnson II
- 31 Michael McLaren

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO

- 1 Milton & Margret Lapp
- 6 Stephen & Charlene Hevey
- 9 Jeffrey & Deborah Rice
- 10 Phil & Patricia Bradney
- 13 Ken & Mary Baer
- 16 Marty & Bonita Coates
- 17 Jim & Kim Ecker
- 24 Royal & Marge Denson
- 29 Scott & Susan Sheldon
- 30 Stu & Barb Sammis
- Scott & Danielle Beres



Members, *children under 18, and non-member participants for whom we have birthday and anniversary information.

If we miss your special day, please call the church office so we can get you included on our calendar.

THE MESSENGER

First Presbyterian Church
1 East First Street
Corning, New York 14830

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Jesus Is
Our
Focus
In All
We Do

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1 EAST FIRST STREET
CORNING, NEW YORK 14830

Reverends James & Banu Moore, Interim Pastors
Home Phone: 607-654-7875
Pastor Banu's Cell Phone: 607-664-7876
Pastor James' Cell Phone: 607-542-6889

Interim Pastors' Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday 9:00 a.m. - noon

Church Phone: 607-937-5419
Church Fax: 607-937-9731

Summer Church Hours: Monday - Friday
9:00 a.m. - noon

Church Email: office@corningpresby.org
Visit us on the web: www.corningpresby.org

Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
Fellowship Time: 11:30 a.m.



The Messenger is published monthly.

DEADLINE for September Messenger articles is **August 15th**. Articles may either be emailed to the church or left in the church office. Any information received after the 15th will appear in the October issue.