



PCC Scroll

Spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and equipping the People of God through the written word.

Guest Columnist—Getting back to the basics

Rev. Lina Thompson, Senior Pastor of Lake Burien Presbyterian Church

I think we can all agree that we are living in very precarious and unprecedented times: global pandemic, global protests, global climate change and so much more. We have all felt the burden and impact of what is happening in our world today. Each of us, whether very intentionally in times of prayer and devotion or even in the “informal” ways that we connect with God during the day, has uttered a “Lord, please have mercy,” in our conversations with God.

I am grateful to know a God that can hear my prayers when I am at my bedside or when I am at home with a cup of morning coffee or when I am driving in my car. Here’s what I know: getting back to the basics has meant being reminded **and** living out the truth of my relationship with God: God is with me. God is with **us**.

His very name, **Emmanuel**, means God is with us. His name is a promise given to us the day that Jesus was born as we learn in the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. It was a promise reiterated in the last chapter of

Matthew when Jesus says that He would be with us until the very end of the age. Getting back to the basics for me is holding steadfastly to this promise. I claim and proclaim **God’s** name daily over my life. Getting back to the basics has helped me to remember that my faith and God’s promise to be with me has a context. My faith is embodied in a place, in a community, in a family and in my friendships. My faith is not a distant experience but one that is **in me**. Christ in **me**. I am so thankful, Lord, for your promise.

Luke 4 has become one of the **basics** for me as I consider Jesus’ own words, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*”

Getting back to the basics includes remembering what Jesus was about – moving all people

toward freedom, liberation, restoration and healing by the power of the Holy Spirit.



While we pray and worship and as the Spirit fills us and renews us, I am reminded that this faith journey is meant to be lived with others. We are created by God to be meaningfully connected to others. Our collective hope is in God and God alone.

While we have no idea when some of the things we are experiencing these days will end, or just how much our lives will have changed by then, my hope is in this: God will not leave us. The Holy Spirit is actively calling us into deeper relationship not only to Himself, but also to one another and particularly with those who have been labeled as “other” or “outcast.” As I read the scripture, it is hard to miss that getting back to the basics is always getting back to this: Love God, Love others.

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Editor's Corner—Getting back to basics: Loving God

Sister LaTonja Brown

Inside this issue:

Editor's Corner	2
Word of the Quarter	3
Women of the Bible	4
Men of the Bible	5
Your Money Matters	6
Fit for the Kingdom	7
Creative Expression	8
Happenings and Events	8

2020 has been quite the year. Last issue, I noted some of the events that transpired during the first half of the year. I won't repeat the list or add to it, but so much has happened in a short timespan globally, nationally, locally and personally that has impacted us. When "life" happens, I often ask myself the same question: 'What is the end game?'

One of the things that I have found so odd about this year is the constant chaos. The other thing that I have found as equally puzzling is the reaction of "Christians." To be clear, I can't validate or invalidate anyone's Christianity, but I do know what traits we should all be striving for and following as believers of Christ based on what the Bible says. I can also admonish those of us who claim Christ to check our love meter and reactions to the mayhem, especially if we are reacting or acting out of hate, anger or fear.

When Paul (then Saul) had an encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, he experienced a change. This transformation had a profound impact on his life. When before he would persecute Christians, afterward he was one of the most vocal proponents of the Christian church. We see the impact of his ministry throughout the New Testament. But, most importantly, Paul's interaction with Jesus had an impact on his life. Before his name change, he was a zealot who persecuted Christians. Afterward, he wrote epistle after epistle to help build up the early church. I mention Paul and his story because of his amazing change. Instead of hate and contempt, he showed love and compassion. When I see people, who claim Christianity, continuously sowing and inflaming hate, anger and fear, I wonder who they met on their figurative road to Damascus.

In the end, it is the love that we have toward each other that shows that we are His.

The Bible tells us what love is and what love isn't in 1 Corinthians.

According to 1 John 4:7, loves comes from God. If you know God, you should know how to love. 1 John 4:18 tells us that there is no fear in love because love drives it out. So, as Christians, we don't have to make choices out of fear or react to it.



The Bible tells us what love is and what love isn't in 1 Corinthians. Love is kind, so I have compassion toward my fellow man even if I don't agree with them. Love is selfless, so I share my abundance and care about the welfare of other people and help those who are marginalized in society. Love is calm, so I don't need to respond or add to the chaos of the world and every event in a way that harms others. Love is righteous and honest, so I don't tell lies or spin the truth to fit my personal narrative.

While working on this article, this prayer, which is often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, surfaced in my memory. With so much fear, anger, hatred and chaos manifesting and being sown, it has never resonated more.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.



Word of the Quarter—Getting back to basics: Loving God

PCC Scroll Editing Team

In the last issue of the *PCC Scroll*, we finished the overarching theme of “Anchored.” In this edition, we begin a new overarching theme: “Return to love: A review of the basics – Love God, yourself and your neighbor.” In this issue, we come from the topic of “Getting back to basics: Love God.”

In Matthew 22:36, Jesus is asked, which is the greatest commandment of the law. He answers in verses 37-40, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*”

What does loving God look like? In our humanity, we sometimes equate love with feelings and emotions, but our love and devotion toward God stem from neither. Our human misunderstanding of love is illustrated in the Bible. Jesus asked Peter three times if he (Peter) loved Him (Jesus). Each time, Peter answered, “Yes,” with growing frustration over the question being asked repeatedly. Jesus kept asking because He knew that Peter did not fully understand the question or the action the answer demanded and would require. Love is shown in action and the love Jesus asked about required it. Jesus was looking for less than what

Peter said and more about what Peter did (or would do).

1 John 4:19 says, “*We love him, because he first loved us.*” The Bible tells us that God so loved us that He gave. It may be hard for us to understand and accept the breadth of God’s love for us due to our human limitations. We may not have experienced what healthy love looks like and so have a distorted view on love. We may have experienced rejection so think we are unlovable. We may have experienced infatuation and then been hurt when someone walked away and then built up barriers in defense. God’s love is beyond what we have seen or experienced in our human relationships.

Jesus came to model what healthy love looks like toward God and others. How did Jesus love God and people, and how do we emulate that? Jesus showed His love toward God in different ways. Jesus showed love toward what God had created and showed love to those who were marginalized and oppressed. He met the needs of the people first and then offered the Gospel. He prioritized going away and spending intimate time with God. He went through the wilderness and resisted temptation. His

We invite you to research the word love and get to the real meanings of the word.

love and devotion caused Him to be obedient to the Cross and seek God in the darkest of places.

Our love for God can manifest in different ways: our obedience to His commandments, our service to

our church and community, giving (finances, resources and time) to our church and community, spending time with Him in prayer (communication is important in all relationships), getting to know Him through studying scripture, loving our neighbors (more about this in future issues but remember the story of the Good Samaritan), by telling others about Him and through our worship.

We are word heavy and misuse them and use them loosely. We use the word *love* a lot: I love cookies. I love your dress. I love my job. We use it so much that we have watered the word and its meaning down. We invite you to research the word *love* and get to the real meanings of the word. The love that Christ asked Peter about should be exhibited through actions, not words. In the next issues, we will talk about loving ourselves and our neighbors, but we can’t love ourselves or neighbors if we have not experienced loving God.

Recommended Reading:

- Matthew 27 and 28
- 1 and 2 Samuel

Women of the Bible—Mary Magdalene

Sister La'Shandra Perkins

Name: Mary Magdalene

Meaning: Mary Magdalene's name's meaning is identified with her birthplace of Magdala, which in Hebrew means tower.

Her Character: Mary was a very caring and selfless person.

Her Sorrow: She was possessed by seven demons.

Her Triumph: After being freed, Mary went on to be a follower of Christ. She was the first person Christ revealed Himself to following His resurrection.

Key Scriptures: Matthew 27 and 28, Mark 15 and 16, Luke 23 and 24, John 19 and 20, Luke 8:2

Mary Magdalene is referenced twelve times in the gospels, making her referenced more than most of the twelve apostles. She was not considered a disciple, but she was a follower of Christ. Not much was known about her besides her having seven demons that were driven out of her by Jesus. By doing so, He redeemed her life, which gave her the opportunity and drive to want to realign herself with Jesus' ministry. She followed Him to the point of His death and resurrection, proving her gratitude to the healing of her life. Mary was present when Jesus was crucified. She was the first one that Jesus revealed Himself to when He rose from the dead. At that time, she was going back to the tomb to take care of His body. She was the first to know that the stone had been removed and the tomb was empty. Jesus trusted her with the news of His rising, so that she could share it with the disciples. God knew

that she would share it genuinely and with love and truthfulness.

When I think about getting back to basics and God's love, Mary of Magdala is a perfect example of that. She walked with Jesus and served not just Him but His disciples. It is noted that she was wealthy, so Jesus and His disciples never wanted for anything. She and the other women that followed Jesus took care of the needs of Jesus and the disciples so that they could focus on the ministry. As I've researched, historians have stated that Mary Magdalene was the same Mary in Luke 7:37-39 with the alabaster flask. How much more love for God can a single person have than to wash His feet with her tears and dry them with her hair? She also anointed Jesus with a very expensive oil. This tells me that she loved Jesus with all her heart and that she was selfless. Mary had childlike faith, the type of faith that can see God in everything. It helped her serve not just Jesus but His ministry better. Mary Magdalene set the atmosphere on loving Jesus. She was there to support His mother and brother during His crucifixion. She was there when His body was taken off the cross and assisted with preparing His body for burial.

How much more love for God can a single person have than to wash His feet with her tears and dry them with her hair?

Mary of Magdala's story in the Bible is unique and a perfect example of God's plan

for each and every one of us. Her dedication of her life to Jesus not only showed her love for Him, but it also showed us God's love for her from the beginning. He saved her from the seven demons (seven being the number of completion) that abided and wreaked havoc on her soul, body and fate. This was an important event because of how it shaped Jesus' ministry. Even though her fate seemed sealed with the seven demons, God saw fit to use her as a vessel to show His love, grace and mercy. Mary Magdalene showed something powerful but very basic that seems to be overlooked all the time when her story is read: allegiance. Her allegiance to God was overwhelming and overpowering to anything that stood in her way. She put Jesus first and foremost in all she did. Mary Magdalene is the perfect story to show that sometimes you just need to go back to the basics: Love God.



*Donatello's
Penitent
Magdalene
Florence, Italy
Photo by
LaTonja Brown*

Men of the Bible—David

Sister LaTonja Brown

Name: David

Meaning: Beloved

His Character: David was a man of great faith who had a strong love for God. He was not perfect, but he was quick to repent and ask for forgiveness for his sins.

His Sorrow: David committed adultery and the child born to that act died in infancy. He was unable to build the temple.

His Triumph: David is known as one of the greatest kings of Israel and the nation reached prominence under his leadership. He is listed in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11 and a man described as a man after God's own heart.

Key Scriptures: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Hebrews 11:32

When writing from the theme of loving God, David is a great example of someone who loved God with his whole heart.

David was the son of Jesse and the great grandson of Ruth and Boaz. He was the youngest of eight sons and was trained to be a shepherd. The traits and skills he learned from being a shepherd served him well when he became king. His time as a shepherd also strengthened his faith because of the memories of having been protected from a lion and a bear.

When David was young, the prophet Samuel visited Bethlehem with the pretense of making a sacrifice. His father and older brothers were invited to the sacrifice, and Samuel asked Jesse to send for his youngest son.

Perhaps this is why so many find David's story so compelling.

When David arrived, he was anointed with oil, infused with God's Spirit and marked as Israel's next king.

Eventually, Saul, the first king of Israel, was denounced by Samuel. This caused Saul to become depressed. Since David was a talented musician, he was summoned to the palace and was able to lift Saul's spirit. David then became Saul's armorbearer. David proved himself through his battle with Goliath and became Israel's champion. As David grew in popularity and fame, Saul looked at David with suspicion and jealousy. Saul's jealousy caused him to try to kill David, and he sent David into dangerous military situations with the hope that David would be killed.

David ultimately had to flee for his life and was on the run from Saul's attacks. Saul was eventually killed in battle, and David was made king. His first few years as king were times of civil war, but his reign proved effective in the end. During King David's rule, the ark of the covenant was installed in Jerusalem and there were military and political victories.

David's life was complex. My Bible's profile on him calls him many things: shepherd, poet, giant killer, soldier, king and ancestor of Jesus. He was a man and king with attributes we should strive to follow. However, the profile also calls out the fact that he was a be-

trayer, liar, adulterer and murderer. These are labels we shy away from. Along with his successes and victories, David's weaknesses and failures were there for the world to see. Yet he is the man described as a man after God's own heart.

David spent his life believing in a God who forgives. He was a man who sinned, but he was a man who was quick to confess his trespasses against God. And when he repented, it was genuine. When he sinned, there were consequences, and he seemed to learn from them. From David, we see the importance of admitting our faults and moving on from them.

David, the shepherd boy who became the second king of Israel, is the perfect example of the duality of our natures. We can love God with our whole heart and perform acts of courage, bravery and strength, yet still totally miss the mark in other areas of our life. We all have many strengths and accomplishments that are offset by weaknesses and failures/mistakes. Perhaps this is why so many find David's story so compelling. We know that we can be forgiven for the gravest of sins, and, through our faith in God's goodness, endure the consequences.

*Michelangelo's
David
Florence, Italy
Photo by
LaTonja Brown*



Your Money Matters—Tithes and offering

Sister LaTonja Brown

When I attended Grace Apostolic Temple during the latter half of my college years, the choir would sing a song while everyone brought their tithes and offering to the offering table. The song had the following lyrics, "If you want to be blessed, pay your tithes and offering. If you want more, give to the poor, and the Lord will give it back to you. He said he'd open up the windows of heaven, pour you out a blessing."

Before the congregation would march around to give, the ministers of finance would speak. Our pastor's dad would always challenge us to give. He would say, "You can't beat God giving." It always felt like his personal testimony, and it was something I took to heart right away. 20+ years later, based on my personal journey, it is something that I have found to be true in life. I have experienced it repeatedly, and it has manifested in areas beyond money.

When I first started going to the church consistently, I wasn't really sure what the difference was between tithes and offering. I just knew that there was an offering goal each week, and we would sometimes not meet it. I found that puzzling since I would see what people were giving toward tithes and think, "We've more than reached that." But then I learned that there was a distinction.

A scripture about tithes that is often quoted is found in Malachi 3:10. It says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." There are other scriptures like Leviticus 27:30, which talks about giving a tenth of what you produce from the land, and Proverbs 3:9, which talks about giving your first fruits.

So, what is a tithe? It is 10% of your income that you give to the church. In Hebrew, *tithes* means tenth. The tradition of tithing is practiced in many churches and some religions as part of the faith and as an act of obedience. While there are different ways to give to the church, time and talent, tithes refer strictly to monetary giving.

While tithes are specific (10% of income), offering is anything you want to give beyond that. Both are ways to show that you trust God to cover your needs. Besides paying a salary to the pastor and other staff, paying for church maintenance and monthly expenses (mortgage, utilities, supplies, etc.), it also goes to help people in

need in the church and community. With the COVID-19 pandemic impact, the importance of people being able to come to the church for financial help for things like bills and food is amplified.

In the end, nothing belongs to us, and we need to steward what we have been given well. In order to be disciplined about your financial

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stewardship, I would recommend you make sure it is a part of

your monthly budget. With that said, know that giving to the church isn't something we do to check off a box on a list. It's something that we do because we have been so blessed. It's not something we do grudgingly or out of rote behavior. We don't give to receive, and we should not do it with that attitude that we expect something in return.

I invite you to practice the art of giving. Like me, you will learn that you really can't beat God giving. His blessings are more than just money and earthly blessings. His blessings includes eternal life.

Photo by LaTonja Brown

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Acts 20:35 "...the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

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Fit for the Kingdom—Seeing your body as a temple of God

Minister Titus Robinson

I was diagnosed with high blood pressure some years ago. I reached a point in my life where I got tired of forgetting to take my (three) pills.

In this article, I want to focus on the scriptures that admonish us to take care of our bodies. By the end of the article, my hope is that you will truly see your body as a temple of God.

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth,” 3 John 1:2.

I’ve heard this scripture a whole lot, but I have never heard anybody focus or teach on the health part of it. I have not heard anyone say straight out that I should, “See my body as a temple of God.” Treating our bodies as temples requires action. This would be done by exercising, eating healthy, resting sufficiently and other healthy habits. You’d be able to enjoy the prosperity part, as the scripture suggests, because you would be in optimal health.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” Philippians 2:5.

Jesus’ mind was on His Father’s business. It is important that we have a healthy and focused mind. This could be done by being strong in meditation (prayer),

It is critical that we grab a hold of and put the scriptures in place over our lives, so we see our bodies as temples of God.

dedication (fasting) and extreme love to God (worship).

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own,” 1 Corinthians 6:19.

The wording in 1 Corinthians 6:19 indicates that the Corinthians showed shock or surprise that their bodies were temples of the Holy Ghost. Or perhaps something in their behaviors and actions and treatment of their bodies indicated that they were conducting themselves in a manner that suggested they did not know. We may not exhibit behaviors like smoking cigarettes, getting drunk or taking drugs, but are we over-eating, not getting enough rest or doing other things that do not benefit our bodies. The scriptures also suggests that our bodies do not even belong to us.

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done,” Luke 22:42.

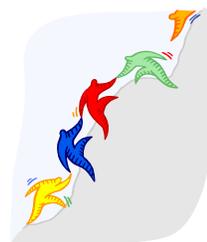
As He prayed, Jesus was praying as a man in the garden of Gethsemane. In my flesh (if I were to be perfectly honest) if it were my will and not God’s, I would eat every chocolate candy, ice cream, cake or donut that presented itself to me. I would eat every burger, steak and ribs I could, and I would even eat all of the 20-piece hot wings from KFC! However, if I consumed what I

wanted, my choices would not be the healthiest. This would lead me to gain back the weight I have lost and cause my blood pressure to go back to where it was before I started my health journey. Can I have ice cream? Can I have a steak? Absolutely, but everything needs to be done in moderation. If I have steak for lunch, I need to be mindful to make better choices for the remainder of that day if not week.

In closing, let us be mindful about seeing our bodies as temples of God. It is critical that we grab a hold of and put the scriptures in place over our lives, so we see our bodies as temples of God. This knowledge will help us make better decisions on how we treat ourselves. This can range from eating healthier, exercising more, getting enough sleep and drinking enough water. We must care for our temples!



**Empowered by God
to Empower Others**



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Creative Expression

Sister Ursula Lovely

I am here

I created this world.
Every man, woman, boy and girl.
I was here when you were born.
I've been here all along.
Just reach out to Me.
Just remember Me.
I am here; I am here.
In misery and strife,
as long as you have life,
I am here; I am here.
Just continue to reach out.
Don't live in fear and doubt.
I am here; I am here.
I have given you a path.
If you follow it through,
I'll be there for you.
I am here; I am here.
In this life full of doubt,
here is My path to higher ground.
Just reach out to Me.
I am here; I am here.
I am God.

Happenings and Events



Bible Study—Wednesdays at
7:00 p.m. preceded by prayer at
6:30 p.m.

Remember our ongoing food
drive!



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- Please limit your submissions to original work.
- Please submit your material electronically. The preferred format is a Word document.
- Please limit your word count to 600 words or less.
- All submissions will be edited by the PCC Scroll Editing Team.

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