



PASTOR'S POINT OF VIEW



Michael P. Rucker
Pastor

ENTERING RECOVERY

"We've never done it that way before."

It's the mainline denomination's mantra. It's our default go-to position. When we have told ourselves that we have to go back to the beginning, back to our roots, back to what really works - we find ourselves doing what we did before.

We know how to do it. We know where our place is. We know what everyone else is supposed to be doing. We are comfortable. At peace. At home. We want to stay there forever. It's the mainline denomination's addiction. But things have changed. Just about everything has changed. The addition of the Emerging Worship service is a sign that FPCE responded to the change. But, when looking at the larger picture, are we addicted to the way things used to be? If so, perhaps we need to turn to step one of recovery:

***We admit that we are powerless over the way our world/community has changed,
and our church life has become unmanageable.***

How do you feel about that? What does that make you want to do? If we are like most addicts, we defiantly insist that we will be just fine, thank you. Just leave us alone. If we do what most addicts do, if we do what people who are addicted to - food, television, alcohol, daily routines, prescription drugs, chocolate, our generations old traditions, our way of thinking about God/the Bible/Jesus/salvation/etc, sex, our pre-adolescent confirmation faith, our way of doing things the way we have always done them - do. Then we bravely and boldly blame someone else for our addiction.

"This younger generation! They do not know what it means to make a commitment! They don't even bother getting up on Sunday!"

"Spiritual but not religious? Ha! And what does that mean anyway? Oh...whatever!!!"

"People these days - cover their ears with headphones and study the screen of their cell phones! They don't deal with the 'real world'."

"And what about our pastor, he/she doesn't do (fill in the blank) anymore and now people won't even come to church, sit quietly for one hour, sing our inspiring, good old hymns, munch on cookies, chat, then go home for Sunday dinner."

"These young parents are not passing on traditional values. Moms take their kids to soccer, basketball, softball, dance, martial arts classes. Dads get up late and watch sports center. And they won't even bring us their babies to us, or help us in the nursery, or attend Bible studies or PW meetings, or work in the kitchen or..."

"This church has thrived for generations. Why won't those long-time members who got mad at Pastor (fill in the blank) come back? They should just get over it."

"What is wrong with this country? What has happened to Christian America? Remember when we went to elementary school? Life was so good. Kids recited Psalm 23 and said the Lord's Prayer. The Sunday School rolls were full. We had to put chairs in the aisles during the Easter service, for crying out loud! What happened? It's the government and/or President (fill in your least favorite president's name) fault!"

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News from the Edge is the monthly newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood. If you have information you would like to include in the next issue, email Judy Mysels at office@fpcedgewood.org by the 15th of the prior month. Sponsorship is available for \$40 per month.

Pastor's Point of View (cont'd.)

After listening to this kind of talk for every one of my 37 years as a pastor, I am very familiar with that chorus of voices praising the way things used to be. Allow me to add my own little sociological commentary, a glimpse at the larger picture: *“Wasn't church life great when moms stayed at home, Westinghouse provided secure livelihoods for families, schools were full of kids who came in mostly one color, stores were closed on Sunday, and we could get by fooling ourselves that “the Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it! And evolution was just a weird (ungodly) theory.”*

I am familiar with those complaints. As your pastor, I feel the same frustration, the same befuddlement most of us feel. When I preached my first sermon in front of my home town congregation in Canton, Ohio there were 500 people in the pews! Wow – I thought this is the way it would always be. Last time I visited my home church, there were fewer than 100 people in that same big, beautiful room with that same big, beautiful pipe organ.

Brothers and sisters, those days are gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Never ever to return. Those days have slipped away – and our church is slipping away too. Just like Westinghouse did. Just like the Roman Catholic Churches are. Just like 95% of the other mainline denominations in neighborhoods like ours are. Really, should we have expected anything different? How can we be surprised that the church will need to change dramatically change too? Are we addicted to the way things used to be? Perhaps it is time we sat down and said (all together now):

We admit that we are powerless over the way our world/community has changed,

and our church life has become unmanageable.

A few words of assurance – and a challenge - before I close:

We are grieving. Something we loved is gone. We are in grieving the loss of the way things used to be. (Did you know that addicts grieve the loss of their drug? They really did think alcohol, drugs, eating was their friend and comforter; it would always make them feel good; it would never have to go away.) We are grieving and all of us are at different stages of grief. Some of us are in denial. Some of us are angry, or bargaining, or depressed. Some of us are slowly beginning to accept the loss we cannot avoid. All of us are grieving.

There was nothing wrong with the way things used to be. It worked for people back then. And, by the way, there was nothing wrong with a dial phone. I was fine for people back then. The way we did church before and Alexander Graham Bell's invention will always be awesome.

This is not easy. This is rocket science. (ok, a bit of an exaggeration, but only a bit.) We live in a period of exponential change, nothing changes incrementally anymore. Some call this “the Age of Raplexity.”

Pastor's Point of View (cont'd.)

The age of rapid, complex change.

We need not take this personally. We must not make the dramatic change and ensuing loss of members our fault. There is nothing wrong with the congregation. There is nothing wrong with me (most of the time anyway.) It is not about us – or something we did wrong, or something we didn't do right, or something we didn't do at all. This congregation has done and continues to do many beautiful things that reflect the nature of God's kingdom. But that does not mean steady, continual growth is inevitable.

God has not abandoned us. ("I will not leave you as orphans." Jesus once promised). We are in this together. We are all in process. We are not perfect, never were, and never will be. God is in love with us anyway. Always will be. Perfect love keeps on loving. God has not given up on us. God has not withdrawn from us. God has not turned his back on us. God has not stopped guiding us. God has not stopped speaking to us. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That has been and always will be the strength of the church. God longs for all of us to thrive in relationship with him. Or her. Or him/her. Or the God Jesus talked about when he said *God is spirit and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth.* That God is with us. Jesus promised he always would be.

So, as a congregation in numerical decline, what can we do this summer? I issue a challenge for you and me: PRAY. Pray for people we know who are sick, recovering, or dying? Yes. Pray for the staff, the deacons, and the elders? Yes. Pray for the educators, choir, and praise team? Yes. Pray for Camp SOS? Yes. Pray for the strawberry festival, community dinners? Yes. Pray for the ministry of Wilkinsburg Community Ministry? Yes. But I most earnestly yearn for us to pray for the ministry and mission of this church. Pray for your heart and our hearts to be filled with the love of God. Pray for God's will to be known. Pray that we be willing to hear what God will say. A good friend and wonderful lay-leader named Barbara once told me, "Michael, God is not as interested in a church full of people as people full of God."

On Sunday, June 4, we will celebrate the Day of Pentecost. The birthday of the church. How did that day begin? With the faithful followers of Jesus gathered in a room – waiting and praying. How did that day end? With the faithful followers, filled now with Holy Spirit, praying for God's will to be revealed.

On Pentecost Sunday I will have a path of prayer prepared for us to walk -together. I believe God does have something to say to us. Will you listen with me?

I pray a blessed summer for all, Pastor Michael



Sharing in the joys and concerns of our family & friends at FPCE



Thank you to Ronan Jones for donating a folding machine to the Church Office. This will be a HUGE help for all of us.

Thank you to Presbyterian Women for their monetary donation, allowing one of our FROGS to use the scholarship fund for tuition.

Saddened by the passing of long-time member, Esther Wark, on Saturday, May 20;

Mary Ann Hartman is recovering nicely from her surgery, but would appreciate cards: 419 Brinton Rd., Forest Hills, PA 15221

Tools of Hope Sunday, June 18

Honor your dad by giving the gift of love and hope in their honor or memory. Church World Service (CWS) and FPCE's Mission Ministry Team is sponsoring "Tools of Hope". Your donation of \$5 per tool will help provide tools and the knowledge that someone cares to refugees, victims of natural disasters and many others across the world. Fill out a bulletin insert through June 11 or call the Church Office.

SUMMER WORSHIP AT FPCE

It's Mostly About the Women.

Through most of the weeks this summer, I will be preaching each week on one of the women of the Bible. I'm looking forward to it. It's going to be fun.

JUNE 4: Pentecost Sunday. Read Acts 2 for biblical details. What spirit will the Holy Spirit give to us? We will celebrate the Lord's Supper in our emerging style of worship.

JUNE 11: An important Sunday in the life of our church. During the **congregational meeting** following worship we will discuss and vote on the building renovation. Let's talk about, then pray for discernment.

JUNE 18: Eve. Genesis 2 – 4:2 & 25. The mother of us all? Is she the cause of the fall? Did sin enter the world through her? Or is she to be honored as "flesh of my flesh," Adam's perfect companion?

JUNE 25: Camp SOS Sunday. The Sunday following our Camp Summer of Service, the worship focus will be on lessons learned, mission shared, friendships formed at Camp SOS!

JULY 2: The Women Who Kept Moses Alive. The first freedom fighters? Read Exodus 1: 8-22 and 2: 1-10. Be prepared to meet **brave women in dangerous times**. The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated.

JULY 9: Sarah and Hagar. What a mess! Ishmael and Isaac – who is the heir? How dysfunctional is this family? One family – three faiths? See Genesis 16 and 21 for an outline of their lives.

JULY 16: Rahab. How is it that a prostitute is in Jesus' family tree? It's a cool action story. See Joshua 2 and 6 for details.

JULY 23: Hannah. See I Samuel 1 – 2. Here is a desperate woman crying her sad tears. Or is there a lot more to the story and a lot more to the woman? She sings a powerful song that reappears centuries later preceding the births of John and Jesus.

JULY 30: The Widow of Zarephath. One of my favorite stories in the Hebrew Bible. See I Kings 17: 8-14. The widow would receive an Academy Award for best supporting actress. Our hearts break for her and rejoice with her.

AUGUST 6: Job's Wife. She has one verse (Job 2:9) at the beginning of a long and deep story. How do we deal with God when we believe God broke his promise? How much of our anger can God take? We will be invited to the table of communion.

AUGUST 13: Esther and Vashti. See the Book of Esther in our Old Testament and read the decisions made by two strong women. One is mostly overlooked. But she has a story too.

AUGUST 20: Elizabeth and Mary. The mothers of John the Baptist and Jesus. Each one was blessed with a surprise pregnancy. Both sang the finest birth celebrations ever. Their stories can be found in Luke 1 and 2.

AUGUST 27: Did **Paul** have a problem with these women? Why? Did these women have a problem – or were they asserting leadership in a male dominated culture? See

I Corinthians 11: 2-16 and I Corinthians 14: 34 – 36.

SEPTEMBER 3: Women – the backbone of the early church. Someone had to do the work! There are many examples in the New Testament of **the first church ladies**. Where would the church be without them?



in the good old summertime...

Community Dinners

June 7, July 5, August 2, Sept. 6
6-8PM, Side Lawn

We'll be grilling hot dogs and hamburgers and will appreciate any side dishes and dessert donations. Watch for bulletin inserts for the donations as well as volunteer times for set-up and break-down. Please join us to have fun with our church family and the community.

Women's Summer Picnic

Saturday, June 17, 1-4PM at Florence Pickels' house,
342 Ridge Ave., Forest Hills

Please RSVP by June 14 to Church Office at 412/241-4613 or Sallie Monk at 412/371-4344
Side dishes/desserts are appreciated. Welcome one and all!

Community Day in Edgewood

Saturday, August 26, 12Noon to ?

It's that time of year again when FPCE is looking for volunteers to help run booth/booths for **Edgewood's Community Day, August 26**. In the past, we have sponsored 2 game booths (duck pond and miniature golf), where 2 people per booth "man" the booths for an hour. Usually the booth/booths are located by the field house, we bring down church brochures to spread the news about FPCE, interact with the children/parents, etc. We are looking for 2 people per hour, per booth. Look for upcoming bulletin inserts/blurbs for sign-ups or call the Church Office at 412/241-4613 if interested.

Technology and Giving!

Computers, cell phones and tablets have changed the way the world operates. Not so much for some of us and dramatically for others. I'm not sure there is a difference between dropping a donation in the plate during the worship service or clicking the Google Wallet app on your cell phone during worship that immediately transfers the same amount of money into the FPCE PNC account. Pastor Michael will have to explain that to us. There are many ways to give to the church: cash, check, electronic transfer from a bank, or Google Wallet or PayPal. We have had electronic transfers of stock to the FPCE Investment account at PNC Bank and many other modern schemes. So, for those interested, FPCE can accept donations using Google Wallet, PayPal, or a periodic transfer from a checking account. The Google Wallet and PayPal accounts are registered under the email address fpce.treasurer@gmail.com. It's the giving that important, not the method used to transfer the money. More information on any of these newfangled methods is available for Tom Ochs, Treasurer. Thanks for your generous gifts to FPCE, regardless of how they get there.

LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION FROM JEFF AND TINA

May 28, 2017

Dear Pastor Rucker, Session and the Congregation of FPCE-

I write this letter with a heavy heart to all of you. As most are aware I have been pursuing ordination as a teaching elder in the PC(USA) for the last couple of years. I am grateful for all of the love, support, encouragement and grace you have shown to Tina and I during that process. This church is without a doubt the primary reason I was considering PC(USA) ordination.

However, in the upcoming weeks I will be transitioning to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) to finish the ordination process. That means I will no longer be able to continue membership in the PC(USA) or at First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood. Tina and I will likely become members of Bellefield Presbyterian Church in Oakland.

The open hearts, arms and deep love you have given us since we returned to Pittsburgh in 2012 have been overwhelming. I can't believe it has been nearly 5 years since I first stepped foot into the beautiful church building at the end of Maple Avenue; God has indeed been gracious. All of you will remain embedded in my heart and soul. Many of us will continue in enduring friendship for years to come.

May the grace, peace and hope of our Lord, Jesus Christ be with you all as FPCE moves into a new era of building, renovation and above all discipleship to one another and the community.

With our deepest regards,
Jeff and Tina



The Book Corner

Joshua by Joseph Girzone is best described as a modern day parable.

When Joseph moves to a small cabin on the edge of town, the local people are at first mystified, then confused by his presence. A quiet and simple man, Joshua appears to seek nothing for himself. He supports himself solely by carpentry and woodworking, and he charges very little for his service. Yet his work is exquisite. Even more exquisite, and even more mysterious is the effect he has on everyone he meets. The acceptance and love in his eyes and his actions amaze the townspeople. Who is Joshua, and just what is he up to?

JUNE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2 8:00 AA (SR)	3 8:30 AA (SR)
4 11:00 Worship 12:15 Camp SOS Mtg. 5:00 Progressive Dinner	5	6 7:00 Deacon Mtg. 7:00 AA (SR)	7 6-8:00 Community Dinner	8 1:00 Daytime Circle	9 8:00 AA (SR)	10 8:30 AA (SR)
11 11:00 Worship 12:15 Cong. Mtg.	12	13 7:00 Session Mtg. 7:00 AA (SR)	14	15	16 3-9 Wilson Grad. Party 8:00 AA (GP)	17 1-4 P.W. Picnic at Florence Pickel's house 8:30 AA (SR)
18 10:00 Worship 11:15 Donuts for Dads (L)	19 CAMP SOS 9AM-2PM	20 CAMP SOS 9AM-2PM 7:00 ESO Reh.	21 CAMP SOS 9AM-2PM 6-8 Strawberry Festival	22 CAMP SOS 9AM-2PM 1:00 Daytime Circle	23 CAMP SOS 9AM-2PM 8:00 AA (SR)	24 8:30 AA (SR)
25 10:00 Worship	26	27 7:00 ESO Reh	28	29	30 8:00 AA (SR)	1 8:30 AA (SR)

JULY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 10:00 Worship	3	4 OFFICE CLOSED 7:00 AA (SR)	5 6-8:00 Community Dinner	6	7 8:00 AA (SR)	8 8:30 AA (SR)
9 10:00 Worship	10	11 7:00 AA (SR)	12	13 1:00 Daytime Circle	14 8:00 AA (SR)	15 8:30 AA (SR)
16 10:00 Worship	17	18 7:00 AA (SR)	19	20	21 8:00 AA (SR)	22 8:30 AA (SR)
23 10:00 Worship	24	25 7:00 AA (SR)	26	27 1:00 Daytime Circle	28 8:00 AA (SR)	29 8:30 AA (SR)
30 10:00 Worship	31					

AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 7:00 AA (SR)	2 6-8:00 Community Dinner	3	4 8:00 AA (SR)	5 8:30 AA (SR)
6 10:00 Worship	7	8 7:00 AA (SR)	9	10 1:00 Daytime Circle	11 8:00 AA (SR)	12 8:30 AA (SR)
13 10:00 Worship	14	15 7:00 AA (SR)	16	17	18 8:00 AA (SR)	19 8:30 AA (SR)
20 10:00 Worship	21	22 7:00 AA (SR)	23	24 1:00 Daytime Circle	25 8:00 AA (SR)	26 12:00 Edgewood Community Day 8:30 AA (SR)
27 10:00 Worship	28	29 7:00 AA (SR)	30	31		

Yesterday was our last day of FROGS for this session. We were actually sad because this group of FROGS were truly special. During this last month, we made special crafts for Mother's

and Father's Day. Because of the weather, we only had one field trip to Koenig Field to play. We were able to play on the church's side lawn when weather permitted. On our last day on May 30, we had a pizza party and sundae bar with some of the parents/grandparents. Special gifts of a picture frame with a great photo were given to the FROGS who were graduating out of our program. During the dessert portion, the FROGS explained their day's artwork/craft which told of their favorite activity this past session. They ranged from favorite crafts, seasonal activities, outdoor activities, homework help, etc. It was truly touching! Thank you to all the volunteers: Flo Raisig, Mary Ross, Ruth Miller, Dan Mielke, Rick Masten, Ed Masten, Sallie Monk, Mary Ann Hartman, Mariah Mysels—who without them, the FROGS program would not exist. Please spread the word about next session starting September 5, 2017!

F.R.O.G.S.
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM
FRIENDS, READING, & OTHER GREAT STUFF