



NOVEMBER 2022

THE LAMPLIGHTER YORK FIRST MORAVIAN

UPSIDE DOWN RELIGION

When our two sons were growing up they were very competitive, always pushing to see which one would be first. The loser of any contest invariably cried, "Remember, the first shall be last and the last shall be first..." In a nutshell this saying illustrates the truth that the Christian faith has always been counter-cultural. This teaching from Jesus is religion turned upside down.

The Christian story began in a way that was decidedly upside down. The Savior of the world is born in a barn and the audience for his birth announcement is a group of shepherds out in the fields. When the king learns about his birth, the infant Savior needs to flee for his life into Egypt. The defining event in human history does not begin with pomp and pageantry and power, but in a demonstration of lowliness and weakness.

We discover this same theme in the parables that Jesus told. In Luke chapter 16 we meet the Rich man and Lazarus. The rich man lives in luxury while Lazarus begs for scraps from his table. The next time we see them, the rich man is in Hades and Lazarus lies in the bosom of Abraham. In Luke chapter 10 a man going to Jerusalem is beaten and robbed and left for dead. Who is it that helps him? Is it the religious priest on his way to the temple? Is it the Levite going to the same place? NO, it is the despised outsider, the Samaritan half breed, who is the hero of this story. Upside down religion!

Who are the kinds of people that Jesus hangs around with? Not the high and mighty - but the poor and lowly. Most of his disciples are common fishermen. Jesus welcomed the social outcasts whom polite society rejected; people who had leprosy, those who were lame and blind and the tax collectors and harlots. To the listening crowds he commended Samaritans and Romans, the outsiders, as examples of people who had true faith. Upside down religion!

Our young sons were right. Jesus did say "The last shall be first and the first last." He also said, "Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant." When he was asked who was the greatest in his kingdom, Matthew records the words of Jesus in chapter 18:1-4. "Then Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst of them and said 'Assuredly I say to you unless you are converted and become as little children you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"

Even his closest disciples did not understand the true nature of the peaceful revolution which Jesus came to bring. They were always waiting for him to duck into a phone booth and re-emerge as the all-powerful conquering Messiah. Even when Jesus was about to leave they asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Today much of popular culture embraces the idea of greatness as power, strength and control. This is even true in the religious community. When I served in the suburbs of D.C. our county was filled with large and impressive churches. Whenever I met someone for the first time they invariably asked me, "How large is your church?" They wanted to know whether I should be treated as a person of consequence.

In popular culture our enemies are identified, opposed and demonized. People who are not like us, don't look like us and think like us must be defeated and destroyed! We alone know what the problems are and we alone know how to fix them. Dear friends, where is our sense of humility, where is our sense of compassion, where is our sense of kindness? This is the way of the world. This is not the upside down way of Jesus!

I remember a time when I was a young man and learned to my consternation that I was not always right. In my first church there was a woman who criticized me for preaching long sermons. One Sunday in the middle of my sermon she got up and left the building. I fumed and later phoned. "Dottie," I began, "I noticed that you left church early. Why did you leave?" She replied, "Oh pastor, I felt sick when I got up this morning. But I wanted to hear you preach so I pushed myself to come to church. About halfway through your sermon I became violently ill and I'm sorry, but I needed to leave before you finished;" I have never forgotten how I judged her without knowing the whole story. Jesus said, "He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted..." This was a lesson I very much needed to learn..

Pastor, why are you preaching about these things? I am concerned about the direction of our country. I am concerned about the deep divisions, nastiness and violence in our country. I know a woman who hasn't talked to her sister in over six years because her sister voted for former President Trump. We have a relative who visited regularly for many years. When our son, a U.S. Capitol police sergeant, was badly injured in the January 6 riot. This relative tried to tell Kathie that the riot wasn't really that bad, it was just a peaceful protest. Kathie said, "Curtis was there, his officers suffered concussions and broken bones. Curt was hit with a bike rack and it broke his wrist and tore he ligaments. There was nothing peaceful about it!" He got so mad at her that he stayed away for eight months. Just because you do not agree with me doesn't make you a bad person - or make you a tool of the devil! No matter for whom we vote, as Christians you and I must stand for kindness, we must stand for honesty and we must stand for truth!

In his book, "Think Big and Kick Ass in Business and in Life." Our former president gives advice on how to treat people and stay on top. "When somebody hits you, hit 'em back harder. Do not hesitate to go after people...When other people see that you don't take crap and you are really going after somebody for wronging you, they will respect you...If you do not get even you are just a schmuck! Always get even."

What about love your enemies? What about bless those who curse you? What about do good to those who hate you? As followers of Jesus we simply cannot support the kind of teaching and example that our former president advocates in "Think Big and Kick Ass." This is as far away from the teaching and spirit of Jesus as Antarctica is from Florida....

I have a friend in Michigan who believes our former president and his followers are standing up for Christian values. There is nothing Christian about calling names and mocking those with whom you disagree. There is nothing Christian about telling your followers to "kick the crap out of someone" who dares to disagree with you, There is nothing Christian about bragging about your sexual exploits. In my opinion, I think we Christians are being used for political purposes.

No one political party has a monopoly on Christian values and no one party is all bad or all good. In his book, "Is Jesus a Democrat or a Republican?" Tony Campolo says that Jesus embodies the compassion for the poor and vulnerable which characterizes the Democrats, and he stands for the demand for effort and personal responsibility for which Republicans call. Jesus is not a captive of either party.

As a Follower of Jesus, my first loyalty is not to a movement, it is not to a political party, it is not to a person - but my first loyalty is to Jesus Christ! My highest loyalty is to Jesus. What he teaches needs to be obeyed.

I may not agree with you, and you may not agree with me, but I am commanded to love you! I may not agree with you, but, but I am commanded to forgive you, and you are commanded to forgive me! If you hurt me I dare not take revenge or hurt you back, but I must try every way to be reconciled to you, I need to do this even if it means I am a loser. I need to do this even if I become a schmuck. Dear friends, if we had more people willing to be schmucks for Jesus, this would go a long way toward healing our country!

Schmucks for Jesus! This is what upside down religion looks like. Are you and I willing to put this kind of religion it into practice?

Rev. Steve Nicholas
First Moravian Church
November 6, 2022

Trustee News

The Trustees met October 12th. Numerous repairs for both the parsonage and church were discussed. We thank all the Trustees for all their hard work and dedication with on going repairs and updates!

Elders News

HELP FOR OUR FOUR FAITHFUL ELDERS

It is amazing to consider that First Moravian has been without a pastor since September, 2021. During these months, the board of Elders has taken responsibility for planning Sunday worship and pastoral care of our members. Our church by-laws call for six Elders, but during this time we have been working with four. The Elders have been faithful in taking care of the needs of the congregation, but we can use help. Our annual church council will take place in January. Both Jeannette Sprenkle and Steve Nicholas have indicated they are willing to be nominated for new three year terms. However, we have one year and two year terms which are currently unfilled and it would be beneficial if we can find two members willing to be nominated for either a one year or two year term. If you feel the Lord MAY be calling you to serve, please contact Steve by phone or email (717-755-7412 or "saintnic1967@gmail.com" to talk about what is needed and how you may help. Thank you.

Did you know...

We have an online giving portal! If you prefer to catch the service via Zoom you can send your offering online! Just go to

- mmfa.info
- click Giving Portal at the top
- Click 'F' and select First Moravian Church - York, PA

If you prefer to mail your offering you can send it direct to:

Wanda Hendricks
3715 Fox Chase Drive
Dover, PA 17315

Total Income & Offerings from Sundays 10/02/2022 - 10/30/2022

General	\$5,462.00
Refurbishing	\$216.00
Parking	\$50.00
2023 Daily Texts	\$44.60
Truist Visa Rewards	\$27.50
TOTAL	\$5,800.10

Upcoming Pastors

November 20th - Lloyd Purswell

November 27th - Cliff Bergstresser

December 4th - Rev. Terry Folk

December 11th - Rev. Dick Godfrey



November Birthdays

7 Linda Taylor
10 Julia Saylor
15 Gary Paules
17 Aaron Eckert
19 Dynola Koteck
20 Olivia Downs
21 Lindsey Robinson
30 Jacob Sprenkle

November Anniversaries

5 Terrence & Christine Downs



**For pastoral care until
our new Pastor is received,
please feel free to call any of the
3 elders listed below.**

Jeannette Sprenkle 717-225-4304

John Knokey 717-848-9220

Steve Nicholas 717- 755-7412

***Please do not call Steve
on a Monday***

Prayer Concerns

Amy Ardison (Betsy Senft's sister)

Pastor Jeff Coppage

Ann Coppage

Don Eckert

Mary Jones

Kathie Nicholas

Karrie Rishel

Cliff & Elaine Rowell

Ruth & Clair Seiple

Jemon Grant

Upcoming Events

November 21st - Trustees Meeting

December 3rd - 9am-2pm - Covenant Moravian Church is having their "Holiday Bazaar". Vendors selling jewelry and decorative items. They also will have their famous homemade cookies for sale, along with hot dogs, hamburger BBQ, chicken corn and ham/bean soup.

December 10th - 5pm - First Moravian Christmas Party - Pot luck dinner, now you have it, now you don't game and more!



NORTHERN PROVINCE SYNOD

The Northern Province Synod of 2023 will meet on the campus of Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pa. from June 22-25. First Moravian is entitled to send one delegate, and we also need one alternate to stand by in case the alternate is unable to attend. Our delegate and alternate delegate will be elected by our congregation at Church Council in January. Synod will elect a President of the Provincial Elders' Conference, set salaries for pastors, and make decisions on what position the church should take on many social issues. First Moravian will pay for room and board and travel expenses. Should any of our members feel that the Lord MAY want them to serve as our delegate or alternate, please contact John Knokey at 717-848-9220 or "yorkfirstmoravian@verizon.net".

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2022 Watchword

“Happy is the one who trusts in you, O lord of hosts.”

Psalm 84:12