

Highlights from the Heights

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | NORTHMINSTER EPC | OCTOBER 2025 VOLUME 10

PASTOR'S CORNER — PICKING SIDES

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come."

— Joshua 5:13-14



It has been a trying month, at the end of a trying summer. Two politically-motivated assassinations, multiple attacks on churches, several shootings at schools and workplaces, and an awful lot of finger pointing has us all in a state of constant anxiety and tension. It seems as if every word spoken, every statement made on social media, every speech (or sermon) given is parsed to try and determine who is with us and who is against us. We know (well, presume actually) that God is on our side and want to know whether the people we read or talk to are our friends or our enemies. Perhaps God doesn't pick sides the same way we do.

The verses above come in the middle of a very tense moment for Joshua and the people of Israel. Moses has died and Joshua was appointed to take his place. Chapter 1 of the book of Joshua recounts God's commissioning of Joshua (God tells Joshua to "be strong and courageous" no less than three times in the first nine verses) and how he took command of the people. Chapter 2 is the famous story of Rahab and the spies in Jericho. In chapters 3 and 4, Israel crosses into the Promised Land through the River Jordan, in a scene reminiscent of the crossing of the Red Sea during the Exodus. At the beginning of chapter 5, as they prepare to begin the conquest of the Promised Land, the people of God are re-consecrated to the Lord. Just after the verses above, in chapter 6 we have the fall of Jericho. Squeezed in at the end of chapter 5 we have this very short scene with Joshua and an angel, the Commander of the Army of the Lord.

Joshua, pacing in the desert with anxiety and worry about what lies ahead (the impenetrable and impassable walls of Jericho), comes across a stranger with a sword. It's a perfectly reasonable question to ask: "Are you

friend or foe? Are you for us or our adversaries?" What stands out most about this is how the angel answers Joshua's question. Of course the answer is, "I am for you." Everything up to this point has shown just how thoroughly God is "for them." They are the people of Israel, God's chosen ones. God, himself, commissioned Joshua and directed his steps to this point. God, himself, stopped the waters of Jericho so the people could cross. God, himself, directed their re-consecration to Him. But the answer wasn't, "I am for you." The answer is as blunt as it is curt: "No."

God is only ever on one side: His own. This is made most clear in Isaiah 48:9-11: *"For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."* (Is. 48:9-11) What God does, or does not, is based solely on what furthers His plans and increases His own glory. We get so wrapped up in presuming that God is on our side that we rarely stop to ask whether we are on His.

Almost a thousand years later, the disciples wanted to know the same thing Joshua did. After three years of following Jesus, facing the depths of despair as He was crucified and died, and then the heights of exaltation when He rose from the grave, they still thought He was on their side. Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, they asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria,

and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8) Once again, Jesus doesn't give the expected answer. Jesus basically says, "You're asking the wrong question. But I'm going to empower and enable you to be on my side, to be my hands and feet, to carry the good news of the coming of God's Kingdom to all corners of your neighborhoods and the globe."

It took a long time for Israel to take possession of the Promised Land. At the end of the book of Joshua, he gathers all the people together. He reminds them of all that God has done for them from the time they left Egypt up to that moment because they were on God's side. Joshua then issues a challenge, one that echoes through to our day. Fear the Lord, Joshua says, and put away the petty "gods" and divisions that this world tells you matter. Choose for yourself whose side you will be on: God's, or not God's. With Joshua I declare, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. What say you?

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

Joshua 24:14-15

Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

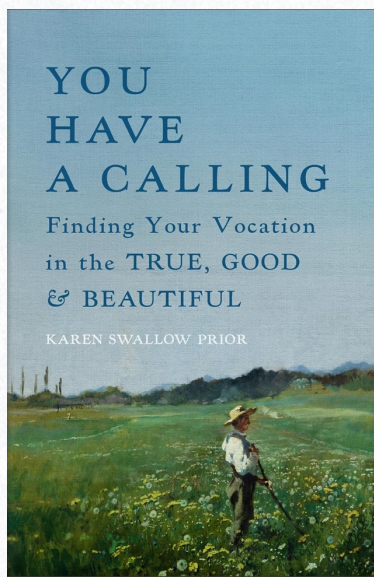
Monday, October 6, 7pm

The Women's Bible Study will meet next Monday, October 6 at 7:00 p.m. at the church. We will be starting a new study that we're excited to tell you about Monday evening! If you haven't come in a while or been wanting to join, this is a great time to do so.

Once again we are going to ask you to bring a refreshment to share.

Looking forward to seeing everyone on Monday night, October 6th!!





WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

*Meets Thursday, October 9,
10 AM @ NEPC*

The Women's Book Club will meet on Thursday, October 9 at 10:00 a.m at Northminster. We will be reading, You Have a Calling, by our friend, Karen Swallow Prior. Karen will be at our meeting on October 9 to read parts of her book and share her motivation for writing this book. She will also answer your questions.

In this book, Karen argues that true vocational fulfillment comes from pursuing the good, the true, and the beautiful, rather than solely from passion or a dream job. Karen explains while passion is internal and often fleeting, a calling is a service-oriented call from an external source, like God or others, that directs us to serve in ways that uphold these universal virtues. The book offers a virtue-based vision of vocation, asserting that by integrating these transcendentals into our everyday work, we participate in our divine creation, regardless of the prestige or alignment with passion.

Join us as Karen shares her thoughts about her book, You Have a Calling. Please bring a snack to share and remember, if you haven't read the book, come anyway. We always have a good time!!

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT 2025 GENERAL FUND

	August	Year To Date
Income	\$ 8,661	\$79,329
Expenses	<u>\$11,916</u>	<u>\$81,492</u>
Balance	\$ -3,254	\$ -2,163

LIFE TOGETHER

Keeping in touch with one another

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS:

13 Bobby Irvine
Elizabeth Kidd
15 Robi Vandevander
16 Alayna Vandevander
18 George Brine
Jonathan Bryant
19 Mickie Brine
21 Gabbi Scruggs
23 Debbie Irvine
26 Lois Stewart



OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

26 Jeb & Beth Clarke, 2003

PRAYER REQUESTS

*I sought the Lord, and He answered me;
He delivered me from all my fears.*

— Psalm 34:4

Several members have asked for prayers for needs that they'd prefer not to share publicly. Please lift up these prayers, knowing that God knows for whom you pray and what they need.

Pam Tinsley asks prayers for her sons Matthew, who is dealing with cellulitis in his right foot and Macon, who has hearing issues.

Cindy Copp asks prayers for her father, Art Pierce, who is recovering from a fall and brain surgery.

Bob Mills asks prayers for his brother David, who has been diagnosed with stage 2 myxofibrosarcoma.

Jude Nyanzi is healing from a bus accident while on a field trip with students from Daystar in August.

Remember others who cannot be with us in church:
Arlene Horton, Mary Murray, Mary Wilhelm and Dolores Wright.

All active servicemen and women, law enforcement personnel, first responders.

OCTOBER 2025 MISSION FOCUS:

Christmas Food Baskets

MOE Committee requests that everyone contribute to the annual Christmas Food Boxes for area needy families.

If you have names of people/families that should receive one of these boxes, submit names and number in family, address and telephone numbers to Pastor David or the MOE Committee. These must be submitted the first Sunday in November so that they can be reviewed.

Eight or nine churches in the area participate in the collecting, packing, and distribution of food. These foods include soup, canned fruit or vegetables, breakfast items such as pancake mix and bottles of syrup, peanut butter, jelly, (best if these two items are not combined), canned meats, etc. Non-perishable packaged foods that include most of the ingredients are also welcome.

Monetary donations are always needed. It is usual to spend more than \$3,000 buying bulk hams at a discount. Hundreds of pounds of apples are gotten from Fitzgerald Orchard at good price. There will be a food collection location in the narthex.

Volunteers will also be needed to pack boxes at Amelon UMC in mid-December.



SERVICE AND OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY

Saturday, October 18, 9 AM

Our church will be serving and reaching out to our community at the Monelison Bruins games on Saturday, October 18. Bruins Park is located behind Monelison Middle School and next to the Madison Heights Youth Baseball fields at 265 Trojan Dr. in Madison Heights.

We will be praying with the students and coaches before games, as well as working the concession stand.

There will be four football games throughout the day with shifts for volunteers from 9 AM – 3:30 PM. Please sign up on the bulletin board or let Karey Garrison know if you're able to help out.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Wednesday, October 22,
8:00 AM @ Pastor Dave's

All Northminster men are invited to breakfast at Pastor Dave's house on Wednesday, October 22 at 8 AM! There will be food, fellowship, and a topical discussion.

Pastor Dave will be cooking, so you can count on plenty of bacon and coffee.

Feel free to invite friends who are not affiliated with our church.



3 CIRCLES EVANGELISM TRAINING

Sunday Mornings, 9:30 AM

We live in a broken world and the Gospel is how God puts broken people back together again. Once we repent and believe in Jesus, God's Spirit helps us recover and pursue His design. God is the one who created the world and every human being in it.

Through this 6-week course, we will introduce you to a method of sharing the gospel that has been tested in the real world. *Turning Everyday Conversations Into Gospel Conversations* is a simple strategy to train new and seasoned believers to join God in His reconciliation work. *Turning Everyday Conversations Into Gospel Conversations* equips believers to use the innovative "3 Circles," a user-friendly evangelistic tool for a new generation. You'll learn how to incorporate the biblical metanarrative, as well as your own personal stories, to tell the good news that Jesus has made a way out of the broken places we find ourselves.

Churches around the world are training people to share the gospel using this method. It has proven appeal across generations and cultures. They've heard stories about an eight-year-old boy leading his twenty-six-year-old cousin to repent and believe in Jesus and a seventy-plus-year-old church member, who had never before shared his faith, leading his Spanish-speaking neighbor to Christ. It's been used to train the Mixtec in Mexico, Maasai Warriors in Kenya, and prisoners in America. It's been presented on napkins, in concrete, in the sand, and using tortillas. The 3 Circles works, and this course will train you in how to use it.

It doesn't matter if you have been a Christian for decades or days, you can learn to do what God asks us to do – to make His appeal to others through us (2 Corinthians 5:20).

This 6 week course will empower and inspire you to turn everyday conversations into gospel conversations.



See you
SUNDAY
at church



Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church
106 Clearview Rd
Madison Heights, VA 24572

First-
Class
Postage
Here