
From the Pastor

On Sunday, November 3, we begin a Sunday afternoon study series about Practicing Joy. That's right, practicing joy!

Why do we have to practice it?

Because the joy of the Lord is our strength. (Nehemiah 8)

Because scripture tells us (Zephaniah 3):

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.

And because Jesus Christ tells his first disciples, who have passed it on to us, we who are disciples today (John 15):

"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

We cannot underestimate the vital importance of joy in our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Throughout scripture joy comes up in situation after situation, context after context, book after book. Our various translations of the bible vary, of course, but one count has joy and its variants (rejoice, joyful, enjoy, etc.) appearing 399 times, and one count is 430 times. Interestingly, one scholar has happiness and its variants (happy, etc) appearing 10 times.

In the book of Hebrews, chapter 12 we read that "for the joy set before him" Christ endured the cross. There is nothing wrong with happiness, nothing at all. But it does

not hit us as deeply in our hearts and minds, I think, as joy, which can exist in the midst of great suffering and grief.

Joy is many things.

Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and thus a mark of freedom to be our true selves, loving God, neighbor, and self. Joy builds community up, and does not tear it down.

Joy is resistance: it roots us and has marked the lives of many who have died or suffered because of their faith. If we have joy, even the tiniest bit, in the midst of suffering, we are resisting the power that death and doom might have, if others are trying to destroy or hurt us. I am not necessarily saying that joy in God will get us out of sticky situations. What I am saying is that our joy in God – whose joy is our strength! – means that destruction does not define us. With regard to resisting racism, Brandy Factory says this:

"Black Joy affirms that I am not a victim. I am an agent of change. It rejects the idea that violence, ... injustice, discrimination, prejudice, and dominance over others are normal and acceptable actions.

Bring this alongside Isaiah 11 and notice it is produced by resistance that is joy, because "the joy of the Lord is our strength:"

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

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They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of
the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

Praying, resting, eating together in peace. Violence is absolutely not the norm of God. Instead, "God is love." (1 John 4)

God desires that we have joy as we read in Luke 2:

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Our adult education series, about Practicing Joy, touches on these and many more aspects of the joy, rejoicing, and enjoyment that pervade scripture. It will be wonderful to study together as siblings in the faith as we seek to understand Christian joy better.

Even more important, though, is the fact that we will actually begin to learn how to practice joy. The more we practice joy, seek it, notice it, the more we can share it, the more we can help others see it, the more we turn to God who is radiant in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. From Psalm 27:

Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,

to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.
Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

I look forward to spending this time of learning with you!

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

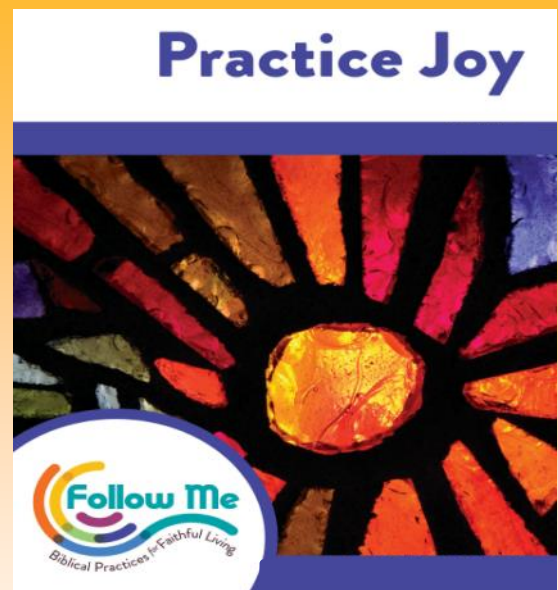
Choir Practice
Choir will be practicing
Nov. 6th & 13th at 6:30-
7:30 to sing in worship on
Nov. 17th.

The season of Advent starts on
Sunday,
December 1st, 2024.



Friends at the First Presbyterian Church of Rensselaer invite YOU to join us as we study the **Practice of Joy!...an adult education offering.** All are welcome!

We will gather 3:30-5:30 (C) on Sunday afternoons November 3-10-17-24; our sessions will include a light supper. As there are printed materials, please reply to the church office (219-866-7005) your intention to attend at your earliest convenience.



Explore biblical texts that illuminate four dimensions of the Practice of Joy:

One: See Joy in God's Creation -- Psalm 65: 5-13; Genesis 28: 11-22

God's glory is all around us; the practice of joy invites us to notice it and savor it.

Two: Rejoice in God's Mercy ---Psalm 30; Luke 5:17-26

God's mercy has overflowed to us, as individuals and in community; the practice of joy encourages us to take notice and stand in awe of God's grace.

Three: Share Others' Joy -- Luke 15; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26

God's blessings have embraced those around us, both enemies and friends; we are invited to rejoice in these with one another.

Four: Practice Joy in All Times -- John 16:1 - 24; Philippians 4: 4-6

The practice of joy urges us to celebrate fully the abundant providence of God; we are equipped to rejoice in the future with anticipation of new life.

First Presbyterian Church, 220 N. Cullen St. Rensselaer, IN 47978

First Presbyterian Church
2024 Chili Supper & Cookie Walk
December 7th 5-7pm

Volunteers Needed!

- Setting up
- Tearing down
- Getting chili prepped the morning of
- Baking cookies (volunteers will need to bake cookies on their own)
- Overseeing cookie tables
- Putting out yard signs
- Delivering flyers

Sign-up sheets coming soon!



Saturday, November 3rd, 2024
Daylight Savings Time Ends at 2 a.m.

Remember to turn your clocks back 1 hour!



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
3 Worship 9:30 am Communion Daylight Savings Time Ends	4 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	5 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm Election Day	6 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm Choir practice 6:30pm	7 Bridge Club 12:00pm	8	9 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
10 Worship 9:30 am	11 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	12 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	13 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm Choir practice 6:30pm	14 Bridge Club 12:00pm Session Meets 4pm Forestry Council 5pm	15	16 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
17 Worship 9:30 am Choir sings	18 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	19 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	20 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	21 Bridge Club 12:00pm	22	23 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
24 Worship 9:30 am	25 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	26 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	27 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	28 	29	30 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm

Pastor Michelle's Sermon Series "The Great Ends of the Church"

will continue, beginning Sunday, November 3. "Ends" in this case means goal or completion. As a congregation we might reflect on each "great end" and ask ourselves "how is God calling us to be a church here and now in Rensselaer?"

Grounded in scripture and found in our *Book of Order* in F-1.0304, the Great Ends are:

October 9, "The Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind"
November 3, "The Shelter, Nurture, and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God"

November 10, "The Preservation of the Truth"

November 17, "The Promotion of Social Righteousness"

November 24, "The Maintenance of Divine Worship"

December 1, "The Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World"

What happened at Session?

*This capsule of the most recent session meeting will help us save room in our newsletter. Copies of the full session minutes will always be available in the church office.

- Session approved the organizing of the office: two Tuesdays in November for organizing.
- This year's Advent devotional book is: *Good News, Great Joy* from Augsburg Fortress
- The search for a backup pianist continues
- New time for discussion group: **5pm CT 2nd Monday once a Month.**
- Michelle needs your help clearing out the Jackie Ritchie inheritance. Wheelchair needs to be taken to the Jasper County Community Center. Linda will reach out.
- SALT and a group covenant-Shared Authority Leading Together. Continue to alert the Pastor to all activities of the church.
- Budget requests are needed by the end of October to Steve Wood.
- An Audit by the Finance Committee is needed by November or December meeting
- Clerks review occurred on September 24, 2024. Our books were approved without exception.
- Session approved the collection and storage of cleanup buckets, at the back of the fellowship hall for the presbytery.



Lucy displaying her drawing she made during the service in September. God is good indeed!

First Presbyterian Church
220 North Cullen Street
Rensselaer, Indiana 47978

