

...from the Heart



Published quarterly by the Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

Here we are. Each year around this time, we find ourselves at one of the most significant times of the year, for the followers of Jesus. We find ourselves at the threshold of New Life and what it took to be made available: Sacrificial love, entering into darkness, a going where no one else could or would go on behalf of the world.

Like so many other churches, the Patchogue church will take steps to enter into a time of contemplation and prayer. As a church, we will journey with a devotional prayer journal, *In His Steps*.

Do you remember sliding your feet into a pair of shoes belonging to your parents as a child? I do. They did not fit, did they? Examining and exploring the path Jesus took is a bit like that earlier childhood experience. We could never fill Jesus' sandals. However, in slipping them on and taking a few steps, we start to grasp how great a sacrifice and how great a love Jesus possessed and continues to uphold for each of us.

In following and continuing to seek Christ, it is the desire and passion of this pastor and all he serves alongside; may we all become more aware of the Presence of the Spirit of God. *In him, we live, move, and exist.* (Acts 17:28 NIRV) *In Him, we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.* (Ephesians 1:7 NKJV) And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3NKJV)

May this be a season of New Life for each of us!

Sincerely,
Pastor Vin



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Matt & Desiree Boutsikos

Alissa Donato

Thomas and Connie Ehrlinger

Christopher Foerth

Paul & Holly Guevara

Margaret Herrmann

Steve & Jennifer Huey

Justin & Meloni Inniss

Mark & Mary Kate La Spisa

David Lettieri

Jonathan Ollett

Jeff Ray

Jon & Lisa Rymer

Justin Taub

Anthony Vertucci

Our Deepest Sympathy and Prayers to the families who have recently lost loved ones.

Blanca Perez-Ray & Jeff on the passing of Blanca's sister Nora's Husband.

*To the Gazzo Family
on the passing of Rob's Mother, Joan.*

*To the families of Diane Malia and Shawn Dioguardo
on the passing of Diane's son
and Shawn's brother, James,*

*and to
Jennifer & Steve Huey on the passing of
Jennifer's Grandmother, Felicia.*

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Senior Pastor Vincent Linguiti

Sunday Service at 10am

**For our weekly schedule of meetings, check
out our website at www.patchnaz.net**

Sermons live stream on Facebook. Find us on You Tube.

FOOD PANTRY - MON, WED, FRI - 10am - 2pm 65 Franklin St. (Rear Entrance)

Integrity and the Christian Life

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Phil. 1:27

While here in Florida I am reading a book called Integrity. It is more like testimonies or stories about well known athletes and their quest for integrity in their lives and careers. There is an organization called the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). They have four core values: Integrity, Serving, Teamwork and Excellence. I want to focus on only Integrity for this article.

Integrity is not an exclusively Christian term or value. It should be something everyone wants to attain to. However, I would like to look at it from a Christian perspective. No matter what, our goal is to live a life pleasing to God. That will take a commitment to Integrity. Integrity from a Christian perspective is - a commitment to Christlike wholeness, both privately and publicly. That's the hard part. I want to be the same when in a public setting as I am in my private life. We should be the same in all situations. Act the same when no one is looking, and it must be real. Integrity should guide, but a double life will destroy.

Our goal should be to live a life that is pleasing to God. One aspect of that is Integrity.

1 Chron. 29:17 - *I know, my God, that You test the heart and are pleased with Integrity.*

Oswald Chambers said this - "My worth to God in public is only what I am in private"

So Integrity in the Christian Life goes beyond what it means in the secular life. Integrity for us is a commitment to a lifestyle that transcends what people see. It is based on what God sees in us. We all struggle at times, but our goal should be to please God in public as well as in our private life?

As I write this we are about to enter the season of Lent. This is a perfect time to humble ourselves before God and pursue true Integrity. We have 40 days not counting Sundays in Lent. It began on Ash Wednesday, February 22 and takes us all the way to Easter Sunday when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection. During this time we focus on our own standing before God. If we are out of alignment, then this is the perfect time to re-center on Christlikeness and holiness. That should bring us to a focus on our Integrity.

Heb. 13:7-8 - *Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.*

It is not just God who is watching our lives, it is also those around us, both Christian and secular. This is especially true of those who are leaders in the church. Our Integrity must stand the test of all three - secular, Christian and God's scrutiny. How do you stack up? I know that I fall short in my private life on a regular basis, but this can't stop me from pursuing the goal. That's why Jesus died for us. As He said when He served that first Communion ceremony at the last supper... "This cup is the cup of My blood that is given for you for the forgiveness of sins." It was and is a new covenant between God and us. Whenever we fail, we have forgiveness if we just repent and ask. Hallelujah! This promise is for all. Happy Resurrection Sunday and happy spring 2023.

In His Service,
Pastor Nick



Lost and Found

This story kind of coincides with my article on Integrity. This is a story where someone showed integrity and may not even be a professed Christian. It makes me think of a passage of a scripture found in Romans. It is a parenthetical in what Paul was addressing about the Law.

Rom. 2:14-15 - *(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times defending them.)*

Today, Feb. 16, we went to the park with friends here in Kissimmee, FL. We sat on a bench together talking. I took out my phone to show a picture and then put the phone on the bench next to my lap. As we left, I had Gizmo on his lead and got up to leave. When we returned to our resort, I went to get my phone, but it wasn't in my pocket. I checked the car and our bag that we took, but it wasn't anywhere. Oh my, I must have left it on the park bench about half an hour away. We called our friends who live five minutes from the park. They went back and checked the bench, but the phone was not there. The search began on a technical level.

I brought up the Find My app on my iPad, but it wasn't working. We checked and the Internet was down in our room. We went to the registration office, but the Internet was down there too. Next stop, Starbucks, but their Internet was also down. We found out that the Internet was down in the entire area. Can you believe that? I prayed about this, but I wasn't enthusiastic about finding my phone. Corinne called my phone several times to no avail. I keep my phone on silent all the time so there was little hope for finding it.

We were in a panic and tried to figure out what to do next. We decided to try to call my phone one more time. This time a young lady, Samantha, answered. She said she found the phone on a park bench and waited to hear a call come in. She realized it was on silent, so she held the phone close to feel for the vibration. We made arrangements to meet her back at the park. It was now dark, but she said she would wait there for us to arrive (1/2 hour or so later). We met her and her boyfriend and gave her a big hug and lots of thanks saying not many people would do what she did. She showed an inner integrity and proved the passage above. Some people have the law written on their heart and follow their conscience to do the right thing.

My phone was lost but now is found. Praise God for his indescribable gift in Christ. This was a small miracle for us. Does God care about the details in our lives. He certainly does. Give Him every concern in prayer. He loves us that much.

I hope this blesses you in some way and helps restore you faith in good people. They are still out there, thank God.

Blessings,
Pastor Nick

Worriers to Warriors

What are the circumstances that cause us to worry? The short and long answer: *everything*. The first consequence of man's disobedience was fear (Gen. 3:10), and their act of rebellion caused the entire earth to be cursed when sin entered its previously sinless existence. The perfect, pre-fall relationships that God intended for us became mistrustful, suspicious, and threatening. The desire for self-protection, self-promotion, self-“whatever makes me feel safe” went into overdrive and, in today's world, it seems worse now than ever before.



I see fear as a default response to whatever threatens our self-defined and self-understood definition of peace. If fear is not quickly addressed, worry begins. Unresolved worry can enslave the mind, soul, and body. It's irrational and counterproductive leaving no room for anyone, not even God, the ability to help us see and think clearly. There is no peace when our 'self' decides to worry.

How do we go from post-fall, natural-born worriers to new-birth Spirit-filled warriors?
We must:

Pray.

Believe that every word of God's Word is the very Word of God. (2 Peter 1:19-21)

Pray more.

Know God's Word and know how to use it. (2 Timothy 2:15 and 3:14-17)

Pray even more.

Ask God's Holy Spirit to help us understand what we read so we can apply it to every minute of every day. (2 Peter 1:19-21)

Pray more and more until the construction of our conversations with God sounds like our conversations with our closest loved ones, but with the devotion, respect, and adoration due our Sovereign Lord God, our Savior Lord Jesus, and His Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Teacher.

When life causes us fear or worry, Satan tells us no one will understand how we feel, and no one can help. Satan wants us isolated, both from God and the Church. If we begin to think we can be part of the body without being with the body, we are sadly mistaken. Imagine getting up one morning to find your arm on the nightstand. You ask it, “Why are you over there? I need you attached to my shoulder.” Your arm responds, “I’ve decided I don’t want to be attached to you anymore, but I’m still part of your body because I’m your arm. I just don’t feel like joining you.” Well now both of you have a problem, but the arm has a bigger problem! (Imagine if some of our internal organs said the same thing.) I’m being facetious of course, but the Body of Christ, as seen in any biblically sound church, always needs all its parts together. Don’t try to go it alone and don’t make us try to manage without you!

So do not be afraid! Don't worry! You're Heavenly Father knows you and what you need. Don't fret, it only causes harm. Protect yourself with God's armor. Sleep peacefully, God protects you. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Shalom,
Sue Cerruto.

Additional Scripture references: Ps. 139, Ps. 37, Eph. 6, Ps. 4:8, Rom. 8:19-23, Phil. 4:7.
Prayer is like a muscle; you must exercise it. Consider joining the Wednesday evening Warriors Circle of Prayer from 7-8:15. Your prayer life will get a workout and you will be blessed!

The Beauty of Stewardship

Stewardship has to do with how we manage our time, talent, and resources — basically our entire lives. It's a beautiful concept when properly understood. Here are the basics of good stewardship:

God is the source of all creation, including our lives. God is the primary owner of all that exists.

We are blessed by being given the task of managing well all that we have influence over: our lives, our abilities, our minds and bodies, our time, our part of the earth, our finances, our children, our church buildings, our automobiles, etc.

Although we can make decisions regarding each of the above, ultimately we are responsible to God. Sooner or later, we must give an account of our management of God's creation and of God's gifts.

When we properly use the talents, resources and property that God allows us to manage, we find great joy. Think of planting a garden which soon overflows with colorful flowers, wonderful vegetables and flavorful herbs, etc. God gave us the plot of ground, God gave us the seed, God gave us the wisdom and strength to bring forth such beauty, such good things to see or eat, or smell. Yet we did the work, with God's help, to make it a reality. Like Adam we tilled it and kept it. But God gave the increase. God's provisions and our labor brought the garden to its fulfillment.

Good stewardship enables us to do something positive and wonderful with the money God has allowed us to have. What feels better than knowing one has managed money well? Our bank account, our checkbook and our portfolio tell the story. When money is handled well, we have enough for ourselves and are still able to give to God's work.

That is the beauty of stewardship.
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Heard It Through the Grapevine

This week I am going out to prune the grapevine in our backyard. In all honesty, I have not had that much luck with growing grapes. My grandfather planted the vine years ago, and we had a grape harvest for a few years; but I was not well-read on viniculture, and so things took a sudden turn for the worse a few years ago. It turns out that if you do not prune the vine, all sorts of dreadful things can happen – in my case it was Black Rot. This is a fungal disease that presents as black and purple spots on the leaves; it is the bane of vine growers. Once you see it happening, it is already too late. I tried in vain to cut off the infected leaves and shoots, but by the time of harvest, all the grapes had shriveled to black stones, harder than even raisins.

And so last February, I made it a mission to prune the vine heavily; if I take out the diseased wood, I was certain I would protect the harvest. Unfortunately, I forgot another principle of grape-tending: fruit will only grow on new growth. By pruning heavily, I also removed the new growth from the previous year. It is true, the fungus was gone, but no grapes grew. This February I have already marked the new growth branches; so, “Lord willing and the river don’t rise,” I should have a grape harvest in September.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.” Jesus’ allegory about the Christian life in the Gospel of John is familiar to me, but after my grape troubles, I have come to see this passage in a new way. I had considered this passage as part of Jesus’ eschatological message, that is: what occurs at the end of the age when he returns. I likened it to the parable in Matthew 13:24-29 when Jesus describes tares growing amongst the wheat. At the end of the age, Jesus will “weed out” his kingdom, removing everyone who does evil (Matt. 13:41). I looked at John 15 similarly: at the end of the age, God would remove all the branches bearing no fruit and throw them into the fire (John 15:6). But now, I have come to see God’s pruning less as an illustration of final judgement, and more as an image of his loving care, not unlike Jesus’ previous description of himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:14-15). Just as a shepherd takes care of his sheep, so a vinedresser takes care of his vine.

Sometimes sheep go astray, and sometimes a vine (like mine) gets unwieldy. God prunes and removes gently, by His Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides and convicts us of our sins throughout our lives. When Jesus said “remain in my love” (15:9) he encouraged the disciples to be attuned to the Spirit, the Comforter. If we live our lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will bear much fruit. Remember that principle I mentioned earlier, that fruit will only grow on new growth? That same principle applies to the fruit of the Holy Spirit, because in our lives we are always growing. The fruit of patience appears when we are placed in those situations where patience is tried and not found wanting. Or think of it in this way: the fruit of the Spirit appears because God has been preparing us, pruning us, just for those situations in our lives where that fruit has an opportunity to grow, whether in the home or in the workplace. That has been encouraging for me, and I hope it is encouraging for you, too. Here’s to a healthy harvest! For my grapevine and for the branch of the Patchogue Church of the Nazarene – may it bear much fruit!

Jon Ollett

New \$ Budget

At this year's annual meeting we voted and approved our budget for 2023. Our budget is partially based on our spending for the previous year. A large part of the budget goes towards the utilities, insurance, and general maintenance and upkeep of the grounds of our three church buildings: the church itself, the youth center next door and our parsonage. Another portion is for salaries, benefits, insurance, and payroll taxes for our staff. Each ministry of our church has a small spending budget to help accomplish their vision and outreach of that area serving our congregation and community. Included also are our obligations to the Metro New York District and the General Church of the Nazarene which now amounts to 14% of our Annual Income. This enables our church to reach out beyond our local community. A portion goes to the World Evangelism Fund (ministering globally), Pastor's Pensions and Benefits, support of our local district office, and support for ENC (Eastern Nazarene College).

In total our budget for 2023 as presented is \$212,140. If you would like a copy of the budget call the church office. This breaks down to a little over \$4000 a week. So where does this money come from you ask? From your tithes and offerings¹. That makes this your church as you are our only support. God loves a cheerful giver so give what you feel is right in your heart. God doesn't love you less or more based on your giving. Right now our average weekly offering is \$2849. We can do it together with God's help.

There are several ways you give. In person, by dropping your offering in the basket at the altar. You can also give online by visiting our website, www.patchnaz.net, and click on the **PayPal** button. Additionally it can be sent by mail to the church office at 65 Franklin St., Patchogue.

I also want to take a moment and thank those who have given generously online through the General Treasurer & Compassionate ministries out of the abundance of their hearts to various global disaster relief projects and child sponsorship.

Soon we will take an additional Easter Offering for World Evangelism. This offering helps us reach our goal of raising and sending 5.5% of our income towards the work of Global World Evangelism.

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." **Luke 6:38**

- *Corinne Franco, Treasurer*

¹ "A tithe is a specific amount (10% of your income) that you give first, and an offering is anything extra that you give beyond that. After you've tithed and paid all your bills and expenses for the month, you can use any extra money in your budget to give even more!" **Ramsey solutions**

First Things First



By the time you read this article, the February fan favorites of Ground Hog, Valentine, and Presidents' Days will be a distant memory. But if February is a month of observances, March is a month for reflection. If only for a few moments, dare to raise your sights above the current misguided defamation of America's past heroes. Let's reflect instead on the greatness of a nation, whose leaders, God blessed and selected for precise moments in our history. When asked to eulogize George Washington, General Light Horse Harry Lee stated; *"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen,"* Washington was one of those leaders.

There are many voices that would have us believe there is no factual evidence of Judeo, Christian influence on America's foundational beginnings. I beg to differ, the evidence of God's involvement in this nation's past is abundant. Let me share just a few of the facts regarding Washington's life, beginning with the famous Battle of Monongahela, in the French and Indian War. On July 9, 1755, sixty of the eighty- six British officers were either killed or wounded in the heat of battle, forcing 23-year old Washington to assume the role of a field general. With enemy bullets whizzing past him, two of his horses were shot from beneath him, yet young Washington escaped unharmed. Only after the battle had cooled did he discover four bullet holes in his uniform. Is there any question that God had preserved his life?

Not convinced, jump ahead to August 27, 1776, The Battle of Long Island. Completely surrounded by a superior British Army, with all avenues of retreat cut off, it seemed certain that the war for independence would end prematurely. But what is impossible with man is possible with God. *Luke 18:27* (NKJ) General George Washington's risky plan of retreat was mysteriously aided by a providential fog so thick that he was able to successfully evacuate all 9,000 of his troops to Manhattan, without losing a single man. Want more evidence? Consider the December 24th Christmas Eve crossing of the icy Delaware River in 29 degree temperature. You get the idea.

Not many know that Washington kept a personal prayer book/journal consisting of 24 pages in his own handwriting. Consider one Sunday morning entry: *"Almighty God, and most merciful Father ... I yield Thee humble and hearty thanks, that Thou hast preserved me from the dangers of the night past and brought me to the light of this day ... a day which is consecrated to Thine own service and for Thine own honor."*

Years later, President George Washington would write: *“I am sure there was never a people, who had more reason to acknowledge a Divine interposition in their affairs, than the United States ... that was so often manifested during the Revolution, or that they failed to consider the omnipotence of that God who is alone able to protect them.”*

Washington has great reverence for God but even more, a recognition that without Him neither he nor the nation would have survived. How is it that so many of our current leaders have lost sight of that truth, and in doing that lost their moral compass?

Leaders, as the old adage goes, *are not made, they’re born*. The Prophet Isaiah would likely have taken issue with this notion. In a vision he received of God’s throne, the very foundations of the heavenly temple shook from the angelic declaration; *“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty...”* Isaiah was sure he was about to die, judging his own life at that moment, as less than exemplary. But instead he heard the voice of God calling; *“Whom shall I send and who will go for us?”* Isaiah 6:8(NIV) Isaiah didn’t hesitate, *“Here am I Lord, send me.”* was his reply. In God’s omnipotent ways leaders are not born or made – they are born again by His Spirit.

I’m convinced that God is intent on re-establishing His covenant with America, but to do so He needs leaders who will answer His 21st Century call. I began this essay with the notion that March would be a month of reflection. It will be. Even at this moment spiritual revival is breaking out in pockets across our nation. At Asbury University, a college in Kentucky, students and staff are experiencing the presence of Holy Spirit in such a palpable way that the prayer and worship session has continued nonstop for more than nine days. Not only is this reawakening already spread to surrounding colleges, people are traveling to Asbury College from all over the county and in some cases other nations. Students and faculty all share the same word about this phenomenon, God’s presence is gentle and peaceful and they find themselves repenting, confessing, and surrendering their lives to Him.

Can you feel something shaking? This time God’s call isn’t preceded by the thunderous angelic cry, as in Isaiah’s vision, it’s comes in the manner of a still small voice. You’ll have to quiet your spirit from all that is going on around you to hear it.

“The turning points of lives, are not the great moments. The real crises are often concealed in occurrences so trivial in appearance that they pass unobserved.” George Washington

God’s light has begun to shine in the darkness, His light is going to reflect from those who will answer His call, *“Whom shall I send and who will go for us?”* It’s time for personal shaking and spiritual awakening.

Pastor John Mercurio