

Glad Tidings

hearts open to christ - doors open to his world

First Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield • Fall Equinox 2020

Pastor's Notes

I'm only in my third month and First Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield is quickly beginning to feel like home — a socially-distanced, mask-covered home — but still home!

No one needs to be reminded of the weird times we're enduring; yet what might not be self-evident is the grace and joy that percolates through the bombardment of dire, confusing, and ever-changing directives. The human spirit is more resilient than COVID and the deeply ingrained quest for hospitality is palpable at FPCH.

Nikki and I will continue Tuesday morning "Courtyard Conversations" until a blizzard chases us inside — we may need to requisition a fire-pit — and we are eager to meet all of you. If Tuesdays don't work for you, and we can safely meet on a porch or patio, please let us know.

Until then — stay safe, be well, and never forget that God is good; God will provide!

Doug



Rev. Dr. Douglas Gerdts
Transitional Pastor

PORCH BIBLE STUDY FALL SCHEDULE

The Porch Study will meet September 23, October 7 and 21 and November 11 to study Max Lucado's Advent series. Please join us for study, fellowship and prayer. You don't need to attend each session and there is no work you are required to do before meeting. The study is hosted by Deb and Jill and Tony Mascena. If you would like to participate, please email Rebecca in the church office or Deb Nussbaum at debranussbaum1987@gmail.com and Kristin Carberry will add your address to our Zoom mailing list.



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East
Haddonfield, NJ
08033

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Courtyard Conversations

Doug and Nikki will host “Courtyard Conversations” on Tuesdays from 9 to 11. They will be outside the church, next to the playground, distanced, under a canopy. You are invited to visit with Nikki and Doug for anything from prayer to a casual “meet and greet.” To book your 30-minute time slot, contact Rebecca at the church number (856) 429-1960 or by email rmannion@haddonfieldpres.org.

Family Pandemic Group

The Family Pandemic Group meets on Wednesday at 8:00 p.m., to continue discussing Brené Brown’s *The Gifts of Imperfection*. This study will help us grow in discerning the difference between selfishness and self-love, provide tools to engage in practices that exhibit self-love, and most importantly – we will learn how to unhook ourselves from the oppressive structure of perfectionism. To attend please e-mail Gab Heimerling who will provide the zoom link.

Pastor Nikki’s Thursday Bible Study

continues its exploration of the Gospel of Mark. Discussions take place on Thursdays at (new time) 6:30 p.m. on Zoom. Here is the [link](#). Join Nikki for fellowship and discussion!

Pastor Doug’s Tuesday Bible Study

Every Tuesday at 8:00 a.m. join Doug for a conversation about the scripture that will be the text for the following Sunday’s sermon. The format is simple: Doug will present for about 20 minutes and then open things up to questions, reflections, responses, and general wonderings about the text. Here’s the Zoom [link](#) — hope to see you there!

Glad Tidings

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Transitional Pastor

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Preschool Directors

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Office Administrator

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Ed Hess
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Receptionist

Mike Richardson
Custodian

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Security

**To: The Congregation of First Presbyterian
Church of Haddonfield
From: The COVID Task Force
August 27, 2020 Facility Use Status Report**

Dear Friends,

Shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19, Session appointed a task force to monitor, plan, and implement the church's response. The immediate action was to close the building to all persons and activities, including Worship Services and Sunday School, Support and Fellowship Groups, and Staff. Concurrent with the lifting of restrictions by the Governor and State Health Agencies, FPCH has recently allowed limited access to its facilities. The following is a listing of those authorized uses:

1. Pastoral, Music, and Administrative Staff have been given access to their offices. Specifically, Nikki and Doug have been in the building regularly since mid-summer and the Music and Administrative Staffs have used their offices on an "as-needed" basis.
2. As seen during the last few Sunday Morning Streaming Services, the Sanctuary walls are being repaired and painted. Workers have had access during the week and should have it completed by mid-September.
3. The Music Library is also being completely renovated and that is also on track to be completed in early fall.
4. The Preschool has submitted a hybrid, partial opening plan that has been approved. In short, a typical week consists of three components: one-hour supervised and instructional play outside on the playground, one-hour of streaming educational content, a packet of materials for at-home education and entertainment. In the case of inclement weather, the outdoor playtime will be canceled. No activities will be held indoors- except for bathroom access. Two staff members will have access to the office. This is a drastically reduced curriculum that also reduces their footprint- but has caused reduced enrollment and fees compared to a typical year. We are committed to cooperate (physically and financially) with the Pre School through these difficult times. Opening date for this year is September 14th.

Moving forward, our objective is to develop access plans for the following as autumn approaches:

1. To bring back the 12-Step and all other Support Groups which traditionally have relied on the church to house their meetings. The decision has been made to restrict these groups to Fellowship Hall and the associated restrooms so that cleaning and sanitizing is limited to those areas. All CDC and Camden County Health Department guidelines are being strictly

followed (this pertains to the Preschool as well). As of this report, an opening date has not been set, but we expect that to be confirmed within the next few weeks.

2. To create a flexible, but safe plan to address all the needs of the IHOC program, which includes allowing individuals access to the building for interviews and assessments. This is currently being detailed with Ed Hess and should be confirmed shortly as well. No access date has been determined.

3. To create a safe access plan for smaller music groups (still guideline compliant) to not only rehearse as needed, but also participate in Sunday Worship.

Guidelines are being detailed between Peter and the Committee. Note: Although initially not appointed by Session, it was determined by the Chair that Peter should be a full member of the Committee and have been invited as such.

Of course, we could not provide this update without addressing your most pressing concern: when the facility be accessible for worship:

It was determined by the Worship and Music Committee, prior to the creation of this Task Force, that FPCH would not gather for worship until it was safe for all persons to do so. New Jersey is currently in Stage 2 of opening and in-person Corporate Worship (as per the W&MC) will not take place until we are firmly into Stage 3.

Even at that time, there will be restrictions concerning singing, hymnal and Bible use, and personal contact. Additionally, there will be guidelines concerning social distancing, egress routes, and personal protective equipment. Any proposed opening plan must also be approved by West Jersey Presbytery. Unfortunately, the Task Force does not see any reason to contradict those original recommendations; therefore, do not expect us to worship together, even in this restricted form, for the foreseeable future.

Lastly, please be aware that we are currently receiving bids from multiple cleaning contractors for daily/ weekly/monthly sanitizing and disinfecting of the areas of the building that have been designated for limited use.

Be assured that we are taking our mandate seriously and are very much aware of the desire (yours and ours) to be together in church as soon as it is safe for all persons. We are currently meeting twice a month and will continue that pace until we achieve that goal. Thank you for your continued patience, prayers, and understanding.

The COVID Task Force:

Lee Federline, Chair. Doug Gerds, Nikki Passante, Chuck Bell, Karen Dante, Kris Bean, Anne Walters, Michele Taffett, Gerry Rice, Marisa McGovern, Peter Leibensperger, Lorraine Gormley-Devine



Peter Leibensperger
Music Director

Music Ministry

Music Library Renovations!

This month, our music library is receiving an overhaul, and I am pleased to announce that renovations are going beautifully. While it will take some time to re-organize that stacks and return them to their revitalized space, the renovations are on track to being completed by mid-September. Compare these recent photos to the proposed final product. It is shaping up nicely, and soon will house one of our church’s treasures: the music library!



Rehearsal Schedule

Just a reminder that, since vocal choir rehearsals will be held at home and bell rehearsals will be held at the church, rehearsal times will be decreased to allow for transportation, sanitization, and set up. Below, please find the proposed rehearsal times for our choirs. Children’s ensembles will begin on September 16th, and adult ensembles will begin on September 17th. Please note that Cherub/Carol Choirs are by individual appointment with Nancy Ruth.

Group Name	Rehearsal Day	Rehearsal Time	Location
Chapel Choir	Wednesday	3:45p-4:15p	via Zoom
Carol/Cherub Choir	Contact Nancy Ruth to schedule an individual appointment		
Alleluia Bells	Wednesday	4:45p-5:15p	Sanctuary
Whitechapel Bells	Wednesday	5:30p-6:00p	Sanctuary
Thomas Sherrerd Choir	Wednesday	6:30p-7:00p	via Zoom
Kirk Ringers	Wednesday	7:30p-8:15p	Sanctuary
Moore Bells	Thursday	6:30p-7:15p	Sanctuary
Chancel Choir	Thursday	7:30p-8:00p	via Zoom

Preschool Glad Tidings

Now more than ever, we need to rely on those unique human qualities that are even more contagious than the Corona virus itself: **kindness, patience, and compassion**. We need to demonstrate grace with one another. This is the message that we strive to deliver every day at the Preschool. This is the atmosphere that Barbara Sewall grew and nourished for 37 years. As Barbara transitions to retirement and we continue with the foundation she built, we strive to create a growing sense of **optimism** and **hope** in a time where we deeply desire connections and community.

We, at The First Presbyterian Church Preschool of Haddonfield have been challenged to reopen the preschool, prioritizing the safety of children and our staff amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. After months of countless discussions with families, church staff, preschool staff, state officials, and medical experts we have examined the multiple scenarios describing what September could and should look like.

While September is typically a time where teachers are bustling from supply closet to their classrooms preparing to greet children and families, this year in particular presents many unique circumstances. We put our creative brains to work and developed our own 11 week hybrid preschool experience which encompasses three components:

- Teacher led Organized Playground Fun (once a week for one hour) –this will provide a place to develop friendships and keep our preschool community unified.
- Curriculum driven supplemental packets of age appropriate learning activities will provide guidance on developmentally appropriate curriculum and promote cognitive growth.
- Virtual STREAM class will offer a flexible online enrichment experience with preschool teacher, Mr. John.

We are pleased to be opening for our preschool families and welcoming back students in September. We are confident in the precautions we have taken and we truly hope that our preschool community will stand by us as this pandemic unfolds.

While many things are different here at the Preschool, one thing remains the same...

The Philosophy of the First Presbyterian Church Preschool

to enrich the efforts of the home in promoting growth and happiness in children.

We believe children are individual and unique.

We strive to give each child a foundation for subsequent school learning
in a Christian atmosphere of love and acceptance.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

In spite of the restrictions imposed upon all of us at this time, the Coordinating Team was able to meet in the beginning of September in the back yard of Co-Moderator Linda Hess. During the meeting, the most recent honoree of the PW Honorary Life Membership Award was recognized. Ordinarily that ceremony would have taken place during the June Strawberry Festival but the pandemic caused us to cancel the Festival and award the Membership later.

Presbyterian Women were pleased to present the 2020 Honorary Membership to Judy Grantham. Judy is well known for her dedication to the PW, for her ministry in the church, her teaching, her singing, her sense of humor and many other talents. She grew up in Kansas and eventually came to New Jersey. While caring for her family, she attended Princeton Theological Seminary. After graduating, she worked with Bill Getman at the Woodstown Presbyterian Church.

Judy came here as Director of Christian Education. Her mission work has included working as a Good Lady in the Prison Ministry, cooking for the homeless and singing in the choir. We are very pleased that she has been the Coordinating Team Moderator for the past several years during which time she oversaw the revision of our by-laws.

The honorary Life Membership is presented by PW for outstanding service in an area of the work of the church. The honored recipient is presented with a silver pin designed by Patricia Lynn Miller which includes many symbols. The overall design is that of a butterfly, symbol of the newness in

Prison Ministry Update

Usually on a Friday morning, 6 women pack their cars with materials to share with the ladies at the Camden County Jail. This ministry has existed for over 75 years thanks to Mary Rhody and many other dedicated women. Unfortunately, the Corona virus has halted us in our tracks. We felt it was important to let the 40 incarcerated women know that we have not forgotten them by sending

Christ and the emergence of a new creation, Presbyterian Women. Making up the “butterfly” are caring supportive hands which represent the women who work to make an inclusive community, the leaf representing our growth as we nurture our faith and the dove and globe which indicate our working for peace around the world. The cross is in the center of the design.

— Connie Reeves

Joan Miller took a picture of Judy (right) with Neva



Bosch who presented the award.

them notes of encouragement, *The Daily Bread* and other devotional materials. Coloring sheets, crayons, puzzle sheets, and pencils hopefully have helped them pass the time. To keep in touch with friends and family, note paper, greeting cards, and stamped envelopes have also been sent. The “Good Ladies” hope that we’ll be able to return to this important ministry soon.....Judy Blank, Carol Carty, Judy Grantham, Janet Lehman, Joan McCullough, Isabel Pross

Mission Opportunities

News From St. Wilfrid's

A total of 1,798 bags of groceries and personal care items have been given out to families in 23 weeks! God at work!!! For the next couple of weeks we have desperate need for peanut butter – 15oz – and tuna, either canned or bagged. Ongoing needs: paper grocery bags to put inside plastic grocery bags so the bags won't rip.....and plastic newspaper bags to separate hygiene items. Everyone who receives groceries is also given peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.....if anyone would like to share God's love in this simple way by making sandwiches, call Jill Mascena at 856-428-7342. We just never know where God is going to lead us in this ministry but KNOW, God is working through all of us to show His love! Check out the website, opendoorcliniccamden.org

Always needed: 10-pound bags rice, 10-pound bags beans, Peanut butter, Tuna, Canned fruit, Pasta, Sauce, Feminine hygiene pads, Adult diapers - medium or large, Kid's diapers all sizes, Gift cards for Shoprite or Aldi's, and always Newspaper bags, Grocery Paper bags.

Donations may be dropped off at FPC on Sundays during the drive-through from 11-12 or weekdays in the bin behind Grace Episcopal Church. Questions? Call Jill Mascena. 856-428-7342.

Caring Hearts Ministry

The pandemic is especially hard on our clients and we work with the Communicable Disease Clinic at Cooper Hospital to help alleviate their needs. Our emergency assistance requests are mostly for food and rent. Camp Bright Feathers, usually a week-long event, will be shortened to one day and we will contribute as needed. The school backpack event will be a drive-thru in the clinic driveway. The clinic has a grant for the backpacks; we will provide food gift cards. The weekend before Thanksgiving, we will deliver frozen turkeys and gift cards to the families. We cannot hold our Christmas party, but will fill gift wish lists and have them picked up at a drive-thru along with a bag of hats, socks, and gloves and hopefully some goodies. We thank you for your support as we continue to serve the HIV/AIDS community.

Backpacks and School Supplies

Let's overwhelm our friends at Camden Community Center and St. Wilfrid's with backpacks and school supplies in the last week or so of our collection! Drop supplies off at the church drive-through on Sundays, 11-noon. .

NEEDED:

- New backpacks
- Colored Pencils
- Glue Stick
- Handheld Pencil Sharpener
- Pencil Box or Pouch
- 3-Ring Binders – 1" or 1 ½ "
- Loose Leaf Paper – Wide Rule
- Dictionary
- 12" Ruler
- Junior scissors with 5" blunt tips
- Pocket Folders
- Composition Notebooks
- Tissue Packets

Becoming a Matthew 25 Church

Do you have a passion for racial justice? We need you! We are brainstorming and mapping out next steps to engage our congregation in thoughtful initiatives that will begin to address structural racism. Please contact Becky Bryan if you are interested in being a part of this denomination-wide effort: rebeccabryan@me.com or 856-986-8594.

PC (USA) offers a Matthew 25 Newsletter – subscribe for more information about the denomination's efforts and for resources such as a Matthew 25 hymn! From the newsletter: "A Bold Vision – As we live into this world of [the] virtual and digital, the Matthew 25 vision continues to connect and engage. You are among the 650-plus congregations, groups and mid councils who, during these unprecedented challenges, are keeping their focus on serving others. This newsletter is specifically for you — to resource, network and engage with communities, one another and the denomination." [Link here.](#)

Matthew 25: 31-46: The Sheep and the Goats
A sermon preached by the Rev. Nikki Perrine Passante
August 30th 2020



Whenever I preach I sermon I always try to look at the context surrounding the passage. It's almost humorous – right after Jesus declares the amazing criteria of the final judgement, he says, "You know, in 2 more days I'm going to be crucified."

I'm going to try to avoid that today, and I think the best way to enter into this text is for me to share a personal story.

It was 2008 I was the Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church in Ashland, Oregon. At the time I had been in that position for 4 years and this was to be my second trip taking 30-plus youth to Ensenada in Baja California, Mexico, to minister with orphans at Genesis Diaz Ministries for a week.

The trip to get there was a pilgrimage in itself, but the border crossings were always a test of our mettle. I've crossed the Mexican Border between Tijuana and Chula Vista no less than 6 times – 2 with the church . It was like the A-Team we were in our vans and our escorts met us and the cars are moving while they're throwing walkie-talkies at us through the window – we needed these walkie talkies in case we got pulled over by the police which weren't always the police.

And we were instructed to have the kids keep their heads down when we drove through Tijuana. I'm not sure we would take those trips today.

But these were wonderful trips.

For that week we worked on their organic farm; building structures for the orphanage in the morning, and in the afternoon we ran a children's camp. And I learned two important things: First – these children weren't orphans because their parents had died, but because their parents couldn't afford to feed them. I found this ludicrous.

And on the heels of my disbelief came the second most important thing I ever learned. Let me set the stage for you. There was no running anywhere on the property of the orphanage. The site was outfitted with

outhouses and solar showers. If you don't know what solar showers are, google it; and we all know what outhouses are. We brought our own supply of bottled water, and the orphanage had a supply shipped in weekly for all the camps that rotated in and out of the site weekly.

And it was on Day Two of this trip in 2008 that we ran out of water. That week, the shipment was hijacked by coyotes. When I say coyote I'm not referring to the animal you're immediately picturing; a coyote is a bandit- an extortionist – that families pay an exorbitant sum of money to – to help them cross the border illegally. Some people make it over. Some people don't. Accidents happen, right.

That week, our water supply was hijacked by the coyotes. Certainly not the first time. Wouldn't be the last. And that very same week, Greg- the founder and leader of the orphanage, had a meeting with officials to purchase a large drill to begin drilling into the ground to create a well that would serve not only the orphanage, but the entire local farming community. So they purchased this drill and began drilling into the ground. But the drill – this 2 ton piece of machinery-cracked. The ground was too hard. All the Kings Horses and All the Kings Men couldn't get the ground to yield even a drop. And we were without water, after that, for 3 days.

I shared this story with someone and they said "That's not Possible." It is.

That's when I learned the second most important thing: That the very Land itself can shut you out. Reject You. Close its' doors to you.

And so I would go home and stand over the sink and wash dishes and I would stand over that sink and cry because what kind of world do we live in where I can turn on a faucet and water just comes out. So from then on out I would pile my dishes in a tub and only use a little bit of water at a time. And then I felt good about myself again. And that lasted for about a week and I moved on.

I have taken a lot of trips like this. Not necessarily because I want to but because ***I need to stay chained to a reality that is not my own.*** I need to be reminded, that no matter how you slice it, there, but for the grace of God, go I. I need to be eye-level with the pain in the world, and I need to be ready and limber enough to meet it.

Scripture:

This morning's passage is a tableau of the Final Judgement of all the Nations. The enigma of the Last Judgement is powerful. It was Thomas Long who said- *it is perhaps this wild, untamed quality is the very source of their power.* Good – because what bothers me about this passage is that neither the Sheep Nor the Goats, see Jesus.

Both Sides ask the same question - When was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn't take care of you?

There is something here.

Let all those with ears to hear HEAR: Neither the people on the right, nor the people on the left, See.

Kaitlyn Schiess, popular blogger, student at Dallas Theological Seminary and graduate from Liberty University – wrote an article this week on the heels of Jerry Falwell Jr.'s resignation from Liberty University. I would sum it up as how can Christian Education go so wrong? My Words – How can our walk with Christ veer so far off course.

Her conclusion - Power.

There are many leather-bound books written on what happens when men of a certain age have amassed so much power and authority that they lose touch with reality. This is what happened at Liberty according to the author, and this can happen to entire communities, churches, and countries. We cannot see what is real.

In the article Kaitlyn writes that we underestimate the power of the Loves in our lives to shape our actions and alter our moral commitments. In Falwell's case – political power and certainly other things- But in our case, what are the loves in our lives that shape our actions and alter our morality just ever so slightly? may be physical security, economic prosperity, and power. Author and Priest Richard Rohr will say the same thing - it is Power, Prestige, and Possessions that keep us from seeing rightly – also the three things that Jesus

was tempted with in the wilderness- these are the things that cause us to lose our focus.

For us especially - Social Power. Here's the thing -All of the gospel writers describe the religious leaders and the cultural elite as those who at every stage of social life wish to be endowed with special privilege and status. And aren't we the same? College choices, neighborhoods, church membership, sports teams, affiliations – important commodities of social power. We place high importance on our stations in our life and our appearance and our successes.

None of us are immune to this sort of Power our hearts have grown to love, and the accompanying desire to Maintain it. This will be the temptation in any society; a Distorted superiority complex viewed as the higher good the Higher God our Rightness our Whiteness- and we deprive the very human condition with our needs and our greeds. We can't see Jesus because we've lost focus. We can't see Jesus because we are too high up on our pedestals.

A mindset that was antithetical to Jesus' instructions to his own community concerning being 'last' and 'servant' to all.

This is not serving this is Lording Over.

Because where do we find Jesus?

With the powerless. With the least. With the Poor and Desperate. In the dirt, in the unyielding ground. In solidarity. Not as rescue, but as relationship. And How like the Disciples to live lives of service around marginal nobodies, in opposition to our world of exploitation and self-serving, selfie-taking power.

How like Jesus to bless the poor in spirit. While the world is busy defining place and position in society, Jesus has lunch with criminals and call girls. How like Jesus to champion the least when everyone else in the world are turning their backs.

Jesus is forever identified with the poor- Why do you think so many of Jesus stories and parables are wrapped around the cycles of planting and harvest? Can you imagine what it must be like to hear stories about Jesus – the Living Water, A Savior who is the Water of Life; water from a well that never runs dry, when the ground refuses to yield a drop? He is at home with people on the edges.

Jesus is literally Shoulder to shoulder brazo y brazo eyeball to eyeball with their situation. *Make friends with Nobodies* says the Message. *Don't be the great somebody.* Aspire to be just another 'Bozo on the Bus,' as my friend says.

FB Meyer said :

I used to think God's gifts were on shelves one above the other and that the taller we grew in Christian character, the more easily we should reach them. I find now that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other and that is not a question of growing taller, but of stooping lower and that we have to go down, always down to get His best ones."

We must Get Low, People.

As low as the Migrant worker I picked strawberries with, on a hot summer day in June one year on a farm in Burlington Washington. The work day started at five and I showed up and picked strawberries beside my new Mexican friend for the full day of our shift. I guessed this gentlemen was around 40. Strawberry pickers are paid by the weight, so when we stood up to take our strawberries over to the weigh machines --- where the supervisors, who all were white college students; these 17 years olds were the final authority deciding how much these migrant workers were going to make for the day---- I wondered where my friend had gone. All of a sudden – I didn't see him. And then I saw something I will never forget. He was standing beside me the whole time. I didn't see him. I didn't see him because his back was horribly disfigured from picking strawberries on the Migrant Worker farm, for 14 years. He started at age six. He was only 20.

By becoming a Matthew 25 church we are being intentional about our focus. We are being intentional about positioning ourselves rightly and lowly so that we may be blessed with the gift of encountering Jesus Christ in the least.

We have got to get low friends.

The criteria of the final judgment are finely drawn. And there are only a few simple things that separate the wheat from the chaff, that divide the Sheep from The Goats. And it doesn't seem to matter where you hold your church membership, or what your PhD is in.

Apparently all the people who have ever influenced history will be there, and it makes no difference the number of autobiographies written, the knowledge amassed, or the fortune gained. Apparently the person who dies with the most toys still dies.

No, God's final judgement does not depend on differences in race and nationality, not even is the dividing line those with faith and those without.

Salvation is not contingent upon doctrine, religious beliefs, or dogmas. When Christ spoke of the Last Judgement he didn't speak of religion, prayer or ritual; he spoke only of social needs.

What shall be the only unifying element for all human beings of all times, will be what we have done and what we have not done for the people the world wants nothing to do with. Our only clothing at the final judgement will be our deeds.

And I like what C.S. Lewis says in regard to this –

There will be surprises.

Humans are God's Sacraments.

And at the end of time, the only thing Jesus seems to be intolerant of, is intolerance.

A few weeks ago on a Monday it was Marco's and my day off together. We went to a friend's house not far from here in a Hispanic community; they were having a cookout and invited us over to eat. They always take such pride in the preparation of food and serving – I was absolutely embarrassed as I was the only white person there and they fed me first.

And then I heard our friend's story: 15 years old, 3 days in a desert, with a jug of water not knowing if he would live or die. Started off with his family, but didn't make it over with them. At 30 years old you can still see it in his eyes.

We will never know what it is like to be in a country where the ground cannot yield food or water. Where there are no jobs. We will never know that level of desperation. (Lord in your mercy -)

The suffering of the poor and the oppressed - This is the only truth. All the rest is posturing. Farce.

So when I sit across the table from them and listen to their stories, and get to eat handmade food that is cooked with tears and love and pride, it is a communion of the highest order. It is the only communion that matters.

I always say Marco feeds the body and I feed the soul. And I have become more and more convicted that it is one in the same. Salvation is simply this:

Every Day you have the opportunity to build someone up or tear them down. Which will you choose?