

BELL TOWER NEWS

College Hill Presbyterian Church – MARCH 2026

513.541.5676 | 5742 Hamilton Ave. | Cincinnati, OH 45224 | www.chpc.org

CLOSING THE HOLY WEEK GAP

BY ALAN WISDOM, *Theology Matters* GUEST WRITER

It's been said that we're in trouble if our Christian faith operates only on Sundays and not on the other six days of the week. Nowhere is this warning more applicable than during Holy Week. If we attend to Jesus' story only on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, we pass over some important events in the week between. The cross, for example.

My wife and I have observed that the Holy Week gap is particularly wide for children. One Sunday they wave palms to greet the Savior entering Jerusalem. The next Sunday they hear soaring hymns of resurrection. Very few children, in my experience, are brought to Maundy Thursday or Good Friday services. Our two children have typically been the only ones I saw in attendance.

The Sunday School lessons also jump straight from Palm Sunday to Easter. There are no lessons on Jesus' cleansing of the temple, or washing his disciples' feet, or his farewell discourses, or celebrating the Last Supper, or praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, or Judas' betrayal, or Peter's denial, or the trials before the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate, or Jesus' scourging and humiliation, or the crucifixion. That's a lot to miss, for children or adults.

A MAJOR THEOLOGICAL FAILURE—The problem is more than just an aesthetic aversion to the gorier parts of the story; it's a major theological failure. We can't grasp the

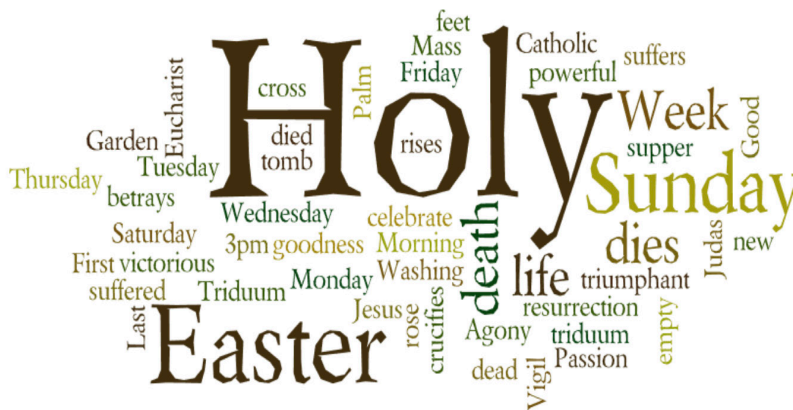
glorious victory of the Resurrection if we haven't fathomed the depths to which Jesus descended in his suffering and death. Otherwise, the empty tomb can seem like just a neat magic trick: "See, no body here!"

In the Gospel proclaimed by the apostles, the cross and Resurrection are inextricably linked. Peter made the connection as he addressed the crowd gathered on Pentecost: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know--this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power." (Acts 2:22-24)

It was this jarring juxtaposition of death and life that caused the Pentecost crowd to cry, "Brothers, what should we do?" (Acts 2:37) Unless we understand the desperate nature of

the sin that nailed Jesus to the cross--our sin that he bore on the cross--we will not recognize our need for a risen Savior who conquered sin. The only way to eternal life is through the death of Christ our Lord. A gospel without Christ's suffering is only half a gospel—not really a gospel at all.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)





PARABLE of the TALENTS

Reflections on Matthew 25:14-30

by Pam Dollard

For the longest time, reading this parable struck fear into my heart. I would picture myself as the faithless servant who buried his money rather than using it to make more. I would think about all the things I could be doing but was not, and imagined God's displeasure with me as I wasted many opportunities.

I could picture God's face becoming sober as he turned to me. After all, had I not said "no" to requests for my time, money or energy? Had I not witnessed in others the attitude that if it was at all possible to say "yes" to every opportunity

that came their way, they did so? Sure, they were crazy busy, but they seemed so productive!

It was a long while before verse 25:24 began to stand out as the focus of this parable: "Master, I knew you to be a hard man..." Knew! Hard! What a sadly inaccurate picture this paints of the God who loved us so passionately, to such extreme cost to himself. What separated this third servant from the other two was his negative opinion of the character of God. It is out of this tragic view that his actions flowed.

It gets worse. The servant goes on, "...reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed..." This servant mistakenly believes that somehow the master that has provided all to him, sustained him, and enabled him to thrive, has no claim on the fruit of his labor. He sees the master as unjustly demanding of his time and his efforts. He doesn't see his own indebtedness to the generosity of the Master.

The first two servants eventually produce their gains cheerfully, confident in the expectation of their master's pleasure in their efforts. Pleasure in them! What a different heart posture this is from that of the third servant's doubtful, distrustful attitude.

This, to me, is the heart of this parable. God has proven himself again and again – and we please him when we step out in the confidence that He is good! He does not expect what we cannot deliver. He does expect us to trust him, and to trust his heart toward us.

After this insight, it was interesting to see that when my heart is confident in God's heart toward me, I am freer to step into opportunities that come my way, but also better able to calmly discern which are my "talents", and which are intended for someone else.



Pam and her husband Pat became Covenant Partners of CHPC in 2016. She is a leader in several ministry areas and a periodically contributes to the *Bell Tower News*.

HAVE A REFLECTION ON A SCRIPTURE
or an article YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?
CONTACT STARECVG@AOL.COM.

BE A PART OF THE EXCITING MOVEMENT

For 50 years, Dr. Gary Sweeten, CHPC's Minister of Christian Discipleship in the 1970s and 1980s, has helped people around the world to build healthier, kinder, more hopeful relationships. In 2021 his current ministry *Relational Peace* began developing a variety of resources to bring this successful ministry online.

The ministry launched a major fund-raising effort soliciting gifts—large or small—to honor the steady, faithful work of Gary and his ministry associates

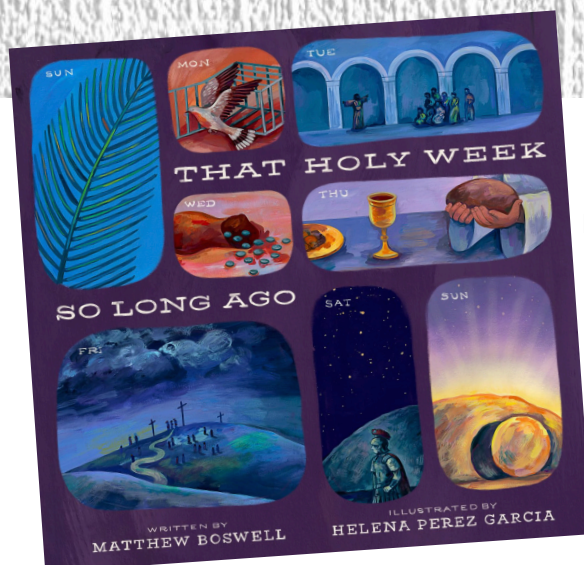


KAREN AND GARY SWEETEN

to equip future generations.

Relational Peace is often supported by many who have personally experienced a deepening of their relationship with Christ and others, an emotional steadiness, and real healing and wholeness in many aspects of life. Technology is enabling courses to reach around the world via the internet and locally through live teaching, video, books and interactive learning. Visit <https://www.relationalpeace.org>.

Give to the ministry at <https://www.relationalpeace.org/>



(CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT COVER)

Paul sees the conjunction of cross and Resurrection displayed in baptism: "Therefore we have been buried with him [Christ] by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." (Romans 6:4-5) The very sacrament by which we enter the Church testifies that true resurrection (Christ's and ours) must be preceded by true death (Christ's on the cross, ours to sin).

Reclaiming the Whole Gospel

What are we to do about the Holy Week gap? First and foremost, we must read and study the Scriptures that narrate the events between Palm Sunday and Easter. Those events occupy a substantial portion of each of the four gospels. If a pastor is preaching consecutively through one of the gospels—a classic Reformation practice, much neglected nowadays—he or she will not omit the stories of Jesus' suffering. And if those passages are not read from the pulpit, then we should read them at home among our families during Holy Week. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services are also helpful—with children

present, by all means.

My wife and I—mainly my wife—did our small part to remedy the gap in the Sunday school curriculum. On Palm Sunday she had our church's children move through a series of stations (wonder where we got that idea?) narrating the events of Holy Week. At each station—the temple, the upper room, the garden, and so forth—congregation members portrayed characters in the corresponding incident and told what happened. I played Nicodemus, a Sanhedrin member secretly sympathetic to Jesus, and recounted Christ's strange reticence under belligerent questioning. The last station, in the darkened undercroft of the church, was the tomb.

I can say with certainty that we held the kids' attention. They sensed that this was serious stuff—some of which they hadn't grasped before. I hope that, in our small way, we put Holy Week and Easter in a new light for them.

CLOSING THE GAP

Parents, grandparents, even neighbors can help to bridge the Holy Week gap by reading to children during Lent. The Public Library has many resources, as do Christian bookstores locally and online. Google "Books for Children about Holy Week." Buy one and read it to yourself. We're never too old to re-discover the messages and miracles of Holy Week.

ALAN WISDOM IS ON THE BOARD OF "THEOLOGY MATTERS," AN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL LIGHT FOR CLERGY AND LAY PEOPLE. FOR MORE INFO GO TO [HTTPS://WWW.THEOLOGYMATTERS.COM](https://www.theologymatters.com).

SUMMER MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES



THE 2026 CONNECTIONS CAMP IS "SETTING SAIL" AND IS RECRUITING "CREW"

Students kindergarten through 6th grade "set sail" on an exciting adventure to learn what it means to follow Jesus and trust God as the "Captain of their lives" and *THE 5-DAY CRUISE IS FREE* due to the generosity of church members, fund-raising and donors.

Dates: Mon., June 22 – Thurs., June 25
Time: 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM (breakfast served 8:30–8:50 AM)

End of Cruise Event: "Set Sail Carnival" Friday, June 26 – 5:30–7:30 PM in the CHPC Parking Lot – open to campers, families, friends, and the community!

What's New This Year?

Group-Based Leadership Model: 4–6 committed adult leaders will work with each age group (K–1st, 2nd–3rd, 4th–5th, 6th grade). Group leaders will stay with their students throughout the day building relationships, providing care, and guiding behavior.

Key Area Core Co-Leaders:

Each main area like Café, Art, Games and Teaching will have 2-3 dedicated

co-leaders overseeing the experience.

Mental Health & Wellness Rotation:

For each age group, our ministry partners Living Hope Counseling Center's summer interns will offer a daily age-appropriate 25-minute "wellness session" to focus on emotional and spiritual care.

Reimagined Camp Store Experience: Campers will select items in advance. Special crew members will prepare orders behind the scenes to create a smoother, more intentional experience.

VOLUNTEERS / LEADERS NEEDED REGISTER NOW

Adults and student helpers (7th–12th grade), there's a place for you! Join the crew for an unforgettable week of serving 100–125 students. This year, Connections Camp is growing and with that growth comes a powerful opportunity to serve in new and impactful ways.

THE PARENT / STUDENT REGISTRATION PAGE at CHPC.org/ SUMMER

Where You Can Serve?

A full listing of Crew Opportunities is available on the online registration form at CHPC.ORG/Summer

This is more than volunteering. It's a chance to invest in the next generation; build meaningful relationships; use your time and gifts for God's glory; and be part of something life-changing

Questions? Contact Nikki McKenna – nmckenna@chpc.org or 513-491-5571



BE PART OF A 50-YEAR LEGACY!

Exercise your "gift of swimming." Make an eternal difference in a student's life. See God at work first-hand, while you teach life-saving swimming skills with love, compassion and fun. five 1-week sessions, June 22 (evening) to July 31. Swimmer registration April 1, 2026.

Find training and teaching dates, a detailed brochure, staff application and more online at CHPC.org/SWIM. Check out the *Bell Tower News'* Swim Ministry 2025 Scrapbook and details of the unique one-on-one teaching at CHPC.org/BTN [January 2026 - Swim Ministry Scrapbook for 2025].

STAFF BENEFITS (Adults & youths 11 yrs and older) Training in teaching swimming, relationship building, and team work. One-week of free personal swim lessons and a discount on more training. Choice of community service hours or a paycheck. Free childcare for staff members, plus a week of child lessons. Financial aid for advanced Red Cross swim-related training. A unique opportunity to invest in children, teens, and adults —teaching life-saving skills, modeling a Christian life, and sharing God's love.

We would LOVE to have you and your family join us this summer. Know someone who might be interested in teaching with us this summer? Please pass this information on to them.

QUESTIONS: Katy.Verhagen@gmail.com.



Mary Sue Verhagen, CHPC Global Outreach Team—
 During CHPC's *reGeneration* fund-raising (2016 to 2021) monies were designated for major repairs and renovations of the church's

Cincinnati campus. A percentage was also set aside for Global Outreach "beyond the walls." Pastor Moses Rianto and Maasai churches in the rural areas of southern Kenya have been recipients of these funds—for raising up and training pastors, materials for church buildings and motorcycles for pastors to serve very remote areas. The 2026 CHPC Team will experience the results of CHPC's investments over the years.

YOU ARE INVITED TO "BE ON MISSION"

BY REV. SAMUEL MOCK, CHPC KENYA TEAM LEADER

To be on mission is simply to join God in the work he is already doing. This means we can *be on mission* in our local neighborhoods, churches, homes, and around the world.

When people think about *mission trips*, they sometimes imagine hard manual labor or sharing new technology with communities in need. Typically these are entry points for mission trips. The true mission is to join God and what he is already doing to bless communities wherever we are and to make God's name known.

This year, the CHPC Team will have the opportunity to partner with churches and believers in Kenya to celebrate what God is doing. We will encourage our brothers and sisters by visiting them, hearing from them and sharing our own testimonies. We will grow alongside them as the gospel continues to spread in their neighborhoods.

We will also be working with Delivering-Dignity. More than 500 million women and girls living in Kenya have no access to feminine care products which are neither available nor affordable. Delivering-Dignity was created to help girls maintain their dignity and its methods are working! Girls are staying in school and getting better grades. Teenage pregnancies and teen marriage to old men are down. Girls are no longer forced into prostitution. They now have a future and a hope and a chance at a better life. Girls are now escaping what's called "Period Poverty."

For nearly ten years, women and churches in America like CHPC have funded Delivering-Dignity.com's life-transforming ministry. The Delivering-Dignity staff in Kenya makes "dignity kits — washable, reusable kits of sanitary products. Over 30,000 kits have been distributed. The staff teach health to girls and their communities. Plus, pads allowing young women to stay in school,



play sports and have an improved quality of life. Delivering-Dignity kits are so valuable to women, they are a wonderful way to express God's love and care to Christians, Muslims and even those with no faith at all.

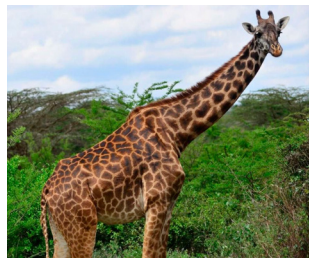
This ministry also teaches men to respect women, and to combat the illegal and devastating cultural tradition of female genital mutilation. Women are encouraged to pursue a new way for the next generation.

PRAY AND ASK GOD how he would like you to "be on mission" in Kenya. My wife, Elizabeth Mock, and I are asking people to join us as (1) prayer partners, (2) financial partners (to support the team as we go) and (3) as traveling partners. If you're interested in joining the team, apply at

CHPC.ORG/Kenya

The 2026 Mission Trip will be from June 11th to the 20th. The cost of the trip will be \$3,000-\$3,500. Scholarship and support-raising guidance is available.

QUESTIONS: SMOCK@CHPC.ORG





THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL
FIRST FRUITS & TITHE
INITIATIVE
BEGAN FEBRUARY 15.

Scripture tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"—Proverbs 22:6. So this new initiative is designed to help our children understand God's bountiful love and provision, provide an easy ways to respond to God with generosity and honor.

The initiative is introduced in a simple, age-appropriate way during K-6 Sunday School classes. It is shared as a joyful invitation, not an obligation. Leaders will share weekly teaching and create consistent opportunities for students to learn and grow in this biblical principle.

Parents are encouraged to continue the conversation about giving at

home. Even simple discussions about gratitude, giving, and trusting God can plant powerful seeds in young hearts.

HOW IT WORKS— Each month, students receive a "Giving Bundle" that includes two "FIRST FRUIT" envelopes. Then, every 90-days a "MISSION" envelope" will be added. These envelopes will be reminders to the students and their families to give prayerfully and intentionally.

The "Mission" envelopes will help students participate in supporting outreach and ministry efforts *beyond our church walls*. teaching them that generosity blesses both locally and globally.

God's Word, the Bible, reminds us: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse....Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." — Malachi 3:10.

Nikki McKenna, Director of Family Ministries say, "We are prayerful and expectant for what God will do as we launch this initiative together. Thank you for partnering with us in shaping hearts of children and adults who grow in loving and honoring the God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God doesn't need us to give Him our money. He owns everything. Tithing is God's way to grow his family for all eternity.

BE PREPARED TO CARE

BY NIKKI MCKENNA | DIRECTOR OF
FAMILY MINISTRIES

Imagine it's Sunday morning at CHPC. During the worship service, a woman sitting in your row begins to look confused. She's sweating. Her hands are shaking. She tries to stand — then collapses. Her granddaughter says, "I think it's her diabetes."

Would you know what to do?

Diabetic emergencies can happen anywhere: at home, work, in a grocery store. They require quick recognition and calm action. Knowing how to assess the situation, provide appropriate care, and monitor what's happening until help arrives can save a life! That's why we're offering "CHPC Safe" Training Classes.

Become certified in American Red Cross

- CPR
- First Aid
- AED Use
- Emergency Response Skills

Register today: <https://chpc.org/cpr>

Choose your schedule:

- Blended (12–2 PM in-person skills), or
- Fully In-Person (12–4 PM)

COST: A suggested donation of \$50 will be used for Family Ministries Summer camp scholarships.

Community members are welcome:
Please Contact Nikki at 513-491-5571

Church is a place of care. Let's be prepared to care well.

**UPCOMING DATES: SATURDAYS—
March 14, April 18, May 16, June 13, July 11 and August 22.**

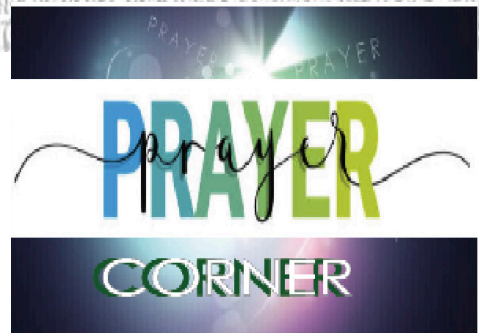


CHPC will receive a portion of your ticket price when using this promotional code

**CHPC CODE
16309**



Featuring Dave Snyder, Barbara McMullen, & Brenda Clark



BY CHRISTY ROEDIGER, ELDER

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

I have good intentions when it comes to prayer – I want to do it. I love God. I believe in the power of prayer and have seen God answer prayer again and again and again. And then I’m alone and it’s time to pray and I just don’t have much to say. I start ok, and then fizzle. It feels one-sided – not very conversational. I fall back on the few things I’m committed to support in prayer. I try to listen, but often the still small voice of the Almighty is quiet.

Almighty God, truly search me. Transform my good intentions to action and connection with You that causes Your will and purpose to live in my world. Draw me deep into Yourself and grant me prayer that connects with you for your glory in Jesus. AMEN

Bell Tower News
Article Submission deadline is the 17th of each month.

Have an article/photo of an event?
Request more information?
Contact the BTN Editor,
Sam Stare 513-382-5902
or starecvg@aol.com

55+ lunch & program

Wednesday, March 11

12-2pm

\$10 - RSVP

www.chpc.org/seniors

NEXT: April 8TH - THE ART OF AGING

The Romance of College Hill

ED LOYD OF THE COLLEGE HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Featuring: Snakes Alive with Rick!

How do animals fit into God's plan for the world?!

COLLEGE HILL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

You're Invited to....

The Magic of Easter

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

10:00AM

Egg Hunt, Entertainment, & Jesus

HELD AT COLLEGE HILL ACADEMY — 1625 CEDAR AVENUE, 45224



BY PASTOR DREW SMITH

March 1 - Count Your Blessings: Prayers of Thanksgiving

We will explore ways that God has expressed His love to us. The Apostle Paul reminds us that all we have and experience is gift! May our prayers be filled with gratitude.

March 8 - Prayers of Confession – Grace Lives Here

To confess is to agree with God about the ways we have disobeyed God’s commands. We aren’t telling God something new. He knows and welcomes our honestly sharing how we have sinned. Then we are set free to receive God’s forgiveness and love.

March 15 - Prayers of Request – Ask Boldly

This is the most common understanding of prayer – asking God to take certain actions for us or others. We will explore the challenges of supplication. What a privilege that God tells us to ask, but how do we handle the times that we don’t feel like God answers?

March 22- Prayers of Silence – When Words Rest

Prayers of silence may be the most novel subject in this series, but maybe the most intriguing. The Psalmist tells us, “Be still and know that I am God.” How do we take time to be still, listen, and simply be with the Lord?

March 29- Prayers of Lament – Honest Pain

This Holy Week we will explore the prayers of exacerbation and pain. During this week, we see Jesus weep over Jerusalem, and hear his cries from the cross. How do we talk with God in times of sorrow and despair?



WHEN IS EASTER?

That seems like a simple questions. Easter is the most significant religious holiday for the world’s 2.4 billion Christians. In the Bible, it is the day when Mary Magdalene found an empty tomb in the cave where Jesus’s body was placed after his crucifixion and death. According to First Corinthians 15:6, the resurrected Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at once, in addition to specific appearances to the apostles, Mary Magdalene, and others.

In most languages other than English and German, the holiday’s name is derived from Pesach, the Hebrew name of Passover, a Jewish holiday to which the Christian Easter is intimately linked. Eastern & Oriental Orthodox Churches (Greek, Russian, Coptic, Armenian, etc.) use the calendar created by Julius Caesar for the calculation of Easter, whereas Western churches use the calendar introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII. This difference can often mean that Orthodox Easter falls later than Easter is observed elsewhere. The earliest date it can fall is 4 April and the latest is 8 May. Whenever you celebrate it, REJOICE. Jesus it risen!



Plan Your Visit . . . and bring others with you.

Our mission at College Hill Presbyterian Church is simple. We want to grow a diverse community of Jesus followers. Here at CHPC you will discover a warm group of real people dedicated to following our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are family. CHPC is made up of people who genuinely love, encourage, and take care of one another. We aren’t perfect and we don’t get it right every time, but we never give up proclaiming God’s Word.

We’ll Save You a Seat at Sunday Worship!

Traditional style—9:00 AM—Experience the timeless beauty of our traditional worship service filled with classic hymns, meaningful liturgy, and a warm and welcoming congregation. *Contemporary style—10:30 AM*—Join us for an engaging and modern worship experience featuring dynamic music, relevant teachings, and a welcoming community that embraces diversity and authenticity.