

Highlights *From the Heights*

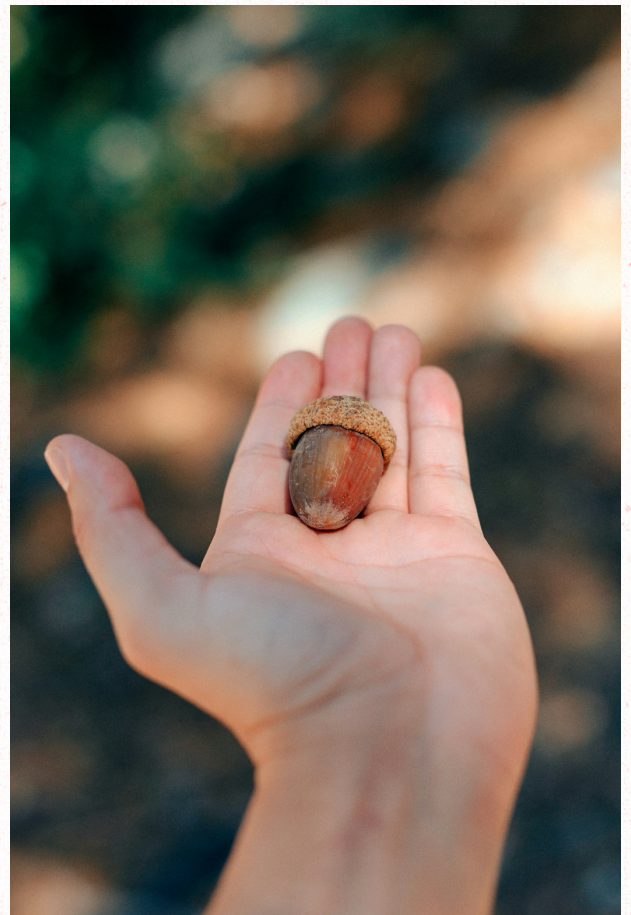
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | NORTHMINSTER EPC
SEPTEMBER 2024 | VOLUME 10

PASTOR'S CORNER — FALLING LIKE A SEED

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." — John 12:23-26 ESV

As I've been contemplating and praying through this passage recently, something particular stood out to me. This teaching from Jesus was given on Palm Sunday, shortly after the Triumphant Entry. Having seen the festive procession as Jesus entered Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, some Greeks "came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus." (John 12:21-22 ESV) The passage above is Jesus' response to their request. If you pause for just a moment and think about it, it's a really, really weird answer. They ask to see Jesus, and Jesus says, "Unless a seed die, it can not bear much fruit." Ok. Right. Good to know. But can you have a chat with these folks or not?

The entirety of his answer comes in John 12:23-36, with verse 32 explaining and expanding verse 24: *"²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit... ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* What was surely confusing to the disciples and the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus is crystal clear to us: In order for the Greeks, or anyone actually, to see see Jesus truly, He first needed to die and rise from the dead. Through the death of the one seed, Jesus Christ, the fruit of the Gospel exploded throughout the world.



There's a lot to unpack in these short verses, and maybe we'll do that over the next few months, but for now, consider this. Autumn, for all of its beauty, is a season of dying. The leaves change color because they've stopped producing chlorophyll; they've started to die. The seeds the trees have been growing all year long fall to the ground. The crops have finished their season of growth and are starting to ripen. The harvest is being gathered in. And yet none of that is an end. All of that is used to begin the process of new life and growth. That new life and growth won't be evident until months of gestation have passed, but life, and life abundant, will burst forth. Watching the leaves fall it seems like the promise of that new life is an eternity away, but once spring comes 'round it will be as if a mere moment has passed.

God created the natural world to work the way it does because it illustrates His truth (Psalm 19:1-4). In God's great redemptive work, nothing is wasted. Even death, that which seems like the ultimate and permanent ending, becomes the seed and soil that nurtures exponentially more life. There is great comfort in knowing that when we die there will be a double blessing: We will be blessed by rising to eternal life with Jesus (1 Cor. 15:52-54) and the Kingdom of God will be blessed as God takes our dying and uses it to glorify Himself and bring forth abundant new life (John 12:27-28).

The future is always scary, because from our finite perspective it's so uncertain. But it isn't, really. God is not just God of the past and present, He is God of the future as well. What seems uncertain and constantly changing for us is sure and certain for God. It is because God holds the future in His hands that we can know with absolute certainty nothing that happens will go to waste, not even death. Leaves die and fall and decompose to provide the nutrients that the seeds that fell need in order to give life to much new fruit. What is true in nature is true in us. And what is true in us is true in the Church as well.

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison

Romans 8:22-25

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

COLLEGE CARE PACKAGES

Mid-terms are coming up and our college students could use some encouragement. For the first two Sundays in October (10/6 and 10/13), we will be collecting items to fill care packages for our seven NEPC college students. Please drop off non-perishable items on the table in the narthex and we will pack them up and ship them. Ideas:

- microwave popcorn
- Little Debbie's or other wrapped snack cakes
- candy
- individual bags of chips
- Ramen noodles
- granola bars
- school supplies - pens, pencils, spiral notebooks, etc.

If you'd rather not bring items, we'd also welcome cash donations to cover the cost of shipping (roughly \$10 per box for the four out of state students). We'll also have cards available for you to sign. Let's remember to lift up our students in prayer and continue to encourage them as they advance their education.

Kayleigh Bennett – U. of Lynchburg
Hunter Brightwell – Virginia Tech
Dani Caplinger – Old Dominion U.
Cole Chapman – Randolph College
Peter Garrison – U. of AL in Huntsville
Brinna Midgley – Liberty University
Jackson Moore – East Tennessee State



LIFE TOGETHER

Keeping in touch with one another

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS:

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



OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 26 Jeb & Beth Clarke, 2003

PRAYER REQUESTS

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

– Psalm 34:4

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

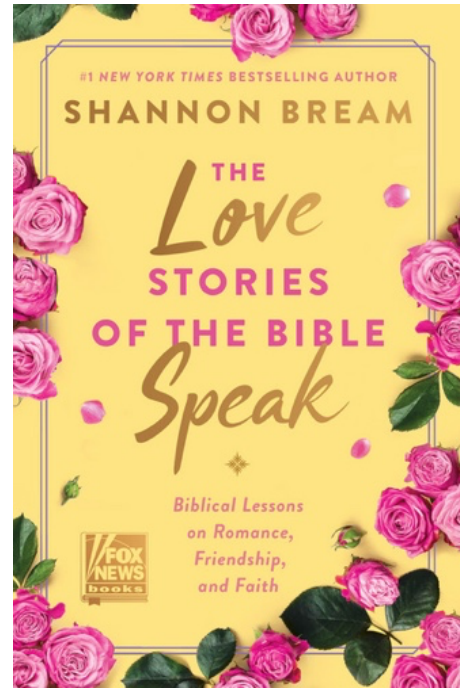
Julie Lerner asks prayers for her upcoming hand & wrist surgery on October 8.

Anne Wilkins asks prayers for her sister, Beatrice Oyler, who has been diagnosed with stage IV gall bladder cancer.

Remember others who cannot be with us in church: Pat Callahan, Arlene Horton, Margie Seal, Dot Stinnett, and Dolores Wright.

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

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY MEETS MONDAY, OCT. 14



Bible Study will meet on the second Monday of October (instead of the first Monday) which is October 14th. We will meet at the church at 7:00 p.m.

This month we move into the section on friendship love and the Bible story we will be studying is David and Jonathan, Brothers in Arms. We are continuing to use the book, The Love Stories of the Bible Speak by Shannon Bream. Please read the chapter on David and Jonathan and answer the questions in your workbook. As always, if you don't have a chance to read and study your lesson, come anyway.

Sharon Bryant is the hostess and the facilitator.

Looking forward to seeing you and a friend on Monday, October the 14th.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT

2024 GENERAL FUND

	August	Year To Date
Income	\$8,002	\$82,949
Expenses	<u>\$9,503</u>	<u>\$87,643</u>
Balance	\$-1,500	\$-4,695

OUR MIGHTY FORTRESS

By Rev. Bob Mills

If all goes as scheduled, on October 27, this congregation will celebrate Reformation Sunday. Nine days later, on Election Day, this country will choose its next president, again assuming that all goes as scheduled.

These events are regular, if not always routine, features of our lives as Christians and citizens. They dutifully appear on our calendars. And yet, we may not fully appreciate their significance. Since most of us likely know more about Election Day, I'll start with a short history of Reformation Sunday.

On October 31, 1517, a young monk and college professor, Martin Luther, posted a list of 95 topics for debate on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Luther wanted to debate the sale of "indulgences." Historically, the Catholic Church had understood itself to have the God-given power to grant Christians "the remission of the temporal punishment due for their sins" (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*). But by Luther's day, some Roman Catholic leaders were selling these indulgences to fund personal projects including military campaigns and cathedrals. Luther insisted that forgiveness of sins was not for sale.

The debate Luther desired wasn't held as scheduled. But his *95 Thesis* sparked a series of conversations about theology, polity, and missions that continue throughout Christendom today. And many Protestants, especially those in the Lutheran and Reformed tradition, use Reformation Sunday to celebrate Luther's challenge to corrupt church leaders.

Also, there are some interesting, if not always obvious, connections between Reformation Sunday and American elections. (These are broadly adapted from Christian.net.)

Reaffirming our Beliefs. Reformation Sunday provides an opportunity for Protestant congregations publicly to reaffirm the bedrock doctrines of the Reformation: *sola scriptura* (scripture alone), *sola fide* (faith alone), and *sola gratia* (grace alone). Similarly, Election Day gives Americans the chance to display our commitment to the democratic ideals on which our nation was founded openly.

Recognizing on our Freedom. For Lutheran and Reformed Christians, Reformation Sunday is a celebration of the freedom found in Christ and the liberation from religious beliefs and behaviors that contradict the teachings of the Bible. It is an annual invitation to remember the courage and conviction of the Reformers who stood against the corruption of the religious authorities of their day. Each Election Day, Americans are tactilely reminded that we have the blessing of choosing our own political leaders.

Reflecting on our Heritage. Reformation Sunday allows Protestant Christians to reflect on their historical and theological heritage. It encourages us to reconnect with the legacy of Martin Luther and other early Reformers (notably including: John Calvin, Martin Bucer, and Huldrych Zwingli) and to acknowledge their contributions to the shaping of Protestant theology and ecclesiology. Such reflections can help us develop a sense of continuity with the Church throughout the ages. Similarly, the act of voting – a privilege functionally denied to much of the world's population – can remind us of those who have come before us, those who sacrificed that we might retain such freedoms as worship, speech, assembly, and voting.

This year, Reformation Sunday and Election Day are separated by nine days. May we use that time to reflect on the connections between them.





OCTOBER 2024 MISSION FOCUS: Christmas Food Baskets

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

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

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

Monetary donations are always needed. It is usual to spend more than \$3,000 buying bulk hams at a discount. Hundreds of pounds of apples are gotten from Fitzgerald Orchard at good price.

There will be a food collection location in the narthex.

Volunteers will also be needed to pack boxes at



Collecting Bibles & Christian Materials

Gleaning has partners close to home and around the world. No matter their location, we continuously receive requests from our partners for new or used Bibles, Christian literature, and other faith-based materials. Are you able to donate any of the following items?

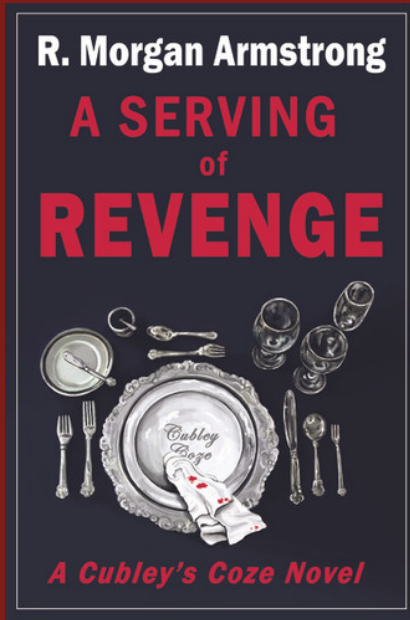
- **Bibles** – All Bibles, New Testament, Bible portions, adult/children, new/used, any language
- **Tracts** – All Christian tracts, any language
- **Books and Paperbacks** – all Christian books, hardcover and paperbacks
- **Magazines** – examples include Christian Reader, Biblical Illustrator, Decision. (Please, no Guideposts)
- **Misc.** – All daily devotionals, reference books, DVDs, CDs, and commentaries
- **Sunday School Supplies** – Quartiles from the following publishing houses: David C. Cook, Standard Publishing, Pathway Press, Lifeway Publishing (SBC), Gospel Publishing House (Assembly of God), Union Gospel

You may drop any items you'd like to donate at Northminster and we'll take them with us the next time we go over there to serve.



WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

Thursday, October 17, 10 AM @ Mary Wilhelm's Home



We have a real treat in store for our October book club meeting. R. Morgan Armstrong, the author of the Cubley's Coze Mystery series and the author of our book of the month, A Serving of Revenge will be with us at our meeting. He is a resident of Wintergreen and was asked by Barbara Baker if he would be interested in coming to our club meeting! Thankfully, he said yes.

We encourage all of you to come and bring a friend. We want to make it worth his time and effort by having at least ten people in attendance.

"It's June 1955, and William Boyer Gunn-Billy is a 12-year-old resident of Highland, Virginia. Highland has its small town charms, but it also has a huge problem: the McCulloch family. Big John McCulloch owns the McCulloch Wood Products plant, and the Green Mountain Resort. He also owns the police department, where his son is a hotheaded sergeant. When the plant rejects a trucker's safety concerns, it leads directly to a terrible accident. The truck's brakes fail and it smashes into an elderly farmer's pickup, killing the man and seriously injuring the trucker.

Billy's father runs the local garage, and the boy accompanies his dad to the scene of the accident to help with the cleanup. There, Billy meets Matt Cubley, a lawyer from Roanoke with a tragic backstory. Matt has just inherited Cubley's Coze Hotel from his uncle. Circumstances pit Matt against the McCullochs, who own the rival resort. The McCulloch clan is also eager to avoid any culpability over the accident-but Matt, a witness to the crash, is sure neither the farmer nor the truck driver was at fault.

Things really heat up when the farmer's sons, Jacob and Joash Beamis, come to town, armed with a thirst for revenge of a biblical order. Meanwhile, a vigilante sniper begins picking off some of the town's unsavory characters."

Grab yourself a copy of the book and find out what happens in this exciting story.

See you at Mary's house on Thursday, October 17th at 10:00 a.m.!!



ELON RURITAN CLUB LOOKING FOR DONATIONS

When you start your Fall cleaning, remember: The Elon Ruritan Club is looking for donations for its annual Fall Yard Sale scheduled for November 2. You can call John at (434) 941-3412 or Barry at (434) 610-4178 to arrange drop off at the Club or pick up (for larger items) at your home.

AN UPDATE ON CONSTRUCTION AT DAYSTAR JUNIOR SCHOOL

*Thanks to your generous support, we raised **\$25,709** to help Daystar finish their new classroom building! Here's a message from Jude and some pictures of the progress they are making.*

Dear Northminster,

Calvary greetings from Uganda, thank you very much for this donation, it shows that you truly care about our cause and the work we do here at Daystar Junior School Kirombe. Thank you for your continued support! Words cannot express how much this continued support means to us. We are so grateful for your partnership in making a difference.

Thank you for being an important part of our school and helping us create a positive change in our community. We are humbled by the generosity of everyone who contributed and thankful for the commitment to our cause. I will immediately notify you when we receive the funds.

Once again thank you very much,

May God bless you all,

Jude Nyanzi

Principal

On Behalf of Daystar Junior School Kirombe



See you
SUNDAY
at church

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



First-
Class
Postage
Here