



The Visitor

Schoharie Reformed Church

September 2020

Pastor Mike & Pastor Sherri

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What Do You Choose?



*“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you,
then choose for yourselves this day
whom you will serve,
whether the gods your ancestors served
beyond the Euphrates,
or the gods of the Amorites,
in whose land you are living.
But as for me and my household,
we will serve the LORD.”*

Joshua 24:15NIV

There's a famous story, often attributed as a Cherokee story, that has gone through a number of revisions. It is the story of the "Two Wolves." This version of the story comes from www.urbanbalance.com:

One evening, an elderly Cherokee brave told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.



“My dear one, the battle between two ‘wolves’ is inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.

The other is good. It is: joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.”

The grandson thought about it for a moment and then asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee replied, “The one you feed.”

This tension between the “two wolves” seems to me to describe so much of what is happening in our society right now. The daily and momentary struggle that continues for each of us in this tension is which part of ourselves do we feed? As I (Pastor Mike) think about this I find hope and challenge in the words of Joshua, “*choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.*” I find hope, because it is a choice. I have power and agency to make that choice each and every day and to re-choose it in the hours and minutes and when I am stirred. I can choose which wolf to feed, even though it may seem like the world around me, or forces beyond me are making that choice for me, the truth is – it is a choice – it is my choice - I am the only one who can make it for myself.

The challenge is that it is a choice that takes awareness, intentional effort, and hard work. It is so much easier often for us to go with our anxious reactivity, or lashing out, our firing back, our taking revenge, our attacking. All of these things are so much of our “natural” responses as people. But while going against that nature is possible, it takes hard and intentional effort. The Good News is that God helps us in our choices. We have the Holy Spirit, we have God’s presence and power to be with us, guiding and helping us to make the choices that help to center us on God, and to help bring about God’s kingdom of love, mercy, and justice in the world.

In this season there are a lot of things that our stirring our emotions going on in the world right now. We continue to work our way through pandemic, there is an increasing sense of political polarization, and there is rising tension around racial equality, and political anxiety. In all of these things the question that is before all of us is the same – which one will you feed? Or as Joshua challenges the Israelites, “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve?”

Here is how I (Pastor Mike) want to choose to serve the LORD in this time:

I choose to work to listen well, especially to voices I disagree with in a manner of respect, without defensiveness, or the need to “win” or “prove” anything.

I choose to be present in relationships of love with others, and a desire to learn what I can from perspectives that are different from my own.

I choose to spend more time in God’s Word, and reading books that will deepen my faith and challenge my growth and transformation than I will trolling the conversations of Social Media.

I choose to define myself with as much courage, vulnerability, and compassion as I am able, as well as to advocate for what I believe to be good, true, and just from my own perspective.

I choose to not make assumptions about others that will influence my ability to be present, and connected to them and the things they desire to share.

I chose to continue to not to get caught up in a false dichotomy that tells me it has to be either or, and that choosing one side means rejecting or harming the other.

I choose to work towards a future where everyone flourishes and where we can live peacefully together in our disagreements because of the deeper truth that holds us together in love.

I choose to engage in my own learning.

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While all of these things may sound well and good, and I may feel like I am doing a lot of them already, there is some really hard work I will need to do to more fully live this out. I will need to continually confront myself with courage and honesty (without shame) about my own biases, my judgementalism, and my prejudices towards others. I will need to recognize how my own position of privilege allows me to define the reality of others in ways that benefit me and justify my own perspectives. I will need to stop using language that dehumanizes and categorizes people such as “*They all just need to _____*” and “*All _____ are evil and the real problem.*” and “*They’re all just a bunch of _____.*” I will need to confront my own tendencies to blame others as the problem and to stop vilifying people who see things differently than I do. I will need to stop living as a victim and buying into the fear-driven rhetoric that seeks to divide me from others.

What are the choices you will make in this current season of our country, our society, and our world? What do your actions, and habits show you about what you’re feeding in your life right now? What do you need to become the person you want to be and to be present with others in the ways that you want to in this time?

Growing in God. Living in Love. For such a time as this,

Pastor Mike and Pastor Sherri



A Special Thank You

As we rejoined in worship Sunday, August 30th we thank Cindy Parks, MaryAnn Foland, and Liza Toborg for leading us in worship. During our worship they each shared some testimonies of God’s faithfulness in their lives. If you were unable to attend you can listen to their testimonies, they may be viewed or listened to on the church website: www.schohariereformedchrch.org under the “Engage” tab.

Remembering Denise Menzies

We received a wonderful card and a generous gift from Carol A. Hallenbeck, the mother of Denise Menzies. Denise was an active member of our congregation for many years. We remember her big smile, her generous spirit, and her servant’s heart, along with her singing voice as she loved to partner with Carol Hendrix in singing their favorite hymns. She wanted to let the church know, “*My daughter, Denise Menzies has been home with the Lord for 14 years now and I still remember your kindness to her and our family. The impact, love and caring you gave in our Lord’s service will always be close to my heart.*” We celebrate the life of Denise Menzies with her and give thanks to the Lord for sharing her with us!



Update on Fall Worship (thus far)

We want you to know that the members of your Consistory along with the pastors and other leaders in the church continue to develop our plan for returning to the sanctuary for Sunday worship. The planning team will again be meeting this week on September 10th.

Here are other important updates we want you to please note as we head into the fall season:

Beginning Sunday, September 13th Sunday worship will return to the time of 10:00am.

We will continue to meet outdoors for worship in the church parking lot (weather permitting) until our indoor plan is completed and we feel ready to move indoors. *We will also be recording the full services and posting them to our church website for people to utilize as desired, at any time!* We are planning to no longer use Zoom for live, online worship, except in the case of inclement weather, or gathering in person is not possible.

If Zoom is something you would like to see continued to be offered and you would utilize it on a regular basis please let a member of consistory know.

We continue to hold to our values of making worship as safe and inclusive for all as possible, as well as to maintain the aspects of worship that make it meaningful for us as best as we can. We know that when we return to indoor worship it will look different, things will not be the same, and it will most likely involve an adjustment on some level for each of us. Yet we also know, that throughout this pandemic we have continued to worship together as the body of Christ at the Schoharie Reformed Church in a variety of ways. We praise God for the wisdom and grace that has been shown to us throughout this time, and we continue to seek the Spirit's leading as we continue to move forward through it. Please be in prayer for all of those who are doing the work of making decisions and developing plans on our behalf. We look forward to worshipping with you this fall!

Our Wednesday Evening Book Study of "White Fragility" will be resuming this September. Please look for more details to come soon. All are welcome to join us!

Grace and peace,

Pastors Mike & Sherri





FaithWalking

Fall 2020 FW101 Retreats

Saturday, September 26 & October 3, 2020, beginning at 9am, and concluding by 6pm each day, Includes refreshments and two lunches

Hosted at Paul Nigra Center for Creative Arts, Gloversville, NY

Deadline to Register is September 11. Registration is OPEN.

November 5-7, 2020

Beginning at 5pm Thursday (with dinner), concluding by 4pm Saturday.

Includes a 2-night stay and 6 meals.

Hosted at Camp Fowler, Specular, NY

Deadline to Register is October 22. Registration is OPEN.

New this year, an online process called **Faithwalking Foundations** is being offered! Foundations is a different approach to the Faithwalking process, particularly helpful for those who are unable to attend retreats. Foundations also offers a slightly slower pace and integrates coaching in all modules through an online instead of retreat format.

This Fall, REGISTRATION IS OPEN for three Foundations Options. Sign Up ASAP to reserve your place! These WILL move forward assuming interest, regardless of pandemic, AND we are continuing a discounted pandemic price of \$100.00. Now is a great time to engage this process!

Module 1 (Self Awareness), Monday Evening 7-8:30pm EDT beginning September 14 for ten weeks. Open to all, especially encouraged for those new to Faithwalking. (Can be used for half of the CLC requirement for FW 101).

Module 2 (Shame and Authenticity), Monday Afternoons 2-3:30 EDT beginning September 14 for ten weeks. Open to those who have completed Module 1 and/or have taken a Faithwalking 101 before. (Can be used for half of the CLC requirement for FW 101).

Module 4 (Emotional Maturity), Tuesday Afternoons 2-3:30 EDT beginning September 14 for ten weeks. Open to those who have completed Module 3 or have taken a Faithwalking 201 before. Please visit: <https://www.schohariereformedchurch.org/engage-faithwalking/foundations.cfm> to sign-up for a foundations course today! The Church can help provide scholarships upon request.

Announcements

Offerings-SRC offers "Tithely" where you may do online giving by visiting our church website at: www.schohariereformedchurch.org or you may mail in your tithes to: Schoharie Reformed Church, PO Box 635, Schoharie, NY 12157. Thank you and be blessed.

Consistory-will meet Thursday, September 24th at 6:30pm.

Announcements con't.

SRC Online-if you are unable to attend Sunday worship in person we invite you to watch or listen to recorded online worship. Visit: www.schohariereformedchurch.org; go to the "Engage" tab to find "Watch" or "Listen" current or previous recorded worship service.

Picking Weeds-the landscaping out front of the buildings can always use attention. An unknown garden angel typically weeds and trims it, but it continues to need attention. Thank you.

Clothing Drop-Off Shed temporarily closed-due to the coronavirus, the operator has temporarily closed the Clothing Drop-Off Shed. This is unfortunate because the shed provided a nice little income source for the Church. In the meantime, please hang onto your donations.

Building Work-anyone willing to assist with painting projects and other jobs needing attention, please contact Dave Toborg at 518-295-8554 if you would like to help.

Operation Christmas Child-National Collection Week will be November 16-23, 2020. What do fun toys, school supplies, hygiene items, and prayer all have in common? They all go into packing a shoe box for a child through Operation Christmas Child. Since 1993 shoe boxes have been lovingly packed with items and prayers and delivered to boys and girls in more than one hundred fifty countries and territories. It has been a long standing tradition for Schoharie Reformed Church to participate in this worthwhile project. Schoharie Reformed Church collection date to be determined.

Schoharie Library-starting Monday, August 24th the public is allowed back in the Schoharie Library to borrow materials. Some highlights are: wearing a mask and social distancing is required, restrooms are temporarily closed to the public, only 3 of the public computers will be open and sessions will not be more than 15 minutes, and you are asked to not linger – the new saying is "Grab and Go!" Go <https://schoharie.mvls.info/reopening-plan/>HERE for the full reopening plan. Hope to see you soon!



Food Pantry

The Food Pantry continues to assist many families in the area as schools have delayed opening. Special items of need are cleaning supplies, paper products-paper towels/toilet paper. Items needed include canned fruit, canned vegetables, tuna fish, pasta, pasta sauce, canned ravioli/beef stew/soup/spaghetti o's/chili with beans; boxed macaroni & cheese, peanut butter, jelly, granola bars, cereal, jello packs, pudding packs, snack crackers. Hand soap, toothpaste, shampoo and shower soaps are also needed. Items may be dropped off at SUPC on Tuesdays or Thursday from 12noon till 2:00pm or they may be left between the doors of the SUPC educational building. Monetary donations are appreciated as well, checks may be written to "Schoharie Valley Food Pantry". Volunteers are needed to help with the Food Pantry, if able, please contact Diane Walion at 518-868-4629.

The Food Pantry has a special request, if anyone with a truck would be willing to go to Price Chopper twice a month to unload a tractor trailer. This would involve loading it into their truck and bringing it to the church and unloading it there. The loads can be quite large at times, if able please contact Diane Walion at 518-868-4629. Thank you all for your continued support.



The Food Pantry is open Tuesday & Thursdays, 12-2pm

Thank You

Greetings Schoharie Reformed Church, This summer is sort of Sabbath for the ministry at Camp Fowler. The big bench overlooking Sacandaga Lake will mostly remain empty. The dining hall will not reverberate with sound nor host a Thanksgiving Dinner. The Chapel will be able to listen to the wind chimes uninterrupted by chaplains talking or the scuffing of sandy feet. The deer will graze on the meadows and I suspect a good part of the garden as well...

A Sabbath is a time that no one is really looking for. It's a moment where we remember that it is from God that we not only get our daily bread, but our daily breath as well. We didn't ask or plan for this time and we cry almost daily for the missed children, volunteers, and staff who would inhabit this space.

But here we are, and in the immortal phrasing of Outward Bound: "If you can't get out of it, get into it!" Your recent gift will be used to give camp a chance for all the things that nourish us to grow into "Apostles of Living Light." And for this I say, "Thank you" Kent Busman, Executive Director.



The New Brunswick Theological Seminary are deeply grateful for your recent contribution to the Annual Seminary Fund.

We also hope that this letter finds you well during this unprecedented time-know that you and your loved ones are held in our prayers. Your well-timed support ensures that we can continue providing future leaders with excellent and adaptable training that is synonymous with a NBTS theological education. Your gifts immediately impact the seminary and students affected by COVID-19. One recently shared with us:

"I work two jobs to be able to pay for my seminary education. Recently, my husband lost his job due to closures with the stay at home order. My salary will now need to pay for mortgage and food. Every dollar of assistance will continue to help me attain my dream of a seminary education."

Thank you for your prayers and gifts, which extend beyond our campus to all seminarians. We have been grateful to our faculty and students who have gracefully navigated the full-time transition to online learning. This dedication and devotion displays our commitment to joy and justice in every community, company and congregation they faithfully serve.

Thank you, and on behalf of all those blessed and uplifted by your support, we send our profound appreciation. In Joy and In Justice! Rev. Micah McCreary, Ph.D, President.

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