



# The Country Courier

News from The Sower's Chapel

November 2023

## FROM THE REGIONAL PASTOR

As the situation with Pastor Garry continues to unfold, it is becoming increasingly clear that his intention is to go into secular work, beginning as soon as he can get that organized, most likely the first week of November. If all goes according to plan, he will continue to live and work in Pittsburgh, but hopes to be able to preach occasionally for both Sarver and Pittsburgh.

Of course, this affects everything at The Sower's Chapel, and with the current shortage of ministers in the General Church, it presents a special challenge for the society. On the other hand, nothing is permitted that can't be turned to some good, and I am convinced that this change will in the long run be good for Garry and for you!

First of all, it relieves the tension around what constitutes a full-time job in the pastorate, not to mention some of the specific issues that complicated the pastor's life. Then again, it will incentivize the congregation to rally in support of the church's many uses, and consider what might be done in good faith to prepare for the call of a new pastor at some point in the future.

That said, the General Church administration is committed to supporting The Sower's Chapel just as fully as our means will allow. For now, I plan to continue as your main pastoral resource, and the guy who schedules other ministers to help out. These will include the Rev. Chris Bown and hopefully Garry, each for worship services on a monthly basis, myself occasionally, and others, including any bishop who has time to visit. And I really hope that you will find the variety of styles and topics in our sermons to be a benefit, and not a distraction!

I plan to attend and contribute to as many of your board meetings as possible, and – soon – to establish a new Pastor's Council that can work with me to consider some of the social and organizational issues that are not directly board-related. On future visits I also hope to schedule personal visits with members – and potential members –

of the congregation as time and occasions permit.

With all this in mind it is going to be important that local members take careful initiatives to help co-ordinate events. For example, is anyone willing to take the lead in arranging overnight accommodations for the visiting ministers? Is anyone interested in checking the office telephone for messages on a regular basis? And what about mail that needs pastoral attention? If someone shows up at the church when no one's there, is there a sign listing a contact number?

You already have a small cadre of volunteers doing important work for the church, but this situation presents opportunities for a new generation of people to get involved, and even to introduce some new ideas and programs at the church. How about you? Is there anything you'd like to discuss with me, or with your local leadership? If so, please don't hesitate to call or write. In the spirit of a "brainstorm," I don't think any idea should be too outrageous to at least consider.

- Mike Gladish

## REFLECTIONS ON DIVINE FORESIGHT AND PROVIDENCE

Something New Church people (and other Christians) have debated for centuries is the question of how Divine foresight works in relation to providence. Does the Lord know, even before you are born, whether you will go to heaven or hell? Or does He foresee ALL the possibilities without knowing the specific choices we will make?

*continued*

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Perhaps His foresight changes with every new decision we make from day to day! As esoteric as this issue may seem, it can be useful to contemplate how it might apply in our lives, both individually and as a congregation of the church.

One thing is certain: the Lord always provides for our free will. But at the same time, there is no “providence in general” without infinite attention to the details. I personally compare the situation to a timeline visible only to the Lord: since He is above time and space, He can see things we can’t see, and can provide for them without in any way interfering in our freedom to make choices within the framework of time.

But if that doesn’t work for you, you might like to read the Rev. Bruce Rogers’ article in *New Church Life* for July/Aug 2021, in which he makes the case for the Lord knowing all the infinite possibilities, not the actual outcomes.

Either way, the critical thing is to be aware that without knowing the future (in some sense), the Lord cannot provide for it, and so cannot lead us toward the best possible outcome (see DP 333). With that in mind, and knowing that nothing is permitted unless some good can come out of it (AC 6489), I think it is critical that we see all the events at The Sower’s Chapel as opportunities to grow in the love, wisdom and uses that lead to heavenly life – both here and hereafter.

In this context every decision matters, and everyone *else’s* decisions can be met with equanimity and patience, looking for the good that the Lord always offers. Remember the manna in the wilderness (*Exodus* 16), and remember that the Israelites had to get down on their hands and knees, and sift through the dirt and sand of the desert to collect it. So we have to look humbly for the good in all our circumstances, and be grateful every day for this “daily bread” that can, in fact, save our lives.

- Mike Gladish

## THANKSGIVING

As we’re in a state of flux, we don’t yet know what, if any, kind of service we will be having on Thanksgiving Day. Stay tuned. When we know, you’ll know.

## JOIN US AND DECORATE THE CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS

Church decorating is scheduled for Saturday November 25th, the Saturday after Thanksgiving. If you haven’t been to a decorating work party they are a good time and a great way to be with friends.

If you are a regular to this party please encourage friends to come. What gets done depends on how many people are available to help. There will be work for all ages, come and share your creativity and get in the Christmas Spirit. If you like, bring something to share for lunch. We try to be finished at lunchtime.

*Thanks,*  
– Carol & Bill



## NOVEMBER 2023 CALENDAR EVENTS

Nov 5: Rev. Garry Walsh, Visiting Minister

Nov 7: 1 pm - Bible Study @ 1833 Coffee

Nov 12: Rev. Brian Keith, Visiting Minister

Nov 14: 1 pm - Bible Study @ 1833 Coffee  
7 pm - Board of Trustees

Nov 19: Rev. Chris Bown, Visiting Minister

Nov 25: 9 am - Decorate church for Christmas!

Nov 26: Visiting Minister TBD

Nov 28: 1 pm - Bible Study @ 1833 Coffee

