

Ponca City Christian

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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Seeking, Serving, Sharing
May 21, 2023



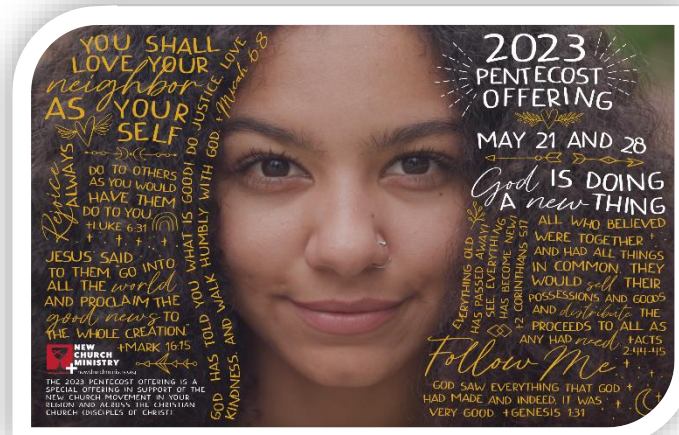
Devotional Christian

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:5-11

You hope for good surprises, but many of life's surprises are the bad kind. The new Christians Peter writes to have been surprised by facing persecution for their faith. Then Peter breaks the news that persecution is ordinary for Christians. Jesus said that if they persecuted him, they'll persecute his followers. We're better equipped to meet life's surprises, tragedies, and atrocities if we center our thinking upon our Lord's pattern of crucifixion and resurrection. It wasn't a one-time occurrence. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are the outline of hope for us. We acknowledge by Jesus' death that evil and tragedy cause needless suffering in the world. Yet Jesus' resurrection proclaims that evil doesn't get the last word. God's grace does.

As we meet the problems life throws at our faith, Peter instructs us to "cast all your anxiety on" God. The believers Peter writes to are losing friends because of their faith. Their neighbors don't trust them. The government is wary of them. Peter says that such struggles test us, and, in a sense, refine us.

As Christians we are part of God's great, grand, and cosmic work. God continues to fight evil through us, to deliver gracious love to others through us, and to bring life from death in us. God's working in our lives isn't obvious every minute. Sometimes it's difficult to see what God accomplishes in quiet ways with ordinary people. We experience God's care partly through our fellow Christians. That's one reason the New Testament tells us to study our faith together, to speak together of our hope, to gather for worship. We trust that God will restore us, support us, strengthen us, and establish us. Because the Christian faith isn't centered on the pastor or any individual but on God's surprising, recurring grace in Jesus. We'll trust that Jesus' death and resurrection are the pattern of God's continuing grace among us, and we'll cast our cares upon God, no matter the consequences. We affirm our faith with Peter's last statement, "To [God] be the power forever and ever." Amen.



In the beginning, Jesus sent out disciples, two by two, not to "plant" churches, but to proclaim good news, to experience the hospitality and wisdom of neighbors all around. At New Church Ministry, we believe God is calling the whole Church back to becoming new... back to becoming who we are: a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

Your gifts to the 2023 Pentecost Offering help ensure our movement continues to embody the Disciples of Christ vision: to be and to share the Good News, witnessing, loving, and serving from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth.

Half of your gift supports the local new church movement through your region's ministry. The other half supports New Church Ministry efforts across the United States and Canada to equip, train, and empower new leaders.

Giving in Review

As of April 30, 2023

Income Received YTD	\$111,198.76
Budgeted Expenses YTD	\$109,500.00
Actual Expenses YTD	\$106,542.74



Wednesday
May 24
3:30 PM

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the hope we have in Christ. Help us to endure trials and persecution with joy, knowing that we are not alone. We ask that you give us strength to resist temptation and cast our anxieties on you. Thank you for your grace and for restoring us when we are weak. Amen.