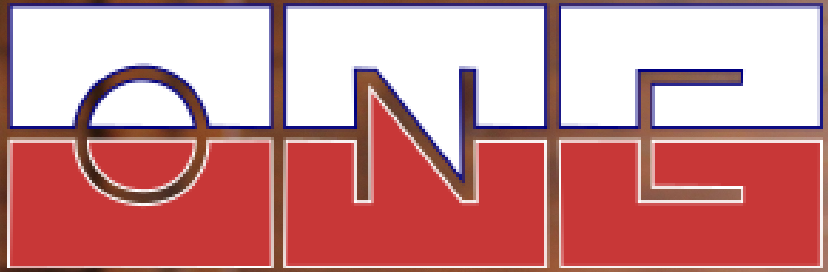


INSIDE:

- + Favorite Biblical Books
- + Local Charity Updates



A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
September 2024





Ellis County Ministerial Alliance

ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

one@ourecma.com.

The ECMA ONE Advisory Board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication. The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

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Editor's Note:

This month we asked our writers, "Aside from the four Gospels, which book of the Bible is your favorite and why?"

The Book of Psalms

Written by:

Cheryl Glassman

"Sing to the Lord a new song for He has done wondrous deeds!" Psalm 98:1 (NCB).

I have been a cantor and church musician for 50 years. Prior to that time, I remember my mom opening the church hymnal and handing it to me. I finally got the hint and did it on my own. Praising God through song has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember.

My grandmother was a gifted musician. She sang in the Methodist church choir, played piano for church events and even played for silent movies! I cannot remember a time we went to Grandma's house on Canal Boulevard or Fort Street when she would not get up and go to the piano and lead us in a song from

church.

The old adage, "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree," holds true, as my dad and uncle were also very involved in church music. Dad was mostly from the pew. He would always sing harmony; I loved sitting next to him at Mass! Church music and worship was never pushed upon me until my rebellious stage kicked in. Even then, if I was at church by myself, I would pay close attention to the cantor(s) and accompanist, picking up my hymnal and following along.

One of the things I love about the Catholic Mass is the structure, which always includes a psalm, which follows the Old Testament reading. It is no surprise, then, that as a Catholic church musician, if I HAD to pick a favorite book from the Bible, it would be the Book of Psalms!

Jesus mentions the psalms in Luke: *"Everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled,"* Luke 24:44 (NCB).

I have quite a few prayer books and books about Christianity. My favorite books are those containing daily verses or reflections. I have three of them on the table next to my chair at home and read the daily excerpt from each one every night. Something else I like to do is see which psalm we will be using at daily Masses and on the upcoming Sunday. At daily Mass the psalm is usually recited; but on Sundays, the psalm is always sung.

In actuality, the Book of Psalms is a book of religious hymns. Each psalm, for me, can provide such a spiritual moment. Some of the psalms are uplifting, some are

The Book of Psalms (Continued)

contemplative, and some share sorrow. All, however, place God at the center. They give the reader or listener, when at Mass and the cantor is leading the psalm, an opportunity to spend what can truly be a profound moment praising and sharing in the presence of God.

I have shared in previous writings my ministry as an RN at Hays Good Samaritan and Haysmed. One of the most humbling things I did while I was at Haysmed was accept a position as a chaplain. The chaplain would visit all new patients and those needing special care, such as those with chronic illness, those critical, such as those in ICU, or those in dire situations in the ER. This included time with the families.

I carried a bible and a special book (still have it), "Pastoral Care of the Sick." The book includes prayers and psalms. Especially during trying times, I would pray a psalm with families and patients; sometimes, it was just a sentence from a psalm and then silence. It seemed to me that those precious words from the psalms would bring comfort and peace, and at times, joy.

Here are a few of my favorite passages: Psalm 46:10 (NCB), "*Be still and know that I am God*"; Psalm 23:1 (NCB), "*The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want*"; Psalm 130:5-6 (NCB), "*I trust in the Lord, my soul trusts in his word. My soul waits for the Lord more than sentinels wait for the dawn*"; Psalm 41:1-3 (NCB), "*Happy is he who has*

regard for the lowly and the poor; in the day of misfortune the Lord will deliver him"; and Psalm 8:4-5 (NCB), "*When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you set in place -what is man that you should be mindful of him, or the son of man that you should care for him?*"

The Book of Psalms - take a moment to contemplate the beautiful texts and prayers - and "*sing to the Lord a new song for he has done wondrous deeds!*" Psalm 98:1 (NCB).



Cheryl Glassman is the Director of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

The Book of Job

Written by:

Rev. Cana Moore

In terms of the many books of the Christian bible, there is one I return to often. Some people are drawn to the wisdom found in books like Proverbs and James; others might be impacted by the stories of the early church in Acts or the release of the people in Exodus. One of my personal favorite books is the

book of Job.

This long, very old story is likely dated from before the patriarch Abraham. There is some discussion about its origins, but it makes most sense to me that this is a story where Job is a character, rather than a person who lived the life expressed in this book. However you understand and interpret this story, those reading Job can see the very

human experience he is having; if you are someone who thinks and strives to do everything rightly and righteously, it is only natural to cry out, "Why, O God, has this happened?!"

The majority of the text in the book is devoted to dialogue. The characters who make appearances are forming court cases, a legal back and forth to argue for

The Book of Job (Continued)

their perspectives. Job and several of his friends are on different sides, and each of his friends has a different perspective but all land in the same place: they believe Job needs to repent and God will restore him. Job, on the other hand, stands his ground, and declares that he is not hiding sin nor is he deserving of what has happened.

This whole conversation and argument is around the concept, one present in their culture and in our own, that those who do good get good, and those who do wrong get wrong. This retribution principle is professed in many portions of wisdom literature in the Christian scriptures and in other places. Job, as a book, stands in the way of this and says with a blinding honesty: what about when that isn't true?

In the case of Job, of course, we tend to see ourselves in Job's shoes—righteous, receiving some sort of divine punishment

because of our goodness. We see the unfairness of it all and we protest, "Why should bad things happen when what I do is in accordance with the will of God?"

Why do nonprofits close their doors after doing good, while greedy mega-corporation CEOs get richer? Why does evil thrive while welcoming love is often threatened and harmed? Job brings this question to God while pushing off the arguments of his friends who get progressively and progressively insistent that it is his unrepentance which causes his struggle.

In the end, God shows up, speaks to Job, and poetically calls him to the witness stand. God takes this time to reply to Job's questions, to indicate that God had been listening the whole time, and reminds Job that God is the origin of all things. This offer of scale is not to shame Job for his requests, but to remind Job of the care God has for every element of

God's own creation.

The story of Job is a comfort to me because it addresses a central human experience of living in an unfair, unequal world, and presses for an answer. We know this in our own lives—when we see someone who is righteous lose a child, experience a disaster, or suffer. Job is given the space to express all of this emotion, work through it, and God, in the end, does not punish Job for what he says or his complaints. Actually, Job is the only one God actually listens to! The book of Job assures me that God is not threatened by my protests of injustice, but rather gives me space to be heard, confident that these unfair realities are not uncounted.



The Rev. Cana Moore is the pastor of Hays Christian Church and Gorham Community Church

Jonah: A Grace-Filled Book

Written by:

Rev. Jon Anderson

My favorite book of the Bible (apart from the Gospels) is the book of Jonah. I appreciate it partly because of

its uniqueness. It's the only one of the Minor Prophets that tells a story, as opposed to giving us a series of speeches by prophets as the others do, for the most part (Hosea has some plot, but it's mostly

speeches, too.) It's also short enough, just four chapters, that you could preach a sermon on the entire book.

What's most important is that it is a story of God's

Jonah: A Grace-Filled Book (Continued)

everlasting love for all humanity. The prophet Jonah is ordered by God to go and preach to the people of Nineveh, a town that is notorious for its sinfulness and opposition to God. Jonah hates the people of Nineveh for what they've done and believes that Nineveh rightly deserves God's punishment.

When God orders him to preach to them, he is appalled. He knows that if he preaches to them and they repent, God will forgive them, and they won't be punished. He doesn't believe that Nineveh, or anyone who acts like them, deserves forgiveness. So instead of going to Nineveh as he was commanded, he gets on a ship bound for Tarshish, which is miles in the opposite direction from Nineveh.

But of course, God knows where he's going, what he's doing, and why he's doing it. And as we see throughout the Bible, when God wants something done, it will get done! God sends a storm to the sea, and the sailors aboard the ship are terrified. Fearing for their lives, they cast lots to see who is responsible for the storm, and the lot falls on Jonah. Jonah begs them to cast him overboard to save themselves, and they do so.

Then God sends a great fish (not a whale) to swallow

him. For three days and nights Jonah sat in the belly of the great fish, praying and hoping for God's forgiveness and deliverance. After three days and nights, God delivered Jonah from the fish's belly, and he decided that as much as he hated the idea, he'd better do as he was told. So he goes to Nineveh, walking through the city, warning the people that God will destroy them. The king of Nineveh, the people of Nineveh and even the animals were covered in sackcloth and ashes, and turned from their evil ways, and God forgave them.

Jonah couldn't believe that God would forgive such evil people. He hated the fact that God was gracious. He wanted to die rather than see Nineveh forgiven. He sat outside the city and stared at it, wondering if God really meant to forgive these horrible people. But nothing happened, and the hot sun beat down on Jonah's head, and he grew very uncomfortable. God provided him with a bush that would give him shade and respite from the heat and Jonah was grateful for that.

But the next day, God sent a worm to attack the bush, and the bush withered. Jonah was angry about that. God also sent a wind that made it even

hotter, and Jonah became even more uncomfortable. Again, Jonah decided he would rather die than live like that. And God asked him, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" Jonah said, "Yes, angry enough to die." And the story ends with God reminding Jonah that he had just had the bush for one day, but in Nineveh there were 120,000 people, whom God had known all their lives. How much more should God be concerned about them, and want them to repent and be saved?

What Jonah didn't understand was that though he was a prophet of God, he too was a sinner. He, too, deserved death, but God was merciful to him, despite his disobedience. Through his preaching, God gave the Ninevites opportunity to receive mercy, despite their sins. Jonah shows us the love and mercy of God, although we do not deserve it. It is one of the most grace-filled books in the Old Testament. For that reason, it's my favorite Bible book, apart from the Gospels.



Rev. Jon Anderson serves Prairie Faith Shared Ministry, a group of four Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America (ELCA) congregations in Western Kansas.

News Briefs

Backpack for Kids

Written by:

First Call for Help

First Call for Help held their 28th annual Backpacks for Kids event on August 1st and 2nd! The event was held in the Fellowship Hall at the First Presbyterian Church. Children received backpacks filled with grade appropriate school supplies (all brand-new items), and a hygiene bag including full sized products such as shampoo, deodorant, bar soap, and a "Smile Kit" donated by Delta Dental.

As of August 8th, there have been over 550 backpacks and hygiene kits passed out to children within

Ellis County. First Call for Help also delivers extra backpacks, supplies, and hygiene kits to all Ellis County schools to keep on hand for any child that may join the school mid-year or show up with no supplies.

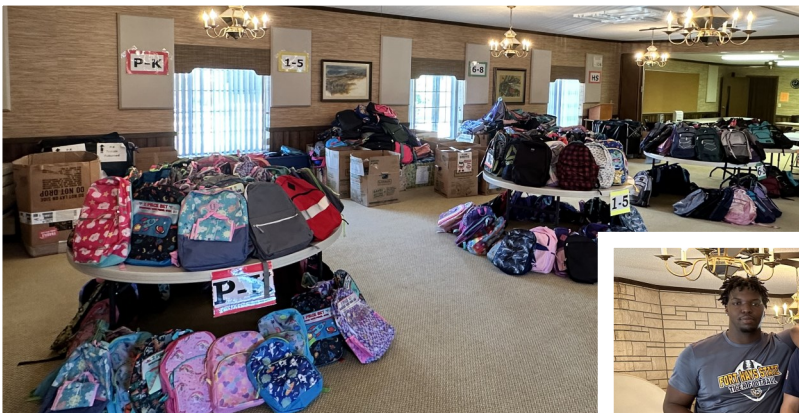
The distribution days take many volunteers to help it be successful. There were a total of 39 volunteers helping with set up and the distribution days. We were luckily able to have eight different community organizations there passing out additional information to the children and their families. The organizations/agencies included were Big Brothers Big Sisters, Bikers Against Bullies, Bookmobile (Hays Public Library), Boy Scouts,

Early Childhood Connections, Girl Scouts, High Plains Mental Health, and KSU Cottonwood District Health & Nutrition.

The community is extremely helpful with this program, and it would not see the success that it does without them. First Call had MANY different donors: some from churches, some businesses, some non-profits, and many individual donors. First Call for Help would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to everyone that helped, whether it was donating supplies, money, or volunteering. Every little bit helps and that is what makes this program so special.

Macey Pfeifer is the Executive Director of First Call for Help.

Pictured below: Some of the Fort Hays State University football players who helped set up.



Cold Weather Shelter Coming Soon: A Letter

Date: August 27, 2024

Dear Community Members,

The Ellis County Ministerial Alliance has drafted a plan to open a cold weather shelter in the Hays community this winter. At this time, we estimate there are 2-5 people in the community who, because of limited resources, must sleep outside or in vehicles during extreme cold weather. The Ellis County Ministerial Alliance plans to provide overnight shelter when forecasted temperatures are 20 degrees or below. Based on previous year's weather we may need to open the shelter as many as 20 nights between November



Informational meetings:

Dates: Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Thursday, October 10, 2024

Time: 6:30 PM

Place: First Baptist Church

1111 Fort St

Hays, KS 67601

and March. The shelter hours will be from 8pm - 7am.

To provide this ministry, we will need volunteers! Volunteers would have training and sign up for the nights and shifts when they would be available. Informational meetings are scheduled to provide the details and answer your

questions. We are excited to provide this important resource to our most vulnerable population. Please share this information with your congregation and include this endeavor in your prayers for God's guidance and your involvement. To register for an information session, visit www.ourecma.com/hayscoldshelter.

