



The Connection

April 2025

A Monthly Newsletter of Turner Christian Church

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Dear Church... from Pastor Matt

The Beatitudes #2: Poor in Spirit

**"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of God."**

(Matthew 5:3 NIV)

The first lesson I ever taught as a minister was on this verse—and it was terrible. At least, I think it was. All I remember is that I didn't understand what "poor in spirit" meant, and the senior minister (who was observing my first night leading youth group) had to finish the lesson for me. Now, ten years later, I think this verse might be one of the most important in the entire Bible. This is how Jesus begins the sermon on the Mount, and an argument could be made that the rest of the sermon is really just an explanation of this first sentence.

To understand how this one verse can be so important, we have to know what it means to be "poor in spirit." If you remember, last month we talked about God's blessing: God provides generously for his people and all of his creation. We call this "Grace." We also talked about how human beings don't like to depend on God. We prefer to be in control (or feel like we're in control), so we set out on our own.

Now think about what happened when Adam and Eve set out on their own. God had given them all of creation to rule over. After they rebelled, what did they have? Nothing. Everything they'd had belonged to God. In fact, this is probably why they were ashamed to discover that they were naked: in the Old Testament, nakedness is commonly a sign of poverty. Adam and Eve were ashamed to discover that they were not rich demi-gods, capable of setting out on their own. Instead they were poor creatures with nothing to call their own, nothing to make them important, impressive, or powerful. This is why they covered their nakedness with fig leaves.

We, like Adam and Eve, are poor created beings. We bring nothing into the world with us. We have nothing that has not been given to us, even our very breath. We cannot add any value to this world beyond what God has given. Everything we can offer is just regifting what God has given us.

We are also like Adam and Eve in that we all try to cover up our nakedness. We put on fig leaves to cover up our poverty of spirit. We cling to accomplishment, status, wealth, anything that will convince ourselves and others that we are worthy, self-sufficient beings. But it's all a lie.

To be poor in spirit may seem like a depressing existence, but that's really only a matter of perspective—or pride. My children are poor in every way. They have no jobs, no degrees, no accomplishments, and they are not self-sufficient in any way. And yet, they are not ashamed. Why? Because they don't need or expect to be "important." They are happy to share in the resources of our family without feeling important or necessary. They are content to belong, not because they are needed, but because they are loved.

As we come to Holy Week, we are reminded of the ultimate example of poverty of spirit: Jesus Christ. Jesus chose to become poor with us, to live as a poor Jewish carpenter, to live in obedience to God, to the point of dying on a cross, without ever thinking about his own dignity or importance. When he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus could easily have said, "Forget it, I'm too good for this," and he would have been right. Instead he died for us in order to open the door, and open our eyes, to a kingdom where we are never needed, but always loved.

I've been thinking... From Pastor Rachel

When I came back from Scotland, I found a small miracle: my Christmas cactus had produced two blooms.

My Christmas cactus NEVER blooms. Sometimes it taunts me, by growing buds, and then after a few hopeful days, it loses them. I have had my Christmas cactus for five years, and not one bloom. I've watered it in different ways, tried more sun or less sun, and finally abandoned all hope, letting it roost above the fridge and only watering it when it occurs to me.

But I came back to blooms.

I needed blooms. Recently, I've been walking alongside a situation of some people I love very much. I'm not sure things are going to turn out okay in their lives; I'm not quite sure where God is at work in the situation, though I believe very much that He is active and involved. I see faith in the lives of those involved, and I wonder, where is the fruit of that faith?

So I got emotional when I saw this long-dormant cactus had bloomed.

Sometimes it seems that things bloom at the most unlikely time. But before that, there's been all the work you can't see. The plant had to take in water, and the water had to travel up through the plant to where it was needed. Complex chemical reactions had to happen inside the plant as it took in sun and carbon dioxide. So many things had to happen that I could not see. And then. . . blooms.

Perseverance is a quality of God. Sometimes I lack perseverance, or have in in the wrong areas for the wrong reasons. But God is always faithful to who He says He is, and God tells us that He is at work.

Romans 8:28: *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

Ephesians 3:20-21: *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."*

Psychologists say that a key aspect of perseverance for humans is emotional regulation.

As believers, we seek to neither dismiss our emotions as unimportant, nor give in to them. When we cannot yet see what God is doing, emotions can bring us to discouragement or despair. Perseverance can become more and more difficult. With emotional regulation, we can freely acknowledge those emotions before our King. We can journal about them, cry about them, discuss them over coffee with an encouraging friend, and get all the hugs we need. *And* we use our times of prayer and worship and our times with God's people to keep us focused on the good things of God. We don't need to diminish our pain or confusion or any other emotion. We don't need to shame ourselves for expression. Instead, we put the emotions in their proper context, surrounded by the love and constancy of the God who is at work for our good. What a truly abundant Father we serve.

Whether you have emotional regulation down pat, or are just beginning this journey of emotional engagement-be encouraged! There's work going on that you might not yet see. The Father is faithful, able to do more than you could ever ask or imagine.

If you could use extra support, or are experiencing debilitating and long-term emotional distress, please reach out to a licensed Christian mental health counselor. In all emergency situations, call 9-1-1.

Financial Report

—Matt Holmes

Dear Turner Christian Church,

On March 30th I announced during the sermon that we are currently experiencing a budget deficit. In 2024 our expenses exceeded our income by \$28,000. The gap between income and expenses has been growing over the past several years.

Expenses have increased in predictable ways—insurance, utilities, payroll, and other expenses always grow with time. We have also seen increases in expenses tied to our ministry opportunities. When our food bank could no longer operate properly in the church building, for instance, we were able to rent a building from Turner Homes at a very generous price which has allowed that ministry to continue and thrive. We also decided to incorporate the preschool into our church budget so that we could invest in them as a ministry rather than requiring them to balance their own ledger at the end of each school year. This has allowed us to increase payroll so we can retain our excellent staff for longer, and to restructure classes to allow for more-focused education.

At the same time, we have seen a slow decrease in giving over the past six years. The main change we have seen in our giving patterns (which are visible only to our financial secretaries, who handle all confidential giving information) is that, as givers have moved away (either to other places or to Heaven), they have not been replaced. Even though our church family has grown overall since 2019, our number of givers has shrunk.

Unfortunately, the trend accelerated in 2025; as of this writing (March 31st), we have likely already spent the last of our general fund and begun using our emergency fund. That sounds scary—and we absolutely need to take this seriously. I want you to know, however, that I am not worried. First of all, we have maintained a large reserve fund for exactly this kind of situation, so we have the time we need to turn this around. Second, our board is already working to limit spending and find ways to narrow the gap between income and expenses. Third, this is a generous, loving congregation. You have proven that you are generous when asked, and you have also proven that you can pull together when there is work to do. I have no doubt that we can get through lean times together and come out the other side closer than ever. Finally, and most importantly, our God is generous, and he shows no signs that he is done working through Turner Christian Church. He will provide for us and guide us to the right balance of income and expenses that will allow us to do the work he has called us to do and lay the foundation for future generations of ministry in Turner.

So what can you do? First of all, if you are part of our church family and you are already giving the amount you are able to give, then all I ask of you is your prayers (and, as I mentioned during the sermon, maybe a casserole or two when we have events to cater). If you are part of our church family, and you do have the capacity to help us make up this shortfall—especially through regular, sustainable giving—I ask you to prayerfully consider helping to share the cost (and the joy!) of the ministry of Turner Christian Church.

If you have any questions regarding the church finances, please feel free to contact the church office.

March Food Bank Report

March was a very busy month at the TCC Food Bank. Our volunteers dedicated 283.5 hours in service to this vital ministry. Besides the usual Monday morning hours, Thursday delivery hours, and weekend hours, we also underwent our annual training. We now have twenty-one officially trained volunteers, up from the thirteen trainees we had last year. We also have two volunteers who have not been officially trained yet and one more potential volunteer I may be working with and training for our Thursday deliveries. —Ann

The amendment to the bylaws as presented to the congregation on March 30, 2025, that would remove all special employment policies for treasurer and preschool staff position from the bylaws was approved by the congregation.

With Sympathy

Pauline Parmenter passed away and went home to the Lord on March 27, 2025. A Memorial Service is being planned. Pauline is Helen Comstock's sister. Please keep Helen and the family in your prayers.

New Members!

We welcome Jerry and Bev Andersen who transferred their membership to Turner Christian Church on March 23, 2025.

Baptized into Christ!

We rejoice with **Katie Remy** who was baptized into Christ on March 30, 2025.

Missions Presentation

Keith & Kathy Ham will share what is happening in their ministry in Kenya, Africa on Sunday, April 6, 2025, 9:00 am in the Fellowship Hall.

The Hams serve with the CMF team in partnership with Missions of Hope International (MOHI) in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya. The goal of their many activities in the Mathare Valley is to see individual lives and communities transformed for Christ.

The Hams are involved in holistic ministry. MOHI currently uses the education and feeding of 13,000 children as an inroad into all types of ministry to the families of the Mathare Valley, including community development, health education, micro-credit loans, business training, church leadership and staff development. As this is done, small groups are formed to pray and study the Bible and churches develop from these groups. To provide leadership for the churches, they have begun the Urban Ministry Institute.

They are also involved with MoHI's Angaza Discovery Camp—a two-week church camp experience that provides an experiential opportunity with Jesus and leads students to a lifetime commitment to live in alignment with God, others, themselves and creation. Come and see what God is doing in Kenya!

Seniors Lunch and A Movie!

Monday, April 7th at 11:30 am

Soups on! Come and enjoy a bowl of soup, a movie, and fellowship. We will be watching *The Sound of Music* while we have lunch. We would like to encourage everyone to bring a friend. Please register on the app: <https://subspla.sh/4mmrvq8/> or use an event registration card in the chairs.

Seniors Bowling Trip

April 11th at 1:00 pm

Strike, Spare, or Gutter, all bowlers are welcome and if you don't want to bowl, come and be a cheerleader. The cost is \$5.00 if you bowl and FREE if you just want to cheer. We will leave the church parking lot at 1:00 pm or you can meet us at Northgate Bowl (2380 Northgate Ave, Salem).

Free Fraud Prevention Class

April 14th at 11:30 am

As a partnership between the Santiam Service Integration and Turner Christian Church, we will be hosting a fraud prevention class presented by the Marion Co. Sheriff's Dept. The Class is free! A light lunch will be served. All are welcome! Please register at: <https://subspla.sh/gsjrzxv/> or use the event registration card in the chairs.

Egg Stuffers Needed!

We will be putting candy in plastic eggs on Saturday, April 12th at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall for our Community Easter Egg Hunt. All ages are welcome!

You can also help by providing plastic eggs and individually wrapped candy that will fit in the eggs. There is a box in the church foyer you can deposit these items.

A Note from Grace Brown



March 15, 2025

Hi, Turner Christian Church

Greetings from Amsterdam! I have been here in Amsterdam in the Netherlands for two-and-a half months, and I want to share with you all that Jesus is coming alive in Europe, especially through the youth! It is incredible to witness with my own eyes how God is setting the youth on fire with the gospel and propelling them into a fruitful relationship with Jesus that spreads like wildfire! The church in Europe is growing rapidly, and those who had grown cold to Him are discovering and leaning into renewed, enduring passion for Him! It's difficult to not be bolstered with confidence and courage watching this unfold in person, so I hope this serves as an encouragement to all of you back home because God is active and coming alive now more than ever in Europe! Also, in two weeks I am going to fly into the Middle East with six others so that we can spread the gospel to the unreached and outcasts; so I ask that you continue to pray for my team and I to fulfill God's will, walk in godly obedience and wisdom, and for divine protection and guidance.

In Paul-like fashion, I want to express to you that "I thank God upon every remembrance of you" and pray about you often. I can't wait for when I can see all of you again and rejoice in God together!

P.S. I want to honor my grandma—Ann Cecil—before the church, because if it wasn't for her godliness in generosity, faithfulness and selfless love (especially her obedience and trust in Christ that inspires me to do the same), I would not have made it this far; and I would venture to say the same for this wonderful church. Keep her company until I get back! Be blessed and His peace go with you all!

In love, Grace Brown

Community Easter Egg Hunt



Saturday, April 19, 2025 at 10:00 am

Volunteer Opportunities Are As Follows:

✓ Greeters: Welcome people to the event and socialize during the brunch. Arrive by 9:30 am day of.

✓ Section Leaders: Oversee an age group while the children hunt! Encourage them if needed and help make sure each child is getting an opportunity to find eggs. Arrive by 9:30 am, day of.

✓ Set-Up Team: Hide the eggs the morning of the hunt—arrive by 8:30 am day of.

✓ Clean-Up Team: Stick around after to help get the church Sunday-ready.

✓ Egg Stuffers (as many as possible!): Put the candy in the plastic eggs on Saturday, April 12th at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. All ages welcome to participate!

✓ Donate Bags of Candy & Plastic Eggs (individually wrapped, miniature-sized/able to fit in the eggs) Please place your donation in the box in the foyer.

We will have a brief meeting on Sunday, April 6th, immediately after worship, for all volunteers.

NAME(S): _____

PHONE: _____

(Please circle where you would like to serve and place in one of the boxes on the back wall or drop off in church office—you may also call the church office. Thank you!)

Easter

At Turner Christian Church

—Maundy Thursday Service, April 17th at 6:00 pm—

—Good Friday Service, April 18th at 6:00 pm—

—Community Easter Egg Hunt, April 19th at 10:00 am—

—Easter Sunday Sunrise Service, April 19th at 6:00 am—

—Easter Sunday Worship Service at 10:30 am—

Discover Beauty in Dry Places God's Compassionate Invitation

"I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." ~Isaiah 43:19b, NIV



2025 Women's Retreat: April 4-5, 2025

Hosted by the Northwest Christian Network
on their convention grounds
— 5605 Jubilee Dr SE, Turner, OR 97392 —

We all experience dry or wilderness periods in our lives, but God invites us to see beauty as we trust his promise that he is making a way through. The women's retreat of 2025 invites us to ponder the fears and possibilities, as well as the discoveries and mysteries in our journey.

COST: \$70/adults; \$45/college students

- Registration includes lodging, meals, and program
- Check-in starts at 3 pm on Friday
- Dinner available from 5-6:30 pm
- Program begins at 7 pm Friday night
- Meals: Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast & lunch
- Program ends at 3:30 pm Saturday

Free Time: hang out, mini-golf, treasure hunt, more

For more information & to register:
<https://www.nwchristiannetwork.com/women-s-retreat>

Church WORK DAYS

Saturday April 5th • 9am-12pm, Lunch, 1-4pm
Sunday April 6th • 1:30-4pm

Indoor + Outdoor Projects available. Young and old, all abilities & experience are welcome!

Some Jobs That Need To Be Done!

- Painting outside trim
- Finish outside painting tasks
- Cleaning all building windows (inside and out) & sills
- Tree trimming lower branches of trees by the road
- Raking playground bark to fill in patches and even out the entire area
- Cleaning out/organizing hallway behind the baptistry
- Dusting fans in fellowship hall and sanctuary
- Caulking in men's bathroom
- Basketball court lines (stencils- see Steven Robinson for directions)
- Pressure washing walkways
- Vacuum baseboards in the sanctuary
- Organize and clean up games in youth room
- Organize and clean up craft supplies in kids classroom
- Kitchen deep clean refrigerators (wash and get rid of anything past expiration dates)
- Clean off counters and wash down thoroughly
- Put things away and tidy up areas
- Replace a bathroom faucet