



# PAL PRES

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION

PALISADES  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH



## — REFLECTIONS —

*“In the social and civil context as well, I appeal not to create walls, but to build bridges,” he said, according to the AP. “To not respond to evil with evil. To defeat evil with good, the offense with forgiveness. A Christian would never say ‘you will pay for that.’ Never.*

*-Pope Francis*

Evangelical preacher, Robert Jeffries, pastor of the first Baptist Dallas Church in Texas, used the Bible to defend the President’s obsession to build a wall along the US- Mexico border. On Fox and Friends recently, he said: “The Bible says even Heaven itself is gonna have a wall around it, He continued : “Not everybody is going to be allowed in. So if walls are immoral, then God is immoral.”

The truth is you can find a verse in the Bible to defend almost any position you want to take. That is why it is necessary to read the Bible with a critical eye and look at the recurrent themes that are not subject to the cultural beliefs and situations of the time in which they were written. Jesus, was a teacher, rabbi, prophet who was forever upsetting the conventional wisdom and social norms of his day. He used Scripture to liberate not oppress and pointed to the ways we create our own hell by our attachment to the ways of the world, specifically the acquisition of power and wealth.

To suggest that the Jesus or God would support the building of a wall of any kind is to radically misunderstand God and Jesus. I am not advocating open borders, but I am suggesting that building walls, excluding people in need is not a Christian teaching. Jason Miller, a leader with the [Franciscan Action Network](#), a Catholic social justice group, told HuffPost it’s possible to “cherry-pick” any reference from the Bible to defend one’s point of view. But for Christians, the biblical command to love God and one’s neighbors should take precedence over all other teachings. He went on to comment: “The United States has a right to secure our border, and we should and we have, but we also shouldn’t turn away those in need, especially those seeking asylum,”

The kind of Christian who likes cut and dry answers, the Christian who insists that some are in and some are out miss the point of the Gospel and most of the parables Jesus used to get his point across. The Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Widow looking for the lost coin, to name a few, suggest that our notion of what is fair and just is not God’s. God’s mercy is not fair...God’s love radical. Rob Bell in his book, [Love Wins](#) rightly observes how: “Often the people most concerned about others going to hell when they die seem less concerned with the hells on earth right now, while the people most concerned with the hells on earth right now seem the least concerned about hell after death” Jesus was not concerned about moral piety. He was concerned about caring for those who are naked, hungry, thirsty, in prison, the stranger...if you have forgotten this read Matthew 25. God is not about building walls.

Walls are not biblical, bridges are. Bell says it beautifully: “Once again, God has a purpose. A desire. A goal. And God never stops pursuing it. Jesus tells a series of parables in Luke 15 about a woman who loses a coin, a shepherd who loses a sheep, and a father who loses a son. The stories aren’t ultimately about things and people being lost; the stories are about things and people being found. The God that Jesus teaches us about doesn’t give up until everything that was lost is found. This God simply doesn’t give up. Ever...Jesus did not use hell to try and compel "heathens" and "pagans" to believe in God, so they wouldn't burn when they die. He talked about hell to very religious people to warn them about the consequences of straying from their God-given calling and identity to show the world God's love.” Perhaps Pastor Jeffries needs to heed Jesus’ warning.

## DEACONS' CORNER

In January we welcomed in the New Year and we welcomed Madeleine Bassil to the Board of Deacons. We want to thank Joanne Conde for her service as a dedicated Deacon for the past 3 years. We thank Margret Allen and John Guzewich for their dedication as they each decided to stay on for another 3-year term. There are a total of 9 Deacons. Among other duties, the Deacons take turns hosting coffee hour after worship on Sundays. We graciously accept any food donation or help with coffee hour. Please contact Jim Rubenstone to contribute (or just bring something in and we will make room at the table for it). If you or someone you know needs a casserole or a dinner contact Denise Cae Tilberis. If you or someone needs a ride to and/or from worship contact Margaret Allen and a ride will be arranged for you.

For prayer requests or get well cards you may contact Stephen Van Dyk. We ask for continued prayers for all who need God's healing presence in mind, body, and spirit including Mary, Bigelow, Sally, Richard, Ernie & Rich, Jane, Jack, Mary Ann, Christopher, Josh, Marilyn, and Helen. Please keep everyone in your prayers.

If a memorial service or any other event is being held at the church contact John Guzewich to help coordinate the service if you require food, desserts, and/or serving help from the Deacons. The Board of Deacons contact information is included in the bulletin the first week of each month. Let us know how we can help or serve you!



### FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

Bible Study Wednesdays 12:15 pm

- 6 Parent Support Group Meeting
- 10 Annual Meeting following worship
- 12 Session Meeting New Members 7:30 pm



The annual meeting of the congregation will take place directly following worship on **February 10, 2019**. The reports of committees will be received as well as review of financials for 2018, the 2019 budget, voting on Pastoral terms of Call for 2019 and the election of a member at large for the nominating committee and auditors. Please make every effort to attend this important time in our life together as a faith community.

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Articles due by the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the preceding month \* Editor Jane Cowan