

“Blessed Are You”

Revelation 7:9-11, I John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12

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From the Pulpit

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A communion meditation delivered by The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens, Sr. Minister, The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, November 1, 2020, All Saints Day, dedicated to the memories of James Arnold Fewlass , Richard H. Kevan, Benjamin F. Wiant, Patricia Likert Pohlman, Margaret Crosby Alexander, Carl Edward Miller, Joan Marguerite Larson Lebold, Arlene Flocken Reynolds, Antonia M. (“Toni”) Carroll, Willard B. Fernald, Lawrence W. Walquist, Jr. and always to the glory of God!

“Blessed Are You”

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Today we will remember with great love eleven women and men who entered eternal life since November 1, 2019. Only Jim Fewlass had a memorial service and reception at First Church. Joan Lebold had a Zoom service, Arlene Reynolds had a small service with a livestream, Toni Carroll had a small service in which was also livestreamed and Will Fernald will have a livestream service November 21st at 10am. The other six have had no services and as a result, no closer for many of us. Today, we need to remember them. In this pandemic year which has taken so much from so many for so long, we must remember them.

Today, we will take some time to lift each one up in this service – our All Saint’s Day Service. Please listen carefully. I ask you to give a few extra minutes of your lives to salute and remember these remarkable men and women who together lived and served God for 947 years

– an average of 86 years for each. They were sisters and brothers. Mothers and Fathers. They were pioneers and innovators. They were kind and generous; loving and compassionate. They were all children of God.

They were ours and we were theirs.

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our salvation. Amen.

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James Arnold Fewlass was 78 years old when he entered eternal life November 29, 2019. With a Master's degree in Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York, Jim found his true passion in teaching and working with teens. He loved teaching. He dedicated his life to teaching students in the Roxbury section of Boston in a school which was 100% minority population when he arrived there in 1966. He taught everything from History to English as a Second Language to Reading and finally Computer Science. He also loved S gauge model trains, singing, his church family where he served as our Treasurer and volunteered in the office and so much more. First and foremost, Jim Fewlass loved Mary Day, Katie, Trenton, Madeleine, Isabella, and all the people whom God brought into his life.

Thanks be to God for Jim Fewlass.

Richard H. Kevan was 88 years old when he entered eternal life on January 4, 2020, surrounded by his family's love and his Jan, his beloved wife of 68 years, by his side. Dick worked for Ohio Bell and

AT&T for 48 years, he loved to golf, and share stories of his youth in the Wellsville, Ohio. He loved to fish the waters of Lake Erie and was an avid hunter. He loved to sled ride down 14th Street, and ice skate on Chettle's Lake, he loved to grow tomatoes and make his famous green tomato relish. He served as President and board member of the Salineville/Southern Local School District, was a member of the Jaycees, and served as a Deacon in the Wellsville First Christian Church. He loved and lived life fully.

Thanks be to God for Dick Kevan.

Benjamin F. Wiant, 85, when he passed away peacefully in his home, the historic Wesley Chapel (Hilliard), with his husband, Jon Chandler by his side. Father of three, Ben was born in China. He grew up surrounded by music and beautiful Chinese artifacts, collected by his educator-missionary parents. Those years in China shaped his career choices and lifetime interest in Chinese antiquities. Ben was recognized as one of the finest piano technicians in America.

His understanding of the instrument's artistic requirements brought him praise from performers worldwide, many of whom were proud to know him and call him their friend and counselor. A gifted pianist and musician, Ben studied in Germany and developed a truly international perspective on piano building and design, which guided him throughout his professional and technical career. He was gentle and he was kind, and he was a member of our Choir for many years, Ben brought music to life and changed our lives. He was beloved by everyone in our church family.

Thanks be to God for Ben Wiant.

Dr. Patricia Likert Pohlman was 84 when she entered eternal life on March 19, 2020 following a long struggle with dementia. Patty grew up in Ann Arbor and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1957. While at U of M, she met and stole the heart of James Erwin Pohlman, a law student at U of M. They married September 6, 1958, and moved to Columbus, Ohio where they lived together for 47 years until Jim's death in 2005. Patty was a member of First Church for more than 60 years.

Patty was an active member here serving as our Moderator, a Deacon, and in many other capacities, including as representative to the United Church Board for World Ministries. While raising three sons, Patty pursued and received a PhD in counseling psychology from Ohio State University in 1980. She served in private practice helping families and later finished her career as an academic advisor for OSU undergraduate psychology students. She was a beloved mother and Granny, favored aunt, creative quilter, accomplished chef, elegant hostess and Patty was incredibly unselfish. Through their thoughtful and generous estate planning, following Patty's death, Jim and Patty Pohlman bequeathed a remarkable gift of \$150,000 to First Church.

Thanks be to God for Patty Pohlman.

Margaret "Peggy" Alexander was 88 when she entered eternal life on April 29, 2020 after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease. Active here for 25 years, Peggy served as a Deacon and was in worship each week until she was no longer able to be with us. She was a lover of all kinds of music and art from across the globe. She loved dogs with a special fondness for Airedales and wire fox terriers. In addition, she enjoyed wine tasting and cooking fine French cuisine. She delighted

in graciously entertaining her guests who have often commented on how much they appreciated her southern hospitality.

She was also very generous sharing her gifts with many of organizations. It was Peggy's gift that made our Parish Hall piano possible. She was always pleased to know it was used for worship each week in the 9am service. Peggy was as one of the most delightful human beings I ever knew. She was always sweet and kind.

Thanks be to God for Peggy Alexander.

Carl Edward Miller was 82 when he entered eternal life having died of COVID-19 on May 6, 2020. Carl was a life-long learner and life-long educator. Carl had a passion for music, fine arts, and literature – known by many for his enduring wit, perpetual curiosity, and the ability to embrace the humor in life. But, beyond everything else, Carl was very positive and optimistic. He had an enduring spirit of optimism. He was very forgiving. He was incapable of holding a grudge. He treated everyone with love and acceptance. Here at First Church, he was a Deacon and enjoyed serving others and being with all of us. He was here every Sunday he could make it. Laurie Maynell remembered Carl greeting everyone every Sunday with a hearty and joyous welcome. He was especially close to Bert Cook.

Thanks be to God for Carl Miller.

Joan Marguerite Larson Lebold was 90 years old when she entered eternal life on May 16, 2020 with all four of her children by her side in her home at Westminster Thurber Community. Joan touched everyone around her with her kindness, compassion and love of family and friends, setting a firm example of acceptance, openness and love for all. In the summer of 1950, it was love at first sight when

Keene Lebold walked into the firelight circle at Dunkirk Conference Grounds. They married in 1951 and they were soulmates and best friends throughout their 64-year marriage.

Joan's selflessness, compassion and care for others was legendary among her family and friends. She was also well known and appreciated (most of the time) for being pragmatic and direct. From purchasing newspapers from homeless persons on the street (whose names she knew) to the volunteer work at First Church for BREAD, Good Samaritan and in the office, Joan helping support those in need exemplified a life of living her values to the fullest.

Over the course of her life, she provided maternal guidance, comfort and support to children and families all over the world. Joan thoroughly enjoyed her role of mother, grandmother and great grandmother not only to those in her own family, but also as mother and "third grandmother" to many in her wider circle. Trained as a teacher, she loved spending time with the children in her life and they in turn adored her.

Thanks be to God for Joan Lebold.

Arlene Finch Flocken Reynolds entered eternal life in the peace of her home in Hilliard on July 5, 2020 at age 93. Mother of four and caregiver to thousands, Arlene Reynolds was an active member of First Congregational Church for 66 years. In fact, she was studying the Book of Acts in our Zoom class just five days before her death. Arlene did everything here – especially as it related to justice and mercy.

Following her first husband Milton's untimely death in 1957 due to cancer, Arlene began her career as a teacher and then the director of

the first interracial nursery school in Columbus at First Church. After several years as a teacher with Head Start (the first cadre of teachers in the program) Arlene became a child development counselor at the Children's Hospital Guidance Center. Her faith and participation at First Congregational flourished through the years.

With the support of husband John Reynolds (married 1970), her service to the central Ohio community grew exponentially. She provided leadership for the mission work of our church, most notably "Bethlehem on Broad Street (BOBS)," our annual Christmas celebration for our area's underserved friends. She was a founder of BOBS and the heart and soul of Bethlehem on Broad St. For many years, she also ran the Good Samaritan Program at First Church. She was our Missions Commissioner throughout the years.

She supported the building of more than 60 Habitat for Humanity homes. Arlene helped refugees from around the world establish their lives in central Ohio, and she supported a variety of social justice initiatives especially BREAD. She never missed a Nehemiah Action.

Although always modest and deferring the success of her work to God, she received recognition with a variety of community service awards. The Columbus Metropolitan Area Church Council's "Living Faith Award" and the Columbus Dispatch "Highest" (now called the Jefferson Award) are just two examples.

All her life, Arlene enjoyed traveling and camping, taking her family on adventures throughout New England, staying in close touch with her family and visiting her many friends throughout the United States. My sermon title for her memorial service was "Incalculable." Her influence on people was incalculable.

Thanks be to God for Arlene Reynolds.

Antonia M. (“Toni”) Carroll, best known to many here at First Church as Rev. Ron Botts’ wife of 42 years, Toni died with Ron and her brother by side at 72 years old on September 13, 2020 after a long battle with brain cancer. Toni Carroll was a trailblazer and a pioneer in the aging field and served as a mentor, teacher and friend to many. She tirelessly advocated for the rights of older adults to age in place with dignity. Known for her quick wit and sense of humor she was also respected for her wisdom and leadership skills. The aging profession has lost a crusader whose indelible imprint will not be forgotten.

She was the first Director of the Franklin County Office on Aging and retired in 2017 after 33 rewarding years. When state funding for a predecessor outreach ended, she and a brave band of supporters spearheaded an effort to create a new program funded by property taxes and became Senior Options. This new program innovatively met in-home service needs through partnerships with for profit and nonprofit entities, and educational and human services agencies. Under her leadership that levy successfully passed five times and has grown to a client base of over 8,000. Adult Protective Services was added in 1999 and expanded the agency’s reach to protect and assist those most vulnerable. She loved Ron so much. Together they had a fantastic life and marriage.

Thanks be to God for Toni Carroll.

Dr. Willard B. Fernald entered eternal life on September 15, 2020 at Bickford of Bexley where he had lived for the last 5 years of his life. Married to his most beloved best friend, Elizabeth (Bette) Taylor Fernald, they shared an extraordinary partnership for nearly

sixty years until her death in 2008. Will died as he lived - gracefully, peacefully, gently and still thinking of others first.

Following service to our nation in WWII, Will returned to become a doctor. Will was a Healer in every sense: as a pediatrician in private practice for more than 50 years who touched countless lives; as a founder of Pediatric Associates; as a member of the staff of Nationwide Children's Hospital for 60 years and serving as Medical Staff President (1972-1973); as Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine teaching the art of medicine to new generations of doctors; as the Medical Director of Heinzerling Community (a foundation to care for children with severe and profound developmental disabilities), volunteering his services for many of its first 50 years; as a Board Member of the Central Ohio Diabetes Association and founder and medical director of Camp Hamwi, a camp for children with diabetes. He was President of the Columbus Civil Rights Council and chair of the Fair Housing committee for Bexley. At First Church, he was a Deacon, choir member, active member of our Wednesday Book Study and an active member of BREAD.

Dr. Will treated everyone who crossed his path with dignity, offering wisdom, comfort and help - spiritual, moral, financial, every kind of support he could. Will and Bette opened their house in Bexley to provide sanctuary to more than 80 people who needed a place for restoration after being battered by the world. Will invested himself and his resources in people and matters of the spirit, rather than personal gain. Many people are alive or living enriched lives because of Will's compassionate heart. Will made great use of every second of his 97 years in the service of others.

Thanks be to God for Will Fernald.

Dr. Lawrence W. Walquist Jr. “Larry,” was 91 when he entered eternal life on October 5, 2020 after a long battle with Alzheimer’s Disease. Larry was a gifted Landscape Architect and Designer. His career spanned 50 years - first in private practice where his work took him across the globe. Then in 1975, he and Sharon (the love of his life!) and their four children moved to Columbus. He became a professor at The Ohio State University in Landscape Architecture. In the mid-80s, he founded the Landscape Architecture Master’s Program, chairing the program for the first 6 years. Larry loved teaching, and the students loved him. During his tenure, Larry also instituted an academic exchange program in Argentina, travelling on several occasions with Sharon and several students. Larry retired in 2004 as a Professor emeritus at OSU. In 2007, he became a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, truly the apex of his career.

Larry loved nature and, during his world travels, he took many photos of the nurseries, gardens, and churches his family visited and which he loved to sketch later in life. He loved to draw and was quite good at it. Larry swam laps nearly every day until his Alzheimer’s prevented him from driving to the pools anymore. A true gentleman, Larry’s charisma and charm will live on through his family and everyone’s lives he touched.

Here at First Church, Larry was in church every Sunday and travelled with the Choir on their pilgrimages. Larry needs to be credited for inspiring us to see a park where a used car lot had once been. Way back in 2008, his original drawings were the first vision of green

space on the west lot – which ultimately became the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park and the west lot green space.

Thanks Be to God for Larry Walquist.

I see all our loved ones stopping by today to see how we are doing. I see them with hearts of gratitude and love checking on us to see if we are all okay. Now with the angels of glory, they are at peace with loved ones in their families and friendship circles who have gone before us. They are now our ancestors. They are our inspiration to be thoughtful and kind, champions for peace and justice, generous and prayerful, active in our world to make this world a better world. They are blessing us, today.

Today, just as we are blessed by their memories, may the eight blessings that Jesus calls us to through the Beatitudes bless us so that we might be a blessing to others.

Let us be poor in spirit and rich in the love of God as we give ourselves over to God in humility and prayer.

Let us mourn not only for our loved ones, but for all who have died in the pandemic of 2020 and pray that comfort come to all.

Let us be meek like Moses, meek like Jesus, meek like Martin, meek like Ruth – Ruth Bader Ginsburg, as we stand with those who in humility are granted the inheritance of the earth.

Let us feel the pangs of hunger at the persistence of unrighteousness and respond by righteous action on behalf of those who are wounded and devastated by injustice.

Let us be merciful, not only for those close at hand, but for all – of all ages - who were hurt by health, finances and safety this past year.

Let us be pure in heart so that the lies, deceits, anxiety and troubles of our times will bounce off us rather than lodge in our souls and cause us to become hateful or hurtful to others.

Let us do the work of making for real and holy peace instead of settling for the comfort of keeping a false peace which allows for injustices to continue.

Jesus said, “Blessed are you.” May these words saturate our hearts and minds and guide us to be a blessing for others. Thanks be to God for all of you. Amen.

Benediction as taken from Peter Spofforth – February 2, 2020

(When speaking about being meek, Jesus says) that the best leaders are the ones who do not seek that position, because they won't be afraid of losing it. They won't lead with the fear of losing it.

Our own leaders are most guilty of this. They spend most of their lives preparing to be elected. And if elected, their only focus is on getting re-elected. It is a vicious, endless cycle. These leaders, only concerned with perpetuating their own power, doing whatever it takes for a favorable poll, serving only to serve themselves. These leaders aren't strong, they aren't principled, they're simply desperate for power.

It is the leaders that are gentle and patient and quiet and listening that are strong. That serve people before themselves, and principle above personal gain. These are the meek, and Jesus tells us that they are blessed by God.

In this one line, Jesus flips our understanding. It is not the loudest or those who put themselves first in line. It is the meek, that God chooses to inherit the earth. Once again, Jesus' message is not so simple. But it is true.