

# *“Put on the Armor of Light”*

All Saints' Sunday

*Romans 13:8-12, Revelation 21:1-6a, John 11:32-44*

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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, dedicated to Greg Kellison and all the Stewardship callers and stewards of First Church, to the nine members of First Church who entered eternal life this past year and to the 11 men and women at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, to the two who were shopping to Kroger's in Louisville, KY, to the two women in Tallahassee, FL and to all who entered eternal life and always to the glory of God!

*“Put on the Armor of Light”*

*Romans 13:8-12, Revelation 21:1-6a, John 11:32-44*

I have asked Greg Kellison to share this time with me today. Greg has brought us this far through the 2019 Stewardship Campaign, *“Awake to What God is Doing.”* THANK YOU, Greg and thanks to all of you – those who met with others, prepared, sent mailings, took time to open up and share stories from your heart and most of all thanks to all of you – the stewards of First Church.

Because of you, we will reach our goal of \$810,000. We begin today at 55% of our way toward our goal. Mystically and

wonderfully, we have \$444,000 in pledges in (444? At 444? Amazing). We will definitely reach this goal – together. Always we achieve great things when we do it together.

In a moment you will hear more... first, please join me in prayer.

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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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Most of us face “*Come to Jesus*” moments in our lives. Usually at significant transitions, following loss, or when we face our own mortality, we dig deep and figure what really is important.

When we or our loved ones are facing the actual end of life, many things become really clear. People we need to see, places we need to go, words we need to say, actions we need to take come into focus. What do I treasure deeply? How can I say my goodbyes on earth in preparation for my hellos in heaven? What really matters?

At some level or another, at some time or another, Bob, Don, Joyce, Bill, Don, Nell, Gary, Wally, and Mary Alice all faced these questions. Each one had to answer for themselves. Each one, in their own way, worked these things out. They did it their way, which may not have been the way you or I would do it. But, in the words of scripture, “they worked out their own salvation.”

The Apostle Paul knew a lot about working out salvation and facing the end of life. As he wrote his final letter to his sisters and brothers in Christ, he brought together all of his life experience in Christ in this pastoral epistle. Awaiting his execution by Emperor Nero on trumped-up charges, Paul wrote to the Roman Christians – who were just outside the prison walls. Near the end of the letter, in Romans 13, Paul challenges his brothers and sisters to live into one law/one commandment. **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”**

**IN THE END, LOVE IS ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS.**

When we lay aside our fears, our expected hopes and dreams, our expectations and our ideas of how things should be – love is all that really matters.

Paul goes on to say, *“You know what time it is. It is time for you to wake from your sleep.... God’s salvation is at hand...so, put on the armor of light.”*

Actually, some of us woke this morning and really didn’t know what time it was. (Tell them the time). But, if we are awake to the time of our life and if we are able to answer the real deep questions of our lives, God is smiling on us. So, now you are awake, let me ask you one more question:

***“How are you awake to what God is doing in your life?”***

When I asked this question to church leaders throughout the six weeks of our Stewardship Campaign, I heard many different answers. Some folks wrestled with God and “God-talk.” Some turned to the language of their life’s work and experience to find answers. Some were quiet and needed time to reflect inwardly. Some stepped into this and offered heartfelt responses to how and what God was and was not doing in their lives. So, I ask everyone, *“How are **you** awake to what God is doing in your life?”* Think about this. It really matters.

On this All Saints’ Sunday, how we answer and how we step into being stewards of the life we have been given by God, can make all the difference in the world. Take this to prayer this week. Take it to yoga, meditation, morning walks, and other

places of quiet reflection. *“How are **you** awake to what God is doing in your life?”*

As you do, put on the Armor of Light. In other words, wrap yourself in the light and love of God. Shield yourself from all the forces that attack and swirl around you creating chaos and discord and embrace the fullness of joy, love, and delight. Put on the armor of God’s light and love as you consider how you are awake to what God is doing in your life.

It really matters...**GREG KELLISON:**

When we remember the considerable Celebrating All Saints Day and simultaneously celebrating our stewardship campaign is appropriate and candidly, adds to the meaning of the Day.

When we consider that it was the vibrant faith and sacrificial stewardship of the Saints that framed the foundation for this magnificent cathedral as well as the nourishing ministries and programs that sustain us and help us grow in our own faith and mission outreach today.

- Without doubt, the generations of Saints we celebrate today left us a very rich and generous legacy

- While some of them were people of exceptional means, most were not – yet they collectively combined their gifts of time, talent and treasure, and we are the inheritors and beneficiaries of those gifts today
- As surely as they stood on the shoulders of their predecessors in faith, we now stand on their shoulders, and the question becomes – how will future generations regard what we’re building and will eventually pass on to them?
- In large measure, we answer those questions in our prayers and in our ongoing financial support of the work of First Church.

Every household, regardless of means, needs to manage its affairs with a budget. It’s true for each of our personal households, and it’s true for the household of God.

As our church leaders gather soon to put the church household budget for 2019 together, it becomes very important to know what we can – and might not be able to responsibly plan to do next year in terms of ministries and programs.

Your continued generous financial and prayerful support is something we appreciate and count on.

In your worship bulletin – as well as at the ends of each pew – are pledge cards and envelopes. If you have yet to make your

pledge, we hope you will **PRAYERFULLY** take this time to complete and sign the card. If you have already made your pledge – we thank you – and we ask that you write a brief prayer or thanksgiving on the back of the card. If you are visiting – Welcome, and we hope you will return often – we ask that you send us a brief note and/or use the envelop if you would like to include an offering.

In a few minutes, we will come to the Table to celebrate the Eucharist. As you come forward, we ask that you bring your envelopes and place them in the basins at the end of each front pew.

With your generosity, future generations of saints will thank us for continuing the rich legacy of our predecessors and providing a solid foundation for God’s ongoing work in the future. **THANK YOU.**

**Tim:** Thank you Greg. Thank you everyone. Let us now prayerfully reflect on what we are going to pledge for 2019. The stewardship committee has asked us to step up in our giving by 5% over last year. If you can’t remember the exact number you gave, you can note your intentions to continue or increase for the coming year. Our Business Manager, Sharon Leidheiser, can always work with you on this. And, Remember, this is your intention – your reaching goal to give.

Take this time of silence to write a prayer, to fill out your cards, to be still and feel God's awakening presence in your life. Do this for Love. It is love, after all, that really matters. Amen.

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