

# THE ENVOY

A Newsletter of Emmanuel Friedens Church  
American Baptist and United Church of Christ Congregation  
218 Nott Terrace, Schenectady, NY 12307  
Rev. Dr. Rodney W. Kennedy, Interim Pastor

Issue 406

November 2022

## From the Pastor: Rev. Dr. Rodney Kennedy

### Book Burning – Metaphor for Fear of New Ideas

Book burning seems a strange way for a pastor to celebrate Halloween. What's the point of such an unholy liturgy by a holy man? At Halloween the usual array of ghosts, goblins, pumpkins, horror movies, and Trick or Treating takes center stage. Yet each Halloween there appears the ubiquitous burning of books by a preacher.

This Halloween, Global Vision Bible Church pastor Greg Locke had a "massive burning" of *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* books, as well as other items, in Tennessee. His congregation exclaimed their approval with Pastor Locke declared in Sunday worship there would be a "burning service" this week. He previously held a gigantic book burning in February 2022 with no holiday connections.

As a Baptist with historical connections to Anabaptists, I suppose I'm grateful this preacher is burning book instead of bodies.

I have the opposite approach from Rev. Locke. Books ought not be burned; they should be read. I would argue that the opposite of book burning is an open-ended studiousness. The studious don't attempt to keep any knowledge secret from anyone else. They are not willing to do violence to ideas, knowledge, or wisdom to save us from its influences. They don't own, possess, or claim priority over the ideas of others. They want others to participate lovingly in knowledge, to respond to it as a gift, an icon rather than a spectacle. The studious follow a scrupulous free market of ideas.

The writers of books are a gift of God to a world drowning in ignorance and fear. Among the studious, there's a willingness to share rather than an attempt to destroy the ideas of others. In the words of Paul Griffiths, "The studious Christian, therefore, seeks a participatory intimacy driven by wonder and riven by lament." I feel the need to say, "The gifts of God for the people of God."

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I have a tentative proposal that builds on efforts that many churches already employ: Church Book Clubs. The book of the month for church members can be a light that shines in the darkness, a metaphor that opposes book burning.

What if the church fires the imagination of children to be lifelong readers? My favorite novelist, Pat Conroy, says that his mother ignited the fires for reading in his childhood. He says of Peg Conroy, "She read so many books that she was famous among the librarians in every town she entered." And "She out read a whole generation of officer's wives."

The church as "Peg Conroy" inspiring children to read fills me with deep joy. When a child reads a book, I want a church that gives that child the sense that we are all applauding and shouting and the child knows she needs to find another big book to read. Building on the knowledge of the Bible, why not open the world of literature to children, youth, and adults in church? What if the church became the magic carpet into a serious intellectual life, the church as the activation of the imagination? The great writers can unlock the mysteries and uncertainties of being human, inspire us to see every tree aflame with thousands of angels.

Supplement Bible lessons with short stories, poetry, novels, plays, history, science, philosophy, rhetoric, comedy, music. This is my normal practice when I teach preaching classes. Reading is the way a student learns to preach. I insist they read because short stories and novels are the form a sermon takes. And they can't learn to write until they are immersed in books. They have no one to imitate until they read people that lure them with powerful words.

Give me a church that serves as the Library of Congress and the Floating Library of the 10,000 lakes region of Minnesota, and New York City Public Library. Let us teach the church to read without fear of devils, demons, heretics, philosophers, historians, novelists, or scientists. Read everything. As God instructed the Hebrew people upon leaving the pagan land of Egypt, "Plunder the Egyptians!" While the Hebrews went up from slavery with Egyptian jewelry, silver, and gold, I like to imagine that they packed books from the magnificent library of Alexandria (admission here that I'm mixing historical epochs in an imagination explosion).

Why would we desert our heritage of philosophy and theology for the arid wastelands of anti-intellectualism? Stanley Hauerwas reminds us, "The Jesuits .... thought smart Catholics ought to know something about philosophy. So Catholic laity got taught Plato to make them Catholic. What a world!" Now it seems many Baptists think students should know more and more about less and less to protect an insular evangelical alternative universe.

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#### Interim Pastor

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#### Minister of Music

Michael P. Harrison  
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#### Worship Hours

Sunday @ 10 am

#### Sunday Classes

(Sept-June)

11:15 am

#### Office Hours

9:30 am-3:30 pm M-F

9:30 am-1:30 pm M-F

(SUMMER HOURS)



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#### Insert

November Calendar

When it comes to books and ideas, "Do not let your mind be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Conroy sums it up: "I never feared taking any unchaperoned walks through the fields of language. Words lifted me up and filled me with pleasure. I've never met a word I was afraid of, just ones that left me indifferent or that I knew or that I knew I wouldn't ever put to use. When reading a book, I'll encounter words that please me, goad me into action, make me want to sing a song. I dislike pretentious words, those highfaluting ones with a trust fund and an Ivy League education. Often they were stillborn in the minds of academics, critics, scientists. They have a tendency to flash their warning lights in the middle of a good sentence."

Like Conroy, I have never met a book I was afraid of, but instead have devoured them all. The church should teach us to read as Christians. By learning to read, church members will learn to speak Christian instead of the "Babel" that now passes for Christian language. These are habits crucial for sustaining the life of the church.

Blessings, Rod

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## Testimonial

I Joined Emmanuel Friedens Church ....

*I am relatively new to the area and for the past 2 years I have been searching for a Bible teaching and salvation preaching church to call "home".*

*Little did I know such a church was just a few blocks away. After searching the internet, I found Emmanuel Friedens Church. So, I called the church and explained my transportation need. Without hesitation, the gentleman who answered told me he would pick me up the very next day. That man turned out to be the interim pastor Reverend Rodney Kennedy.*

*After hearing him preach and the warm reception I received from the congregation, I knew I had found my church home and family. Since then, I have rededicated my life to Jesus Christ and joined the church.*

*I look forward to being an active member. I thank God for Rev. Kennedy and the entire church .  
"God bless us, everyone "*

Sincerely,  
Ken Ballard

## Sunday Worship

(Live in –person, Zoom link or online)

Rev. Dr. Rodney Kennedy will lead worship and preach.

**November 13:** Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: 65:17-25, Luke 21:5-19

Sermon: "Apocalypse Now?"

**November 20:** Christ the King Sunday (Giving Sunday)

Readings: Colossians 1:11-20, Luke 23:33-43

Sermon: "Long Live the Poets"

## Advent Begins

**November 27:** First Sunday of Advent

Hanging of the Greens

Lighting the Candle of Welcome, Openness and Affirmation

Readings: Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 24:36-44

Sermon: "Living Backwards"

**December 4:** Second Sunday of Advent

Breakfast feast, communion (service in Fellowship Hall)

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10, Matthew 3:1-12

Sermon: "The Prophetic Imagination"

**December 11:** Third Sunday of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 35:1-10, James 5:7-10, Luke 1: 46b-55

Sermon: "Mary's Imagination"

**December 18:** Fourth Sunday of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 7:10-16, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon: "God's Imagination"

## Sermons

Dr. Kennedy's sermon from the past Sunday is sent out via mail and e-mail during the week, as well as being posted on the church's website under "Worship".

## Advent Highlights

**Theme: Follow the Star: The Power of Imagination  
Advent 2022 is Coming Soon!**

We will gather and celebrate Advent and Christmas, giving thanks for God's promise of comfort and centering in hope of divine deliverance.

The first Sunday of Advent is November 27.

**Church Decorating:** scheduled for Saturday, December 3 starting at 9:30 am.

### **Sunday Morning Worship**

Worship each Sunday will include our usual customs around lighting of Advent Candles, Hanging to the Greens (November 27) and more!

### **Something New This Year-A Christmas Feast Happens at EFC on Sunday, December 4**

There's no better time for a feast than the season that leads to the birth of Jesus. On Sunday, December 4, at 9:45 am, we will serve a scrumptious Christmas brunch for everyone. Reservations are requested. You may call the church office or e-mail us. A meal, the Lord's Supper, and worship all in Fellowship Hall. This will be a major celebration that you will want to attend. Make your reservations asap!

### **Giving During the Season**

- Our Giving Tree: You are invited to take a gift tag (for children requests) from the tree starting Sunday, November 20 through Sunday, December 4. The unwrapped gifts must be returned by Sunday, December 11 so that they may be placed underneath the tree, and later distributed to the community (City Mission of Schenectady).
- The Mitten Tree: A second tree, which will be located at the back of the sanctuary, will be up and ready for donations of **new** mittens/gloves, and hats, scarves, and socks for children and adults. Bring in your items starting November 27 through December 24. They will be given out to the local community.
- Our church will once again participate in the Holiday gift program. Our recipients are to be determined.

**Christmas Eve Service at 7 pm.**

## Rod's Reading University Club

*You are invited to participate in Rod's Reading University/Club. (An e-mail was sent out this week)*

*I believe that the church should be a school of reading. By knowing how Christians past and present have written, we learn to speak Christian. Given the paucity of solid theological knowledge in our culture, I am convinced that one of the tasks we should embrace is reading together.*

*You will be enrolled in Rod's Reading University/Club by responding to the e-mail that you received this past week. Just write me back and say "I will read with you." We will read books together, discuss our opinions about the readings in an e-mail group. There are no classes to attend. There are no meetings. This is an on-line experience. We will form an e-mail group of all participants. I will answer questions you have by e-mail. You will send e-mails to me with questions and comments about the book. The e-mail thread will be available for all readers. You can pick and choose when you want to participate. So, let's read!*

*Our first book is Rowan Williams: Tokens of Trust. Books will be available on websites such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble, in paperback, new and used or as eBooks. I look forward to reading with you. The schedule and the chosen books listed below. Blessings, Dr K*

December <u>2023</u>	Rowan Williams, <i>Tokens of Trust</i>
January	Wendell Berry, <i>Standing by Words</i>
February	Reynolds Price, <i>A Whole New Life</i>
March	James Miller, <i>Can Democracy Work</i>
April	Richard Friedman, <i>The Disappearance of God</i>
May	Barbara Brown Taylor, <i>Leaving Church</i>
June	Will Campbell, <i>Soul Among Lions: Musings of a Bootleg Preacher</i>
July	Mary Stuckey, <i>The Good Neighbor</i>
August	Anne Tyler, <i>Saint Maybe</i>
September	Barbara Brown Taylor, <i>When God Is Silent</i>
October	Linda Hogan, <i>A History of Kindness</i>
November	Sara Ahmed, <i>The Promise of Happiness</i>

## Thank you

**Refreshments on Sunday Mornings:** *Everyone who attends Sunday worship in person appreciates the coffee, tea, and baked goods in the Gathering Room after the service. Thank you Bart and Marilyn Bisgrove for the drinks and thank you Sandy George Detwyler for volunteering to coordinate the donations of baked goods. To make sure there are no Sundays with too much to eat or nothing to eat, contact Sandy (518-346-3193) if you would like to contribute something (purchased or homemade) and she will coordinate the contributions. Thank you all! Faye Bailey*

## Committee News

### Stewardship 2022

Every November, we share in the effort of Emmanuel Friedens Stewardship campaign, which is now underway. This is not simply a collection of monetary pledges; it is our vote of support for our church's faithful future.

Excerpts from a recent letter to church members and friends, Stewardship Chair Angela Keller wrote:

*Your pledge enables many good works to occur throughout the year – School of Wonder and Mystery, monthly brunch, building repairs and maintenance so that others can share in our space to meet their missions, denominational support, external ministry support such as SICM, and a variety of other targeted activities for those young and mature.*

*With our pledges and offerings, we thank our Lord for all the blessings in our lives. We acknowledge his generosity in our lives; we will never be able to outgive him. He is a God who blesses, and he has graced all of our lives. We thank him for our financial blessings. We thank him for providing us with the physical and mental strength we need to do our best in our jobs, our relationships, and missions.*

You should have received your pledge card in the mail this past week. If you are unable to attend on Giving Sunday, please mail your pledge to the Church office by November 18 "so that we might symbolically make your offering of stewardship." If you have not received your card, please call the office and another one will be sent out.

### Outreach and Mission/Brunch Committee:

The Christmas Sale: As we did last year, we are having a Christmas sale. This will take place after church on **November 20**. We will serve coffee, hot chocolate, tea and assorted Christmas goodies to all who attend. This will be a nice gathering for our church community and our shopping friends in Schenectady. Let Nancy or the office know if you can help serve at the event. We will also need some good bakers to bring their best.

Do you have Christmas decorations to donate? Christmas decoration donations may be brought to the church now – please leave them neatly on the stage.

The Community Brunch will be held on the Saturday following Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 26). If you can donate any pies/desserts, that would be wonderful. We would like to give away homemade/purchased goodies at the brunch. Bring them down Wednesday (Nov. 23) or on Saturday (by 9 am). Please leave them on the counter or refrigerator (if needed) labelled "for brunch." Thank you.

Emmanuel Friedens Church  
218 Nott Terrace  
Schenectady, NY 12307



*Wishing you a very  
Happy Thanksgiving  
wherever and however  
you gather  
with loved ones and  
friends!  
Your Church Staff,  
Rodney, Michael,  
Maria and Dave*

As a Welcoming and Affirming/  
Open and Affirming  
Church, Emmanuel  
Baptist Church and  
Friedens United  
Church of Christ  
welcomes and  
affirms  
all persons without  
regard to sex, marital  
status, age, race,  
sexual orientation, or  
abilities, inviting all  
into membership,  
mission, and  
leadership.

#### STAY CONNECTED



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#### A Vision for Our Journey

*Captivated by Jesus' life and teaching,  
Committed to  
Growing hearts and minds;  
Learning openness, courage and love;  
Serving with our neighbors;  
Pursuing God's justice and peace;*