

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**Rev. Art Scanson**  
**“Penguins and Christians”**  
**Ephesians 1:3-14**

Here is a true story of a family from Kentucky. They were off on a day-trip to the aquarium in Chattanooga, TN. As they entered the aquarium they immediately find themselves fascinated with all of the things to watch. Then, about mid-way through their planned visit the young parents become aware that their 4year-old son (we'll call him Travis) was missing. He had been there just moments before, but now he was gone. As you might imagine - they were in panic mode. They looked around quickly. But when they could not find him they asked a security person for help. Security immediately had all exits closed into and out of the aquarium until the child could be found.

Travis was finally located in the penguin exhibit. Somehow Travis had gotten himself over the barrier and was actually inside the pen. He was fine, but not his parents, of course they were glad to see him. They got Travis out of the pen and finished their tour. They got in the family car to make their 2 hour trip home

After a short time on the road, Travis' parents noticed that he was acting oddly. He was not uttering a word, and he was staring ahead with a strange expression on his face. They wondered, had this experience caused Travis some kind of trauma? So Dad pulled the car to the side of the road and both Mom and Dad turned to face Travis.

“Tell us son,” they asked as calmly as they could, “are you all right?”

Travis nodded his head, but still did not say a word. But there was still something peculiar. They noticed Travis glancing at his little backpack once-in-a-while. The backpack was something that Travis took everywhere, including inside the aquarium that day. So Mom reached for the backpack. She unzipped it. Surprise! Inside the backpack was - (are you ready?) a live baby penguin. Their 4 year-old son Travis had removed a penguin from the aquarium. The penguin was unharmed and seemed to be okay. So Travis' Dad was forced to turn the car around and head back to the aquarium. How are they going to explain this? Can't you see it? “Remember us? We caused you to close the aquarium today. Yes, we are back. This time to return a baby penguin that our child stole.”

I told you this to set up Margaret Manning of the Tellico Village Community Church when she compares penguins to the church of Jesus Christ. Now don't laugh. Stay with me. Many of you probably saw the highly successful documentary movie. *The March of the*

*Penguins*. It was filmed in Antarctica and tells the amazing story of the Emperor penguin. According to the film, the female Emperor penguin gestates only one egg per year. They don't build a nest but rather incubate it in the folds of their skin. They lay that egg in the coldest time of the year - when temperatures get to -80 degrees and winds to 112 mph. When the female produces the egg, she gives this egg to the male to protect and preserve until she returns from gathering food in the warmer waters of the sea. She will be gone for 9-weeks and the male penguin is entrusted to preserve that egg and must incubate and nurture this little life in the fold of his skin. They are not able to eat during this whole period so they lose almost half of their body weight. With all of this, in order to make it the male emperors don't try to fend for themselves. They huddle together in tight bunches for warmth and protection against the bitter cold and winds. The entire flock moves as one, huddles as one, stays together to protect those eggs. Basically, they strive for one goal—to stay warm in order to produce offspring; and the bitter and brutal winter of Antarctica will not deter them from their goal.

(<http://www.telicochurch.org/Sermons/o50918.html>)

It is this singleness of purpose and cooperative spirit, says Margaret Manning, are a model for the people of God. (Except, for the not eating part) The church has been given a task to make disciples for Jesus Christ and we accomplish that task by banding together as one body. At this point, I am reminded of McCabe's Education program and the significant part the men of McCabe play in that program. Over the last 11 years, half of the Church School staff has been males. People of McCabe, Floramay has help us develop a model for our children that not only verbally, but by example shows them there is a place for men in God's church! Let's say thanks to all those men of McCabe who have helped this happen!

This brings us to our scripture lesson for today. We are once again today turning to St. Paul as he tells us about being a chosen people. Read Ephesians 1: 3-14.

We are chosen, **first of all, "to live with God and be God's holy and innocent and loving people."** Or as the NRSV says it, ". . .For he chose us. . .to be holy and blameless in God's sight." For me, Paul is talking about living a life of personal integrity. Where our life is to be holy devoted to living as God would have us live. That we live the "Three Simple Rules" (To do no harm, to do good and to stay in love with God.) Where such things as sincerity, keeping one's word, honesty, truthfulness, fairness and justice, and not faltering for what one believes in. Now, this does not mean we are flawless. But it does mean, by God's grace, to be persons of character and responsibility.

Next, Paul would have us understand that **we are chosen to live**

## **as God's children.**

Larry Pillow in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette(2/7/99) tells about a small school in Arkansas.

“The 1997 graduating class of Witts Springs, . . .population 100. . .produces few athletes from a student body of 41 in grades 7-12. But they manage to produce athletes that take team play to a new level.

“In a basketball game with rival Leslie, Witts Springs trailed by over 30 points with just 2 minutes to go. The fans began to chant, Scot-TEE! Scot-TEE! Coach Nash obliged and sent senior guard Scotty Harmon into the game. Scotty has cerebral palsy.

“Harmon received a pass, alone and unguarded on the perimeter, and flung the ball toward the hoop. He missed. His teammates scrambled for the rebound and gave Scotty a second chance. He missed again, which started another fight for the ball.

‘The kids know when Scotty’s in there, their game is over.’ Coach Nash said, ‘They’re doing it for him now. The atmosphere changes. If they’re worn out, they’ll break their necks to get the rebound. Our kids will go above everybody to get the ball to Scotty.’

“On his fourth try, Scotty made a three-pointer. Fans on both sides of the gym cheered wildly. The scoreboard said Leslie 89, Witts Springs 58, but everybody left a winner, especially Scotty’s teammates.” They knew the value of being together as a team!

So what does it mean to live as children of God? It means living as a family - God’s family! Besides living as holy and blameless lives, we are to live caring lives, reflecting God’s love for each other. We are chosen to live in love.

Lastly, **we are chosen to bring praise to God’s name.** Paul says, “. . .The Spirit also makes us sure that we will be given what God has stored up for us. Then we will be set free, and God will be honored and praised.”

Yes, praise is our witness to the world that God reigns in our lives. Thus, praise is not an option for the Christian. And the place where we are best at this is in worship with others of God’s children!

There are a number of our church whom we will never see in our church unless their daughter gets married here or unless their funeral is held here. As some would say, The “Matched and dispatched.” For them, they don’t seem to think that the worship of God is important. They miss this critical responsibility when we are chosen by God it is to bring praise to God’s name.

Dr. Sandy Winter, pastor of the University Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, AL, tells the story about a conversation between a daughter and her mother who was 88 years old and dying. The daughter knew that as a child during the worst part of the depression

her family lived with her grandparents out in a rural area. This large family, along with grandparents worked hard to eke out a living on the food they could produce. They had to walk everywhere they went.

But this daughter also remembered as she was growing up her family lived in town. She wondered about this, so she asked her mother how she managed to get the family moved to town in the midst of the depression?

The mother may have been weak and couldn't say much, but her mind was clear. Here answer was, "I had to."

The daughter said, "What do you mean, you had to?"

The mother replied, "We had to go to church!"

Think about that. "We had to go to church!"

"Her family being able to go to church, says Dr. Winter, "was a matter of life and death for the mother, a matter so important that it empowered her to move mountains."

My friends, praise is our witness to the world that God reigns in our lives. We gather each week in this place to say to the world, "God lives! God matters!"

As God's chosen - what does it mean?

-It means we live lives of integrity;

-It means we love one another as Christ loves us;

-It means that weekly we gather and lift our hearts in praise to

God.

**Because**, we are chosen,

not for privilege,

**but for purpose – for serving God!**

And may it be so for each of us as God's children!