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**The Pastor's Searchlight—September, 2024: "The Ultimate Closing Argument" (*The One Year Book of Amazing Stories*, R. Petterson)**



Clement Vallandigham of Ohio was never in doubt that he was right. This opinionated rabble-rouser would fight to the death to prove it. A descendant of Southern aristocracy, he was an implacable champion of the Confederate cause, even though he lived in the North. As the leader of the northern wing of the Democratic Party, known as the Copperheads, he campaigned long and hard against the policies of Abraham Lincoln and his Union armies. This dogmatic Ohio lawyer would hold passionately to his Southern loyalties until the day of his bizarre death. After all, a person who is always right can never admit to being wrong—no matter how much it costs to defend his position. Maybe that's why Clement Vallandigham is remembered for one of the craziest stories in the history of American jurisprudence. It all started with an 1870 barroom brawl in Hamilton, Ohio. Someone was shot to death in the melee. Although there was plenty of conflicting evidence, legal authorities arrested Thomas McGehan and charged him with murder. Clement Vallandigham was hired as his defense attorney. Though no one could say for certain what happened in the mayhem of that smoke-filled saloon, McGehan's doggedly opinionated lawyer had no doubt that his client was innocent. After all, the Ohio attorney had spent his whole life being right about everything and repeatedly fighting tooth and nail to prove it. Vallandigham's defense was simple: the victim, Tom Myers, had accidentally shot himself with his own pistol. Clement was so sure that his strategy would win over the jury that he decided to demonstrate it to his team of defense lawyers. Using his Lebanon, Ohio, hotel suite as a mock courtroom, he pulled out a pistol that he believed to be unloaded. He cocked it and aimed the barrel at his stomach. To his shock, and to the horror of his fellow attorneys, when he pulled the trigger, the pistol discharged a forgotten bullet. Clement Vallandigham, the man who was always right—and willing to die proving it—fell fatally wounded onto the hotel floor. The dead attorney's defense team used his final argument to win the case for Thomas McGehan. It did little good. Four years later, an angry customer shot Mr. McGehan to death in his saloon. It seems fitting that the lawyer who always believed that he was right and was willing to fight to the death proving his viewpoint would end his life by making his final point. Yet was it worth his life to get someone like Thomas McGehan off the hook? Maybe this is a more relevant question: Are you fighting battles that are worthwhile? Before you lose a marriage, a family, friends, a job, a reputation, and maybe even your life to prove a point, you should ask if the win is worth the cost. You might want to remember the amazing story of Clement Vallandigham's final defense and save your bullets for battles that really matter.

## *The aim of argument should not be victory, but progress.*

"Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. (II Timothy 2:25)

*Wow...how often do we get so carried away with having to be right, and making sure that everyone knows we are right, that maybe we're willing to sacrifice dear friends, relationships with loved ones, and whole communities of what we originally thought were like-minded pursuers of truth. I have spent the past 10 years being angry, frustrated, feeling betrayed, feeling that the truth was obvious but so many were ignoring that truth to pursue selfish aims. I have struggled with decisions to unfollow some folk on facebook (people I love and dearly respect) simply because their posts are driving me crazy with more anger and affecting my perspective on our relationships. So rather than continue to allow my own brokenness drive wedges into our relationships, I have simply decided to unfollow so I don't say or do anything that I will regret in the future. It is God's job to impact people's opinions of what the truth is...and I will never be able to change people's minds on that truth; just as they could never change my mind. I will continue to pray for God's Spirit to keep my mind open to a willingness to listen to differing perspectives and then invite the Spirit to help me discern Genuine Truth for my own understanding in following Christ. I will also keep praying for all those I may disagree with, that I would be willing to forgive in my heart (and not hold grudges), and that I would be willing to consider that I as well could be wrong (once in awhile, LOL)!! Let us all be willing to do the same.*

**In Christ, Pastor Dave ([reved87@verizon.net](mailto:reved87@verizon.net))**

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**We celebrate in-person worship services on Sundays, but we will also continue to live-stream** our Sunday morning worship experiences (9:30am @ "ErieEAPC" & 11am @ "belle.church" and the pastor's personal page "Dave Edmunds") and our Wednesday Live! devotional experiences (6:30pm) on the pastor's personal Facebook page: "Dave Edmunds" on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays. Know that we are all praying daily for you, for our ministries, our mission, those who have been especially hit hard by this crisis, our Ghanaian Mission Partnership, and our world!

**All Are Welcome to Join Us for an Adult Study Group on Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Letter to the Church in Corinth!**

We meet on Tuesdays (6/11, 18, 25) @ Grandview Manor Apartments in the Activity Room on the ground floor (Davison Avenue, near E. Grandview Ave.) @ 10:30am (refreshments & coffee are provided). On the first Tuesday of each month, we normally meet for breakfast and fellowship @ 10:30am: this month, 6/4 @ The Original Breakfast Place (McClelland & E. 38<sup>th</sup>).



**BVPC PRAYER CONCERNS:** Jack Larsen, Linda Wellsby, Camille Jimerson, Darwin Michielsen, Steve Bullock, Joe Helsley, Cindy Beer & Family, Tony Vacanti, Jolene Carner & Family, Taylor Brown, Dotty Hoover (Leo's sister), Jeannette Komorek, Jane Clinger, Kim Wurzbach, Steve (cancer), Chelsie Belden, Janine Johnson, Rebecca Stallard, Sandra Sauder, Dixie Hartless (hospice), Chris Province, Cassandra Langdon, Leonie Degnan, Scott Eddy's father (& mother), Mike Burnham, Anne Campbell's brother-in-law (Todd), Linda Jarzynka, Jack Donovan (Patty Smolinsky's brother-in-law), Zach Napierkowski, Sandy McConahay, Fred Marshall, Jr., Dave Arens, Friend of Nancy Marzka's who has 2 nieces needing major surgery/transplant & brother with glaucoma, Kim Potter, Diana Marie, Chipper

Langdon, Bea & Dan Reese, Maria Hodapp & Lorelai, Sherry Wolfe (Pastor Dave's sister-in-law's family), Jordan Kendzior & 112th Infantry Regiment, Becky Fuller, Dale Teribery, Missy Zimmer, Kayla & Kendra Altadonna, Pam Crants, Mary Ann Straneva (friend of Nottinghams), Sarah Richards (lung cancer), Judy Zytech & family, Tim Grant, Tyco Swick, Timi Ricket & family, Sullivan Bruder (Rita's great-grandnephew), Rachel Fabrizzi, Nancy Marzka's niece (Helen), Patty Smolinsky's nephew (Adam), Albert Boorady's brothers (Andre, Tom, Roy), Jackie Roddy, Nohade Boorady. **BVPC Mission Efforts:** Girl Scouts, OLOMC Food Pantry, BVFD, BVES (including Angel Tree, backpack food prog. & teachers' supplies effort), 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant Sunday Suppers & The Upper Room Lunch efforts; Ukrainian & Middle Eastern warfare; Victims of New England & FL storms, CA & CO wildfires, and Pacific Northwest earthquakes; Systemic racial injustice; Senseless gun violence; The southern border refugee crisis; Current military services personnel; the Ghana mission partnership (*We pray especially for the Chereponi District: 11 churches, 528 members, and District Pastor M. L. Agbovi*); Josh Heikkila (*our PCUSA W. Africa Liaison*); the Wapuli Health Clinic; The victims of ; The President, VP, Senate, House, Supreme Court—wisdom & justice; **Presbytery prayers:** Revs. Robin Cuneo, Rachel Johns, Jim Haas, Jim Rimmer, and Jim McCormack.

**BVPC September Birthdays:**

- September 10<sup>th</sup> Rebecca Cousins 4333 Carney Ave., Erie, PA 16504
- 11<sup>th</sup> Rebecca Edmunds 37-1021<sup>st</sup> Ave., Astoria, NY 11105
- 19<sup>th</sup> Kathy Simons 330 Rosebay Erie, PA 16509
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Megan Kavala 8822 Horseshoe Drive, Erie, PA 16510
- 28<sup>th</sup> Gwen Ebert 1731 Norcross Rd., Erie, PA 16510
- Fred Ebert 4725 Loop Rd., Waterford, PA 16441



**Please Minister to Members Challenged by Chronic Health Issues** (cards, calls, visits, and prayer): Dan & Diane Horton: 5 Little Pine Place, Franklin, PA, 16323 (814-657-2663); Harry Krahnke: 4210 Davison Ave., 16504 (#504, 814-315-8359); Paul (Doc) & Linda Wetzel: 10540 Sampson Rd., Waterford, PA. 16441 (814-825-2070); Ellie Logan: 819 W. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Apt. 211, Erie, PA 16502 (814-520-1190).

Please do your best to continue your regular giving, and for those able, please increase your giving to cover those who have been negatively impacted by this pandemic's financial hardships. **Financial Report YTD thru July, 2024: Operating Revenues YTD Received: \$64,235.97; Operating Expenses Paid Out: \$72,363.52; Leaving a shortfall of \$8,127.55. Please reach out to Albert Boorady** (treasurer, [bvp16510treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:bvp16510treasurer@gmail.com), 814-218-2544) if you'd like to learn how to set up BVPC as a regular payee with your bank automatically! And **be aware that you can always donate online at BVPC's website as well** (though there will be a small fee charged by the online donation service—something your bank won't do if you use them to set up BVPC as a regular payee). *Please continue to pray for BVPC's ministries and your financial giving! The next few years will be a real test of our faith, our obedience to God, and our endurance during very thin financial conditions!*

**"Per Capita" Giving:** For those who are able to pay their Per Capita for 2024 (**\$34 per member**), use a pew offering envelope. Your "Per Capita" giving supports many significant mission efforts throughout our presbytery and the world-wide Presbyterian Church. Pray about your gift to our larger church mission efforts!

### **2024 Slate of Officers:**

**Elders:** Dave Sickles, Sandy McConahy, Leslie Sickles, Doug Ebert, Stacey Simons, Chris Tombaugh; *Clerk: Kim Ragen, Treasurer: Albert Boorady*

**Deacons:** Kathy Simons, Joann Barber, Maryann & Corey Rice, Becky Cousins, Kim Ragen

**Audit Committee:** Stacey Simons, Rita Postlewaite, Chris Tombaugh

**Memorial Committee:** Bonnie Renaud, Bonnie Marshall, Melody Lewis

**At-Large Nominating Committee:** Bonnie Marshall, Chris Tombaugh, Leslie Sickles, Becky Cousins

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- **Joint Women's Fellowship:** 9/3 @ Max 'n' Erma's (Interchange Rd.) @ 6pm (call Kim Ragen, 814-392-5831 to RSVP)
- **II Corinthians Study Group,** 9/3 @ Picnicana Park (Summit Twp., if rain, The Sickles); 9/8, 15, 22, 29 @ Grandview Manor Apartments (Davison Ave.), Activity Lounge
- **Joint Confirmation Classes** begin on Sunday, Sept. 8, @ 4pm @ BVPC (call Pastor Dave to confirm details)
- **BVPC Session,** 9/9 @ 6:30pm
- **Faith & Film series:** Sept. 13, 7pm, featuring the film: "Leap of Faith" @ BVPC.
- **BVPC Rummage Sale:** Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> (9am-4pm) & 21<sup>st</sup> (9am-2pm); Hot dog lunch \$2
- **Joint Men's Fellowship Night:** 9/27 6pm, The McKean Tavern (8968 Main St., McKean)—mtg. @ 6 @ Elmwood Church (in order to carpool)



**Faith & Film series: Sept. 13** (Friday), 7pm @ Belle Valley Presbyterian Church, featuring the film: **"Leap of Faith"**

Leap of Faith is a 1992 American comedy-drama film directed by Richard Pearce and starring Steve Martin, Debra Winger, Lolita Davidovich, Liam Neeson, and Lukas Haas. The film is about Jonas Nightengale, a Christian faith healer who uses his revival meetings to milk money out of the inhabitants of Rustwater, Kansas.

**Bring your favorite snack to share!**

**Rummage Sale:** September 20<sup>th</sup> (9am-4pm) & 21<sup>st</sup> (9am-2pm); Hot dog lunch \$2. Please tell all your friends and family. **IMPORTANT:** We will start collecting rummage donations after coffee hour on Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>. Doors will be open to accept donations most weekday mornings (from Sept. 9-18<sup>th</sup>) from 10am-1pm, along with some evening hours. **PLEASE,** if you are able to help even for just an hour or two, we need your help. There will be a sign-up sheet with specific times listed, that you can sign up on. Call Leslie Sickles with any questions or to sign up (814-504-7976).

