



*Grace and Peace Be Unto You*  
*A Sermon on Galatians 5:16-26*

*Sunday, September 28th, 2018*  
*First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois*  
*Rev. Zachary T. Lysdahl*

Seminary is designed to help students prepare for a life in ministry. In seminary students hear about the “ins and outs” of the church, the “does and don’t,” and the possible difficulties and joys, which come from formal ministry. Seminary teaches you a lot, but not everything. I think my ministry at FFC is unique. Of course there has been some hiccups along the way, but over that last 30 months all of you have taught me so much. Among what I have learned from you is the true meaning of the “fruits of the Spirit.”

## I. Love

- A. Together we have witnessed many baptisms. At those baptisms we all vowed to care for those children, teach them about God and who we are. In doing so, you have shown the church and the community meaning of love, while teaching those children to love as Jesus loves. In baptism we witness the depth of God’s love for us, that before we even know God, God claims us as his own.
- B. Together we have also witnessed many funerals. At those funerals you demonstrated love by being present with those who were suffering loss. You have lamented with them. You have remembered with them. You have celebrated with them a witness to the resurrection. In all of that you showed the church and the community the meaning of love.

## II. Joy

- A. In my mind, one of the easiest places to find joy is at Logos, the Wednesday evening children’s program. About 30 children show up at 5:30pm and the LTC is filled with smiling faces and boundless energy. The children are glad to be spending time with friends, sharing a meal together, and playing games. Their cheerfulness is invigorating! If you want to witness joy first hand, show up some night and you’ll experience true joy.

- B. Another place joy is found is with the youth group on a mission trip. Sure, the beginning is a little shaky as everyone gets settled in, but once they do, being with them is a delight. Even though we sleep on the floor, pull bushes in the heat of the day, scrub soot from the walls of a house that caught on fire, the youth are always happy to be doing what they are doing.

### III. Peace

- A. Every Sunday night at 7:30pm the Youth Group gathers around the table in the Senior High room. In the middle of the table is one large candle. That candle is lit and everyone takes a smaller candle and lights their candle off the center one. Then, together, we bid one another farewell with a short song. It begins “Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ.” During those moment there is a special type of peace that settles into the room. One that offers confidence and assurance. Confidence that there are people who care deeply about one another, and the assurance that no matter how difficulty things get there are people you can turn to when life becomes overwhelming. That peace gives each student the confidence that there are other students who will be there to journey with them. That is a peace unlike any other I have ever experienced.

### IV. Patience

- A. I remember my first sermon here and a good part of me hopes you don't. I was nervous. I talked a mile a minute. I didn't make eye contact. All the things I learned not to do or be in preaching class was the every thing I did, but you were patience. You gave me space to grow. You tolerated my newness and didn't get upset with me. Thank you for your patience as I've learned and grown as a minister and preacher.

### V. Kindness

- A. If you have ever notice Frosty leaning over and saying something to me during a worship service and wondered what he was saying, this morning I want to let you in on the secret. I have been classified by some personality tests as a “perfectionist.” There are all sorts of reasons why, but, I think, largely because I have so much trouble with reading. To read something correctly takes a lot of effort and so that effort to get things right carries over to all areas of my life. Well, as the saying goes “Life Happens.” When Frosty leans over to talk to me it is often because something in the worship service didn't go right. I skipped over the Assurance of Pardon. I was too eager and started to pray before Russell and the

choir could sing. I got things wrong. When Frosty leans over and talks to me he is telling me everything will be alright, “Don’t worry about it. The church will still be standing tomorrow. God is still being praised.” Frosty, you have shown me kindness. Thank you.

## VI. Goodness

A. If you haven’t had the opportunity to serve on the board of deacons of the executive board, I pray that one day you will. If you have served on either of those boards, thank you. The people who serve in those ways are people who exhibit goodness. They are people who are positive about the church’s future. They worked diligently and for the betterment of the church. They are people who trust God and lean into the promises God has made. When I think of goodness I think of those people.

## VII. Faithfulness

A. Over the past year I have undertaken a little experiment called “Theology On Tap.” We have had four rounds of Theo. On Tap. There has been a core group of people, who week in and week out have shown up, and talked about all sorts of ethical and church related topics. It isn’t just that they show up and talk. They are eager to grow as disciples of Christ. They are committed to the church, to following Jesus, they are a faith filled bunch. They exemplify faithfulness.

## VIII. Gentleness

A. The Mission Committee has the privilege of seeking God’s will concerning the various missions the church will support. They talk about what's going on in the community of Peoria, as well as, the world. They are sensitive to the various needs of organizations and individuals. In one way they are like grandparents. My grandma Williams is the gentlest person I know. She feels things deeply and is always placing other people's needs before here own. The Mission Committee does the same. They feel things deeply. They think about the least, the last, and the lost. They seek to put people first. That is gentleness.

## IX. Self control

A. I’ve thought long and hard about this one. How does the church practice “self control?” I think it practices self control through the means of civility. The church is a place where we are polite to one another no matter our differences. Together, we engage in difficult conversations and when it's all over, we still esteem one

another. We chat in fellowship hour and wave when we pass one another on a walk. We don't let our differences separate us. Although, we might not see everything eye to eye, we recognize that everyone bears the image of God, so, instead, of highlighting our disagreements, we unite over what we share in common, being children of God. In short, self control is treating other people as you would have them treat you.

What seminary didn't teach is just how amazing ministry is. That is something I have learned from you. 30 months ago you invited me into your life. It has been my honor to journey with you, to cry with you, to celebrate with you, and to grow with you. Thank you for giving me the space to learn and grown as a person and as a pastor. I am thankful to have called FFC home and am thankful it was my first call into ministry. You have shown to me the "fruit of the Spirit" all nine of them. That, my friends, has been an incredible blessing to me. Thank you!

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.