

Possibilities **Ahead**

2024 EASTER SEASON DEVOTIONAL



West Virginia Conference
The United Methodist Church

March 31, 2024 – Easter Sunday

Unknown Situations

[John 20:1-10](#)

² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

The many years growing up in a very pagan-oriented home was, let’s say, very different from my school friends. The simple mention of going to church in my family was grounds for severe looks as well as lectures.

When Jesus had risen, no one knew that He was risen; those closest to Him simply thought His body had been moved.

You can imagine my reaction once I grew up and started experiencing churches and the people in them, some who were kind, some who were not so kind, and a lot of “unknown.” After I had started trying to find my way and where I belonged in Christianity, there seemed to be a lot more “unknown.”

It wasn’t until I moved to West Virginia and started actually being willing to talk through years of bitterness with God and be willing to trust His love for me that I started finding my way in an amazing church.

There have been a lot of “at the tomb question everything” moments... but if there is one thing I am learning and being reminded of, it is that He is there.

It’s not always the situation I see at first. Sometimes those situations come as the death of a loved one or even a situation we can’t seem to let God handle. We don’t “go all the way in.” At the end of the day we need to remember later in the scripture Jesus showed Mary the way, and He will always step in and show us the way.

The most spiritual prayers I’ve prayed are a simple “Lord, I’m lost... can you hear me?” That’s usually when God stops me in my tracks and uses a situation to remind me my past doesn’t matter or define me any longer.

Prayer: Father God, help us day to day remember your unending love for us. And Lord when we are skeptical or hesitant about anything you are leading us to, let us have faith to walk into it knowing you are holding our hand. In your loving name Father God, Amen.

Willow Roark
Madison United Methodist Church
Madison West Virginia
Lay Servant

April 1, 2024

From Despair to Joy
[John 20:11-18](#)

*Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."
(John 20:18a)*

Mary Magdalene, in the midst of extreme grief, went to the tomb where Jesus's body had been placed. On Friday Mary Magdalene had witnessed the cruel and torturous death of Jesus.

She had seen his pain and great suffering; she was despondent and heartbroken. No work was to be done on the Sabbath and that included carrying spices to a tomb, so Mary Magdalene went at the first opportunity which was early on Sunday morning.

But what a surprise, the stone at the tomb was rolled away, and Jesus was not there.

What a shock to her already fragile state of mind! Who would have done this and why? She rushed to the first person she saw to inquire if he had witnessed what had happened to the body of Jesus.

That gardener asked the same stupid question the angels had asked, "Why are you weeping?" Mary was most likely thinking, "How could I not be weeping after what I have seen the last three days?"

The Messiah was here; he had come to save us, and all of his plans were destroyed; he was destroyed." Then Jesus called her name, "Mary!" The tears became tears of joy! She wanted to hug him and not let go, but Jesus would not permit her to touch him. So she ran proclaiming the Good News! Jesus is alive!

Has Jesus called your name? How did you respond? Do your actions proclaim "Jesus is alive"?

We all go through times of grief and disappointment, but Jesus does not leave us or forsake us. I have been through times of trial through loss of family to loss of employment and times of being unable to find work.

But, I have always been able to find comfort in the Lord, when the money ran, out an unexpected check from a Christian friend would arrive in the mail. Looking back I have realized these rough times has been times to strengthen my faith.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, when you call our name, may we respond with such joy overflowing from our soul that we proclaim, "Jesus is alive! I have seen him!" In all things let us continue to praise you! Amen*

Rich Shaffer
First United Methodist Church, Parkersburg, WV
Conference Trustees

April 2, 2024

Could It Be?

[Mark 16:1-8](#)

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you. (Mark 16:7)

I retired December 31, 2022, and a friend of mine who is a part-time Baptist minister invited me to attend a “read through” Bible study which began January 6, 2023 with Genesis and ended with Revelation in November. As I have led a Bible study on Sunday evening since November 1, 2009, I thought that would be nice just to take part in a Bible discussion with brothers and sisters in the faith.

When we were studying about the apostles and the resurrection, I asked the group a burning question: “Could it be that Mary Magdalene was the first resurrection apostle? She was the first person to see the risen Lord, and he gave her a commission to go and tell the disciples and Peter.”

It gave my friend a shiver, and he said he never considered that but could not deny it. Mary Magdalene fit the description of an apostle, which comes from the Greek word *apostello* which means “to send forth with a commission.” And she was sent by the Messiah Himself, being the first to see him outside the empty tomb (Mark 16:9-22; John 20:11-18).

According to Luke 8:1-2, “... he went on through the cities and villages, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out...”

Jesus had just told Simon the Pharisee that the one whose many sins were forgiven loved him more than the one to whom little is forgiven, who loves little.

Mary Magdalene was forgiven of her sins by Jesus, followed him, was there when he was crucified and placed in the tomb, and was the first to see him in his resurrection body. The notes on Mary Magdalene in the *Life Application Study Bible (2021)* states it perfectly: “Mary’s faith was not complicated; it was direct and genuine. She was more eager to believe and obey than to understand everything. Jesus honored her childlike faith by appearing to her first and by entrusting her as the first messenger of the Good News of his resurrection.”

Could it be that regardless of your past, if you repent and have faith and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the possibilities ahead are eternal life with Jesus? YES!!!

Prayer: *Father in Heaven, please help us to have a heart like Jesus for the lost souls of this world and help us to guide them to saving faith by living a genuine and faithful life before them and giving them the words that you would give us through your Holy Spirit. Amen*

Charlie White

St. John’s United Methodist Church
Spencer, WV

Lay Leader, Certified Lay Servant, UM Men treasurer, and Bible Study leader

April 3, 2024

Awe and Wonder

[Acts 4:32-35](#)

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

I'm not sure how anyone else goes about writing a devotion. I read and study the scripture, then read it again to see how it speaks to me. Really the first thought I had was what I titled this devotion: "*awe and wonder.*"

Wouldn't it be wonderful to come together as the body of believers who were all of one heart and mind? It is possible. It is not a trick. It is not a miracle. It is each of us doing what we are called to do.

The apostles and other believers were going through a really rough patch. They did not get a lot of time with Jesus, and didn't expect to have to remember all the parables, stories and particulars, which had not been written down. So they came together.

This scripture says they were of one heart and mind, and there were no needy among them. How did that happen? Do you wonder? These folks were relying on "with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."

There were no needy among them because they all were encouraging each other. What a gift! It could have been the selling of land, but it could also have been helping hand cooking the meal or caring for the child.

Each person has a talent – then and now. How can you encourage?

We are all apostles. We are required to tell what we know. Your story of how you met Jesus may be the one that reaches into the heart of the darkest sinner. No one can hear it if you don't speak it.

When you speak – speak love – Jesus's love. Before you were born, you were loved. Jesus loved us enough to die for us. That is why the believers were of one heart and mind.

Can you tell me that doesn't smack of "awe and wonder"?

Prayer: *Heavenly Father please make me an instrument of encouragement to go tell the story of peace, love, hope, and joy found in loving and serving You. Amen*

Mary C. Bane
Blacksville Charge, Mon Valley District
Certified Lay Minister, Certified Lay Speaker

April 4, 2024

Blessed Unity of the People of God

[Psalm 133:1-3](#)

“¹Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ²It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard...of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. ³It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.”

How good and pleasant it is to dwell together in unity! “Blessed” unity is God-activated. The scripture indicates this precious oil to be holy anointing oil, pouring down like spiritual showers. Acts 3:19 says that times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord. Like the sweet aroma that arises from the fragrance of perfumed oils, *unity* among God’s people refreshes and creates a pleasant atmosphere for all.

Because we have been welcomed into the love of Christ and received as dearly loved children by the Spirit of God’s Son, we shall be one. We are able to love others by the same love which we’ve received. We can offer the world a place of safety and healing, become committed to inviting and receiving all people, and share with them the *Good News*, sprinkled by the fruit of the Spirit.

The early church shaped their lives around the practice of hospitality. Acts 2:46b-47a says, *“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”* How effective this could be in our churches and homes if we adopted the Apostle Paul’s words in Colossians 1:10, and pledge, *“I will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work”*, and in Romans 12:18, *“As much as it is possible, I will live peaceably with all people.”*

Charles Spurgeon’s prayer of unity says: “O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity.”

Psalm 133:3 tells us that the blessing of unity is something that God *commands*. Since we have life forevermore with the people of God, let us make every effort to enjoy unity with them now. The possibilities are endless!

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help us to see how precious all our lives are. We pray that we can wrap others in the conversation of the Good News that preserves and delights the soul. Help us to be strong and supportive, and be the link that brings others to you. May we offer others the fragrance of forgiveness and love as you, Lord, have given to us. Amen.*

Gregory Hicks

Jenkins Chapel United Methodist Church, Mathias, WV

Certified Lay Minister for Baker Charge, Hardy County, Potomac Highlands District

April 5, 2024

Beginnings

[John 1:1 - 2:2](#)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. (NRSVUE)

A famous rock group from the sixties and seventies, the Chicago Transit Authority, who later shortened their name to Chicago, had a hit single that smashed the charts when it was released in 1969 called "Beginnings." However, although the song speaks of a beginning, I doubt that it was referring to the same beginning that John 1 speaks of.

The NIV interprets this passage of scripture as: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

We all know that our Lord and Savior came as a babe in Bethlehem to begin his earthly ministry. That was the second biggest beginning in the Bible, with creation being the first. There were others in the Bible who had a beginning as well. Look at the lives of Joseph, Naomi, Noah, and Esther to more modern stories of faith. New beginnings are a theme that is woven throughout the Bible. Each of these stories provides us with an example of renewal, hope, and faith in God.

Just like those in the Bible, we too have beginnings, from the time we are born until the day we die. Each year we begin a new year, some say it is turning over a new leaf, while others call it getting a clean slate. We have new beginnings each day that the Lord gives to each one of us. It is often said your gift *from God* is life and what you do with it is your gift *to God*. With this Easter season comes spring; spring brings with it a time of new beginnings and new possibilities.

What new beginnings for the Lord are you planning this year? Is it to begin a Bible study? To read the Bible more? Or is it to memorize scriptures, or maybe attend church more? What has the Lord laid on your heart to begin that you have not done before? The possibilities for new beginnings are endless if we only believe and trust in the Lord. We all just need to listen to that small voice inside all of us (The Holy Spirit) for directions on what he wants you and me to do.

Maybe we as Christians should all meditate on the first few words in Chicago's hit single "Beginnings." Don't these words sound like something we as Christians should be saying to our Heavenly Father every day?

When I'm with you; It doesn't matter where we are
Or what we are doing; I'm with you that all that matters.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, we love you and adore you, show us all the new beginnings that you want us to do for the advancement of your Kingdom. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen*

Jerry Meadows

Cross Lanes United Methodist Church, Cross Lanes, WV
Communication Chair, UMM President, Conference UMM Vice President, Prayer Advocate

April 6, 2024

“Peace Be with You”

[John 20:19-25](#)

¹⁹Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

The beginning of this passage finds us on the evening of Resurrection Sunday after Mary Magdalene shared Jesus’s news that He had risen with the disciples. But instead of rejoicing and sharing the Good News with others, they are in hiding.

Hiding from the Jewish leaders, fearing for their own lives as the news began to spread. You can almost imagine what was going through their minds trying to process all that they had recently experienced--fear, confusion, and disbelief. Then suddenly, there He was! In the room with them! “Peace be with you.”

Upon hearing these words and seeing His scars, their fear subsides then He recommissioned them with a new title. They were now no longer just His disciples, but His apostles.

As Apostles, they had been given the power and authority of the Trinity to share the Good News to all the world and to forgive the sins of new believers.

“Peace be with you” now has a totally new meaning from when they first heard it just minutes before!

The apostles, “ones who are sent out, or messengers,” went on to change not only their immediate areas, but the whole world, and ours as well.

Flash forward to today. We have also been commissioned to share the Good News as His disciples. Instead of locking ourselves away and hiding from the world in fear of what others might say, as the disciples originally did, we need to be bold in our faith.

Imagine the possibilities of a world where we lived each day sharing what Christ has done in our lives and making new disciples. Imagine a world with no fear or confusion, but one of peace and clarity. Now take Jesus’s words of “Peace be with you” and let your light shine into a world of darkness.

Prayer: *Lord, lead us with Your peace into a world full of darkness as you did the apostles so long ago. Help us see clearly all the possibilities that lay ahead and to act on them so that we may change our world too. In Your name we pray, amen.*

Heather Fulton
Madison United Methodist, Madison, WV
Certified Lay Speaker, Southern District Lay Ministry Team
Annual Conference Lay Ministry Team

April 7, 2024

God's Answer to Doubt

[John 20:26-31](#)

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.-- 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

I grew up hearing "Thomas, the Doubter." How many of us are like Thomas? How many times do we doubt God and what he can do through his followers?

On February 7th, my 84-year-old mom fell and broke both femurs just above her artificial knees.

Many questions started running through my head: Will she be able to walk again? What can be done for her? How will we be able to manage her at home? So many questions and an unknown future. For a brief time, I let doubt consume me, then I reached out to our charge's prayer chains, and we all prayed for her recovery.

Despite what I knew about modern medicine and what they can do to help repair bones, I had doubts about what could be done to help her. Mom is now in rehab, anxious to get home.

How many times do we let our mind go down the negative path before we turn things over to Jesus?

No matter what situation we find ourselves in, we need to turn things over to God and let Him use our circumstances to bring honor and glory for Him. God resolves situations when I surrender my doubt and believe and trust in Him.

I never dreamed that I would be a lay speaker or write devotionals for others, but God is leading me to a future that he knows, and I need to let go of doubts and be obedient.

Let God show you the possibilities for your future. Every experience we go through God can use to grow our faith. What possibilities lie ahead for you and me when we believe and trust God to guide us?

Prayer: *Lord, once again you have shown me how to trust you in times of distress. Help me to trust you more each day as you guide me through my time here on Earth. Amen.*

Patricia Dixon
Wesley Chapel UMC, Albright, WV
Lay Speaker, Lay Leader, Adult Sunday School teacher
Charge Conference Representative

April 8, 2024

Raise Up and Go!

[Acts 3:1-10](#)

“And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.” Acts 3:7

In our scripture today, Peter and John have entered the temple, the same temple that Jesus visited during his ministry. As they were entering, a lame man’s call got their attention.

This man had spent many days at the Beautiful Gate begging, but on this day, the two disciples intentionally stopped in front of him. Now all this man wanted was some alms. Peter tells the man that he has no silver or gold, but he directs him to stand up and walk in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Wow! What a gift. The next verse tells us that he took the man’s hand and raised him up.

Recently, our pastor spoke of scripture in the Gospel of Mark. He spoke of the words “raised up” and how often Mark used those words in his gospel. Raise up, receive new strength, a new life, a new beginning. This is what I believe Peter has given to the lame man. As in many of the other healing encounters that Jesus had, this man jumped up and immediately started praising God.

The people were filled with wonder and amazement. I have no doubt that they ran and told many of the splendor of God. Peter and John had been authorized through Jesus and the Holy Spirit to go out and continue His teachings and to continue His works of healing the lame and the sick.

Most of us do not feel that we are qualified to heal the sick and the lame, but through the Holy Spirit we are equipped to go forth and “raise up” the sick, the lonely, the left out. We can do this through our witness, our prayers, our tending to other with our gifts, graces and our love.

We, as Christians, have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:28). As we go forward from Easter to Pentecost, I urge each of us to pray for those opportunities to raise up those who need a little lift. Imagine the possibilities of not only helping others in the name of Jesus, but having that excitement spread throughout our churches, communities and even farther as those proclaim the love of Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father: As we journey through this time after Easter into Pentecost, allow Your Holy Spirit to work through us. Help us to raise up those who are suffering. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Cheryl Bramble
Bridgeport United Methodist Church, Bridgeport, WV
Lay Servant, United Women in Faith President

April 9, 2024

Learning to Grow

Psalm 4

*Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.*

*How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words
and seek after lies? (Selah)*

*But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself; the Lord hears when I call to
him. (Psalm 4:1-3)*

When we cry out to God, and he remains silent, we often jump to the conclusion that God has left us. What we fail to remember is that he never leaves us; he is just giving us some space. We often want a quick fix to our particular prayer of the moment, and when we don't get it, we feel abandoned or forgotten. We forget that we have the gift of free will. Our understanding of God's plan is equivalent to a toddler's understanding of the life of an adult.

We think we understand; we mimic things we perceive as good with no real, deeper understanding as to why. As with toddlers, sometimes a loving parent will take a step back to let the child make decisions, learn how to achieve tasks for themselves. Sometimes the parent even allows the child to make poor choices. How are we to learn without making a few mistakes?

We often perceive God as an old grandfatherly figure, but I see God more as a young parent who has baby-proofed the house and is letting us roam and explore our surroundings. Like a loving parent, God is with us the whole time. Sometimes we can feel him sitting next to us; sometimes we--as children--think that he is looking away, and we can get away with things. This is when we often get ourselves in trouble.

Like any good parent, God knows that we need to be given the chance to work some things out on our own. This is how we learn and grow. He has gifted us with gifts and abilities. He wants us to use those gifts.

How fun would life be if we just sat there while God did everything? We would never learn anything. No matter if you are 10 or 100, we are all children of God. He is allowing us to explore, giving us the chance to succeed or fail, while always watching over us.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father: thank you for giving us love, guidance and support, while letting us try on our own. Thank you for the free will to make both good decisions and bad ones. Thank you for your forgiveness for when we mess up. Help us to grow each day to be more like you. Amen*

Ashley Wood
Christ Church United Methodist, Charleston, WV
Director of Youth and Children's Ministries, Lay Speaker
Nine Rivers District Lead Team

April 10, 2024,

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
[Psalm 135](#)

“Lord, your name is forever! Lord, your fame extends from one generation to the next! The Lord gives justice to his people and his compassion on those who serve him.” (Psalm 135: 13-14, CEB)

I've been a member of Wellsburg United Methodist Church for over 50 years. Wow! That is a long time – at least by human standards! I was taken in by Profession of Faith at the ripe young age of 18/19. This is the church where my husband (yes, I was a very young bride) and family were members. My father-in-law was active there at the time, so I followed him to this church. He was a member of the Men's Sunday School Class, and – being shy at the time (if you can imagine that!) – I even followed him into that class. They accepted me graciously.

When I reflect on how the universal church, the United Methodist Church, this congregation, and my life have changed over these many years, there are two things that have not: this wonderful old church building (built in 1853) and, of course, GOD. God is the same and God's *“fame extends from one generation to the next!”* While four generations of Clayton and Mary Ruth Ramsey's family have now been involved at WUMC, our God of Psalm 135 – our good, great, creating, conquering, eternal, righteous, and compassionate God – has been the same God.

This majestic Psalm of worship – which begins and ends with *“Praise the Lord!”* – tells why we should: God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, for the Lord's *“name is forever!”* We can count on that fact! God is creator of all, gives justice and compassion to the people who count themselves as God's own, and reigns over all the false idols of this world. And he has, does, and will do all these things and so much more FOREVER!

You know, now that I think about it, this majestic 171-year-old church building has been majorly damaged twice and has (much like my nearly-70-year-old body) degraded with time, requiring rebuilding and repairs, but God has always, ALWAYS been the over-arching presence! I take great comfort in this fact in these angst-ridden times. I have great hope for all the wonder-filled and grace-filled possibilities that lie ahead – because God is FOREVER! Praise the Lord indeed!

Let us pray: *Holy Lord, we are thankful to be counted among your “treasured possessions.” We are thankful that you have been and are and always will be present with us. And so, in this post-Easter season, we sing praises to your holy name because it is beautiful to do so. Amen.*

(M.J. Patricia) Pat Ramsey
Wellsburg UMC, Wellsburg, WV
Certified Lay Minister assigned to Ruble UMC, Wheeling, WV
CLM liaison on the Northern District Committee on Ministry
Member of the Northern District Laity/Lay Academy Team

April 11, 2024

Who is God? What Can God do for you?

[1 John 3: 1-7](#)

² Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.

Are you a Child of God? That's who we are, but the world doesn't recognize it or take us seriously. Why? Because they have no idea who He is or what He's up to.

Friends, that's exactly who we are: A child of God! Who knows how we will end up? We know that when He is openly revealed, we'll see Him—and in seeing him, become like him.

What can you do to get to know Christ better? Have you heard of the Walk to Emmaus? It is a 72-hour Christian experience to bring you closer to Christ. It is something that you owe it to yourself to attend and be forever changed and experience Christ's love in an authentic way.

In 2005 my husband Fred attended the Walk to Emmaus. It was 72 hours without a phone or watch. Upon his return home I saw such a change in him, and I wanted to experience that too! Two weeks later, I went on my Emmaus Walk! This experience was an amazing way for us to change and to know that we are a Child of God!

How can we stay in His likeness? Upon knowing Him and experiencing Him, we become like Him. When we look forward to His coming, we stay ready, with the hope and purity of Jesus' life as a model for our own lives.

Those who indulge in a sinful life are dangerously lawless. Sin is a major disruption of God's order. Christ came to save us from sin! There is no sin in Him—and sin is not part of his program. No one who lives in Christ makes a practice of sin. Those who do practice sin should take a good look at Christ; they've got him all backwards.

So, don't let anyone divest you from truth. It's the person who "acts" right who "is" right--just as we see it lived out in our righteous Messiah.

Prayer: *Father, thank you for all that you have taught us about following you. Keep those who may not follow your teachings and are seeking to know your way in your thoughts and show them your way. We are all grateful that you know us and will keep us on the right path on the journey you have planned for us.*

Melanie Herr

Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church, Huntington, WV
Certified Lay Servant, Chairperson of Nurture, Outreach Committee, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Pack for the Future Backpack Ministry, Common Grounds Dinner Ministry, Covenant Ministry Council, Breakthrough Prayer Committee

April 12, 2024

The Truth Hurts

[Acts 3:12-19](#)

“But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life.” Acts 3:14-15a

The apostle Peter takes the hand of a man who has been “lame since birth” and raises him up. The man leaps, jumps, and praises God.

When the crowd was amazed at this miracle, Peter let them know it was not done by the power of the apostles or by their godliness, but by faith in Jesus – God’s servant, the Author of Life, the Holy and Righteous One.

But Peter said they had killed Him and asked for a murderer instead to be released. Peter issued this scathing rebuke to the gathered crowd, likely some of whom were present at the crucifixion of Jesus.

Peter expected these words to hurt them.

The truth hurts.

Have you ever been told a hurtful truth? Here is one for you: You and I are also guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. All have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory; therefore, we all have a part in the crucifixion of Jesus.

We all have sin that requires his shed blood, blood from the Perfect Lamb, in order for us to be forgiven. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your son into the world to die on a cross for our sins. We confess our sin, and we are thankful for Christ’s obedience to your plan to offer salvation to all who confess and accept his work of salvation. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.*

Paula Beard McCoy
Bascom United Methodist Church
Rupert, WV
Certified Lay Minister (enrolled in licensing school)

April 13, 2024

Peace Be with You

[Luke 24: 36-43](#)

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see, a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence."

When I was 14 my mother took me to the Good Friday Service at our church. It was the first time I remember going to a Good Friday Service. When we walked into the church, the large cross that hung on the front wall was draped in black. But I saw Jesus and as clearly as He spoke to the Disciples, He spoke to me; "I did this for you. Peace be with you."

At 14 I did not know the possibilities ahead or understand what this meant. And like the disciples, I was startled and afraid. After the service my mother and I sat in the car as I went through multiple feelings, feelings of joy and amazement. Throughout my life I have not always been or done what I should, but one thing was always sure: Jesus is real, and he took my sins away so I might live for and with Him.

Two years ago, I lost my husband, a man whose faith never wavered. He loved Jesus more than anyone I know. He struggled with health issues but served God in full-time ministry for almost 30 years. When he passed, I wasn't sure how I was going to go on without him.

But again, Jesus reminded me that He was with me and to take His hand and HE would be with me -- that His peace would be with me. I don't know the Possibilities Ahead, for me, for the church, for our denomination, but one thing I know is that JESUS IS REAL.

He came to save us from our sinful ways, not to form a denomination or religion but to form a relationship with HIM. I pray that you too will have that relationship with Jesus-- that Jesus will show you His hands and feet and that you will know Him as your Savior.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, guide us to know you better to have a relationship with you. To look to you and no other. Lord to hear you say to us, "Peace be with you." Amen.*

Lynn Frum
Tennerton UMC, Buckhannon, WV
Lay Servant, Representative to Annual Conference.

April 14, 2024

My Upper Room

[Luke 24: 36-49](#)

³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

Mary Magdalene and the women had been to the tomb; it was empty! Peter and John had run to the tomb; nobody believed her. Befuddled and shocked, they came back to the room where the other nine and followers were gathered.

Shock, fear, and confusing conversations consumed the room. Doors were locked due to the increased Roman presence. In the evening there was a loud knock at the door. Cleopas and a companion had returned from Emmaus, seven miles away. Unbeknownst to them, Jesus had walked with them, stayed, and broken bread with them. They recognized him as he broke bread, and he disappeared. The excitement and screaming conversations exploded in the room.

Jesus appeared in the middle of the room with "Peace be with you." Astonishment and uncertainty were across each face. "It is I, myself. Handle me and see. A spirit has not flesh and bones as I have."

They were still astounded and thinking it was too good to be true. He asked "Have you anything to eat here?" They handed him a piece of cooked fish, and he ate it before them. There were no hallucinations or delusions; it was Jesus.

He told them of the words he spoke to them while he was with them, fulfilled all things written about him by Moses, the prophets, and psalms. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Jesus was to suffer and arise from the dead on the third day; repentance in his name and forgiveness of sins should be preached to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. He promised help from the father, but he told them to stay in this city until they were clothed with power from on high.

First, this scripture points to the reality of the resurrection. He was no spirit or phantom. They touched him, handled him, and he ate solid food before them. The eleven were acutely aware of the crucifixion as they had seen other crosses of condemned people. They scattered and hid from the Romans and the Sanhedrin. Peter tried to be brave but denied he even knew Jesus three times. The hole of denial dug deeper.

We have to grasp the necessity of the cross. The cross was not an emergency measure where everything else had failed. The cross was not forced on God; it was part of the plan. At the cross we experience the eternal moment of the greatest love the world has ever known. He was the atonement for the sins of all who believed in him.

As I try to embrace "my upper room," I visualize the faces and overwhelming emotions of these eleven personalities who argued among themselves. The "sons of thunder" who were hated as siding with the Romans. They who were crippled, who doubted, who ask "what now." Who was brash and defensive enough to bring the knife? Yet all were weak and heavy burdened to run for cover. Where do I find "I, myself" in this crowd of questioning believers?

Jesus provided the solution to all of their questions. "I will send out the promise of my father upon you. But stay in this city until you are clothed with power from on high." Oh my, what am I receiving? The expectation of given gifts with unexpected arrival.

This creates the perfect wait. As a child I waited for a gift on a given day that created great excitement. The birthday gift, though not as exciting, was disappointing if not received. The birthing of a child is filled with all of life's pleasures, challenges, and joy, but surrounded by *waiting*. Walking with Jesus demands patience, waiting, and knowing that the complete solution will arrive in the fulfillment of time.

My upper room experience challenges my discipleship to the Triune God. Have I embraced the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ? Has my personality received power from on high to boldly proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins? As long as I am, I have room to grow into the person Jesus created.

I have adopted a scripture of my family through the years for my proclamation of possibilities. Joshua 24:15 calls us to "...choose for yourself this day whom you will serve....But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Prayer: *God of the Universe, I repent of sins, known and unknown. Forgive me of unwarranted doubts, fears, and cowardice. Holy Spirit, fill my emptiness that only you know. Awaken my spirit to serve my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ while I have breath. In the name of the One who saves me by His Grace. Amen*

Robert N. Lohr
First United Methodist Church, Princeton, WV
Chairman SPRC, Former President United Methodist Men

Monday, April 15

When Opposition Comes... Acts 4:5-12

⁷ When they had made the prisoners^[d] stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are being asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,^[d] whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.

Peter wasn't new to being questioned about Jesus. He met resistance with Jewish leaders and doubters from the moment he said 'Yes' to following Christ. I can imagine Peter, along with all of the other disciples, being fearful for their lives--maybe questioning why they would still face trouble or pain or loss while being called to heal and proclaim in the "powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene."

Yet in this passage Peter doesn't come across as impulsive like he's been so famous for in the past. We meet a new Peter in the book of Acts. A tenacious Peter; a powerful Peter; Simon isn't showing face anymore, and it's because there's something new on the inside.

That power and tenacity is revealed in verse 8 where we see he is "filled with the Holy Spirit."

He risks his very life to stand up to these elders and rulers and not only question their accusation, but to also state that it was all done through the very One *they* crucified! He continues saying the one they rejected is now the only one that can save, that can heal! Wow! Go Peter!

We would like to think we would have the same boldness and backbone in that position, but the truth is, we don't know how we will respond until the opportunity arises. Whenever I am questioned or interrogated or accused, I pray I am able to reply with the wisdom by the Holy Spirit giving me the words.

Luke tells us that when we "are brought to trial in the synagogues and before rulers and authorities, don't worry about how to defend yourself or what to say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said" (Luke 12:11-12). This does not mean we never need to read the Word and just rely on the Spirit to tell us what to say. How can we recognize His voice if we never know His Word? We have to prepare daily.

We don't know what path we will encounter each day, but we know as representatives of the King, we need to know Him well enough to know when it's Him speaking to us. And don't be nervous and timid about speaking up for Christ. He has already given us a "Spirit of power" (2 Timothy 1:7). My job, and yours, is to spend daily time with Him to know Him more than the day before. We must be ready at all times to live boldly and preach the gospel, and be ready to use words when necessary.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank you for Your Spirit of power that lives within me. I ask you to continue to speak to me daily as I read your word, so that I can recognize your voice when opposition comes my way. Help me as I strive to be worthy of the calling to which you have called me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Laura Dyer
Nine Rivers District Certified Laity, DCOM Board Member

April 16, 2024

Recognizing the Possibilities Ahead

[Psalm 23](#)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;^[a] ³ he restores my soul.^[b] He leads me in right paths^[c] for his name's sake.

They say you never forget your first: first kiss, first car, first job. This is true, at least for me. My mining career took an unplanned and unexpected turn when, in 1981, I became Division Safety Inspector. Within a month, I was investigating my first mining fatality. Part of the investigation was interviewing a miner who was within a few feet of the deceased; he was operating part of the equipment that resulted in the injury and death. This man, who was my dad's age, was still shaking the next day when we interviewed him.

At random times in the interview, he would recite pieces of the 23rd Psalm. Late in the interview, during a lull, I asked him why he was doing that, thinking he was trying to calm himself and wanting to reassure him we were not there to blame him. He said that is what Frank, the deceased, was reciting as he died and those words haunted him now.

The 23rd Psalm is many times associated with death. We use it at funerals and print it on items meant to comfort those who are dealing with one of life's trials or near death. Many of us memorized it when we were young, and it sticks with us today.

Being a little different sometimes, I see the 23rd Psalm's language and imagery in the context of life, especially *life after Easter*. Life in a time when we celebrate and try to discern how to live in the light of Jesus' resurrection – not that different from those first disciples. I see the 23rd Psalm as more how a person lives in harmony and relationship with God than about how one faces death and the hereafter.

Some say we are facing uncertain times. So . . . when have we humans faced “certain times”? For one who believes in the promise of Jesus' resurrection and life, it is being “an Easter person living in a Good Friday world.” We have boundless opportunities and possibilities ahead if we only have the wit and faith to take hold of them.

The 23rd Psalm describes that world of possibilities if we allow the Lord to be our Shepherd. By God's grace, focusing on the life and possibilities of Easter in front of us tends to dull and fade those uncertainties all around us.

Prayer: *Glorious God, please help me remember to sing when I'm happy and sing when I'm scared because I know you listen to me. Help me see those possibilities ahead of me and learn from the trials behind me. Help me hear the whispers of the Holy Spirit to show the best paths to take. Lord, I thank you for that. In Jesus' name, AMEN.*

Gary Hartsog

United Methodist Temple, Beckley, West Virginia, Certified Lay Speaker, Conference Lay Ministry Team, Conference Episcopacy Team, Southern District Lay Leader, Southern District Director of Lay Servant Ministries, UMT Audit Team Chair, Secretary for the Board of Directors – Hope in the Mountains

April 17, 2024

Harmony of Possibilities

Psalm 150

¹ Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!^[a]

² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

Psalm 150 is a symphony of praise, inviting us to join the buildup of worship that echoes through the ages. As we examine this masterpiece, we discover a theme of "possibilities ahead" woven into each verse. Praise in the sanctuary is an anticipation of the possibilities that lie within the space of God's presence. It's an invitation to approach Him with expectancy, recognizing that within the boundaries of worship, endless possibilities unfold.

The sanctuary becomes a doorway to heavenly encounters, a space where the impossible becomes possible. The variety of instruments mentioned—trumpets, harps, lyres, tambourines, strings, and flutes—paints a brilliant picture of the distinct expressions of praise. Each instrument represents a unique aspect of our lives, contributing to the balanced possibilities of worship. The tune of our existence, when offered to God, becomes a tapestry of possibilities that resound in the heavenly realms.

A few years ago, there was a community event organized by a local church where people from different backgrounds and faiths came together for an evening of music and worship. The event aimed to celebrate diversity and unity through the universal language of music. During this gathering, individuals brought various instruments, echoing the sentiments of Psalm 150.

There were guitars, drums, flutes, and even unconventional instruments like handbells and shakers. As the music played, people from different walks of life joined in, creating a harmonious blend of sounds. What made this experience special was the shared joy and sense of connection as everyone contributed to the musical celebration. It felt like a living expression of the psalm's call to praise God with all kinds of instruments. The event served as a reminder of the power of music to bring people together and transcend differences in a beautiful and harmonious way.

Psalm 150 challenges us to praise God with both skill and impulsiveness. Skillful playing reflects our commitment to excellence in our worship, while impulsive praise reveals the possibilities of genuine, unrestrained encounters with the godly. The psalm encourages us to explore the full field of our worship, embracing the countless possibilities that arise from a heart fully surrendered.

As we meditate on Psalm 150, let us adopt the possibilities that occur when we enter God's sanctuary with hearts open to His presence. The instruments of our lives, skillfully and impulsively played, create a pleasant melody of worship. In this divine symphony, possibilities ahead are not just imagined but realized, as we encounter the unlimited love and power of the God who invites us into the grand quest of praise.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, we come before you with hearts overflowing with gratitude and awe, inspired by the psalmist's call to praise. May our lives be instruments of worship, resonating with the diverse melodies of love and devotion. In the symphony of our days, help us to praise you with both skill and spontaneity, offering a harmonious chorus that echoes through the heavens. Amen.*

Andy Fowler

Duff Street UMC, Clarksburg

CLM Assigned Supply at Stealey; Greater Clarksburg Cooperative Parish Worship Committee

April 18, 2024

LOVE
[1 John 3: 16-24](#)

¹⁸Little children, let us just stop saying we love people, let us really love them, and show it by our actions.

1 John Chapter 3, verse 18 seems simple enough, **but is it?** Can we really open our hearts to love everyone?

That is what God says we must do. We should want to give others the love they need. And yes, that can be difficult at times. The challenge is **HOW** to express our love.

Have you ever gone to a grocery store and witnessed others being rude to a cashier? The clerk may seem impatient and has a harried look of disdain on their face. How easy is it for us to forget that it's not the cashier's fault that the line is long. Give the clerk a compliment and a warm smile. YOU can be the difference between their having a good or bad day...Be the smile!

A smile and a kind word may be just what someone needs to brighten their day. This type of love is a simple expression of showing happiness. But unconditional love is what God is asking us to do.

When driving down a street, it's easy to drop a dollar into a beggar's hat and drive away. Really though, to a homeless person, love is a warm meal, a safe place to sleep and a companion to talk to. To a family member, unconditional love is not judging but helping. As God showed unconditional love by the ultimate sacrifice of his only son, we too should be ready to help others however possible.

What if loving the other person or persons is difficult? This is where we need to pray for the grace of God and his guidance.

A smile, a dollar, unconditional love, and a prayer. Is it enough? I don't know but just remember, it's not our place to judge. That's God's job. Our job is to LOVE! Love yourself so you can love others. That is what our Lord wants from us and for us.

Prayer: *Dear God, let us learn to love everyone we know and don't know so that our love will teach others to love as we love. Make it our destiny to love everyone and teach everyone that loving one another is what you want and expect. Make the world a better place for all in hopes that all can love one another.*

Fred and Paula Wade
Wellsburg United Methodist Church
Wellsburg, WV

April 19, 2024

Looking Forward

[Genesis 48:8-19](#)

¹⁴ But Israel put out his right hand and placed it on the head of Ephraim, the younger one, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands because Manasseh was the oldest son. ¹⁵ He blessed them and said,

*“May the God before whom my fathers
Abraham and Isaac walked,
may the God who was my shepherd
from the beginning until this day,*

*¹⁶ may the divine messenger who protected me from all harm,
bless the young men.*

*Through them may my name be kept alive
and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.*

*May they grow into a great multitude
throughout the land.”*

¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, “No, my father! This is the oldest son. Put your right hand on his head.”¹⁹ But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He'll become a people too, and he'll also be great. But his younger brother will be greater than he will, and his descendants will become many nations.” Genesis 48:14-16, 18-19 (CEB)

Israel (Jacob), the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, is nearing the end of his life. His son Joseph brings to him his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob provides a patriarchal blessing to both grandsons. Jacob, however, breaks with tradition and culture and places his right hand on the head of the youngest grandson Ephraim rather than the oldest grandson Manasseh.

How is this ancient story relevant today? Jacob provided his grandsons with a vision and blessing for the future. He broke with tradition and recognized that while both grandsons would be leaders, the younger, Ephraim, would be the greater leader.

Let's ponder this scripture with several questions. What is the vision for our church and its people going forward? How do we honor the past without getting stuck in the ways things used to be? Who are the leaders, including those who may seem unlikely, who can prayerfully guide us in achieving that vision?

Prayer: *Loving God. Guide us to honor, but not dwell in the past. Open our minds and hearts to optimistically look forward with vision to the future. Raise up leaders to guide that vision. Amen.*

Cheryl Davis

Elizabeth Memorial United Methodist Church, Charleston WV
Certified Lay Minister; Lay Leader, Nine Rivers District
Trustee, United Methodist Foundation of WV

April 20, 2024

Get Some Rest

[Mark 6: 30-34](#)

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

It was a few days before we were hosting a holiday dinner for family and friends at our house and preparations were in full swing. Groceries needed to be purchased; the house needed to be cleaned; laundry needed washed and put away, etc.

I don't want to give you the wrong impression. I do not keep an immaculate home. However, whenever I am preparing for guests, I feel the need to make sure everything on the to-do list is completed regardless of whether it has anything to do with the upcoming event. I know my guests will not care or even notice if the laundry is done, but I find myself stressing over the smallest and most insignificant tasks on the list.

While immersed in preparations, friends invited us to join them for a relaxing dinner at one of our favorite restaurants. Any other time, we would have accepted our friends' invitation without hesitation; but how could I even consider taking a break from preparations when there was still so much to accomplish on the to-do list?

Ultimately, my husband talked me into accepting the invitation. The evening was just what I needed. I thoroughly enjoyed visiting with our friends and taking an evening to just relax. The next day, I reevaluated the to-do list and removed the items that had no impact on the holiday dinner. I felt a lot less stressed which made the rest of the preparations more enjoyable.

Even Jesus' disciples needed time to rest and recharge. This taught me a valuable lesson. From now on, I am going to work on taking advantage of opportunities to relax. I am working on cutting out stressful preparations and instead, looking forward to the joy of spending quality time with family and friends.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, it is so easy to get caught up in preparations that we miss the real purpose of the event. Please help us recognize sharing your love with others is all that really matters. Amen*

Terri Broadwater
Stout Memorial United Methodist Church
Parkersburg, WV

April 21, 2024

My Sheep Hear My Voice

[John 10: 11-18](#)

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

In 1998, our family, along with approximately 60 other West Virginians, participated in a WV Volunteers in Mission trip to Russia, led by the Rev. Tom Clark. Our project was to build playgrounds in orphanages outside of Moscow. Getting to the orphanages required us to travel through airports and subway stations and ride in planes, trains and buses.

Upon arriving at the airport, we quickly learned that we could not understand the language, could not read the signs, and basically had no idea where we were going or how to get there. We were totally dependent on Rev. Clark to lead us and keep us safe in a very foreign land.

If you ever had the privilege of meeting Tom, one thing that stood out was his distinctive voice. It was deep and loud and strong and could be heard above the noise and confusion of the airports and the subways as he told us to stay together, follow him, and do not stray. In those circumstances, he was like a shepherd leading his sheep.

In our Bible passage for today, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd" and a few verses later he says "my sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." (John 10:27)

I must be honest and say that many times in my life I have struggled to hear Jesus's voice, struggled to find the direction I was praying for, or struggled to find the peace I was searching for. Why was I not getting an answer? So many times I thought to myself, it would be so much simpler if the voice was loud and distinctive and could be heard above the noise and confusion of life. But I have come to understand that, at least part of the time, is not the way it works.

A pastor recently reminded me of the Parable of the Lost Sheep, in which the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep to find the one lost. Would the shepherd have left the 99 if he did not know they were safe, protected, and would be fine? In those periods of life when we cannot hear the voice of the Lord, is it possible to imagine that he is not responding because he knows we are safe and protected and trusts us to find the right direction and make the correct decisions?

May it be so.

Prayer: *God of grace and mercy, open our hearts and minds to hear your message to us and give us the ability to discern your voice above the noise and confusion of the world. Help us to know that even during those periods of life when we cannot hear your voice to trust and know that you are always there watching over us. Amen*

Jeffrey A. Porter
Steele Memorial United Methodist Church, Barboursville, WV
Chair, Conference Council on Finance and Administration

April 22, 2024

Questions

[Acts 8:26-31](#)

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.

²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

“On his way home, he was reading the Gospel.” This high-ranking official from Ethiopia had been to Jerusalem to worship, and was now seeking answers. Each and every one of us has been there--whether before we knew Jesus, or during our journey.

Questions about the Good News are how we learned what The Gospel and this guy called Jesus have to offer. Somewhere, sometime, someone helped us by speaking about and living out the Good News in a manner that made sense to us. We all need to hear and see the Good News in different ways so that we can begin to have some understanding.

Because we are living out the Good News, we are like Philip. Every day, in all situations, others want to know how it is that we are living out the call of Jesus in our lives. The opportunities are endless to show Jesus' love as we live out our everyday lives.

People who are questioning their own spirituality are looking at us whether we know it or not. They want to know if we really believe what we say we believe, and act in a way that reflects Christ's presence in our lives. Our witness can make them feel comfortable enough to approach us and ask for help in their lives as they seek reconciliation, or just answers to their questions.

As Christians, we have the unique opportunity to show others the possibilities of the Grace, Peace, and Joy that is available in Jesus.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, please make us mindful of all the opportunities available to us, so we can witness your Grace to others. Give us the ability to recognize when others are questioning their own journey. Help us to hear your call to be an effective witness for those who are struggling. In Jesus precious name, Amen*

Bob Cover

Central United Methodist Church, Fairmont, WV
Trustee Chair, District Lead Team, District Youth Coordinator, DRM/ERT

April 23, 2024

The Possibilities are Endless

[Acts: 8:26-39](#)

“So he got up and went.” Acts 8:27a (NRSVUE)

In this little story, Philip “got up and went” when told by an angel to travel a certain road.

Once there, Philip obeyed when he was instructed by the Spirit to speak to a certain traveler on that road. The traveler had been to Jerusalem and was reading and pondering scripture as he made his way home. The passage was one from Isaiah that we (like Philip) see as being about Jesus.

Philip didn’t try to do anything fancy. He started from where the traveler was and shared the Good News of Jesus. That led them to another opportunity: water for the traveler’s baptism.

Looking at this story from our perspective, we can see how God brought all of this together before the traveler even knew what he was looking for. God’s provision brought Philip and the unnamed Ethiopian to the same place, enlightened the Ethiopian man’s understanding, and led to his baptism. (John Wesley might have called that prevenient grace.)

God’s provision can do the same for us. We are not likely to be running up to chariots on wilderness roads, but all around us there are people who need Jesus. We should listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit.

When we meet them, we have to start from where people are, with whatever understanding they may (*or may not*) have about Jesus, and we have to share the Good News. Sometimes that takes creativity; sometimes it takes a listening ear; sometimes it takes a hot meal; sometimes it means going somewhere; and sometimes it means staying put.

When we listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit telling us who needs Jesus and how to reach them, the possibilities are endless.

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, help us to get up and go when you speak to us about those who need to hear the Good News. Open our hearts so that we hear you, and help us to meet people where they are to share the Good News with them. Amen.*

Carmen Rexrode
Fairview-Bethel UMC, South Fork Charge
Potomac Highlands District
Certified Lay Servant, PPRC Chair, Lay Member of Annual Conference

April 24, 2024

Unleash the Possibilities of Praise!

[Psalm 22:27](#)

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindred of the nations shall worship before thee.”

Wow! What a complex psalm! Psalm 22 is a stirring, emotional read! King David, the ruddy shepherd boy-turned-poet/songwriter/musician/giant slayer, is credited for this literary masterpiece. David (did I forget to mention he was also a prophet?) demonstrated his God-given prophetic gift in the first several verses of Psalm 22.

Most can only imagine the depth of utter hopelessness from which David penned the words, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Indeed, Jesus, who became sin for our redemption at His crucifixion, quoted David’s words from the cross.

Utter despair.

Utter abandonment.

Utter desertion.

Utterly alone, separated from God.

The tenor of the psalm turns drastically, however, when David changed his profound sorrow to glorious praise. David was a worshipper, and, on one occasion, he danced before the Lord in praise with all his might. He even changed the relationship with his wife because of praise, but doesn’t everything change with praise? Shouldn’t it?

Praise unifies the body of Christ like nothing else can. Praise turns the focus from us to HIM. It changes our perspective. Heartfelt praise is exciting, electrifying!

Praise is powerful, transformative.

Praise is powerful, a violent weapon in the kingdom of God.

Praise is powerful, lifting us up to the presence of God.

Praise is powerful, holy, and peaceful; for He alone is worthy, powerful and is himself, peace.

Praise makes the impossible, possible with God.

And it is in praise, that we, like the 120 in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, come into unity with each other. Unified, one in the Spirit, one in the Lord. Oh, the possibilities ahead for us in unity! When we come together in praise! Thank you, Father! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Holy Spirit! And thank you, David, for obedience to your anointed, prophetic pen!

Prayer: *Father, we glorify you through Jesus’ sacrifice. Empower us to take the gospel to our world, united, unlimited and undimmed. Enable us to move ahead, the possibilities for ministry and evangelism, limitless! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Shawn Cline-Riggins
Claypool United Methodist Church, Davin, WV
Lay Leader, GodSpot Ministry Coordinator

April 25, 2024

Love God, Love Others

[1 John 4:7-11](#)

⁹ *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

As I write this devotional, it's not too far from Valentine's Day, and love has been in the forefront for a while now. What better time to contemplate this scripture that uses some form of the word love eleven times in just five verses?

I think John uses this repetition to show the breadth and expanse of God's extravagant love and to convey the importance of loving one another. This passage starts with a directive and explanation that we are to love one another because love comes from God.

It's in verse 8 where it becomes evident that we still have so much work to do. *"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."*

Can you think of times you didn't love? I know that I can. I'm not saying it's easy to love one another as John tells us in this passage. We all know people who are hard to love; people who have hurt us or hurt those we care for; people who have made poor choices or shown poor judgment.

If it were easy, I think John may not have needed to remind us *eleven times* in five verses to love. But he gives us the most compelling reason of all to love one another: He showed that God loved us so much that he sent his Son to atone for our wrongdoings and shortcomings.

At the beginning of the year, my friends and I started an online Bible plan, and we've been re-reading those first books of the Bible, marveling at how many times the Israelites complained, disobeyed, and rebelled against God. So it's fresh in my mind that they angered God so much, that he nearly destroyed them time and time again.

But he loved even them so much, that he still sent Jesus into the world so they could live and not die. And he loves even you that much, and even me. So just as John says in verse 11, I'll say to you, "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so extravagantly. Help us remember that we should extend that same grace-filled love to all, even them – all of them. Help us know you more, because to know God is to love God, and loving God means loving others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Angela M Jones
St. Marks United Methodist Church, Charleston, WV
Conference Staff

April 26, 2024

God is Love

[1 John 4:12-21](#)

¹⁶ So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

When I go to visit my family up north, one of my cousins loves to watch the Hallmark Channel. We will spend a whole afternoon watching one movie after another. They sure do make you feel good. Especially the ones in February, right around Valentine's Day—when they really pour on the love and throw in a wedding or two.

As much as we would like to think that Hallmark has the perfect love stories, and they always end in happily ever after, it is all a fantasy. In real life we have disappointments, hurts, heartaches and loss.

Verse 12: "Dear friends...we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us!" (*The Message*)

But here is reality: God is LOVE. Pure and Simple...

The scripture tells us if we say we love God then we should show others the same love. God sent his son to teach us how to love, to take away the ugliness in our lives, and "make something beautiful and new out of us." God makes us perfect in his love. Perfect love—what more could we want? It's what we look for in our relationships, from our parents, spouses, what we hope for in our children and grandchildren, but in reality perfect love can only be found in a relationship with God.

The Message (verse 17), reads: "**God is love.** "When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God, and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we are free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's."

When we love God, and he lives in us, we too are guaranteed the true happy ending that no Hallmark movie could ever give. So, let us truly love God, by believing in his word, allowing him to take up residence in our hearts, and truly share God's love in service to others.

Prayer: *Come Lord Jesus; dwell with us and make our love perfect in every way as we serve you in the world. Amen.*

Gayle Lesure, Deaconess
WVAC Mission Coordinator, Northern District Lay Leader

Saturday, April 27

God And Possibilities in a Mustard Seed

[Mark 4:30-32](#)

How can we compare the kingdom of God? It is like a mustard seed. . . the smallest of all seeds. . .and becomes the greatest of all. . .

I remember as a young girl, and a new church goer, wearing a mustard seed bracelet. Even at an early age I would pour through the Bible to help me understand things. I thought the more I knew the better I could serve this God I had come to know.

I wondered how in the world could something so small and insignificant grow into anything of importance. And how could a girl so small and insignificant do anything of importance to help build God's kingdom. (I still ask myself that a lot.)

A lifetime of learning has taught me many lessons about the possibilities of God and His calling. I have learned that God does not call us because we are qualified, but He qualifies the small and insignificant because they answer the call.

I am often reinforcing the thought that each of us have a call and not just the clergy. God calls good parents, teachers, medical professionals, and a hundred diverse types to make our world and His kingdom better. None are too small or insignificant.

This is one of my favorite parables because it reminds me that God's love is like that mustard seed. If we allow it, it will be all we need to see us through our uncertain times.

When we feel as if we just want to quit, He comes in a quiet and loving way to heal our brokenness. When the mountain seems too high and too rocky, or the night is too dark, there He is, giving us strength and a light to make it through.

He makes all things possible. Even what looks insurmountable, or when we seem so insignificant, His love comes anew and makes going on possible.

Prayer: *We thank you dear God that even though our faith may seem like that tiny mustard seed, you take that and make all things possible. During this season of new beginnings ,help us to see that Your love will always be enough to get us through. Amen*

Judy Raines

Serving as CLM at John Stewart United Methodist Church
Bluefield, WV

Chair, Global Ministries, WV PAG to United Women in Faith,
United Methodist Foundation Trustee

April 28, 2024

Pruning Potential

[John 15: 1–8](#)

“I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken” John 15: 1- 3 (The Message)

We live along a river in the forest. It is a beautiful peaceful part of God’s creation; nonetheless, we are constantly picking up branches from trees that fall during storms. The wind and snow help nature to self-prune dead growth allowing the fruit of the forest to provide a habitat for birds and wildlife while protecting the land and water. A fruitful forest is part of God’s creation.

Jesus said *“I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer” (worker of the soil)*. Disciples are only fruitful when connected to the true Vine. Our fruitfulness is dependent on our connectedness through community nurtured by the true Vine.

Jesus taught his disciples that vines with large bushy canopies may look heathy, but serious pruning is needed. A lush canopy results in poor fruit. The church in recent years has pushed “church growth” and too often we equated large numbers as a sign of faithfulness.

Jesus isn’t interested in showy churches or showy disciples. The standard for discipleship is bearing fruit through Jesus, the *“Real Vine.”* Pruning is required to bear fruit. Yet, often we see pruning as something to avoid in our lives. Pruning offers us the opportunity to grow excellent fruit to serve God’s world.

Connection, community, and pruning through Jesus, the *“Real Vine,”* provide us potential for a fruitful discipleship of love and service in God’s world.

Prayer: *May God’s love connect us when we need to be connected, prune us when we need to be challenged, and help us be fruitful in the community of Jesus, the Real Vine. Amen.*

Lisa Godwin
First United Methodist Church
Elkins, West Virginia
Member of Staff Parish Relations Committee
West Virginia Ministry Spouses, Buckhannon Area Treasurer

April 29, 2024

Going Beyond

[Acts 10:44-48](#)

They began to speak in new languages and give praise and honor to the Great Spirit. (Acts 10:46 - First Nations Version)

These 5 verses are the last part of the story of Peter the Apostle and Cornelius, a Roman Centurian, a Gentile, an Outsider, who had a vision of a Messenger of God, and was told to ask Peter to come to his home. I commend that entire story to you.

As is often the case in the Revised Common Lectionary, we are looking ahead even as we wait. Pentecost has not yet happened, yet here we read of the Holy Spirit coming down on those hearing Peter speak at Cornelius' house. And as happens at Pentecost, those touched by the Spirit speak *"in new languages"* as the *First Nations Version* says or "other languages" as expressed in the CEB.

A Roman soldier, an outsider, has connected with Peter and asks Peter to tell those gathered what God has instructed Peter to say. And even as Peter is speaking, the Holy Spirit acts, confirming for Peter and those who had come with him that God's message is for *all nations*.

"Possibilities Ahead" is the theme Bishop Sandra suggested for these Easter Seasons Devotions. The possibilities in this story are immense. New languages or other languages, depending on the translation or version, open wide fields of opportunity for the work of discipleship. Peter and the others at Pentecost and at Cornelius' home heard human speech; they were given the languages they needed to take the Gospel to all lands and peoples.

We humans have many ways of communication: by touch, by facial expression, by body language. There is a language of the love of God. What "new language," what "Fresh Expression" might God be setting before you as a possibility? What new way of communicating God's love might the Holy Spirit be gifting us with at this time and season?

Possibilities Ahead. This is a time of transition for many United Methodist churches. What possibilities can we look for? This Easter Season we celebrate the Resurrection, an un-looked-for possibility to the Christ-Followers of Jesus' day. What might we imagine for our own spiritual journeys, for our Church's journey, at the local level and beyond to the wider church, in this celebratory time?

Prayer: *Lord God, as we celebrate the Resurrection, send your Holy spirit to open our hearts and eyes to wider and unimagined possibilities. In the name of Christ, Amen.*

Jane Arnold

Capon Bridge UMC, Capon Bridge, WV
Lay Speaker, PPRC Chair, PHD Lay Leader

April 30, 2024

Marvelous Love

[Psalm 98:1-3](#)

¹Sing to the Lord a new song because he has done wonderful things! His own strong hand and his own holy arm have won the victory! ²The Lord has made his salvation widely known; he has revealed his righteousness in the eyes of all the nations. ³God has remembered his loyal love and faithfulness to the house of Israel; every corner of the earth has seen our God's salvation.

When this Psalm was written, the Israelites had returned from exile in Babylon back to Canaan. It is a song of joy for all the marvelous things God had done for them through the centuries.

Yet centuries later God “raised up his Son Jesus to be not only a light to lighten the Gentiles, but the glory of his people Israel; for he sent him, in the first place, to bless them. God is said, in sending Christ, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant.” ([Henry commentary](#))

These promises are still ours today. God provides his love and faithfulness for all the earth. Jesus Christ's message of salvation is for all that only need to believe in him. Our lives and that of our church will be led, by listening for the “*Possibilities Ahead*” that God will guide us to do.

God will guide us to reach out--to those in need those that are lost; that are lonely and need love, compassion, and caring--to meet them where they are if we only listen for the voice of God's guiding words to break through our prayers.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father thank you for all the marvelous things you have done for us. Thank you for sending your son Jesus to be our guide for sharing your love of all. Please guide us as to share love, compassion, and caring for all we encounter. Amen.*

Fred Herr
Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church, Huntington, WV
Certified Lay Servant, Chair Covenant Ministry Council
Director Lay Ministries, Nine Rivers District

May 1, 2024

Make a Joyful Noise

[Psalm 98:4-9](#)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord! Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.

Kenova UMC has a lot of wonderful ministries including a thriving children's program. This past fall, after only a few weeks of rehearsal, almost 30 children played the bells during children's moments at Sunday worship to Michael W. Smith's song, "Friends."

They had a lot of fun ringing their colorful bells along with the coordinating cards and background music.

Growing up in Kenova, Michael W. Smith did not know what his future would hold or the positive impact he would have on the world. He has since recorded 15 Christian albums and continues to tour the country.

Decades later, children in his hometown played a song he wrote, not knowing where their lives will take them.

What they know is that they anticipate Sunday all week long because they enjoy coming to church. The children have Sunday school teachers who are invested in them. They have a dedicated children's ministry director, friends their age, adults in the congregation who support them, and family members who are committed to bringing them each week.

What I know is that because they have a strong foundation, these children will have so many possibilities ahead of them.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for the joyful noise children bring to our churches each week. May we always look forward to Sunday and the possibilities you will bring. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.*

Julie Tennant
Kenova United Methodist Church
Kenova, WV
CORE Leadership Team

May 2, 2024

Faith Conquers All

[1 John 5:1-6](#)

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴ for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵ Who is it who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

The decorations may be down and the Easter basket candy finally gone, but we continue to celebrate the risen Christ.

In this reading from the First Epistle of John, we're encouraged that "[e]veryone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God" But John's insight does not end there. You may have heard the phrase before: Love the parent, love the child. However, John isn't giving a direction, he's emphasizing depth of love in faith.

John doesn't just talk of love—he points it out and how we can see it. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments."

Easy? In John's faith it is easy, because obeying commandments doesn't cause difficulties. Obeying commandments should be easy because in obeying you overcome those difficulties of the world. Faith conquers.

Celebrate the risen Christ, and that faith in the risen Christ is what conquers the world.

Prayer: *Almighty God, when we strive to obey your commandments and feel the difficulties and challenges of doing so in our lives, remind us that the difficulties are ours, not yours, and instead of being burdened by commandments that your love makes them light and faith conquers all. Amen.*

Jamie O'Brien
First United Methodist Church
Buckhannon, WV
Conference Rules Committee Member, United Methodist Foundation Trustee

May 3, 2024

In God's Hands

[Isaiah 45: 5-9](#)

⁸Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation may spring up,¹⁰ and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also; I the LORD have created it.

I returned to West Virginia a few years ago and now work as a third-generation hay farmer at our family farm. Farming requires more patience than planning and teaches me about following.

As spring arrives, I observe the snow melting, the fields and forests turning green, and I know it won't be long until hay season starts. I work hard to prepare the equipment and fields for the upcoming season planning for a good year. However, I'm reminded every day that my best-laid plans of when to cut, rake, or bale are small moments when the windows of opportunity arise.

Although I wish I could block out the calendar days in advance, I don't control when the hay will be ready. This, like everything else, is in God's hands.

We recently welcomed a golden retriever puppy into our home. Watching his curiosity and amazement as he sees and experiences new things around the farm has been a real pleasure.

While calling for him to come back inside this morning, I wondered if this is how God feels. We love our puppy, and when we call him, we want him to come running. Unfortunately, puppies, like people (including myself), get sidetracked. After several detours, when he returns, we shower him with love. We try to share what's best for him and give him opportunities to live happily. Sometimes, he has a different idea in mind.

When I read this passage, I'm reminded that God controls the beauty of every morning, the amazing sunsets and stars at night, and everything in between. He brings the sun and rain that makes the hay grow tall, the wind to dry it, and the sweet smell it provides when cut. Like most hay farmers,

I love the anticipation of the work and the reward for being ready for the window of opportunity to open. He alone controls the calendar, and I just need to be able to spring into action when the time is right. And like our puppy, when God calls on us to come, we need to follow without detours and allow Him to, as the hymn says, "remold and make us, like Thee divine."

Jill Poe

Gateway United Methodist Church, Fairmont, WV
Mon Valley District Lay Leader

May 4, 2024

Servant Leadership Training

Mark 10:35-45

But it is not so among you; but whosoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. (Mark 10:43-44)

I want to begin this meditation by acknowledging all the WV Annual Conference does in providing training opportunities for those who hear the call, especially lay members. Current training opportunities can lead to a certification as a Lay Servant, Lay Speaker or Lay Minister.

These initiatives continue the work that began with Jesus when he called 12 individuals to follow him. They accepted the invitation--possibly out of curiosity or a nudge from God. What they did not know was they had signed up for leadership training. I am guessing that Jesus felt it best not to label it.

As they traveled the countryside, the Disciples saw Jesus at work. They saw his power and greatness through his actions to heal the sick and feed the poor. They participated in his public and private teaching sessions.

The thing that the Teacher failed to do was to give them a pop quiz or test to assess what they were learning.

This became apparent when James and John came up to him and said, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." They had been dazzled by all the power Jesus had exhibited through his miracles and the crafty ways he dealt with the religious leaders.

They wanted to be just like Jesus. Unfortunately, they had not fully understood what Jesus was teaching. Fortunately, their boldness provided Jesus with an opportunity to refine and clarify his teaching. Jesus did not rebuke James and John but sat down with them and the rest of the class to explain and share his vision for their leadership roles.

Jesus recognized that the request for glory came from a cultural context. Power was in the hands of the Roman Empire and the religious leaders were threatened by Jesus' influence. Jesus calls the Disciples to live in a way that differs from all the world. We are not to abuse power, but to serve our neighbor and the poor. Jesus equates greatness with servanthood. The concept of servant leadership is born.

Through reading scripture, participating in Bible study, and attending weekly worship, we have completed our training. May we remember and use Jesus' definition of greatness and live into our greatness and our purpose.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the lessons of humble servanthood. Open our hearts to see opportunities to serve others and learn what it means to love like you today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Mark W. Stotler

St. Marks United Methodist Church, Charleston, WV
Chair, Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry

May 5, 2024

To Love One Another

[John 15:9-17](#)

“You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask Him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

“My . . . isn’t she little?” My doctor spoke those words when I was born. My body was not ready for this world yet. My heart was quiet and still, my lungs empty and motionless.

I was small, only 4 pounds and 2 ounces, far too small to live in a world devoid of NICU’s and their special care for such fragile little ones. My doctor sent me home to die in the love of my family, for surely, I was too little to live.

Yet God had a plan for me. I believe God has a plan for each of us.

Long before the world came into being, God formed His plan for an eternity of love with the children He would create. When Adam and Eve betrayed God’s love by disobeying the one command He had given them, they were sent out of the beauty and perfection of the Garden of Eden and into the dark world.

Sin is punishable by death, but in God’s compassion, He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for each of us. Through Jesus’ death we are forgiven and restored to an intimate relationship with God, for this is God’s plan for us.

Jesus tells us we are chosen and appointed to love one another.

Our ministry of love need not be grand or impressive. We may be appointed to a simple ministry of praying with someone in need of God’s special touch in their lives. We may be appointed to a simple ministry of helping to feed the hungry or shelter the homeless. We may be appointed to a simple ministry of sharing God’s gifts to us with those not so blessed.

We have been created for love, and I believe God has a plan for each of us. We have been chosen and appointed to love one another.

Prayer: *Loving God, You have created us for love. Open our eyes and hearts to Your plan for our lives, and show us ways to take Your love into the world, for we are chosen and appointed to love one another. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.*

Connie Steward Keplinger
Retired Pastor
Main Street UMC, Petersburg, WV

May 6, 2024

You Will Be My Witnesses

[Acts 1:1-11](#)

⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses. . .*

Being a witness to a really special event may make us think “I’ll remember this all my life.” As a witness, we see what happened and think about how that may impact our lives or the lives of others.

Decades later we may remember exactly where we were and what we were doing on the day the event happened. I was in second grade at a circus in the high school gymnasium when a clown announced that President Kennedy had been shot. I remember that as if it were yesterday. (Yes, it really was a clown.)

In the opening passage of Acts, Luke tells us that 40 days after his crucifixion, the disciples witnessed Christ’s ascension into heaven. Imagine the emotional roller coaster they must have felt after seeing Jesus put to death on a cross, then appear to them only to disappear again. Being a witness to history is life changing, but imagine being instructed to **be a witness** to “the ends of the earth.”

Witness as a verb means **seeing** something.

Being a witness is a gerund (noun phrase) that means **doing** something. Jesus told the disciples to be a witness; it was a **calling** with the instruction **to go**.

Technology enables us to achieve that calling to go to the ends of the earth much more easily today than during the time of the early church. Yet we struggle to get outside our comfort zones and outside the walls of our buildings.

John Wesley wrote that he looks “upon all the world as my parish.” (*Works*, “Journals,” June 11, 1739). Wesley reminded us how important it is to get outside the church building to make disciples. He taught us to share the good news of God’s love and “do good” in all places.

We are learning about the [Fresh Expressions](#) movement. It’s sort of new, but in many ways, it’s the same as the instructions Jesus gave the disciples:

Get outside the building. Find people who share common interests. Be in community with them. Spend time with them. Listen to them. Share how Jesus has changed our lives and can do the same for them.

In other words: Be a witness. Imagine the possibilities.

Prayer: Gracious God: We give you thanks for the ability to be a witness to our brothers and sisters around the world. Help us remember to gently encourage our neighbors to accept your grace and mercy and to seek peace. Prepare us and give us courage. Amen

Pam Braden
Calvary UMC, Ripley; Little Kanawha District Lay Leader, CLM

May 7, 2024

The House that God Built...Us

[2 Samuel 7:1-11](#)

11...Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

The new king David has a grand idea to build a fancy temple for God. But God has other ideas for David. David wants to take God's house to the next level. Our passage opens with "the king settled in his house" and was resting from trials and tribulation. But in his palace, David is unsettled about something.

That something? The house for the ark of God. Is a tent good enough of a home for the Lord? This God deserves a temple. David runs to the prophet Nathan. Without hesitation, Nathan affirms David's vision for a more permanent home for the ark. "Go, and do all that you have in mind."

But then God has words with Nathan in the night. David was unable to discern the will and way of God because he only sees things from his point of view. God doesn't need a fancy house built of stone.

God needs a people built by God.

Here is the plot twist in verse 11: "You will not build me a house," replied the Lord, "I shall build you a house."³ And the house that God builds is not a house with four walls either.

Ultimately it is God who takes this covenant to the next level when God becomes present in human flesh as Jesus Christ. And we are heirs of this promise.

Through baptism, God dwells with us and through us as we journey through trying times and when we dance in joyful processions. God doesn't need us to build a fancy new dwelling. God wants to build **us**.

We need to slow down and let God build us—dwell in us—in humble, simple, usual ways. God takes the covenant to the next level (not us). When did I ever demand a temple from you?

I go where you go. I am with you.

So let us go out into our churches, neighborhoods, communities, and the world and bring the Good News that Jesus, God's Son, is the Prince of Peace.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for inviting us to be part of Your Kingdom by sending Jesus to be our forever King. May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard our hearts and our minds. In Christ Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Krista Cather
Memorial UMC, Williamson, WV
Certified Lay Minister

May 8, 2024

Our Spiritual Riches

[Ephesians 1:15-19](#)

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparable great power for us who believe.

Charles Spurgeon published a devotional book called *A Checkbook on the Bank of Faith*. The daily devotional described a promise from the Bible. He said that each promise was as good as money in the bank to anyone who would claim it by faith. However, unlike a bank account, our spiritual riches have no limits because they come from the wealth of God.

Paul says that he has heard about the Ephesians' faith in the Lord Jesus. That must mean that someone had told Paul about their faithfulness and obedience to Jesus. Paul also mentions their love for all of God's people. Their spiritual wealth was being used not for their glory, but to glorify God. What a glowing report of the church at Ephesus!

Then Paul tells the Ephesians that he keeps asking that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that they may know God better.

The first purpose of spiritual possessions was to bring God glory. Now the second purpose is for the believers to gain knowledge of God. This spirit of wisdom and revelation comes only from spending time with God and His Word.

It takes discipline and time. Paul ends this section of Scripture by praying for the Ephesians – and us. He prays that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope and the riches of God as well as God's power. Just think of the possibilities ahead if we tapped into the riches and power God offers to us!

Prayer: *Our Gracious and Loving God, we pray to claim these spiritual riches for ourselves and our churches. In this season, may we find deeper faith in Jesus, a greater love for others and a greater measure of Your Spirit. We pray for the hope to which You call us, the riches of the inheritance that You promise us, and the power You give to those who believe. Amen.*

Sharon Miller

Warwood United Methodist Church, Wheeling, WV
Lay Leader and Delegate to Annual Conference

May 9, 2024

Open our Eyes

[Luke 24:44-53](#)

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

Even with all of the conversations Jesus shared with his disciples over their three years together, they still didn't totally understand what Jesus was all about. Their actions didn't always run parallel with their words.

Often they failed to see the possibilities ahead of them, and, in many ways, it wasn't until His death and resurrection that they truly understood and put into practice Jesus' teachings.

This reminds me of when I was a new rookie firefighter back in 1985. I had taken many hours of training to get to that point, listened to numerous stories from seasoned smoke chasers about their experiences, ran through all of the practice drills with simulated fire scenes, and felt that I was totally ready to go inside a burning building.

My first structure fire call was in the dead of winter. It was cold and icy out. A perfect time, we were taught, for fires to start in homes.

After the alarm sounded, I ran to put on my gear, hooked up my breathing apparatus, made sure my mask was sealed tight, and jumped on the truck. I was pumped, excited, nervous to be a part of something this important, but, once on-scene, all of my training and practice did not totally prepare me for the real thing.

It was different to feel the heat, the confining feeling of the breathing mask, to try to see in the darkness. As I crawled toward the light, the bright flames came into view. I froze. I couldn't move. I was scared.

I felt the excitement, the anticipation, the desire, but I didn't totally understand the risks before me. I didn't understand until "my eyes were opened," so to speak, in real time, of risk, danger, the human cost, and, of course, the fire. The experience was quite humbling. I realized I still had a lot to learn, but I built on it over the next 20 years. The disciples did the same.

As we navigate through this Easter season, allow Jesus to open our eyes, our minds and our hearts to the real fires around us – the injustices, the hurting, those who do not see the light of our faith and the hope that we have in Him, those who need our resurrected Savior. Let us continue to embrace the ministries each of us have in our connection and our communities.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, as we celebrate the Risen Savior this Easter season, open our eyes that we might see our true possibilities and potentials. In your name we pray. Amen.

Jim Minutelli, CLM
West Buckhannon and Mt. Lebanon UMC
Greenbrier Wesleyan District
District Lay Leader & District Director of Lay Servant Ministries
WV Conference Communications Lead Team

May 10, 2024

God's Promise

[1 John 5: 9-13](#)

We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his son. And this the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (NIV)

If you are like me, you may find this scripture somewhat confusing. John seems to repeat himself, but he does this only to get our attention. John is asking us if we will believe the testimony of people around us, why will we not accept the more important testimony of God? If we are followers of Jesus, then he lives in us, and if so, God says we will have eternal life. What a promise!

Everything rests on us. We are the ones who must make the decision to believe. It is easy to say we believe in Jesus, but as they say, "Actions speak louder than words." One of the reasons non-believers don't understand our message is that we sometimes say one thing but do something different.

The message Jesus left us was to love God and love our neighbor. As children of God and believers in Jesus, we will want to follow his lead. John tells us we must believe what God has said about his Son. We must believe that God will give us eternal life and that this new life is possible only through his Son.

John tells us we can know we have eternal life now when we show Jesus's love to others. Jesus asks Peter three times "Do you love me?" Each time Peter says yes. Jesus' reply is "Feed my sheep." (John 21:17). This question is also asked of us. Do we believe? Do we have Jesus living inside us? If so, we are also asked to take care of "His sheep."

It is not enough just to say "yes" we believe Jesus is our Savior, and we will have eternal life. We are expected to reach out to others and show them God's love. Showing love is our witness that Jesus is living in our hearts.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us eternal life through our belief in your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us witness to others by showing your love every day in our actions and words. In your Son's precious name. Amen.

Betty Lou Harris
Franklin United Methodist Church, Wellsburg, WV
Certified Lay Speaker, Administrative Council Chair, Liturgist
Member United Women in Faith

May 11, 2024

Something from Nothing

[2 Corinthians 5:17](#)

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away;
look, new things have come into being!*

When our sons were small our neighbors on either side also had two boys each. We hosted a birthday party at our house one year and all the boys and their parents were there.

Young toys are (in my opinion) so much more fun than today's tech toys: cars to run in the dirt, balls to throw, Play-Doh to use to craft a kingdom. True of that time as now--restaurant kid's meal toys were ever plentiful.

One series of toys we had all over the house were the miniature Beanie Babies. One particular toy I remember was a purple-ish gray animal--the exact same purple-ish gray as a wad of Play-Doh floating around the living room.

One of the dads, when he sat on the fireplace hearth, happened to pick up both. As he sat and talked to the boys he pushed and squeezed on the Play-Doh. The kids seemed rather enthralled, wondering what he might be going to make.

He talked...he formed...they watched. And then in a great reveal, unbeknownst to them he had switched the Play-Doh for the Beanie-Baby. He opened his hands with a flash and there rested the toy animal. The Play-Doh was nowhere to be seen. The boys were speechless and breathless and amazed.

On Easter, God takes the work of a teacher, the work of a carpenter, the work of a Son and in an amazing display of something from nothing (death) reveals everlasting life.

Prayer: *Gracious Lord, this Easter season may we see with new eyes and a new heart, the new things you have made. Amen*

Steve Matthews
Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church
Huntington, WV
Certified Lay Servant, President of the United Methodist Men

May 12, 2024

A Life Filled with Joy is Not Without Hardship

[John 17:6-19](#)

“But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.”

At this time in His earthly walk on Earth, Jesus knew what was in store for Him.

He knew that he would soon accomplish His earthly work and be an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He spent much time teaching His disciples, but in this passage, we find Him praying for His disciples.

He was praying for the unity of the disciples, but also that they would find joy fulfilled in their lives.

This may seem strange to some as most of Jesus’ disciples were later martyred in trying to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Although their lives were painfully cut short, we can know that they experienced joy in their earthly ministry and later in Heaven.

Like the disciples, we also are able to have joy.

Life is hard. Illness and deaths of family member and friends, job losses, broken relationships, and more struggles can take their toll.

God has a plan for our life, and that does not mean we will be without struggle and hardship. There will be difficult times, but there will be joy as well. It is our job as Christians to spread that joy and light into other people’s lives.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for being a God of joy in the midst of difficult times. Grant us joy and peace as we seek to follow You through the difficult times. Amen.*

Amanda Hayes
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Buckhannon, West Virginia
Staff Parish Relations Committee, Youth Leader

May 13, 2024

Surprised by Joy
[Psalm 104:24-34, 35b](#)

³³ I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.
³⁵ Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Praise the LORD!

The whole of creation is like a song of joy sung by the Spirit of the Lord.

Interdependence is the order that God has given the world so that each created thing sounds a note in ongoing harmony.

One of the most spirit-filled moments that I have experienced occurred while leading a Volunteer-In-Mission team. As our work was concluding, we gathered for reflection, prayer, and finally singing.

The hymn "Amazing Grace" was sung in perfect harmony in two different languages. It came so effortlessly, surely the presence of the Lord was felt in that place and that time, Kelemenova, Russia.

In His presence our lives were connected by the gift from the same God that creates the entire world.

There is joy in singing in harmony and in the stillness of prayer. There is joy in the wondrous interdependence of God's creatures, in the necessity that we exist for one another.

There is joy in the gifts of life and spirit that we receive from God and in our rejoicing of those gifts. Consider these possibilities.

Prayer: *Oh God, we celebrate you as our creator our provider and sustainer. Open our hearts and minds to embrace all of your creation. Amen*

Connie Williams Trickett
Bethel United Methodist Church
Mountain Lake Park, Maryland
Church Council Chair, District Lead Team, DCOM, CLM

May 14, 2024

The Spirit of God

[Romans 8:22-27](#)

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in^[a] hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all that you do. All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The different times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pains.

But it is not only around us; it is within us. The moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we do not know what to pray, it does not matter. He does our praying for us. We have to remember that The Spirit of God is with us always. Amen.

Before I begin my devotion, we must not forget. We celebrate Easter because not only did our Lord conquer death, but without the Resurrection, we have no foundation for our faith.

Paul explains that the entire universe, held under the curse, eagerly longs for the day whenever it will join with God's children. It will be a moment when God's children will be revealed in glory and all creation will be free from bondage. The Apostle Paul is teaching believers that their new life in Jesus Christ is solidly founded in God's promises and plans for his children

God sees our hearts and knows what is in our hearts and our minds, because the Spirit makes it easy for all of the people according to the Will of God. Likewise, the Spirit helps in our weakness, for we do not know how anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God would want us to love each other, be kind to one another, and try to help those who need help no matter who they may be. God is always watching and giving us strength to move forward and have faith in ourselves.

We should always think about the best and Spirit of God. He will give us strength when we need it and love when we feel forsaken.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, we worship you, we pray that you bless our hearts and minds.*

Aliene Lee
Simpson Memorial United Methodist Church
Charleston, WV
Trustee Chairperson of Simpson Memorial UMC
United Methodist Foundation Trustee

May 15, 2024

Holy Crystal Springs

[John 7:37-39](#)

³⁷ On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, ³⁸ and let the one who believes in me drink. As^[a] the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart^[b] shall flow rivers of living water.'

I live very near the top of a high mountain in West Virginia. Right across the road from our driveway, the mountainside is dabbled with water literally springing from the ground: 24/7, 365 days of the year.

The crystal water trickles into a ditch lined by fall's leaves or winter's snow and filled with smooth glistening rocks. Just down the road a bit, there is the culvert where it crosses the road and continues down the mountain. On the other side of the culvert the water is stagnant, leaves cover the water, and mud lines the ditch.

On our way home from walking our dog Daisy, we're careful to keep her out the ditch until we've passed the culvert. It doesn't matter how cold the day, once on the right side, she's immediately drawn to walk the rocks and lap-up the clean mountain water, satisfying her thirst and rejuvenating her old body before she heads home.

One of the three main rites of the seven-day festival of Feast of the Tabernacles was "the rejoicing of the place of water drawing." The priest would draw fresh water from the pool of Siloam and return to the temple through the Water Gate to pour the water on the altar as an offering.

For Christ to appear at the festival at all was startling. The Pharisees were ready to arrest him, but here he is, on the last day, proclaiming: "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

We don't have to make a trip to a sacred pool or, like Daisy, get our feet wet to drink. Christ is our source of the Holy crystal springs, satiating our spiritual thirst and rejuvenating our souls.

Can I be filled with those life-giving springs, 24/7, 365 days a year? Or will I be stuck in the stagnant muddy waters beyond the culvert?

Prayer: *Lord, thank you for your springs of rejuvenation. As Jesus pours the never-ending springs of the Holy Spirit on me, let me be a source of pouring the Holy Spirit to others, so they, also, may experience Christ's life-giving waters.*

Gina Palmer
Buena Chapel United Methodist Church, Davis, WV
Blackwater Charge
Admin & Finance Chair, Potomac Highlands District Lead Team
United Methodist Foundation Trustee

May 16, 2024

Never Give-up. God is in Control.

[Job 37:1-7](#)

²Listen, all of you, to the voice of God. . . .⁵At God's command, amazing things happen, wonderful things we can't understand. . . .⁷He brings the work of men to a stop; he shows them what he can do.

The Book of Job (one of the Wisdom Books) has always intrigued me because I find it so different from all the other books of the Bible. It's a story that asks the age-old question, "why do the righteous suffer?" I have pondered that question many times myself.

When my late husband, Bill (Rev. Turley) came down with ALS, I asked the question "why him?" He was such a good Christ-like man. But Bill asked a different question: "why not me?" He never complained during the 2½ years ALS held him in its grip. ALS took his active life to the point where he had to depend on others for everything.

"Job suffered. His name is synonymous with suffering. He asked "why? He asked, "why me"? And he put his questions to God. He asked his questions persistently, passionately, and eloquently. He refused to take silence for an answer. He refused to take clichés for an answer. He refused to let God off the hook." (Quoted from *The Message*)

Three of Job's friends came to comfort him but instead discouraged him because of the Jewish belief of that time that if things go bad, you must have done something to deserve it.

Just like Job, we have storms in our lives: illness, financial problems, divorce, drugs, mental anguish, family feuds, and other stressors. Listen to the voice of God as it echoes through the thunder. God is in control of nature through the weather in the rain, snow, lightning, and wind. Other ways we hear the voice of God: in Scriptures, that still small voice, a nudge, through others, a dream, a sermon, music, and nature.

Job didn't understand his losses, and neither do we at times. For now we see through a glass dimly but then face to face. God does not give an answer to Job's questions, but he does, in the end, respond to Job's faith by overwhelming him with his divine power and wisdom. Job then humbly acknowledges God as wise and great and repents of the angry words he had used.

Prayer: *Oh Lord, help me to follow your ways and not mine. Amen
I pray the Serenity Prayer everyday: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen*

Penny Turley
Spruce Street United Methodist Church, Morgantown, WV
Sheepdog Ministry Coordinator

May 17, 2024

Bones and the Spirit of God

[Ezekiel 37: 1-14](#)

³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath^h to enter you, and you shall live.

We may not have a valley that we can go to and see skeletons and bones in disarray. Bones laying there forgotten from previous battles in that place, where bodies were left to decay, and now that is all that is left of what was once living beings.

We live in a valley that maybe was a precursor to that scene. We have all kinds of people in various stages of death in front of our very eyes who are starting to become like those bones.

We have the alcoholic, drug users, pedophiles, Satan-worshipers, non-believers, some may be homeless, some may be abusers--basically the unsaved--that are all around us. They are going into moral decay or are already there.

They may appear to be living on the outside, but they are dead or dying on the inside, because they don't know Jesus.

We have the power that Jesus has given us to breathe life into those people. We have the power in us that raised Jesus from the grave to breathe life into those who are not saved. We are charged by the great commission to go and save those individuals.

Prayer: Father, help us to remember that we are your children, and we have Your qualities, power, and strength in us to fulfill what you asked us to do. Let us go forward in Your name and breathe life into those who are not saved. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen

Lyle Henderson, CLM
Central United Methodist
Huntington, WV
Lay Leader, Lay Speaker

May 18, 2024

Pentecost People

[Acts 2:1-13](#)

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.

How many times have you read this passage about Pentecost? Probably enough times that the idea of a violent wind rushing through the house and tongues of fire dancing among the people just feels interesting, but expected.

Take a moment and imagine what it was like for the people who were gathered together. I think they would have been afraid – they might not have understood what was going on. Wind and fire in the house? Sounds like the stuff of nightmares. Who knew what would happen next?

I think we are living through a time in our church when it is easy to be afraid – when we don't know what is going to happen next.

As I write this at the end of February, General Conference approaches. The delegation has been and will continue to be praying using the words **return, rebuild, restore**.

If you think about it, those are words full of fire and wind – power and unpredictability. But read the next verse in our passage from Acts: *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:4)*

The wind that rushed through the house and the fire that touched them were of God. The Holy Spirit filled them, and while that can be frightening, it is a sure sign of the presence of God.

As I look to the future, I don't know what the next few weeks, months, or years will hold, but I know God is present. As the new church gathered 2000 years ago amid wind and fire, they spoke in other languages and understood each other. It was unity. It was a restoration of what community could be, and it was packed full of possibility.

Instead of focusing on the fear, consider the possibilities. What hope are we offered? What hope can we bring to others? Even amid our disagreements, we can be filled with the Holy Spirit; we can understand each other, and we can offer the possibilities the world needs.

Are you willing to be Pentecost people?

Prayer: *God of wind and fire, send your Holy Spirit among us so that we can give up the fear of losing what we know, be the Church you call us to be, and offer every possibility of new life to the world. In your son's name, Amen.*

Kim Matthews, CLM
Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church
Huntington, WV
United Methodist Foundation Vice President, Associate Conference Lay Leader,
General Conference Lay Reserve Delegate, Pentecost Person

May 19 – Pentecost Sunday

Dwell in Possibility

[Acts 2:14-21](#)

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams. Acts 2:17 (CEB)*

My favorite poet is Emily Dickinson, and one of her famous poems begins with “I dwell in possibility.” I have thought about that line many times since learning the theme of this devotional series: Possibilities Ahead.

Do you ever dwell in possibility? Do you take the time to ponder and dream about what could be?

Reading this passage of Acts, I was immediately drawn to the end of verse 17. Your elders will dream dreams. What if it said “your elders will dwell in possibility?”

Would you take a few moments and dwell in possibility with me? Will you pray for the church universal, for the West Virginia Conference, and for The United Methodist Church? Will you open your heart and your mind to all that is possible when it comes to mission and ministry?

I don’t know about you, but I get really excited when I think about all the ways we can expand ministry and reach new people for the sake of growing the Kingdom of God!

Let us dwell in the possibility of truly and effectively sharing the hope, love, light, and peace found only in Christ.

I pray you will dwell with me, dreaming about being the church that was meant to be. And, then, will you take the next step on your personal discipleship journey to make that dream a reality? There’s no better time than now, on Pentecost Sunday!

Prayer: *Gracious and loving God, thank you for possibilities and dreams. Thank you for equipping and leading us as we share the hope of Christ with others. Come, Holy Spirit, Come. Walk with us as we take our next steps in mission and ministry, and work to grow your kingdom. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.*

Kristi Wilkerson
First United Methodist Church
Buckhannon, WV
Conference Lay Leader