

November 2021



HAVEN CHIMES!



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR – by Juhee Lee

My beloved Haven Family,

The season of gratitude and Thanksgiving is coming~! What are you grateful for? I am thankful for your passion and love toward Haven~! I am grateful for a living God who moves around our church. I am grateful for the spiritual legacy and inheritance of the faithful ancestors that allow us to do something good at our church and in our community.

In doing so, our God sends us to do it with more volunteers who willingly donate their hearts to our church. For example, for the thrift store through which we support the homeless, we have about 7 volunteers organizing all clothes and selling it. So thankful~!

For months, I tried to connect with students at Brown University and finally received a fruitfulness. I found five volunteers who had the musical gifts and donated their gifts with us. They will play the instrument for our Christmas concert and help me to teach the kids. So precious hearts~! Thanks be to God~!

While we have done for our community, a congregation member came to me and shared her passion for our ministry. As soon as I listened to her compassion to others, I felt God's work through the holy spirit. I am praying for her discernment. Also, our leadership is developing. Please, do not be discouraged while you see a small number. Living Spirit is leading our church~! This is the treasure and strength of our life. Praise the Lord~!

Last week, I met with the mayor and religious leaders and heard their struggle in the ministry in this Covid situation. And the mayor appreciated our church and said we have a common heart to protect and care for the community and work together. (For your information, the city provided 4 Chrome books (laptop) for our worship live-streaming.) So, I am grateful for you who responded to the voice of the needy in our community. And I am thankful to God for solidarity with the city to share our resources for our community.

Havenites~! Let us be proud of ourselves and keep doing meaningful work for God to care for the needy around us. Our church has been working faithfully to live the gospel, sharing good resources with the community. That would be a way our God is most pleased~!! Let us lift our gratitude to God more and more through our church.

Peace,

Pastor Juhee Lee



Mission Statement:

We are a haven for those who would seek to know God better while spreading the love of Jesus Christ.



Together in Christ

A letter from Bishop Devadhar

November 1, 2021

Beloved in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today we observe All Saints Day!

In my journey through life, I have seen, read about, met, and experienced saints, not only from Christian traditions but from other faith traditions as well. These saints have changed me and enabled me to become a better disciple of Jesus Christ. These saints are children of God whose goal is not to advance their personal kingdoms, but to strive for the extension of the Kingdom of God!

Who are the saints in your life?

In a previous All Saints Day message, I wrote, "Though there are many definitions of a 'saint,' one of the definitions that I appreciate and celebrate is: 'A saint is an agent of change.'"

Who are those saintly agents of change for you? For me, one was Rev. Dr. Hannibal Richard Cabral, who recently entered the Church Triumphant.

As I remember Hannibal, I recall the Apostle Paul's words of salutation to the Corinthians:

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:2-3, NRSV).

We are all called to be saints. Hannibal was a saint for me. On Oct. 24, there was a powerful funeral service for this friend, colleague, and constructive critic of mine, who served as a pastor, theologian, and principal (dean) of a theological seminary.

I met this brother in Christ nearly 50 years ago on a train journey to a student conference. That journey led us to other journeys in India, in the United States, and even to Taizé.

These travels together enabled us to have deeper biblical, theological, pastoral, and societal conversations. Though we did not agree on all things, in good Christian spirit we agreed to disagree, and our friendship remained strong and grew even stronger through the years.

His funeral service was filled with heavenly music and heartfelt witnesses from colleagues who worked with him. There were leaders from different Christian denominations and faith groups, a wide ecumenical circle, including people from all economic classes, political leaders, and others in a packed cathedral that seats several hundred people. Even more watched the service, which was streamed live all over the world. This spoke volumes about this humble Christian disciple.

Though institutional politics did not give him the proper acknowledgment and recognition he deserved, and even good Christians, at times, tried to pull him down, his funeral service brought together people of all faiths. To the best of my knowledge no Christian leader in that community has drawn such a diverse community of the faithful. Honestly, as I watched his funeral service, I was reminded of Saint Teresa's (Mother Teresa's) funeral service. As I reflect on the service, remembering the testimonies, among many things, this particular saint, a true agent of change, demonstrated many of the following unique characteristics:

1. He was a people person. Though academic degrees decorated his walls, for him the most treasured accomplishment was to be the voice of the voiceless, marginalized, and victimized. His office was always open to anyone. He did not care whether his desk was cluttered with papers. He was always willing to listen, and as I often heard him say, "Let me do something!"

2. He was an honest person. His honesty often made him vulnerable as he embraced risks, which even caused him to lose friends. I had seen him, having made a decision, refuse to budge, even in the midst of pressure.

3. He trusted people. He trusted people, even to a fault. At the end, when his friends teased him by saying, "We told you so," his answer was always, "What can we do?" Ten years ago, during one of my visits to India, our travels brought us to the same city. During our conversations, I encouraged him not to move forward with his desire to run for a particular office because of the dirty politics around that election. He did not agree. Later, he confided to me that he had been wrong, and I had been right. But the amazing thing is, he forgave even those who had harmed him.

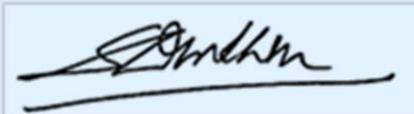
4. He used his God-given gifts. Chief among Hannibal's gifts was the gift of music — composition and singing — that reached people of all ages! Reflecting on his death, one person wrote that when Hannibal was a youth, he always looked forward to music from a particular radio station. Hannibal composed nearly 800 pieces of music that still touch the hearts and minds of many. Just to give you a glimpse of what I mean, though you may not understand the words, may this recorded music by Hannibal inspire your hearts and minds.

On Sunday, Nov. 7, 2021, as we celebrate Holy Communion in our faith communities, let us sing with gusto, "For all the saints, who from their labors rest ..." (#711, United Methodist Hymnal), as we recall the names of saints — saints in Heaven and in our midst — who have touched us and transformed us. I will be lifting up Dr. Cabral as one among many.

Friends, may this All Saints Sunday be a day for us to reflect on the saints. For us to do this prayerfully and reflectively, let us read the following prayer by Rev. John Winn: (on the next page.)

Wishing you all a powerful and celebrative All Saints Day.

In Christ's love,



Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

**Transformed by the Holy Spirit, united in trust,
we will **boldly** proclaim Christ to the world.**



New England Conference
The United Methodist Church



Daily Prayer

A daily prayer from the New England Conference

Members of the New England Conference Extended Cabinet are sharing a daily prayer based on the Revised Common Lectionary for the week.

Nov. 4, 2021

1 Kings 17:16

The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Providing God, Grant us faith to believe that there is enough, enough for all of us to sit at the table and feast together. Help us to know that you will provide even when we do not see how. Let us share our resources without hoarding or fear and in so doing, return to you the things we mistakenly believe are ours. Amen. *By Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications*

All Saints Day*

O God,
like a cloud of witnesses,
saints of every shape and hue
have warmed us
with your grace and all it means.

We can call many of them by name.
Miriam dances by,
spreading the joy of small victories;
Isaiah inspires our hope
for a new and different future;
Jeremiah revives our soul
by writing on our hearts once more;
Ruth and Naomi show us how to dig deeper
in our commitments to love;
Paul gently whispers again,
“We walk by faith and not by sight;”
there is Luther standing firm;
John Wesley warming our hearts;
Bonhoeffer reminding us of
the cost of discipleship.

They never leave us
and by your grace, O God,
you give us eyes of faith to see others
in that great cloud of witnesses.

There are some alive and among us, even now,
weaving themselves in and out of our lives
when grace needs replenishing
and love is the only way it can come.
Some of them even call us by name,
and whether deserved or not,
enable us to feel
that these bones can live again.
In the name of all the saints,
Amen.

**Taken from John Winn: FOR ALL SEASONS, Preachers' Aid Society of New England, Plymouth, Massachusetts, 2011, p. 99*

Please Pray For... Frontline Workers ~ Those affected by COVID-19 ~ All veteran's dealing with PTSD, addiction, physical injuries ~ John Bentz ~ David ~ Manny Fernandes ~ Brian Higgins ~ Raymond Smith ~ Lisa ~ Heidi Bentz ~ Matt ~ Robert Fernandes, Sr. ~ Emily Bentz ~ Amy Bentz ~ Jean James ~ Mary ~ Mike & Ellie Pickering ~ Kenny ~ Delores August ~ Steve Robinson ~ Angell Rodrigues ~ David ~ Andrew Anguita ~ Mike M. ~ Marge Lavoie ~ Paul ~ Bert Dorrance ~ Rev. Emmalou Kirchmeier ~ Joan Chase ~ Joanne ~ Jamie & family ~ Kurt ~ Deborah ~ Ginny Melo ~ Sue Dorrance ~ Alex Holt ~ “Winkie” Chrystie ~ George Glover ~ Michael Tonry ~ David Springer ~ Teachers, students and staff ~ Bob Mason ~ Lemuel Fuller ~ Rebecca Cummins ~ Karen Miller ~ Clarence Tucker



November 1, 2021

Shout to God with cries of joy. Psalm 47:1

Today's Scripture: Psalm 47 (NRSV)

¹ Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy. ² For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome, a great king over all the earth. ³ He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet.

⁴ He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. *Selah*

⁵ God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. ⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. ⁷ For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm. ⁸ God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. ⁹ The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted.

After an astounding thirty rounds of radiation treatments, Darla was finally pronounced cancer-free. As part of hospital tradition, she was eager to ring the “cancer-free bell” that marked the end of her treatment and celebrated her clean bill of health. Darla was so enthusiastic and vigorous in her celebratory ringing that the rope actually detached from the bell! Peals of joyous laughter ensued.

Darla’s story brings a smile to my face and gives me a sense of what the psalmist might have envisioned when he invited the Israelites to celebrate God’s work in their lives. The writer encouraged them to “clap [their] hands,” “shout to God,” and “sing praises” because God had routed their enemies and chosen the Israelites as His beloved people (Psalm 47:1, 6).

God doesn’t always grant us victory over our struggles in this life, whether health-related or financial or relational. He’s worthy of our worship and praise in even those circumstances because we can trust that He’s still “seated on his holy throne” (v. 8). When He does bring us to a place of healing—at least in a way we recognize in this earthly life—it’s cause for great celebration. We may not have a physical bell to ring, but we can joyfully celebrate His goodness to us with the same kind of exuberance Darla showed.

Reflect & Pray

Thank You, God, for Your many gifts to me. I shout my praises to You and clap my hands in celebration of Your work in my life.

How do you show your gratitude to God? What good work has He done in your life recently that merits celebration?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Out of the 150 psalms recorded in the Bible, eleven are attributed to the “sons of Korah.” So, who were they? It appears they descended from Korah (which means “little bald head”), a Levite who joined three others (Dathan, Abiram, and On) in leading a rebellion against Moses’ leadership in Numbers 16:1–40. The consequences of that revolt saw Korah and his followers literally swallowed up by the earth (vv. 31–32). The Lexham Bible Dictionary suggests that “the manner of Korah’s demise likely influenced their (the sons of Korah) approach to composing psalms, which include many references to Sheol [the abode of the dead].” In addition to composing psalms, 1 Chronicles 9:19 says that the sons of Korah were also responsible for protecting the entrance to the tabernacle—Israel’s first “house” of worship and the center of their national life until the temple was constructed. **By: Bill Crowder**

'Church for nerds' builds community without a building

By Aaron Cross Oct. 18, 2021 | DENVER, N.C. (UM News)



The Rev. Nathan Webb is pastor of Checkpoint Church, which was designed to be exclusively virtual. The church utilizes social media platforms Twitch, Discord and YouTube to build community. Screenshot courtesy of Checkpoint Church via YouTube.

As the world develops and changes, churches are embracing those changes and adapting in order to reach a new generation.

Checkpoint Church in North Carolina is one of those ... sort of. While its pastor, the Rev. Nathan Webb, founded and operates the creative ministry out of Denver, North Carolina, the church has no actual physical location — by design.

Checkpoint, which describes itself as “the church for nerds, geeks and gamers,” began in 2020 and is totally based online, utilizing social media platforms to build community.

“Currently, we are found on Twitch for our livestreams, on Discord for our day-to-day communal stuff, and on YouTube for our closest comparison to 'worship' every Sunday,” said Webb.

Operating in multiple spaces for different kinds of engagement allows the ministry to evolve and develop with the needs that are brought into the spaces.

Webb, who calls himself a “nerd pastor,” uses the streaming platform Twitch for reaching out to new people, leading conversations about recently released games and other nerdy topics. These streams can have as many as 450 people watching and participating.

The church’s Discord, a community platform and app, currently has around 100 active members. He said he wants to establish a yearly physical meetup — much like comic book and gamer conventions — but that event is still in the planning process.

A preacher’s kid, Webb was originally reluctant to pursue ministry.

“I tried for years to run away from ministry,” he said, “but God kept tapping my shoulders since I was 9 years old.”

Following a conversion experience at a Christian camp in North Carolina, he knew that he was called.

“My biggest inspiration that I realized during my camp days was the love I had for my friends — most of whom were not Christian,” he said. “I’ve always been a nerd, and nerd-dom and church don’t often overlap.”

His calling put him in the perfect place to bridge that gap between the two worlds. Within that gap exists the ability to reach new people and to spread the Word of God outside of the traditional approach.

“The traditional structure is too good at putting up boundaries,” Webb said. “There is no reason a video game ministry can’t work in a rural or traditional area.”

“Having a finger on the pulse of what the world is interested in is vital to the act of ministering to people. What these ministries offer is an opportunity to know that the church cares about the things that they care about and can offer some direction as to how we consume them.”

This approach seems to be working, and Webb said he’s encountered people who hate the church or couldn’t care less about the church and seen them shift from trolling to active participation.

Ryan Lelache has been part of the Checkpoint community for about six months and said the kindness and welcoming body of regular attendees has kept him coming back and wanting to get more involved.

“I’ve tried and often failed in ‘real-life’ churches to connect in social gatherings and small groups,” said Lelache, whose wife, a United Methodist pastor, recommended Checkpoint to him. “They didn’t just invite me into the existing conversation, but were really open when I shared interests outside of what was already ‘the norm’ and made space for those things as well.”

And Lelache never could’ve become a part of Checkpoint if it were confined to a physical building: He lives in New Jersey, more than 600 miles away from Webb in North Carolina.

This change in approach has been embraced by others in the church as well, such as the Rev. Luke Edwards, the Western North Carolina Conference associate director of church development.

“As Methodists, innovative forms of outreach and worship is in our DNA,” Edwards said. “John Wesley and Francis Asbury went out into the fields, the pubs, the prisons to preach. Nathan Webb and others are going onto Twitch.”

But, Edwards said, Wesley and Asbury didn’t stop with preaching. They invited those who heard their message to join classes and bands, to build community where an encounter with God could occur. He sees Webb building similar community on Discord.

“It’s every generation’s job to find creative ways to pass along our rich Methodist tradition. That’s what Nathan’s doing,” he said.

Edwards believes that this new, explorative approach to ministry is vital to the future of the church.

“Younger generations meet people, form friendships and build community online. I think with Gen Z and the generations following them, if we don’t start to build digital forms of community, we are going to lose a huge group of people,” he said.

Like Edwards, Webb is bullish on the growth of the “world parish” suggested by John Wesley. He said that the possibility of the internet and the connection of The United Methodist Church have the potential to work in tandem and change the way church is done forever.

“I couldn’t be much more of an evangelist for every church ever to build their own Discord and create an online space for community to be done,” he said. “It’s like someone standing there and offering you a free building space on Main Street — you’re being foolish refusing the possibility.”

Webb encourages others who may be called to unconventional ministry and advises them to lean into the United Methodist connection.

“Make relationships. Work with one another. Collaborate. We’re better together,” he said. “Church doesn’t need to be boring. Worship shouldn’t be lackluster. It doesn’t have to be a gimmick — we are just doing what we love and doing it in a community that loves it, too.”

Cross is a freelance writer in Fargo, North Dakota. News media contact: Julie Dwyer, news editor, newsdesk@umcom.org.

Tree stump reminds aging church: God is not done with us

October 14, 2021 Minnesota Conference of The UMC

By: Christa Meland

Goldie Lowney, an elementary school student, was the youngest person to give a stump speech.



In early June, leaders of Hill City UMC made the difficult decision to have a majestic, 100-year-old Cottonwood tree on its property taken down. It was dying, and the branches were at risk of falling on people walking by and vehicles parked below.

After the tree was felled, only a large stump remained. Rather than grinding it down, leaders decided to have an event around the stump to honor the tree and the 112-year history of Hill City UMC. People from both the church and the community were invited to an evening of food, camaraderie, and “stump speeches”—(non-political) short stories from anyone who wished to speak to the crowd from the stump. Forty-five people came—significant for a congregation that worships 20 to 30 each week.

Prior to the event, one member painted the top of the stump, and another carved steps and a railing into it. They created something beautiful from the ruins of the tree—and they noticed that the stump was still sending up new shoots and showing clear signs of life.

Hill City UMC, like many churches across the state and the country, has seen its worship attendance decline and its membership age in recent years. But the stump and the speeches served as an important reminder to members: God is not done with us.

“We are still alive,” said Rev. John Scheuer. “We are not dead. We can still be vital in this community. We just need to grow a little bit, like the stump.”



For his stump speech, Ron Olson read the poem "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert W. Service.

Art Elling, who retired from the U.S. Forest Service 16 years ago and has been a member of Hill City for 42 years, isn't one to give speeches. But he gave a beautiful reflection about the stump as a metaphor for the church. He reminded those gathered that like the stump, the church has been

through hard times before. In fact, the initial church building burned to the ground around 1950. While the congregation was surely devastated at the time, its members didn't give up. They rebuilt and created the building that Hill City UMC now occupies. Elling pointed out that while in recent years the church has faced challenges, there are positive signs of growth for Hill City UMC just as there are for the stump: The community responded positively to the church's root beer float socials in the park over the summer. The church bought a trailer that it's used for outdoor worship services in the community and to participate in the town's Fourth of July parade to reach new people. The stump speeches themselves attracted individuals who weren't part of the church.

“All these things are signs that hey, we're not giving up,” said Elling. “We're going to live on. We're going to get stronger, and our numbers will increase. We will continue to be part of the Hill City community. We have a lot to do yet.”

Other stump speeches were about hunting and fishing. Some people told jokes. Goldie Lowney, an

elementary school student, told a story she made up about misbehaving kids. Another member relayed a poem by Robert W. Service called “The Cremation of Sam McGee.” Scheuer’s friend from high school, who learned about the event on Facebook, went out of her way en route from the Twin Cities to Ely so she could give a heartfelt stump speech about her elderly father finally taking on a date a woman he’d loved from a distance since high school.

“It’s one of the best evenings I’ve had in a long, long time,” said Scheuer, who intentionally didn’t give a speech so as to make space for other voices.

People left the stump speech event joyful and inspired. A couple from the community who attended the event started coming to worship.

The stump and the speeches were so significant, in fact, that church members decided they’re going to keep the stump and gather around it at least once or twice a year to remember where the congregation has been and remind them where they’re headed. On Oct. 31, in celebration of All Saints Day, the church will have outdoor worship and has personally invited all families that have had any connection to the church in years past through baptism, youth group participation, Vacation Bible School, or other avenues.

“The stump is a reminder that we are not dead,” said Scheuer. “The stump, even in its old age, has purpose. It still has the power to transform, even though it’s no longer the tree we park under.”

Christa Meland is director of communications for the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Group seeks bishops’ grace in church exits

By Heather Hahn Nov. 2, 2021 | UM News



Key points:

- **On the first day of the Council of Bishops’ fall meeting, a group of United Methodists is urging the leaders to allow churches that so desire to depart now with property.**
- **The group’s letter comes amid uncertainty about whether General Conference, twice delayed by pandemic, will be able to meet next year and take up a proposed denominational separation.**
- **The group also asks for abeyance on complaints related to ministry with LGBTQ individuals.**

A group of United Methodists is urging bishops to allow congregations that want to do so to leave with property now — rather than wait for General Conference.

“As the writer of Ecclesiastes notes, ‘For everything there is a season,’ and the season for waiting on General Conference legislative solutions as the only way forward has passed,” says the group’s open letter, titled “A Call to Grace.”

The ad hoc group released its letter Nov. 2 — as the Council of Bishops begins its fall online meeting that goes through Nov. 5.

“We call bishops and annual conferences to use existing disciplinary authority to find grace-filled ways for these leaders and churches to follow their call now, allowing them to take their church property with them where appropriate,” the letter said.

Initial signers include General Conference delegates, lay leaders, pastors, district superintendents, seminary professors and other church members. Signers come from across the U.S. as well the denomination's central conferences — church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The group now invites other United Methodists to sign.

“We hope the bishops receive this in the spirit which it is meant,” said George Howard, one of the letter's initial signers and a General Conference delegate from West Ohio.

“We believe all in the UMC want to pursue mission and ministry. We encourage the bishops to consider all the available options open to people seeking a path beyond the UMC. We likewise encourage all who seek a different path to engage with their bishop and annual conference.”

Council of Bishops President Cynthia Fierro Harvey told United Methodist News that the letter serves as a reminder of one of the foundational values United Methodists hold — grace.

“The letter calls us to take a breath, to calm our minds and spirit and respond with grace in ways that will advance the kingdom of God,” said Harvey, who also leads the Louisiana Conference.

“The Council of Bishops will meet this week to continue exploring how to best honor its commitment to walk alongside one another in this in-between time and to use its agency to lead our conferences and churches to honor and respect one another, serve one another, and let love be our witness.”

The letter calls for “bishops and annual conferences to develop resources to assist local churches in discerning their future, including resources on how to have difficult conversations in ways that reduce harm.”

It also asks for abeyance in adjudicating complaints under church law related to ministry with LGBTQ individuals.

The letter comes as many United Methodists have grown weary of waiting for General Conference to act on a proposed denominational separation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has now twice delayed the international denomination's top lawmaking assembly, originally set for May 2020. With the challenges of vaccine and visa availability around the globe, it's not certain whether General Conference can go forward as scheduled on Aug. 29-Sept. 6, 2022, in Minneapolis.

Still, the hope is that a denominational separation will resolve decades of intensifying United Methodist debate over the status of LGBTQ people.

The most endorsed plan submitted to the coming General Conference is the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation. If adopted, the protocol would allow traditionalist churches and conferences (those that support restrictions on gay marriage and ordination) to leave with church property and \$25 million to set up a new denomination. The proposed protocol also sets aside \$2 million for other groups of churches that might leave.

The theologically conservative advocacy group the Wesleyan Covenant Association is working on that new traditionalist denomination, the Global Methodist Church. Meanwhile, a group of progressive United Methodists is developing the new denomination Liberation Methodist Connexion.

The Rev. David Meredith, a member of the mediation team that developed the protocol, is one of the Call to Grace letter's signers.

“The two core principles of the Protocol are called forth: 1) a gracious exit for congregations and pastors seeking to leave the UMC and 2) an abeyance that ends the harm directed at clergy and congregations targeted by anti-gay prohibitions of the Discipline,” he said in a press release about the letter.

The bishops plan to spend this week in discussions about The United Methodist Church that will continue after any separation.

“We must begin to shape a narrative for the continuing United Methodist Church that serves as a great witness of love rooted in Scripture, centered in Christ, and united in the essentials,” Harvey said.

The United Methodist Church and its predecessors have maintained a policy since 1797 that all congregations hold property “in trust” for the benefit of the entire denomination.

However, as the open letter notes, the Book of Discipline — the denomination’s policy book — already offers procedures for churches to disaffiliate with property under limited conditions.

The newest of these is in Paragraph 2553, which permits disaffiliation by Dec. 31, 2023, “for reasons of conscience” related to homosexuality. That procedure comes with a hefty price tag, with churches responsible for paying certain obligations including a share of their conference’s pension liability — that is, what conferences will owe retirees.

So far, dozens of United Methodist churches have used Paragraph 2553 to depart. Most identify as traditionalists, but some progressive congregations also have used the procedure to disaffiliate. Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church in Marietta, Georgia, has invoked the paragraph in its lawsuit against the North Georgia Conference.

However, the Discipline has another option: Paragraph 2548.2 allows local church trustees — with conference approval — to join “another evangelical denomination.” In 2019, a large church in the Texas Conference voted to join the Free Methodist Church denomination, using this provision.

That paragraph might work for congregations to join the still-in-progress Global Methodist Church, but the new denomination has not officially launched.

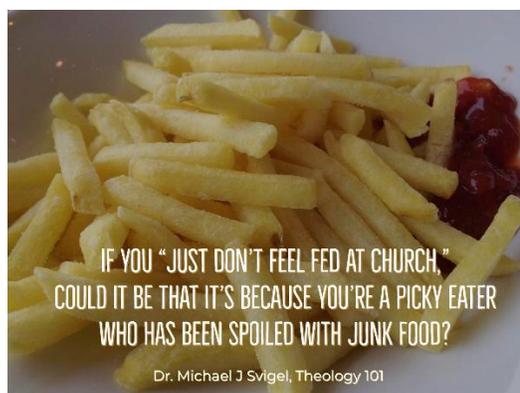
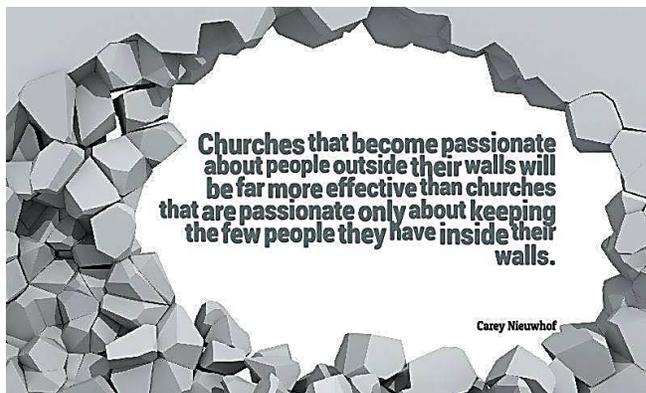
The open letter does not cite any particular paragraph in the Discipline.

Many of the letter’s signers are United Methodists who have expressed a desire to stay in the denomination. Many also come from the progressive and moderate side of the denomination’s theological spectrum, but they are hoping to draw more traditionalists to the cause.

“For all our disagreements, I am confident that every last one of us would love to be able to give less attention to church politics and more to our mission and ministry,” the Rev. Rebekah Miles, one of the initial signers and a reserve delegate from the Arkansas Conference, said by email.

“This call for grace offers one way through our current chaos. ... Mainly, I am earnestly hoping and praying that together we will find a way through the sad mess we now find ourselves in as a church, for the sake of Christ and the world we serve.”

Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.



November 2021



New England Conference
The United Methodist Church

Connected is a publication of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. This monthly insert is designed put Conference news directly into the hands of our local church members.

Find more at www.neumc.org.



Bishop's Days on the Districts

Support of the laity is critical

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar has been making his annual visits to the districts, and Oct. 2, 2021 brought him to the Katahdin District in northern Maine.

There the bishop encouraged laity, particularly those in leadership positions in the church, to “continue to support your pastors.”

Some tangible ways to offer that support, the bishop said, are to have adequate continuing education funds available for pastors to continue their training and to ensure that pastors can take two days off each week.

“Laity, you have been amazing in supporting the local churches. Your constant support made a big difference in this conference,” Bishop Devadhar said. “I am hearing about wonderful things that are happening in local churches with the support of the laity.”

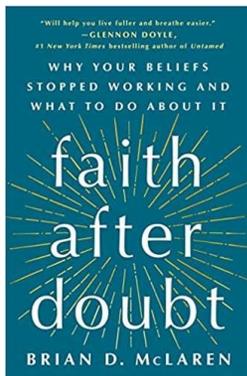
The bishop told a story of his days as



Bishop Devadhar in the Katahdin District

a local church pastor. He was appointed to a church that had a lot of challenges and he had not been there long when he asked his District Superintendent to reappoint him. The DS rejected his request.

Continued on page 2



Catch up on discussion of 'Faith After Doubt'

After recommending his book “Faith After Doubt” to NEAC members, Bishop Devadhar invited author Brian McLaren to lead a four-part online discussion series about the book in September and October.

If you missed a session or the series, you can find video recordings and McLaren’s presentation materials as PDFs on our website:

www.neumc.org/news, headlined: Follow-up materials for 'Faith After Doubt' book discussion.

Watch the news as there may be more opportunities to hear from Dr. McLaren coming up.



FIND PHOTOS AND STORIES FROM EACH DISTRICT ONLINE

www.neumc.org/news

Get the latest Information on the Boy Scouts bankruptcy

In February 2020, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) filed for bankruptcy reorganization to protect itself against a growing number of sexual abuse claims made against it.

Many United Methodist churches are or have been chartering organizations for the Scouts and may be affected by this proceeding.

The United Methodist Church has formed an ad hoc committee to work on this issue on the denominational level and regularly shares information with the conferences that we share with our churches here in New England.

To do that, we have created a page on the Conference website www.neumc.org/bsa where you can find the latest information we have.

We know this has been a tremendous challenge for our churches that have had long and strong relationships with Scouting. We appreciate your cooperation and faithfulness as we work through this proceeding together.



When you give to the special offering on United Methodist Student Day, you invest in a channel of hope for young leaders who bring their Wesleyan values into their schools and professions.

For example, Katrina Lewis says she struggled with her self-worth when her parents divorced. "I saw myself as a mistake and unloved," she recalled. Then her mother introduced the children to First United Methodist Church, St. Mary's, Pennsylvania, which, she said, "completely changed the trajectory of my life."

When she was preparing for college, Katrina's pastor and church family encouraged her to apply for a Gift of Hope Scholarship, funded by the United Methodist Student Day offering. "Their belief in me and what God has in store for my life," she said, "empowered me to apply, knowing I could not fund college alone."

Receiving the scholarship permitted her to follow God's direction for her life. "I know that God is calling me to team with him in restoring his beautiful creation," she said.

Katrina is pursuing a bachelor of science degree in statistics and predictive analytics at Robert Morris University, Moon Township, Pennsylvania. Her classwork and extracurricular experiences have given Katrina a deeper appreciation of natural resources and "our collective obligation to protect and defend those resources," she said.

"The scholarship," she said, "has blessed me beyond comprehension. God has used that money in my life to truly transform my college experience and allow me to pursue opportunities I never thought possible. I will always remember the generosity poured out to me by my church, and the fruits God has grown through that. A scholarship provides true hope and testimony to God's generosity and goodness."

Thank you for your generous gifts that give students a financial boost to help them realize their dreams while giving them a spiritual boost knowing that United Methodist congregations are supporting them and their dreams.

Please give online at UMC.org/SSGive or mail checks to United Methodist Student Day, GCFA, P.O. Box 340029, Nashville, TN 37203. Checks can also be directed to your local church by writing "UMSD" in the memo line.

Laity support ...

Continued from pg 1

Following his first church conference, the Pastor Parish Relations Committee chairperson delivered a handwritten letter of support.

"When I read this, it was like getting a million-dollar check, because of that support," said Bishop Devadhar, who added

that he still has the letter all these years later.

"When the laity gets excited with the pastor's ministry and when it becomes a team spirit, that makes a big difference," the bishop said.

Find stories and photos from each district on our website www.neumc.org/news

Let's Connect

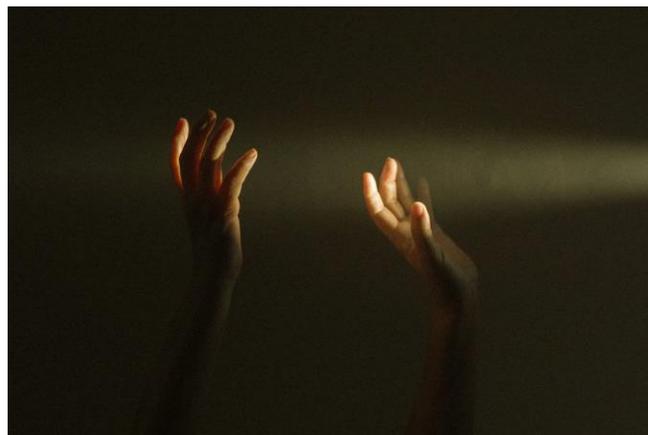
Do you have a story to share? A feature idea? A question to ask? Contact Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications, at communicate@neumc.org or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150

New to the UMC?:

Faith and Mental Health

By Alan Whitley

I grew up where we often did not talk about faith and mental health in the same conversation. It almost felt like faith was welcomed into conversation but any conversation around mental health was averted. Imagine if we allowed faith and mental health to join forces and build a relationship?



Let me start: My name is Alan. I am a Christian (United Methodist), and I am in recovery from addiction and mental health. That feels good to say out loud. Try it sometime. Believe it or not, I am proud of my struggle and recovery from addiction and mental health. It sculpted my relationship with God, my relationship with the universal church, and cleared a path for my vocation. Faith impacts our mental health, and our mental health can impact our faith.

One of my favorite quotes is by Ann Voskamp. Voskamp is a Canadian blogger and memoirist writing on themes of Christian women's spirituality. She said, "Shame dies when stories are told in safe places." I remember the first time I was able to share my story in church. I had recently been through my own faith deconstruction and reconstruction period. I was trying to "rethink" church. I did not know it then, but God led me to a faith community that eventually became a safe place where vulnerable conversations and holy listening take place. I was encircled by diverse Christians, and I was able to be vulnerable in this holy place.

It was a safe place for me to share about my struggle and recovery with addiction and mental health. I simply opened with, "I am Alan. I am a United Methodist, and I am in recovery from addiction and mental health." I could feel the presence of God, and I could feel the shame slowly waning. It was in that moment that I began to recognize that my faith was no longer hindering my mental health. Instead, my faith strengthened my mental health. This is all because I was provided a safe place to tell my story.

Where is your safe place? Have you found a space where you can tell your story? We all have a story to tell, and we should be able to tell our story in a safe sanctuary.

This year has been tough. Covid-19 heightened depression, anxiety, substance use, and isolation. The mixed emotions of grief come and go. There is fear, and there are people who have lost loved ones. The pandemic has made it more difficult to find a safe place in this virtual world. Mental health comes in many forms for many different people. There are times when we must reach out for professional help and seek guidance from a licensed professional. One of my favorite T-shirts says, "Therapy is Cool." Occasionally we just need someone to listen.

In 1 Corinthians Paul talks about holy listening. I like to believe holy listening is suspending judgement and inviting people to heal their wounds. Father Steve Wolf is a retired Catholic priest in Nashville, TN, and someone I consider to be a mentor and spiritual director. He defines scripture as one big love letter from God. It is comforting to know that no matter your wounds, no matter your struggle, and no matter your barriers, there is a God who knows you by name and loves all of who you are. As Christians we should emulate holy listening and love people just as they are. I wonder if that is how healing begins. Maybe, that is the value in building the relationship between faith and mental health.

Every Sunday morning, I give a welcome message to the congregation. I always say that no matter what you are feeling or just not feeling, you are welcome in this space. There might be some days that we just do not feel good and unwanted emotions may be present. The church should be inviting and safe for people to come as they are and begin to practice what it means to be a holy listener.

There is something so beautiful about holy communion. I know holy communion looks unusual right now and there is some grief around the loss of being able to receive as often due to Covid-19. Given the opportunity, I encourage you to reflect on each person as they line up and fold their hands to receive communion. It is not a line of people who are continuously happy, living in perfect harmony, forever spiritually mature, or addiction-free with no mental health diagnosis.

It is a line of people who sometimes feel sad, anxious, or scared. It is someone struggling with addiction, or someone who might be spirituality broken. It is someone lost in their faith, because they are grieving a death or going through a divorce. It is a parent who struggles with mental health and at times doubts the strength of their relationship with God. It is someone who sees a therapist, a psychiatrist, or a psychologist. It is leaders in the church who are struggling with stress and feeling overwhelmed. It is seekers trying to rethink what church looks like for them.

It is a variety of diverse people coming together to share in an open table no matter where they are in their faith or mental health journey. That is God's grace. My hope is that we permit faith and mental health to build a relationship so that safe spaces can be created for people to share their stories and begin to heal. It begins with a conversation and the church creating a space where people know that it is ok to not be ok.

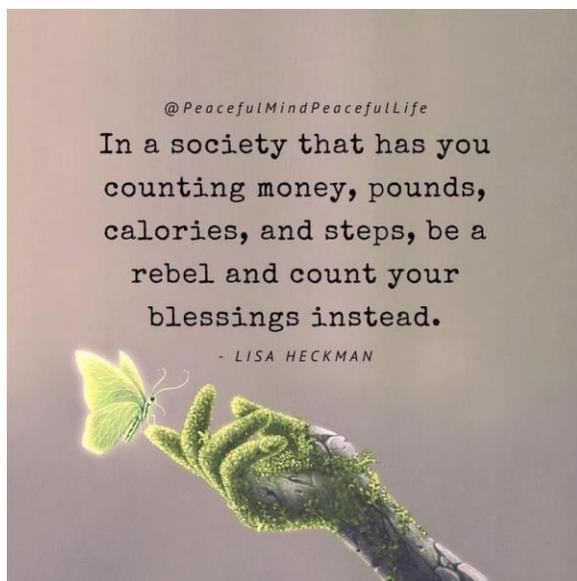
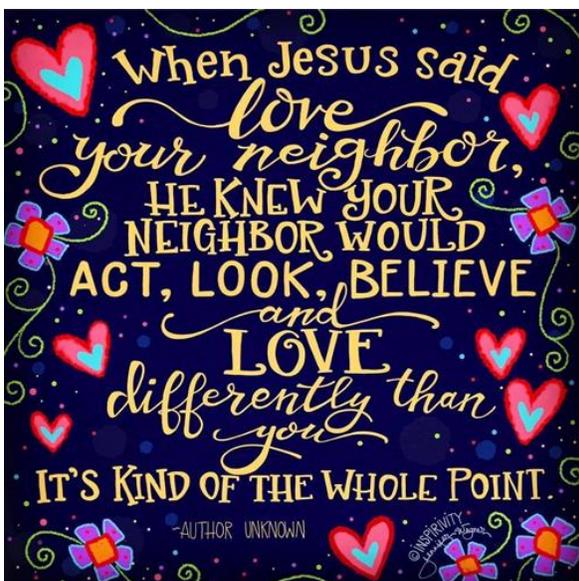
When he said that it was like a light bulb went off in my head. "Wow, you're right." Maybe when I was younger and not capable of making the best decisions God gave me discernment. Maybe now that I am 22 years old, God trusts me to use my own discernment about my future.

With all that being said, I do not believe that God has predestined our lives. However, I do believe that at times God designs for certain people, things, and places to happen in our lives.

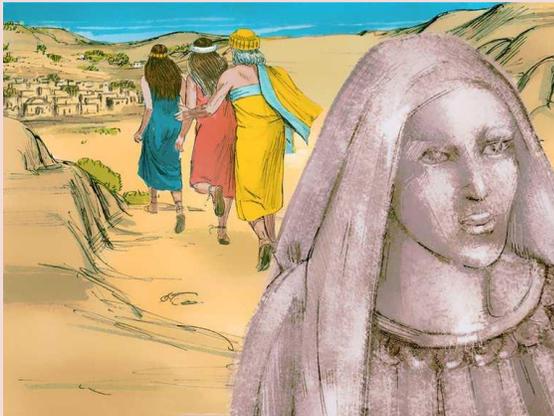
I don't necessarily think that there is a plan for my life. However I do believe there is a purpose for it. Big or small, whatever that purpose may be, I believe that I carry the goodness and love of God deep down in my soul, and I am a vessel of that love. I am meant to share that love with people who need it.

I love art. I love painting big things like murals and sharing them with my community. But that is not my sole purpose in my life. I am a yoga instructor. I like teaching others healthy ways to strengthen their mind and bodies. But that is not my soul's purpose. I am a traveler. I love to explore new places and meet new people. But that is not my soul's purpose. I play so many ever-changing roles in life, but my main role is to be a vessel of God's love. My purpose is to cultivate that intimate love, and then let it seep out to those I surround myself with.

Alan Whitley, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, MSSW Candidate - Clinician Evidence Based Concentration-University of Tennessee, and Lay Leader at Glendale United Methodist Church - Nashville, TN.



Bible Quiz: Famous Bible Quotations



1. "You are the _____ of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." (NIV)

- disciples
- foundation
- hope
- light

2. "Do not throw your pearls _____." (NRSV)

- before swine
- to the dogs
- to the Gentiles
- to the winds

3. "Am I my brother's _____?"

- jailer
- judge
- keeper
- shepherd

4. "A land flowing with _____"

- honey and cream
- manna and honey
- cookies and cream
- milk and honey

5. Which Bible book is this quote from? "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Acts
- Romans

Answers can be found on the next to the last page. Quiz taken from *The Christian Bible Reference Site*, www.christianbiblereference.org

6. Which Bible book is this quote from? "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

- Matthew
- Luke
- Acts
- 1 Corinthians

7. Which Bible book is this quote from? "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." (KJV)

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

8. Who said, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love"? (NIV)

- Jesus
- Paul
- Peter
- Solomon

9. "But when you _____, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." (NRSV)

- fast
- give alms
- give to the temple treasury
- pray

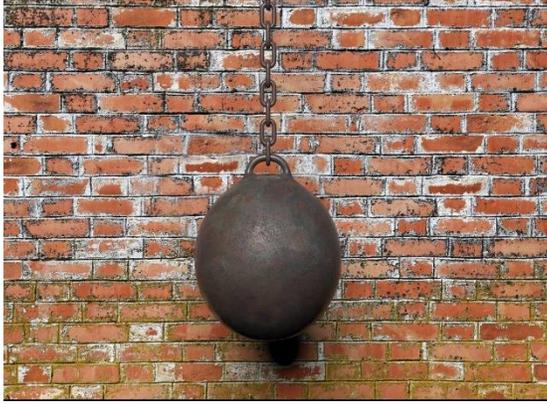
10. Which Bible book is this quote from? "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me."

- Matthew
- John
- Acts
- Revelation



"Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. It is the belief that God will do what is right."

— Max Lucado, *He Still Moves Stones: Everyone Needs a Miracle*



When my faith is frightening

By Joseph Yoo

Faith calls us to smash our comfort zones

There have been a few instances in my life that I can recall where faith calmed, sustained, and carried me through certain seasons. For the most part, faith has meant something else to me.

In August of 2013, Miley Cyrus released a song with a chorus of, “I came in like a wrecking ball.” More often than not, the chorus of that Miley song describes God’s presence in my life. That’s the part of my faith journey that really scares me. I find myself wanting to be comfortable; safe; being in control; doing things on my terms, in my time, in my own way. God seemingly (always) has a different plan.

Every time I want to commend myself for drawing my circle of inclusion wide enough, Jesus comes back and says, “Nope. Wider.” Every time I want to give myself a pat on the back for drawing a line in the sand that I felt was loving and appropriate, Jesus shows up in his sandals erasing that line saying, “Nope. You don’t need to draw any lines in the sand.”

Every time I want to remain comfortable and remain in control and invested in keeping the status quo, Jesus comes in like a wrecking ball and throws my life into chaos — a good and love-filled chaos, but chaos nevertheless.

An invitation to discomfort

Someone once told me that the Holy Spirit comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. I guess by living, working, and being in the first world, complaining about first world problems, I’m more comfortable than afflicted. Actually, I know that I’m more comfortable than afflicted.

And I wish I can tell you that -- when the wrecking ball that is the presence of God comes crashing through my life — I have enough sense to follow through with it. But even after that rude awakening, I still have a desire to stay within the comforts of my self-created boundaries.

I learn that it’s really, really easy to pray Jesus, lead me. It’s the actual following Jesus where he leads where I struggle with.

That’s what’s challenging and scary.

I once was making a late night church supply run at Wal-Mart (the local Wal-Mart was open 24hrs). As I was about to turn left into the strip mall where the Wal-Mart was located, I noticed a man sitting on the bus stop (way after the last bus left), head down, and staring dejectedly into his coffee cup. I felt this voice rise up from the back of mind telling me to pull over and go see if that man was okay: “Uh. No. It’s like 11pm. This is not the time nor place to engage with strangers.” I said to... myself.

But that voice (which was my voice) returned accompanied by a sense of urgency, “Go. Speak to him. It might be a good thing.”

“It might also could be a bad thing...” I countered.

Ultimately, I felt that my “sanity” won out and I drove straight to the Wal-Mart’s parking lot. But all throughout walking up and down the aisles of Wal-Mart, I kept thinking... Maybe I should’ve talked to that guy. When did I ever feel such a sense of urgency to speak to anyone...

I decided that if he was still there after I was done shopping, I’d definitely get out and ask if he may need anything. Of course, he was long gone by the time I drove to the bus stop. And this feeling of regret washed over me.

Instead of leaning into the Spirit, I chose comfort. Instead of taking a risk in the name of Jesus, I chose to remain inside my comfort zone. Really, who knows what might've conspired if I had initially listened. But to this day, I'm convinced it would've been something holy; something special.

Trusting the Spirit

Months later, I'd experience that same inner dialogue once more, but this time I actually followed. I wrote about that experience here.

Willie Jennings asked, Where is the Holy Spirit leading us? And into whose lives?

Those words have haunted me because I realized that the Spirit continues to lead me to other people; into their lives. Which admittedly, is like a wrecking ball for me.

Being an introvert, meeting new people is beyond my comfort zone. And yet, Jesus leads me to the edge of my comfort zone inviting me to step beyond. The space beyond that imaginary border will be holy; full of life; filled with love; drenched with God's spirit.

It is absolutely the scarier and riskier part of faith. Yet, I believe abundance of life and love awaits for us. Where is the Holy Spirit leading you? And into whose lives?

Joseph Yoo is a West Coaster at heart contently living in Houston, Texas with his wife and son. He serves at Mosaic Church in Houston. Find more of his writing at josephyoo.com.



Get Them Talking: Growing

When is a time when you noticed that you had grown? In what areas do you still hope to grow? Growing is the topic of this "Get Them Talking" edition. Photo by Anna Shvets for Pexels; Canva design by United Methodist Communications.

Scripture

"Instead, like a newborn baby, desire the pure milk of the word. Nourished by it, you will grow into salvation, since you have tasted that the Lord is good." 1 Peter 2:2-3, Common English Bible

Reflection

Some children have a place in their house where their height is marked, showing their growth. Other times, a child will find they've outgrown their favorite outfit. Because it happens so slowly, we don't always notice the growth until we see this year's mark is a little bit higher than last year's, or our favorite pants are too short.

Our Bible passage tells us this is true of our spiritual lives too. It too may happen slowly, but as we are attentive to God's presence in our lives, we grow. Our homes and churches are wonderful places to grow as followers of Jesus.

Get them talking

- ~ Watch a time-lapse video of plants growing or plant some seeds of your own. Talk about how the plants are always growing, even when we don't notice.
- ~ When is a time you noticed that you had grown? What is something you can do today that you couldn't do last year?
- ~ How have you grown in your faith?
- ~ In what areas do you still hope to grow?

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for all the ways we grow. Amen.

Activity

Look at old photos together as a family—vacations, birthdays, everyday fun—and make special note of how each person has changed since the picture. It may be something you see, or it may be something unseen.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.

- Quiz Answers
1. light. Matthew 5:14
 2. before swine. Matthew 7:6
 3. keeper. Genesis 4:9
 4. milk and honey. Exodus 3:8, Exodus 3:17, Exodus 13:5, Exodus 13:3, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 14:8, Numbers 16:13
 5. Genesis. Genesis 19:26
 6. Acts. Acts 20:35
 7. Luke. Luke 2:7
 8. Paul. 1 Corinthians 13:13
 9. give alms. Matthew 6:3
 10. John. John 14:1

The Breath Prayer

Written by Sheridan Voysey

Lord God, fill me with your Holy Spirit

I receive your *love* & release my *insecurity*

I receive your *joy* & release my *unhappiness*

I receive your *peace* & release my *anxiety*

I receive your *patience* & release my *impulsiveness*

I receive your *kindness* & release my *indifference*

I receive your *goodness* & release my *ungodliness*

I receive your *faithfulness* & release my *disloyalty*

I receive your *gentleness* & release my *severity*

I receive your *self-control* & release my *self-indulgence*

Artwork by @jodie888

DO ALL THE GOOD
YOU CAN ♥ BY ALL
THE MEANS YOU CAN
IN ALL THE WAYS YOU
CAN ♥ IN ALL THE
PLACES YOU CAN ♥
AT ALL THE TIMES YOU
CAN ♥ TO ALL THE
PEOPLE YOU CAN ♥
AS LONG AS EVER YOU
CAN ♥ JOHN WESLEY

©HECK

Your task is not to
foresee the future,
but to enable it.

~
Antoine de Saint-Exupery

@PeacefulMindPeacefulLife

When someone spews something really hurtful, don't pick it up and hold it and rub it into your heart and snuggle with it and carry it around for a long time.

Don't even put energy into kicking it to the curb. You gotta see it and step OVER it or go AROUND it and keep on going.

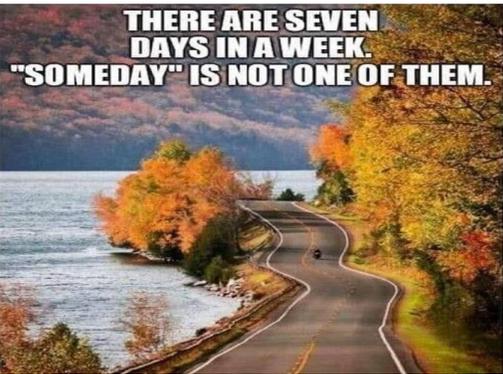
- BRENÉ BROWN
(PARAPHRASED FROM A LIVE TALK AT SXSW)

Just try to look at your shoes the same way again.....
You're welcome.



A man is driving down a road when he runs over a bunny. He slams on his brakes, gets out and walks up to the flattened bunny. The bunny is obviously expired. A passing car slams on it's brakes and screeches to a halt. The driver of that car runs up to the bunny pulls out an aerosol can and sprays the bunny with the aerosol spray. The Bunny jumps up runs a few feet, then stops, turns around and waves it's paw at the two men. Runs away a few more feet, stops, turns around and waves at the two men. He continues to do this until he's out of sight. The first driver looks at the man with the aerosol can and says "Wow that is amazing, what is in that can" the man looks at the can and reads the label "Hair restorer, with a permanent wave".

Dog: Suspect spotted 45 meters away, behind a tree
Sniper: Affirmative, looking for target
Dog: Suspect is brown
Sniper: Ok
Dog: Walking East
Sniper: Ok
Dog: Carrying a nut
Sniper: ...are you looking at squirrels again?
Dog: Sorry



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