

The Parish Visitor

January, 2014



Visit us at myaledoumc.com

PERSPECTIVE IS EVERYTHING

By Rev. Mark

Isn't perspective an amazing thing? When you're a kid, what did you want? What did you most ENVY? If you're like me, it was the kid who had all the cool G.I. Joe stuff, or the kid who had the awesome bike or, best of all, the kid who had the swimming pool! "Oh, if I could just be like THEM, then everything would be GREAT!"

Then you get older and things change. It becomes the kid who has the great car or the kid who is the star quarterback or the kid who gets straight A's. And it escalates from there. It begins to be about jobs and houses and money and power. But there ALWAYS seems to be someone who has more than you. And their presence creates envy.

I would argue that, even among the strongest Christians, envy is a problem. Why? Because it pulls at our most basic fears, needs and desires. We KNOW we shouldn't envy other people...but it's hard! And then something happens that changes your whole perspective.

I have had my share of struggles with envy over the years. And those struggles would center on pretty much the same things that YOUR struggles center around. I have gotten MUCH better as I've grown older, but it still rears its ugly head from time to time.

But lately, I've had that "perspective change" that I mentioned earlier. I still find myself struggling occasionally with envy, but the source of that envy has taken on a whole new character. Gone are the thoughts about someone's house, car or bank account. I really don't care about those things. I live in a very comfortable house. I drive a perfectly fine car and if I were worried terribly about the size of my bank account, I certainly wouldn't be in the ministry!

No, the envy I have found myself struggling with in recent months centers squarely around one topic- health! For my whole adult life, I have been the picture of good health. I never got sick. I never had to go to the hospital. I rarely even needed to see a doctor. I never missed ONE Sunday in 17 years of ministry because of illness. Not ONE! And then, May 28th came and I got the phone call no one wants to get. "Could you come in NOW to talk to us about the results of your CT scan?" Since that moment, my life has taken a radically different trajectory. I find that, if I envy anything these days, it's people who are healthy!

The point is this- whatever you have...appreciate it. Maybe you don't have a ton of money but you are relatively healthy. Appreciate it. Maybe you struggle with health issues but have a place to sleep at night and food to eat. Appreciate it. Maybe your kids don't call or visit as much as you'd like but you have good friends who help fill that void. Appreciate them. God gifts us all uniquely and individually. Find the silver linings in YOUR life and center yourself around them. Why? Because perspective is everything!

SPECIAL DATES:

- Jan 1 Office Closed. Happy New Year!
- Jan 5 Communion & Food Pantry Collection Sunday
- Jan 6 Finance Meeting 6PM
- Jan 6 Trustees Meeting 7PM
- Jan 13 Relay for Life Meeting 4:30PM
- Jan 14 Miriam Circle 6PM
- Jan 16 Naomi/Wesleyan Circle 11:30 @ T & C
- Jan 17-18 24 Hour Prayer Vigil 5PM-5PM
- Jan 19 Dedication Sunday
- Jan 19 Ad Council 7:15PM
- Jan 26 CIA Luncheon 11:30AM
- Jan 27 Relay for Life Meeting 6PM
- Jan 28 Work @ MC Food Pantry 5:30-7:30PM
- Jan 31 Work @ MC Food Pantry 8AM-noon



WORSHIP TIMES:

- Sundays 8AM & 10:15AM
- Sunday School 9:15AM
- Evening Service 6PM

NEW AND CURRENT PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDIES

Parables: The Greatest Stories Ever Told

WHAT: Rev. Mark and Joanne's new Bible Study

WHEN: Tuesdays @ 9AM and 1:30PM

Wednesdays @ 6PM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Area next to the sanctuary (Tues. 1:30PM in the Sonrise Coffee House)

WHY: Everyone loves a good story. But the parables of Jesus are a special kind of story. They sneak up on us, catching us off guard. The familiar suddenly takes an unexpected twist, and we find our secret thoughts exposed in the healing light of Jesus. In this 8-week study, we will explore eight of the greatest stories ever told.

WHAT ELSE: It is NOT too late to join.

The Sermon on the Mount

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current MEN'S Bible Study

WHEN: Wednesdays @ 6:30AM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Area next to the sanctuary

WHY: United Methodist founder John Wesley's desire was to present "plain truth to plain people." Editor Clare Weakley has attempted to help him do just that by updating his original 18th century commentary for the modern reader. As you read *The Sermon on the Mount*, you will see that the Beatitudes are to be the attitude of believers. This study will show you how.

WHAT ELSE: It is NOT too late to join.

The Letter to the Romans

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current Sunday Morning Bible Study

WHEN: Sundays @ 9:15AM

WHERE: In the Chapel next to the sanctuary

WHY: The Letter to the Romans is the best, most complete example of the Apostle Paul's theology found in the New Testament.

WHAT ELSE: It is NOT too late to join this class.

NEW SERMON SERIES

On Sunday, January 12th, we begin a new sermon series- The Making of a Leader. We will spend eight weeks looking deep into the life of one of the true giants of the Bible- Moses. And through his life, we will consider what it means to be a leader for God...and how you can become one! The weeks of the series look like this:

Sunday, January 12- I'm Your Density (Exodus 2:1-4) God has a plan for us.

Sunday, January 19- A Checkered Past (Exodus 2:11-15) God can use anyone.

Sunday, January 26- The Blazing Shrub (Exodus 3:1-12) God communicates in a variety of ways.

Sunday, February 2- Bricks Without Straw (Exodus 5:1-9) God can do the impossible.

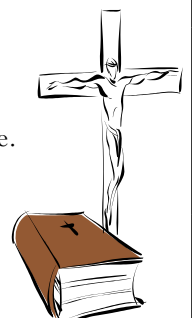
Sunday, February 9- Now You Will See My Wonders (Exodus 5:22-6:6) God is more than you can imagine.

Sunday, February 16- The Plagues (Exodus 7-11) God will protect you.

Sunday, February 23- Packing in a Hurry (Exodus 12:31-38) God walks the journey with you.

Sunday, March 2- A Rock and a Wet Place (Exodus 14:10-14, 21-22) God will save you.

Come each week expecting God to reveal His plan for YOU as we consider His plan for Moses!



Fellowship Café

Hebrews
13:2



"Don't forget to welcome strangers. By doing so, some have welcomed angels without knowing it."

The response to the upgraded Fellowship Café has been awesome! Everyone seems to be enjoying the variety of breakfast and snack food and drinks available. We try to have low sugar or low fat and gluten free selections each week as well as the other delicious choices. We are open from 7:45 AM – 11:45 AM each Sunday in the Fellowship Room to share our hospitality and fellowship with each other and welcome newcomers to Aledo United Methodist Church.

The food is purchased and/or made by the Fellowship Café Team. Donations are accepted to defray the cost. We welcome your suggestions and also anyone who would like to join the team.

The Fellowship Café team rotates serving each Sunday with the assistance of three groups within the church: United Methodist Men, Miriam Circle and All Methodist Women. The groups help the Fellowship Café team members serve in two different morning shifts. The Café team truly appreciates the serving assistance from these groups of people. The schedule for the assisting groups is as follows:

Group	Contact Person	Serving Months
<u>All Methodist Women:</u>	Connie Thomas	January, April, July and October
<u>Miriam Circle:</u>	Joan Reynolds	February, May, August, and November
<u>United Methodist Men:</u>	Tim Hay	March, June, September and December

One of the groups may contact you to assist in the Fellowship Café. We hope you will feel, as we do, that it is a privilege to serve while helping make AUMC a very warm and welcoming place to be.

Debbie Swank and Ruth Dulaney

I HAVE A DREAM

On Monday, January 20th, we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of slain civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For our kids, it's a day off from school. My experience is that for many of them, that's all it is. Why DO we celebrate this man's birthday?

Although he is often labeled as simply an advocate of African-American rights, Dr. King's message truly transcended any notion of merely being a spokesman for a particular group. His was NOT simply a message of race and color; his was a message of hope- grounded in strong Biblical principles. When he delivered what was arguably his most famous speech, he said, "I have a dream." His dream was NOT that we would let ethnicity separate us. His dream was NOT that people of a particular skin color would strike out against those of another color. His dream was NOT that children would learn to hate others because of their physical appearance. His dream was that ALL people could live together in peace and harmony, regardless of the color of their skin. When that glorious day happened, he said, we would be able to quote the old spiritual and exclaim, "Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

We are all unique and we are all different. That's NOT our weakness- it's our strength! Our diversity makes us strong. We are all children of God- made in His image. This month, take a moment and reflect on Dr. King. Tell your kids or grandkids about him. My prayer is his prayer- that one day we will live in a world where people aren't judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their heart.

UMW NEWS

The 2014 UMW Yearbook is currently being assembled. Part of the yearbook includes 4 serving committees who provide funeral luncheons, receptions, Lenten breakfasts, Golden Age Luncheons, etc. for our church. If you are a woman of our church, your name will be on one of the serving committees. When it's completed, you will also receive a 2014 yearbook to use as a reference for many things pertaining to our UMW.

Please contact the church office, Molly, or Mary if your phone number has changed in the past year or two. It is important that we can reach you if needed.

Thanks in advance for everything you will do for our church family in 2014.

UMW Co-presidents,

Molly Joseph and Mary Flint



EPIPHANY

January 6th is Epiphany (Greek for "appearance or manifestation"), also known as the 12th Day of Christmas or Three Kings Day. Epiphany is a Christian feast which celebrates the revelation of God to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. According to various traditions, it recognizes both the coming of the Wise Men to Jesus and the baptism of Jesus- both revelations of God in their own way. On Sunday, January 5th at both morning services, we will celebrate the revelation of God Incarnate, Jesus the Christ, Emmanuel!

PASTORAL CARE

If you are ill, having surgery, or are simply in need of some Pastoral Care, let your pastor know! Rev. Mark would be happy to visit you, pray with you, even bring Communion to you. Simply contact the office (582-2169) or contact him directly (revmark@stickwithjesus.com, 217-390-2359- call or text).





To all of you who helped us move on the 16th, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to help us. Your kindness and generosity will not be forgotten! We are so blessed to have each of you in our lives!!

God Bless & Thank You!!!

Adam Douglas & Tammy Friedel

For the decorators of the sanctuary, craft helpers, youth, food preparations, and any who helped in any other way for "Hanging of the Greens", THANK YOU!! From my count, we had 100+ participants! What a great turn-out!

Mary Flint

Thank you to everyone who helped in any way and supported the Men's Soup Luncheon!

United Methodist Men

Tim Hay, President

Thank you to the United Methodist Women for my recent award at the UMW Sunday Services.

Stan Swank

I would like to thank my church family for all the prayers, calls, and cards during the illness and loss of my brother, Paul. Although he will be missed this Christmas, he will be smiling down from his heavenly home.

Ella and Charles Luallen

The family of Les Marston would like to thank our church family for all the many and varied expressions of sympathy you have shared with us following the passing of our Dad and Grandpa. Losing two wonderful parents in such short succession has been difficult, but we are comforted to know that they are together again, in a better place. We're sure God knew that this was best for two people who had loved and cared for each other for over 72 years.

Rhonda and Steve Brown & family

Linda and Bruce Hall & family

Thank You! Thank You!

by Rev. Mark

On behalf of my family, I would like to thank everyone for the way you shared of yourselves during the Christmas season- the many cards and gifts we received were greatly appreciated. We also greatly appreciate all the prayers regarding my health. The Harris/Allan family feels truly blessed to serve God as a part of the Aledo United Methodist Church!

JANUARY- A SEASON OF PRAYER AND FASTING

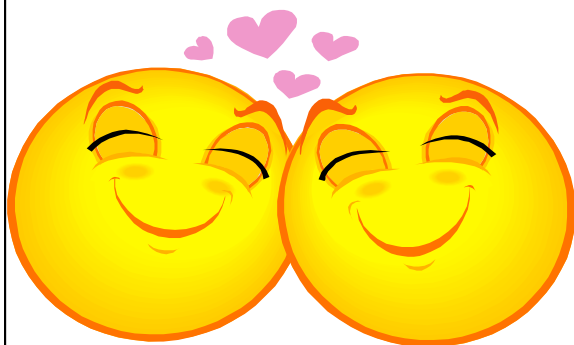
A great thing is happening this month! On Sunday, January 5th, the sermon focus will be on the power of prayer and fasting. We will talk about what fasting IS and "bust some of the myths" of what fasting ISN'T. Then we will begin a 2-week period of prayer and fasting. Everybody in the church will be encouraged to participate as God leads you.

That time of prayer and fasting will be brought to a close in a powerful way. From 5PM, Friday January 17th through 5PM Saturday, January 18th, we will host our 2nd annual 24-Hour Prayer Vigil. You will be given the opportunity to sign up to lead and/or attend one or more hours of prayer. The hours will rotate back and forth between the sanctuary and the chapel. Communion will be available each hour.

Then, on Sunday, January 19th, we will celebrate Dedication Sunday. Later this month, each household will receive a packet about committing our time, talent and tithes to God. And on Dedication Sunday, at both services, we will all have the opportunity to bring our Dedication Card to the front and place it on the altar. Please keep this powerful and important time in the life of our congregation in your prayers!

ANNIVERSARIES JANUARY

01/02/1955— Frazier & Donna Hunt
 01/03/1954— Alan & Bonnie Ricketts
 01/03/1998— Blair & Sara Blaser
 01/06/2001— Daniel & Valerie Maher
 01/18/1953— John & Frances Blick
 01/20/1984— Samuel & Leslie Salmon



UM Women Golden Age Birthdays

01/10 Lois Jackson
 01/10 Gloria Morgan
 01/11 Donna Hunt
 01/16 Virginia Cooper
 01/16 Beverly Norton
 01/18 Tommy Greer
 01/27 Jean Ketzle
 01/27 Dee Dellitt



Our Library

This month this writer recommends 3 authors, instead of particular books:

Anything by:
 Clive Staples Lewis,
 Leonard Sweet,
 Debbie Macomber.



THOSE WE REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS



Fred & Joanne Beard
 Jeanne Balmer
 Sherry Bieri
 John & Bev Carlin
 Lucy Ceurvorst
 Jane Chandler
 Brian Cobert
 Betty Dainty
 Tim Dirth
 Adam Douglas
 Jim Earl
 Judy Elliott
 Ben Glenn
 Joanna Henderson

Rev Mark & family
 Kate Hermanson
 Leanne Helton
 Baby Cody Howell
 Gerri Howie
 Cynthia Jennings
 Carol Kiddoo
 Brad Killip
 Rodney Laird
 Paige Lehrer
 Mazzocco family
 Jean McAlister family
 Sara Ott
 Kenaleida Ozbun

Marla Reynolds
 Linda Schrock's father
 Alice Seaton
 Greg Stead
 Teresa Stevens
 Marissa Tippet
 Pam Truman's mother
 Mark Vinson
 Marilyn Wagler
 Travel mercies/holidays
 All who are ill
 All who are alone
 The homeless
 Shut-ins

Mercer County Schools: Administration, Teachers, Students, Staff
 National and Local Governmental Leaders, Military, Security Officers
 AWANA, Bus Ministry, College Students, Shut Ins, the lost



3rd Annual “*Follow the Star*” Holiday Bazaar Follow-Up Report

Thank you to the Holiday Bazaar committee for their dedicated service to this event, the entire church family for your support and donations, the many workers at the bazaar, all of those who prepared for and cleaned up after, and everyone that attended our family-oriented, old-fashioned bazaar.

Through your efforts we connected about 225 people to Christ as they walked through the doors, viewed our 135 beautifully displayed nativities, visited our thirteen unique booths, and ate our delicious meals.

We were fortunate to have a profit of \$4950 which we will share with our community and church in the following manner:

Food Pantry:	\$500	New table fund:	\$250
Crisis Center:	\$500	New chairs fund:	\$250
AUMC Mission Team:	\$500	Fellowship Café:	\$150
AUMC Network of Caring:	\$750	Printing Expense:	\$ 50
Caring Hearts Program:	\$750	Remainder in UMW treasury	
Kitchen Renovation:	\$800		

It takes a whole church family to make an event like this a success and YOU made it happen! God is Good, All the Time!!
Thank you,

Ruth Dulaney

Caring Hearts News

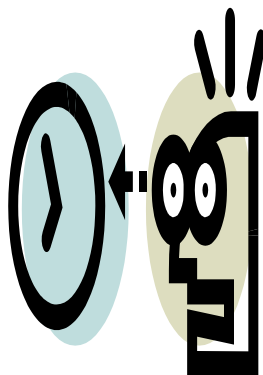


The Caring Hearts food ministry team appreciates the WNF donors who continue to provide the extra food for the Caring Hearts freezer each week. This provides a nice variety of food along with the food that the Caring Hearts team prepares monthly. Please feel free to deliver a meal to someone who needs it. This is another way we can connect people to Jesus Christ.

The money collected in the December Connection Coins cans provided gift cards for six families at Christmas time. They were tucked in with the fruit and cookie trays the Caring Hearts team delivered to 30 happy recipients.

The hospitality team is still looking for new members to assist in giving an extra warm greeting to those who walk in our doors. Increase the joy in your life by spreading it to someone else.

The deadline for the
next Parish Visitor is
Friday, Jan 24th at 8am.
Please have all articles
submitted by this date!



FELLOWSHIP CAFE

Have a cup of
coffee or
hot chocolate. Grab a
snack or breakfast!
Join us!



AWANA

What a blessing it is to be a member of Aledo United Methodist Church!. There is never a dull moment here. The hands of Jesus are continually working and serving in all sorts of ministries. Sharing, caring, and loving is being poured out, in, and on all that enter this building, where we join together to "Connect People to Jesus Christ".

It has been awhile since I shared with you and gave a big woo-hoo (thank you) to my church family for showing your love in so many ways to the children that attend our Awana Club. For the dedication of the teachers, their helpers, and to all that contribute funds to support this mission, THANK YOU! The Methodist Men & Women, Miriam Circle, and the Pizza Fundraisers, and many of you who go un-noticed, have been so generous that the program is still a stand-alone ministry! This means that Awana is still made possible because of direct gifts made to the club. To me, this confirms that the club brings glory to God and contributes to "Connecting People to Jesus Christ".

We have been able to buy a new TV and 2 new updated DVD players for the classrooms. We pray this helps others as well as our program. We have also committed ourselves to using the bus on Wednesday nights to drive to Keithsburg and fill the bus with kids who want to learn more about Jesus. (Thank You, Jessie Brown). We will, with your help, designate funds from Awana to help with the cost of gas for this mission.

The club is now 4 years old! Time is flying by, and I am quite confident that new blood would help this ministry grow larger, and more effectively. If you have a heart for kids, I ask you to pray for guidance and direction from the Holy Spirit; and, if He moves you to volunteer in any way for this mission, speak up! You will be blessed!

Thank you, everyone!

Wanda



ALEDO UMC BUS MINISTRY

We'd love to come pick you up and bring you to any of our services. Just make arrangements with **Greg Cobert** in advance by **calling (309) 737-5621** and we'll put you on our "Pick Up" list.



THE RETURN OF WEDNESDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP!

Wednesday Night Fellowship is coming BACK from hiatus! On Wednesday, January 8th, everything starts back up! The dinners have been spectacular, the rest of the evening has been great and the fellowship has been outstanding!

The evening starts with dinner from 5:15-6PM. Then, everything else starts!! At 6PM, your choices include:

Nursery for birth-3 years old

AWANA for kids through 6th Grade

Junior/Senior High Bible Study

Rev. Mark & Joanne's class /Parables: The Greatest Stories Ever Told!

Bell Choir

Choir

See you on Wednesday evenings!



SCHEDULING EVENTS

The Aledo United Methodist Church is a BUSY place! (Our custodian tells us that he struggles to find time to CLEAN the church because there is always something GOING ON in the church! His exact words are, "You are the dirtiest church I clean!") And since we are busy connecting people with Jesus Christ, it is a VERY good thing that we are busy! But BECAUSE we are so busy, it makes scheduling a bit more of a challenge. Events that never had to be concerned with the calendar before now...have to!

We continue to find creative, collaborative ways to enable multiple events to happen at the same time- which IS our goal- but we can't do that if we don't know an event is scheduled. With that in mind, please contact the Church Office as soon as possible to make sure your date/time/area of the church is available and to get your event on the church calendar.

Is your church a busy place? Yes! Is it busy connecting people to Jesus Christ? Yes! Therefore, we want to do EVERYTHING we can to make sure as many ministries as possible that help further our mission are able to happen!

DID YOU MISS SUNDAY'S SERMON?

If you miss church on Sunday, you can STILL experience the sermon. Simply go to www.stickwithjesus.com. Scroll down the main page until you find the date you missed- that day's blog will be a transcript of the sermon! If you would like to subscribe and receive a daily email link, email Rev. Mark at revmark@stickwithjesus.com. Please share these links with your friends.



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Have you felt God tugging at you, urging you to take a leap of faith and become a larger part of something bigger than yourself? Have you been considering joining the church, but just haven't taken the plunge! There is no time like the present! Contact Rev. Mark (582-2169, revmark@myaledoumc.com) and set up a time to visit with him. This 30-minute meeting will allow you to get to know each other better. At the end of the meeting, you'll decide which Sunday you would like to join the church...and the rest, as they say, is history! Pray about it- are you ready to take the plunge?

SPECIAL DAYS IN JANUARY

Where you aware that January is Eye Care Month? How about Hot Tea Month? Braille Literacy Month? Soup Month? Oatmeal Month? In addition, here are some special days in January: the 1st- New Year's Day, the 2nd- Run up the Flagpole and See if Anyone Salutes Day, the 3rd- Fruitcake Toss Day, the 4th- Trivia Day, the 5th- Bird Day, the 6th- Epiphany, the 7th- Old Rock Day, the 8th- Bubble Bath Day, the 9th- Apricot Day, the 10th- Peculiar People Day, the 11th- Step in a Puddle and Splash Your Friends Day, the 12th- Pharmacist Day, the 13th- Make Your Dream Come True Day, the 14th- Dress Up Your Pet Day, the 15th- National Hat Day, the 16th- Nothing Day, the 17th - Ditch New Year's Resolutions Day, the 18th- Winnie the Pooh Day, the 19th- Popcorn Day, the 20th- Penguin Awareness Day, the 21st- National Hugging Day, the 22nd- Blonde Brownie Day, the 23rd- Measure Your Feet Day, the 24th- Compliment Day, the 25th- Opposite Day, the 26th- Spouse's Day, the 27th- Chocolate Cake Day, the 28th- National Kazoo Day, the 29th- Puzzle Day, the 30th- Inane Answering Message Day, and the 31st- Backward Day. This month, celebrate the best, the worst, and the weirdest January has to offer!

CONFIRMATION CLASS

It's that time! Confirmation, when young people dig into what it means to be a Christian and prepare to become full members of their church, will start in early February. This opportunity is for youth **7th Grade and older**. They will spend 7 **Sunday afternoons, 1PM** starting **February 23rd** and ending **April 6th** with Rev. Mark and Melissa, learning more about what it truly means to be a Christian. There will be lots of conversation and reflection, but there will also be music videos and fun "game shows"! Then, on Palm Sunday, April 13th, they will be baptized (if they have not been), Confirmed and become full members of the church! If you have a youth who is in **7th Grade or beyond**, let Rev. Mark or Melissa know that you are interested in this great opportunity!!

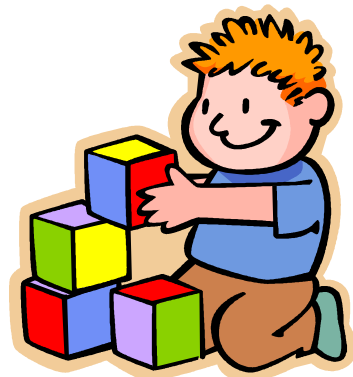
CHURCH WEBSITE



Have you looked at your church's website? If not, go to **www.myaledoumc.com** and see what's going on! Not only can you see the "basics" about the **Aledo United Methodist Church**, you can find the most current church calendar. In addition, the 2-minute "call to worship" videos that start our 8AM service every week are available. Also, the monthly newsletter AND the weekly bulletin (complete with the current version of the Prayer List) can be found on our website. Stop by and check it out!

THE NURSERY

Have you ever wondered why churches need good, safe, well-staffed nursery programs? Well, wonder no more! The reason churches need strong nursery programs is that, for folks with young children, the nursery is often THE most important part of the church. If there is a good nursery, they can comfortably leave their kids in capable hands and attend a worship service. If, however, they find a nursery that is poorly or under-staffed with folks who seem unfriendly and stressed, they A. won't leave their kids, and B. won't come back! Your church truly believes that children are NOT simply the future of the church- they are very much an active, important part of its present!



It's Okay To Cry

I find the Father of Lights often drops topics for devotions through random everyday encounters in my life. God caught my attention again this week by an unexpected blessing.

While out and about, I ran into an angelic faced, kind, but troubled young man I worked with a few years back. He looked so grown up (now 21), and after squeezing the life out of me (LOL), he had to tell me how he got "his act together" and more importantly how Christ got "ahold" of him. It is amazing to witness the power of our God, and I was just so proud to see how his emotions bubbled to the surface as he excitedly talked. I met him when he was 17 years old, wild unkempt red hair and dull green eyes. The night of our introduction was the worst time of his precious yet tortured existence. He sat in the most isolated corner of this huge activity center; his arms wrapped around his knees. The Director of the youth campus had called and asked for me to come down. He hoped a new face would bring answers as the boy's friends said he wouldn't talk.

As this innocent boy shook my hand, I noticed fresh rope burns around his wrists. He had hoped to conceal them by wearing a denim jacket not needed for that particular season. The Director asked if we could visit with him. I asked if I could sit beside him on the floor.

With his soul so broken, our conversation progressed rapidly from small talk to matters of the heart. He timidly shared about his abusive father, who made a game out of beating him on a weekly basis. Older bruises around his face confirmed those stories for me. When the conversation became still, I looked him straight in the eyes, placed my hand on his shoulder, and gently asked, "Who tied you down?" He didn't realize that I saw his hidden secret.

Like in a movie, he threw his arms around me and began sobbing. I rocked him back and forth and asked him what happened. Now being in the social work world, I was pretty confident I knew the disturbing answer. However, through gulps of air he confirmed to the Director and I that he had been assaulted. The constraints were to keep him from fleeing. The boy cried in my arms for an hour. When he was able to talk in full sentences, the first words out of his mouth were "I'm sorry." He was sorry that he cried as though he had caused me some inconvenience.

Jesus wept (John 11:35) – the shortest verse in the Bible, yet so powerful! Almighty God displaying weakness? I think not, but rather compassion for His friends.

Yet some view tears as a sign of weakness. Did God give us tears to display our frailty? No, tears are given to express emotion. Tears provide a healthy outlet for how we feel inside. The Bible says God keeps our tears in a bottle (Psalms 56:8) as if they are precious to Him. Tears disgust some people, though not Jesus. Jesus could have kicked Mary and told her to stop the foolishness, washing his feet with her tears, but He didn't. Simon criticized her, but Jesus commended her. The daughters of Jerusalem were weeping as Jesus was being led away to the Cross. Jesus told them not to weep for Him, but to weep for themselves and others (Luke 23:28).

Crying is a way to release tension, a way to cleanse the emotion that is otherwise stuck inside without expression. A baby who cannot talk yet communicates by crying. As I was reading Scripture and looking online, I found a counselor's fantastic definition for crying. "Tears can be a sign of a breakthrough, conviction of sin, or an expression of hurt, anger or sorrow. Tears open up an opportunity to discuss what is going on in the person's heart."

God says there is a time to cry as well as to laugh (Ecclesiastes 3:4). We are actually commanded to cry. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep* (Romans 12:15). We are blessed when we weep because soon we will laugh (Luke 16:21). *Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning* (Psalms 30:5). *They that sow in tears will reap in joy* (Psalms 126:5).

Seeing that 21 year old reminded me it IS okay to cry....and for the record, you NEVER have to apologize for it in front of me or anyone.

In His Love & Service,

Melissa Farrell

Director of Youth & Children's Ministries



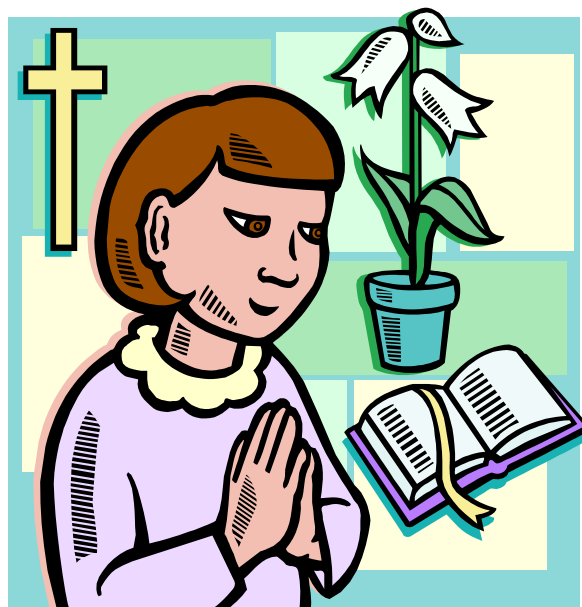
Junior High: 5-7pm
Senior High: 7-9pm

COME CONNECT WITH US IN PRAYER

WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP

Each *Tuesday* at 1:30pm
& 3pm in the Fellowship
Room

PRAYER WALK
through the church every
Sunday morning at 7am



FINANCIAL MATTERS (WEEKLY NEED \$5,440)

Date	12/01	12/08	12/15	12/22
Attendance	263	359	225	160
Receipts	\$6,327.02	\$6,783.55	\$4,601.61	\$3,466.00



**JOIN US SUNDAY
EVENINGS @ 6PM FOR
MESSAGE, WORSHIP,
COMMUNION,
AND PRAYER.**

Miriam Circle

Miriam Circle invites all ladies to join us in 2014. Our meetings are the **2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:00 PM** in the Fellowship Room. We have a great DVD Bible study by Rob Bell, a short business meeting, and refreshments and fellowship. We would love to have you join us in our 2014 activities. Please contact Ruth Dulaney for more information.