**The Courier: February 2017**

*Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Margate, FL*

**Along The Road: At *the Shack***

I hope none of us ever has the experience that fictional character, Mack Phillips, has in the New York best-selling novel, *The Shack.* The work stirred quite a bit of controversy when it was published in 2007. Many Christians found the questions it raised about the nature of God and confrontation with evil to both challenge and strengthen their faith; others saw heresy on almost every page. While the writing is not brilliant nor the story original the power to move the reader is profound.

A child’s death is always traumatic and when brutal murder is involved deep depression and spiritual crisis seem inevitable. Encountering “an enigmatic trio of strangers,” God in Three Persons, Mack “finds important truths that will transform his understanding of his tragedy and change his life forever,” according to the publicity for the soon-to-be-released movie version.

Ever since I read the book I have wanted to host a dinner and discussion group about it. I think *The Shack* can open minds to the possibilities of who God is and what it means to walk by faith when the valley is dark. The movie will premier locally on Thursday, 2nd March—the day after Ash Wednesday. It can be an opportunity for conversation about life and death and God in the midst of it all. Whether a person is not religious, nominally religious or has deep faith our common story is touched on in this tale.

If you are interested in attending the 7 pm showing with me at the Silverspot (The Promenade, Coconut Creek) please let me know. Perhaps another group would like to see it on another date and time. Whether you see the movie or read the book remember *The Shack* isn’t gospel, but it might be a great way to open hearts and minds to our universal need for the real thing and God’s provision in Christ to meet that need.

Blessings for the journey,

Pastor CJ

**Watoto Children’s Choir**

TONIGHT, SUNDAY 12th February: Community Christian Church, 10001 W Commercial Blvd., Tamarac at 5 & 7 pm.

Watoto Children’s Choirs have travelled extensively since 1994, sharing a message of hope for Africa’s orphans and widows. To date, the choir has toured six continents and performed to enthralled audiences in schools, retirement homes, churches, parliaments, state houses and royal palaces.

Each child in the Watoto Children’s Choir has suffered the loss of one or both parents and now lives in a Watoto village. The experience of travelling on a choir helps the children to develop confidence and boldness, as well as broadening their worldview.

Accompanied by a team of adults, the choir presents Watoto’s vision and mission by sharing personal stories, music and dance. While on the road, the children act as advocates for the millions of other African children who have experienced the same heartbreaking pain and suffering as them. 

The Rev. Rich Updegraff is ready to serve as facilitator of a new men’s group. ALL men of all ages are encouraged to be part. One man may come to make new friends, while another may attend for spiritual growth. A men's group can satisfy multiple needs, but it helps if these needs are considered in initial planning. Please speak with Rich, (954) 573-7802, about what would interest you and what you can offer.

Our focus on GOOD GRIEF has spurred interest in having a gathering for people who have experienced/are experiencing tough times. Please let Pastor CJ know if you would like to know more.

**10 Ways to Offer Solace,** by Roberta Temes

*(Roberta Temes, Ph.D., author of Solace: Finding Your Way Through Grief and Learning to Live Again, is a psychotherapist who has taught classes in death, dying, and bereavement. A slide show of these 10 ideas is found at http://www.beliefnet.com/Love- Family/2009/09/Offer-Comfort.aspx). The ideas won’t all fit all people or situations, but they may help you to think creatively about ways of offering, or asking for, comfort.*

When a person you care about is hurting, you hurt, too. When that person is grieving the loss of a loved one, there are some steps you can take to ease their journey as they go through the bereavement process. As an experienced grief counselor, I know you can actually help them feel better. Here are 10 tips to help people who are grieving.

Stay in Contact with the Bereaved

Talk with your bereaved friend or relative—even if you are uncomfortable doing so. Remember that they are feeling far more pain and discomfort than you. Be present the first few days, and later call or email regularly to say that you are thinking of them and would like to be useful.

Offer to Drive

The bereaved will have many immediate chores to do--at a bank, a funeral home, or an attorney's office. Grief may slow them down and make it hard for them to take care of the myriad details after a death. They may need your help while doing these tasks, but if not then simply wait in the car.

Bring Comfort Food  
After the initial week or two, most family members will have resumed their usual schedules and are no longer available to literally cater to the bereaved. If the person says that they don't want anything, then bring over soup and ice cream. Those are good for a person in mourning because they contain enough calories to maintain nutrition yet require no biting and chewing. It is sometimes difficult to chew or swallow when deeply in mourning.

Help Out with Paperwork  
There are many forms that need to be filled out after a death, and the bereaved may not have the patience. You can ease the job by doing it with the person at your side responding to your questions. You could also help address envelopes of thanks for condolence notes.

Be a Good Listener  
Most survivors, after a few weeks, need to talk about the circumstances of the death of their loved one. It helps them process the traumatic event and absorb the reality. If it feels right, ask about the day of the death. All you need to do is listen.

Post an Internet Memorial  
Help your grieving friend or relative create an ongoing memorial for their loved one on the internet. Putting feelings into words and pictures can be a healing endeavor. Friends and family can post their prayers and memories as well. There are a number of internet memorial sites to join, some free, some charging an annual fee.

Create a Keepsake

Encourage the bereaved to create something tangible, something they can look at or carry around, that reminds them of their loved one. Suggest they make some personal jewelry from the deceased's jewelry, or perhaps help them create a collage of photos. Choose some photos to fit into their wallet.

Consider a Pet

After some time has passed, see if the bereaved person would consider getting a pet. Offer to go along to buy or adopt one. If the person is now alone in the house, for instance, a dog could provide love and companionship--and a reason to get up and out in the morning.

Help Them Reach Out

Offer assistance in finding a bereavement group. Beyond that, help your friend or loved one to expand their social network by finding course offerings at the local community college, library, or house of worship. There are always activities that welcome new members. Suggest particular courses that might interest them, and if necessary go with them to the first class.

Look to the Future  
After many months, the bereaved will need help in planning for the future. Bring over information about possible trips, vacations, cruises, and special events. Having something to look forward to prevents constantly looking back.



**Did Jesus descend into hell or to the dead?**

“He descended into hell." That's one possible explanation of what Jesus did between Good Friday and Easter.

For more than a millennium, Christians have uttered some version of that phrase as part of the Apostles' Creed. And for nearly just as long, theologians have wrestled with what the phrase means or whether it should be included in the creed at all.

Early Methodist hymnals omitted the phrase altogether. The 1989 United Methodist Hymnal includes the likely more accurate translation, "He descended to the dead," and mentions "descended into hell" only as a footnote.

But including any mention of descent in the creed says something about how Christians over the ages have come to understand God's saving work, say church scholars.

## Meet With Pastor About Membership

While everyone is welcome to call Cokesbury their faith home membership is a way to profess publicly our commitment to God and His church. People become members of the local church in one of the following ways:

CONFESSION OF FAITH

--the initial entrance into membership in the church when one confesses faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who are committed to growing as fully devoted followers of Jesus through active participation in the ministry of the church;

REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH

— one's renewing of the initial confession of faith after a period of inactivity or not being on a church membership roll;

TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP — from another United Methodist Church or a Christian church of another denomination. We recognize Baptism from all other Christian churches.

Every member commits to being actively involved in the life of the church by supporting it through prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness. In being part of the Cokesbury community you already enrich our life together and contribute to our ability to fulfill the call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We hope you experience your involvement as a blessing, and we look forward to being further blessed by you as you affirm your commitment to Jesus Christ through full membership.

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## Everyone is welcome

"It means there is no part of human existence to which Christ did not 'descend,'" said the Rev. J. Warren Smith, associate professor of historical theology at United Methodist-related Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C.

"It's what it means for Christ to take upon himself ... the punishment of sin, which is death. If Christ really dies, then that means he (journeys) all the way to the place of dead."

The Bible offers no clear answer on how Jesus spent the day and a half or so between his death and Resurrection. One big concern for the early church — and Christians to this day — is what happened to the Old Testament patriarchs and others who never knew of Christ. A whole mythology arose about Jesus rescuing people from the netherworld after the crucifixion. The Gospel of Nicodemus, which dates to the third century and did not make the Bible cut, offers a narrative of Jesus retrieving Adam and other Old Testament figures from Satan's clutches. It was a popular subject for medieval artists.

What is going on here is Christian reflection on the doctrine of salvation only in Christ, and then trying to figure out where does that leave people who a) haven't heard about Christ or b) who lived before Christ. That is a question that remains a source of debate for modern Christians.

*More at the source: http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/did-jesus-descend-into-hell-or-to-the-dead*





Hearing from God and learning from each other.

Saturdays, March 4th-April 15th,

from 5.30-7.00 pm. Settle Hall

Six Saturday nights for families of every kind, every age and every number.

Simple dinner and then actively exploring about God, others and ourselves.

Opening doors and revealing pathways that will ignite passion, awe & wonder!

For people who are not religious, nominally religious, or deeply connected in a faith community—we all have questions and growing edges! To make the most of the venture we ask that participants commit to all six weeks (though we know “life happens”).

Suggested donation per evening (covering dinner and supplies):

$5 for household of two; $10 for household of three or more.

NEEDED:

People willing to serve on cooking and hosting team.

People willing to serve as table greeters and encouragers.

People willing to serve via hands-on activities such as crafts.

People willing to PRAY, PRAY, PRAY! People willing to INVITE, INVITE, INVITE!



Imagine for a moment a large bowl filled with jelly beans. The bowl is passed around and you are invited to take a handful. What is the next thing you do with the colorful sweets in your hand?

Are you someone who immediately starts to sort them into color groups? Is there a specific order that you like to eat them in, a flavor that you just don’t like? You may be a flavor mixer! Or do you just open your mouth and throw them right in there without any thought or reason?

It may be that you just don’t like jelly beans and would decline the initial invitation to help yourself; perhaps you’re not in the mood for jelly beans at that particular time and would have preferred the option of chocolate. You can discover a lot about a person by the way they eat or don’t eat their jelly beans.

Diversity of faith development

This observation highlights the way in which our responses to one situation differ according to our taste and preference. Within our community there is a rich diversity of God’s people all at different stages in their faith development and spiritual experience.

We are a beautiful collection of artists, scholars, reflectors, dancers, data collectors, fact finders, readers, sculptors, writers, musicians, actors, talkers and listeners. Whatever our age, ability or experience we will engage more meaningfully in an activity if it releases our natural preferences.

Exploring the Bible together

Explore Together places the Bible at the center of this diversity and releases the community to explore the message and hear God’s voice in a way that embraces their natural preferences. It encourages the community to come together to share their thoughts, questions and revelations with each other. The elderly with the young, the new believer with the mature traveller, the learned scholar with the inquisitive toddler.

EXPLORE TOGETHER is a new venture by Cokesbury United Methodist Church. Pastor CJ, Ministry Intern Scott Didriksen, and Children’s Coordinator Joan Martin are the coordinators.

**CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY & Early March**

Other Groups Sharing the Campus:

Monday through Friday, Victory Living, 7 am- 4 pm, Rooms 2, 3, 4

Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays, Spanish Alcoholics Anonymous, 8-10 pm, Grace’s Place (Room 4)

Monday Feb. 13th and Tuesday Feb.21 & Saturday Feb.25th: Cub Scouts—7:00 – 8:00 pm

Wednesday and Fridays, Anglo Alcoholics Anonymous, 7-8 pm, Don Lowe Chapel

Thursdays, Spanish Al-Anon,  8-10 pm, Don Lowe Chapel

*Always check with our Church Secretary about room availability before you schedule usage as there are “one-off” meetings NOT listed. Thank you.*

12          9:30 & 11:00 am Worship; Sunday School & Children’s Church

              9:45 am - Choir Practice - Room 7

            10:45 am - Bible Study – Lowe Chapel

              6:00 pm – Meet with Pastor – Library

13          4:30 pm – Food Pantry – Settle Hall & Room 1

              6:30 pm – Finance Meeting - Library

15        10:00 am – Morning Bible Study – Library

              4:30 pm - Intercessors – Sanctuary

              6:00 pm - Evening Bible Study – Library



16          3:30 pm – M.I.C.A.H. Meeting – Lowe Chapel

              2:15 pm – Thumbs Up – Settle Hall

              7:00 pm – Praise Band Practice – Sanctuary

19          9:30 & 11:00 am Worship; also Sunday School & Children’s Church

              9:45 am - Choir Practice - Room 7

            10:45 am - Bible Study – Lowe Chapel

20          1:00 pm – Lunch Bunch – Settle Hall

              7:00 pm – Photo Discovery – Room 6

21          6:00 pm – Mission & Ministry Meeting – Library

22        10:00 am – Morning Bible Study – Library

              4:30 pm – Intercessors – Sanctuary

              6:00 pm – Evening Bible Study – Library

23          2:15 pm – NO Thumbs Up – Settle Hall

              7:00 pm – Praise Band – Sanctuary

25          9:00 am – 5K (Food Pantry) – Front Lawn

26          9:30 & 11:00 am Worship; also Sunday School & Children’s Church

              9:45 am - Choir Practice - Room 7

            10:45 am – Bible Study – Lowe Chapel

27          4:30 pm – Food Pantry – Settle Hall & Room 1

**March**

01        ASH WEDNESDAY: Beginning of Lent.

10 am Bible Study

4.30 pm Prayer Meeting

7 pm Service with Imposition of Ashes

02          2:15 pm – Thumbs Up – Settle Hall

              7:00 pm - Praise Band Practice – Sanctuary

Group Trip to See *The Shack.*

04          9:30 am – GALS (God’s Angels, Loving Servants) – Settle Hall

05          9:30 & 11:00 am Worship; also Sunday School & Children’s Church

              9:45 am - Choir Practice - Room 7

            10:45 am - Bible Study – Lowe Chapel

06          7:00 pm – Trustees Meeting – Library

07          7:00 pm – Evangelism Meeting - Library

08        10:00 am – Morning Bible Study – Library

              4:30 pm - Intercessors – Sanctuary

              6:00 pm – Evening Bible Study – Library

09          2:15 pm – Thumbs Up – Settle Hall

              7:00 pm - Praise Band Practice – Sanctuary

**What happens after a person dies?**

Do they go directly to heaven or hell or do they go to a holding place until Christ returns to earth for the final judgment?

Throughout history, people have wondered what happens after death. While we may want a clear cut answer, we are called simply to trust God that ultimately we will be in His care, and that His kingdom will come. Faith is the base of salvation, and it is that faith that calls us to trust that God holds answers that humanity cannot yet understand. We find in Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." While the Protestant tradition teaches us certain aspects of the afterlife, there is still much that remains held in the mystery of God that requires simple faith.

The traditional Christian view has always been that those who believe will share eternal joy with God in heaven, while those who refuse God's love suffer endless separation from God.

Many Christians through the centuries have believed that when persons die, they remain dead (asleep) until the final judgment, at which time they are resurrected to life or punishment. Scripture references in both the Old and New Testaments seem to agree with the position that we remain asleep/dead until the final judgment. Other Biblical passages, such as Jesus' words to the thief on the cross "today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43), seem to indicate that we go to be with God immediately at the point of death.You may hear a pastor at a funeral today speak as if we go to be with the Lord immediately.

UM Reporter interviewed Thomas G. Long, professor at Candler School of Theology, about his new book on funerals. To the question of how we should think about what’s happened to the dead, he said,

“There are two images in the New Testament about what happens. First, the Resurrection Day, when the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised up incorruptible. If you only had that image, what we would imagine is that when people die, they lie in some intermediate state awaiting the great Resurrection Day.

The other image, however, is that death contains no victory over us at all. As soon as we die, we are with God. We get this in the Book of Revelation where John looks up and already the saints who have died are praising God around the throne. In terms of linear time, we can’t work this out. We’ve got these two competing images: You either wait until the general resurrection or you go immediately to be with God.

But the imposition of linear time on what is an eternal idea is what creates the contradiction. I don’t try to make a theologian out of Einstein, but he did show us that events that happen in sequence can also be events that happen simultaneously. If Einstein can imagine that in terms of physics, theologians can imagine it also in terms of the intrusion of eternity into linear time—that we are both immediately raised and raised together.”

The Protestant church rejected the idea of purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory originated in medieval Catholicism and is taught in the Roman Catholic tradition. Purgatory is believed to be a place where the souls of the faithful dead endure a period of purification and cleansing, aided by the prayers of the living, prior to their entrance into heaven. Although John Wesley believed in an intermediate state between death and the final judgment, that idea is not formally affirmed in Methodist doctrine, which “reject the idea of purgatory but beyond that maintain silence on what lies between death and the last judgment.” ([Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials](http://www.cokesbury.com/forms/ProductDetail.aspx?pid=1005225&rank=7&txtSearchQuery=campbell) by Ted A. Campbell)

Whatever happens after death, we live with hope in life eternal and in the assurance that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39).

*SOURCE:* <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-happens-after-a-person-dies>