

New Beginnings

Then the crowd asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"
Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."
John 6:28-29 N.I.V.

Bonfield Grand Prairie Parish

March 2017



Pastor's Corner

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21 *At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.*

22 *"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."*

23 *Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."*

- Luke 10:21-24 (N.I.V.)

Many messages have scrolled across the digital screen in front of the Evangelical church in Bonfield since it was installed nearly 2 1/2 years ago. One message that has been flashing from the first day is entitled, "What is Missing From Your Life?" I have heard some answers to that question, mostly from people trying to be funny. Their answers include time and money. Who couldn't use a little more of those? We cherish both because they are so fleeting.

The message on the sign is asking for you to search for a deeper answer than those. The sign is asking more about love, peace, hope, happiness and joy. When you see the images of violence in the world around us does money and time pop in your mind as the solution? The same sins that caused Cain to kill Abel are still alive and well in our society.

In the passage above, Jesus is filled with joy, not because of sin but because the disciples have seen beyond sin to hope. This passage is the Lord's response to the disciples 'going out' into the world and having success at challenging sin and evil. Jesus is filled with

joy about their ministry and missions report. Jesus says, Blessed are who have seen."

Whatever might have been missing from their lives has been found; not in taking from the world but giving back to it. The disciples were not blessed because they found a bag of Roman coins alongside the roadway but because they had connected the love God had given to them with the people God wants to give love to. They have discovered they are good conductors of God's amazing power.

As the disciples grow in their faith we can read how the material things of this world lost their grip on them. They completely gave themselves to the ministry of Jesus and the found real love, peace, hope, happiness and joy. Their new job title gave them no more time and no more money

Since the beginning of time when Cain slew Abel we have been a most covetous people. We want others land, money, power, prestige, love, possessions, we want others to think like us and worship like us and when we can't get what we want, we get angry, mean spirited and too often we get violent.

The equation is simple, what is missing on our lives is more Jesus. How we go about infusing that sentiment into the world is by exemplifying it in the way we live. John Wesley was so discouraged at his perceived failure in America he was emptied and thought he had somehow let God down. I imagine he may have thought of this passage from Luke where Jesus finds joy in the disciples successes.

Wesley may have thought like many of us, what is missing from my life? A colleague of Wesley, Peter Bohler, told the Methodist founder, "*Preach faith till you have it, and once you have it you will preach it.*" There is no pill to fill the emptiness we feel, we need to nurture our faith everyday. We need to refuse to let the evil one get a strong hold of us, we need to rebuke him and the lies that leave us feeling empty and wondering what is missing from my life.

Everybody needs a little more Jesus in their lives!
-Pastor Mel

Pastor Mel and Debbie To Present Poverty Lesson On March 16

A joint meeting of the Bonfield Evangelical United Methodist Women, Sunshine Circle and Martha Circle is being planned for Thurs., Mar. 16 in the Upper Room at Bonfield Evan at 6:30 p.m. You do not need to be a member of these group to attend, all are welcome. This is the same lesson Pastor and Debbie presented to Bonfield First and Herscher UMW's this past fall.

This is not a recap of the mission trip to Kokomo, IN, but a more in depth look at the reasons that create generations of poverty. Did you know the statements, "Why don't they just get a job," and, "My parents made me work when I was a kid," are not well spoken Christian responses to poverty? These words reveal the ignorance of the middle class' understanding of the lower class. If you believe education is one of the best answers to society's problems then come get a little education on poverty in the American family.

Pastor Mel and Debbie will be referring to a book written by The Rev. Jeff Newton, who directs the Kokomo Urban Outreach. He has more than 30 years of experience working with people in the midst of poverty and it's devastating effects on society.

Snacks and drinks will be provided.

Wonder Of Wonders

The world is filled with wonders, writes Nathaniel Olson. Consider chemistry: Salt is formed by two poisonous substances (sodium and chlorine). The alnico magnet, the world's strongest, contains three nonmagnetic substances (aluminum, nickel and cobalt). And water consists of oxygen (which is flammable) and hydrogen (which burns easily); yet water puts out fires!

That pales in comparison to the wonder of salvation through Jesus. Every day, Olson writes, Jesus transforms filthy, hopeless sinners into new, forgiven creations. "On the skid rows of our cities, in wealthy and poor homes, in jungles ... whenever any soul wants Christ, the wonder of the new birth is taking place."

Our God is the true Wonder of wonders. "None can compare" (Psalm 40:5).

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Sunshine Circle Report

On Feb., 16, six members of the Sunshine Circle met at the Upper Room at the Bonfield Evangelical United Methodist Church. Lorraine Wildman and Carol Buente served as hostesses. President Donna Diefenbach opened with prayer. Devotions were lead by Buente on love, she closed with prayer.

The business meeting began with roll call, minutes were read and approved.

On Mar., 8 the group will serve a meal for the Gift of God Street Church in Kankakee, IL. Jan Green will prepare ham and bean soup. Ina Bauer and Rita Overacker will bring desserts and drinks.

The next meeting will be held on Mar., 16, at the Bonfield Evangelical UMC, beginning in the kitchen at 6:00 then moving to the Upper Room at 6:30 for a special meeting with Martha Circle and the Bonfield United Methodist Women presented by Pastor Mel and Debbie Nielsen about poverty.

Plans are in the making for a spaghetti dinner and garage sale to help support missions. A motion was made and seconded to purchase 2 Easter Lillies.

On Sun., Mar. 26, 2 p.m., Bishop Frank Beard will be at Bonfield Evangelical UMC for a Service of Dedication for the new addition. The group has been requested to provide snacks for this Bishop's visit. The meeting adjourned.

Delicious refreshments were served with the theme of Valentine's Day.

Entering Glory

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who served as pastor of London's Westminster Chapel for almost 30 years, couldn't speak at the end of his life. Days before dying, he wrote, "Do not pray for my healing. Do not hold me back from the glory."

The Apostle Paul was torn between staying on earth and going to heaven: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... I am hard pressed between the two" (Philippians 1:21, 23).

Neither of these men feared death; nor should any Christian. As Haddon Robinson said, "For those who trust Jesus Christ, death is not a sheriff dragging us off to court but a servant ushering us into the presence of a loving Lord."

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Fellowship Breakfast

The next Fellowship Breakfast has been scheduled for Tue., Mar. 7, 2017, 8:30 at IHOP in Bourbonnais. Come enjoy a great breakfast and even better fellowship with other church members and friends. This is a good way to get to know other people who worship God in the Bonfield area. You do not need to be a member to attend. Everyone is invited to attend.

Firefighter's Breakfast

The next Salina Twp. Firefighter's will be held Sun., Mar. 5, 2017, 8 a.m. until Noon. Come and visit with your neighbors, get a great breakfast and help support the local fire station. The firefighters may be volunteer but the bills they need to pay are mandatory, so the whole community needs to help support their local fire fighters by attending this great community event. This is the last breakfast until Oct.

Time For Church



Bonfield Evangelical

348 Smith Street, Bonfield

8:00 a.m. Sunday Services

9:15 Adult and Youth Sunday School

Grand Prairie

Rt. 17 Bonfield

9:15 a.m Sunday Services

8:00 a.m Adult and Youth Sunday School

Bonfield First

172 Church Street

10:30 a.m. Sunday Services

9:15 Adult and Youth Sunday School

Upcoming Worship Schedule

*The following is a tentative schedule for
February 2017 worship.*

(Readings & message may change without notice.)

March 5

1st Sunday in Lent

“Who is Jesus?”

Altar Color - Purple

OT: None

NT: None

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-16

March 12

2nd Sunday in Lent

“What Matters Most”

Altar Color - Purple

OT: None

NT: None

Gospel: Mark 12:28-34

March 19

3rd Sunday in Lent

“Am I Accepted”

Altar Color - Purple

OT: None

NT: None

Gospel: John 8:1-11

March 26

4th Sunday in Lent

“Where Is God?”

Altar Color - Purple

OT: None

NT: None

Gospel: John 1:1-5 & 14

April 2

5th Sunday in Lent

“What Brings Fulfillment?”

Altar Color - Purple

OT: None

NT: None

Gospel: John 13:1-5, 13-17



There is POWER in PRAYER

Pastor Mel invites you to join in praying
for the following names and causes.

Friends and Family Close to Home

Nursing Home:

Heritage Village:..... Vi Morse

Manteno Veterans:..... Bob Grob, Byron Warren

Assisted Living:

Butterfield:.... Bernice Schultz, Mel Brinkman family

Harvest View:..... Warren Cochran, Roscella Piper,
Randy Riegel

River North..... Ruth Ohrt

Westwood Oaks:..... Fostine Schwark, Don Mau

At Home:..... Jan May, Jackie Wagner

From Our Church Bulletin

Charles Brinkman, Jr., Kurt Boesen, Shirley Brunner,
Dennis Bushman, Joann Coffman, Tyler Coffman, Sue
Coons, Jean Dunn, Dennis Hertz, Butch Lambert,
Janice Logsdon, Allen Messer, Sheila Neuby, Dorene
O'Connor, Merle Penrod, Kevin Reiniche, Rob
Reiniche, Randy Riegel, Richard Wildman, Pam
Wilking, James Vilt., Sr.

Compassion International Kids

Latif Korogo..... Burkina Faso

Maria Clara Maciel Da Silva "Clara"..... Brazil

Dayava Sanchez..... Columbia

Witney Juarez..... Guatemala

Shan Toppo..... India

Junior Okwii Barasa Kenya

Genesi Marisol Martinez Vasquez..... Honduras

Samuel Juda Lopez Miranda..... Mexico

Mohini Ahirwar..... India

Cinthia Yolany Carranza Aguila..... Honduras

Sonaton Soren..... Bangladesh

Yeferson David Ortiz Cortez..... Colombia

Nevada Eric..... Rwanda

Anielka Carolina Garcia Roque..... Nicaragua

Schekinah Jean Louis..... Haiti

Salome Vicente Melo..... Mexico

Benjamin Sewu..... Ghana

Lucky Hubiagbe..... Ghana

Rebeca Callapa..... Bolivia

Other requests

Bishop Frank Beard, D.S. Leah Pogemiller, Nueva
Jerusalem, Inner City Violence, State Budget,
President Trump and his new cabinet, First
Responders, Missionaries, Military.

Two Compassion International Names Need Extra Prayer

If you have been praying for the names on the prayer list, which is at the left of this article, you may have noticed two from India, Mohini Ahirwar and Shan Toppo. These two children have been supported by local Christians for some time, but no more.

Compassion International employs 6,000 workers in India who provide aid to children living in extreme poverty. It has worked in India since 1968 and is the largest humanitarian presence in the second most populated country in the world, providing \$50 million in annual relief funds. But India is cracking down on foreign non-government organizations based on fears that groups are using humanitarian work to mask evangelization efforts. Those fears have prompted the government to block the inflow of relief dollars.

Compassion International simply ran out of money and was forced to shut down it's ministry in India. Since supporters are not given the actual addresses of these children it is next impossible to continue supporting them – except in prayer.

Pastor Mel is going to keep their names on the list so we may continue to pray for them. A vast majority of India's population lives in extreme poverty and Mohini and Shan just got even poorer. Please continue to pray for each child on this list but with an extra prayer for these two so they may know they are still loved by us and by God.

Special Dates In March

- Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2017
- World Day of Prayer, March 3, 2017
- First Sunday in Lent, March 5, 2017
- Second Sunday in Lent, March 12, 2017
- Daylight-Saving Time begins, March 12, 2017
 - Girl Scout Sunday, March 12, 2017
 - Third Sunday in Lent, March 19, 2017
 - First day of spring, March 20, 2017
 - Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 26, 2017

Bible Quiz

In John 4, Jesus talks with a woman about living water. Where does that conversation take place?

- A. Sychar
- B. Samaria
- C. Galilee
- D. Jacob's well

See answer below

March Memory Verse

May your unfailing love be my comfort.
Psalm 119:76

Key For The Day

The key of the day Prayer should be the key of the day
and the lock of the night.
—George Herbert

+ Christian Symbols +



Hen

The hen represents Jesus' deep care and compassion even for those who killed prophets God had sent to them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," mourned Jesus shortly before his death. "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37, ESV).

Quotes Of The Month

"No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn."
—Hal Borland

"Faith is permitting ourselves to be seized by the things
we do not see."
—Martin Luther

"Music comes from an icicle as it melts, to live again as
spring water."
—Henry Williamson

Answer: A, B and D (See John 4:4-7ff.)

Roast Chicken with Carrots and Apples

INGREDIENTS

For the Chicken:

- One 4lb. chicken, broken down into 8 pieces
- 1/4 cup olive oil, divided
- 1 1/2 tbs Sweet Nigella spice blend
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

For the Carrots:

- 1 1/2 lbs. carrots, cut into 3/4 inch pieces
- 2 tbs pomegranate molasses
- 2 teaspoons Sweet Nigella spice blend
- 5 garlic cloves, smashed
- 4 dates, pitted and roughly chopped
- 4 thyme sprigs
- 1 Granny Smith apple, cored and cut into 1/2 inch pieces
- Fresh ground black pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1.) Prepare the chicken: In a large bowl, toss the chicken with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and the spice blend. Cover the bowl in plastic wrap and let marinate in the refrigerator for 1 hour.

2.) Meanwhile, prepare the carrots: In a medium bowl, toss all of the carrot ingredients together and set aside.

3.) Preheat the oven to 400°. In a small roasting pan, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium-high heat. Season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper, then sear, flipping once, until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a plate, add the carrot mixture to the searing-hot pan, then return the chicken over the carrots.

4.) Roast in the oven until a thermometer reads 160° when inserted into the chicken, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board to rest and tent with foil for 5 minutes to carry the internal temperature to 165° before carving. Let the carrots continue to roast in the oven while the chicken rests, 5 minutes.

5.) Remove the carrot mixture from the oven and transfer to a platter. Top with the roasted chicken, then serve.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes, plus marinating and resting time

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Total Time: 40 minutes, plus marinating and resting time

March Birthdays

March 2.....Sharon (Foltz) Howard
 Jacob Brinkman
 Pam Wilking

March 3.....Janet Schroeder
 Janet (Grob) Boyer

March 4.....Susan (Bradley) Schroeder
 Eric Pangle
 Tom Willibey

March 5.....Bill Hertz
 Mary Osenga
 Norman Bauer

March 7.....Denise (Dato) Kirchner
 Lynn (Broussard) Pangle

March 8.....Alaxis Morse

March 9.....Michael (Jake) Colston
 Herb Foltz
 Jennifer Rice

March 11.....Kenneth Bouk
 Gina Cordes

March 12.....Dawn (Duchene) Eberl

March 13.....Jessica Brinkman
 Chad Grob

March 14.....Wade Kuipers
 Matthew Meyer
 Dan Pitkin

March 15.....Terry Meyer
 Rebecca (Kuipers) Loyd
 Doreen (Burkhard-Voigt) Wendling
 Susan (Voigt) Resing
 Bob Nichols

March 16.....Richard Marcotte

March 17.....Joyce (Diefenbach) Cochran
 Alexis Robinson

March 18.....Melissa Pastorel
 Tammy (Dau) Riegel

March 19.....Don Mau
 Frederick Meyer
 Lauren R. Davis
 Virginia (Meyer) Young
 Jared Charter

March 20.....Sue (Han) Buente
 Wesley Adams

March 21.....Joyce (Walter) Riegel
 Wayne Buente
 Shirley (Schwartz) Larkins

March 22.....Joy (Riegel) Bland

March 23.....Patrick Lindley
 Douglas Gagnon

March 24.....Ryan Dau
 John (Jonnie) Pitkin

March 25.....David Buente
 JoAnn (Domagalla) Hertz

March 26.....Jay Buente
 Ron Charter
 Jeremy Jensen

March 27.....Alison (Ohrt) Paglin

March 28.....Amber Lindley
 Kurt Berghouse

March 29.....Lecia Geiger

March 30.....Larrin Nottke, Sr.
 William Diefenbach
 Alexandra Meyer

March 31.....Tony Graf
 Eloise (Pfeiffer) Kuipers
 Martine (Grant) Berghouse

Please notify the church office of any names and birthdays which need to be added, removed or corrected. Office number 1-815-802-9805.

Jan. 2017 Attendance

	<u>1/1</u>	<u>1/8</u>	<u>1/15</u>	<u>1/22</u>	<u>1/29</u>
Evangelical	36	47	35	41	43
First	20	24	21	13	15
Grand Prairie	34	40	30	40	32
TOTALS	90	111	86	94	90

Please don't forget that when church is canceled due to bad weather the bills still come due. Faithful giving is needed every Sunday to help your church maintain it's ministry and mission.

Be A Hope Over Despair In This New Year



**By: Jonathan
T. H. Rose, II**

As a Global Mission Fellow, working with the Simuklai Child Protection, in Mutare, Zimbabwe, I am deeply involve with children from all works of life;

orphans living in communities, students at primary and secondary schools, and vulnerable children living and working on the street.

With the street kids, whom we constantly referred to as vulnerable children living and working in the street, we conduct a regular, Hygiene training, sexual reproductive health as well as psychosocial support for them.

In last year festive seasons as our organization was getting ready for closure and end of year activities, I was inspired by the Holy Spirit to conduct a dream mapping with the vulnerable children living and working in the street. And to my greater surprise, listening to these kids' stories, we realized that 90% of these kids (60 kids that we reached out to) living and working on the street in both mutare and Chepinge are refugee who had fled from the civil war in the neighboring Mozambique countries.

Mutare and Chepinge share a border with Mozambique, and the transportation fair from any of these town to Mozanbique is just \$20USD per person in a public bus, I asked these kids whether they are willing to go back to be reconnected with their parents, there were an unanimous happiness and

excitement on their face as if that is what they have been dreaming of all this year... When asked whether they have ideas on where exactly their parents are living in Mozambique, all agreed. Conducting, the DREAM survey to find out their hope and inspiration for their future, many of these kids are willing to get back to school to acquire trade so that they may be able to become a better men in the future.

We have started working with the Mozambique Embassy; to see how best these children, of God who are trap in the midst of bad governance and broken family and marriages, can be repatriated and be reunited with their families.

As I work in reaching out with these kids situations, I taught it wise to share their stories to this congregation, my partners in God's mission, to share some of the amazing work your support to GBGM is doing around the world and encourage you to be a hope over despair to these kids and see what could be a change of story of their lives in this new year, 2017 as we all hope for a better lives and situation in this new year..

Share the Joy that you hope to experience this year, by supporting these kids DREAMS of reuniting with their parents and perhaps going back to school. You give contribute to their DREAMS by sending your support to the General Board of Global Ministries through my Advance Number (#3022112).

Your support to GBGM for the many amazing and wonderful works that your church is doing worldwide can be done through the advance # (#3022112).

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FROM THE AUTHOR'S NEWSLETTER

13th Annual

Festival Of Quilts

Celebrating a tradition that offers warmth, comfort, and hope for every child.

Fri. April 7 and Sat. 8

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Spiritual Life Center, 1301 Cunningham Ave, Urbana, IL

All proceeds Benefit Cunningham Children's Home

\$5 Suggested donation for admission.

Giving Up Guilt

Rev. Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest who ministers to high-risk youth in Los Angeles, once quipped, “I ... don’t do guilt. I gave it up for Lent years ago.” Many Christians give up something for Lent but usually not guilt! Rather, Lent is seen as a time to somberly examine our sinful nature.

Having witnessed sin’s tragic effects through addiction, violence and gang warfare, Father Boyle realizes that dwelling on guilt doesn’t lead to hope or healing. Instead, he helps young people discover their God-given strengths and their ability to make life-affirming choices. His nonprofit Homeboy Industries provides positive alternatives for teenagers, who are reminded not of their guilt but of their identity as God’s beloved children.

On Good Friday Jesus conquered sin and death so we don’t have to wallow in guilt. Giving our lives to God frees us to live in the joy of forgiveness.

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The Cost Of Hiding Our Light

A Los Angeles restaurant owner recently discovered that a neon light had been covered — without being disconnected first — during a construction project 77 years prior. The calculated electricity cost to run the hidden light all that time was \$17,000!

People don’t intentionally hide light; that would be counterproductive, not to mention wasteful. Yet when we shrink back from sharing Jesus’ good news, we do indeed hide “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14) that is in us. When we’re too modest to use God-given talents such as singing, playing piano or reading to bring others joy, we hide our light. When we put our own wants ahead of meeting someone else’s needs through giving and serving, we hide the light of God’s love. And at what cost?

“Let your light shine before others,” Jesus says, “that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (verse 16).

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“It’s what you learn after you know everything that counts.”

—John Wooden



Photo Courtesy of Bishop’s Office

Bishop Frank Beard

Bishop Frank Beard To Lead Service Of Dedication At Bonfield Evangelical

Illinois Great Rivers Bishop, Frank Beard, will lead worship at Bonfield Evangelical United Methodist Church on Mar., 26, 2 p.m. The worship service will include a Service of Dedication, preaching by the Bishop and Holy Communion. There will be a gathering time in the fellowship hall afterwards with snacks and drinks. Vermilion River District Superintendent, Leah Pogemiller, will also be in attendance.

This special service is being planned for the dedication of the new addition to the Bonfield Evangelical UMC. The addition was completed in the Summer of 2016. All are welcome to attend this special event.

A Service of Dedication is for the dedication of church buildings or additions that have been paid for in full. The congregation of Bonfield Evangelical recently paid the last amount owed on the construction. Bishop Beard will dedicate the addition for use in God’s Kingdom.

From Great To Good

Jim Collins' 2001 book *Good to Great* featured companies that had "made the leap" to greatness. Years later, many of them are no longer great; some aren't even around.

Should Christians seek greatness? After all, our attempts to be great — wealthy, powerful, successful, famous — often become the "enemies" of our doing the good God commands.

God's Word flips on its head the saying "good is the enemy of great." The meek, Jesus teaches, will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). "Whoever would be great among you," he says, "must be your servant" (Mark 10:43, ESV). One of Jesus' most famous parables is called the Good Samaritan, not the Great Samaritan. And goodness, not greatness, is a fruit of the Spirit.

Christians and churches are called not to greatness but to doing good for the sake of the world. Let's shift our focus "from great to good."

—Based on "From Great to Good," Homiletics, January-February 2017

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Willing To Worship

Lamentation is a powerful, and meaningful, form of worship because it places our love for God above even the worst of circumstances in our life. ... God does not ask us to deny the existence of our suffering. He does want us to collect it, stand in those things and make him an offering.

The Holy Spirit, our Comforter, helps us to do this: He aligns himself with our will and says, "I will help you to will to worship God." The glory of the majesty of God is that he helps us will and do.

—Graham Cooke

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God's Hands

Our life is like the dial of a clock. The hands are God's hands, passing over and over again — the short hand of discipline and the long hand of mercy. Slowly and surely, the hand of discipline must pass, and God speaks at each strike. But over and over passes the hand of mercy, showering down sixty-fold of blessing for each stroke of discipline or trial. And both hands are fastened to one secure point: the great, unchanging heart of a God of love.

—Virginia Brandt Berg

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Perfect Victory

Many people enjoy making basketball picks in March, though their brackets are soon "busted." Selecting every correct victor throughout the NCAA tournament would be quite a feat. According to *Mental Floss* magazine, if you flipped a coin for each game, the odds of achieving a perfect bracket would be one in 9.2 quintillion! By comparison, your odds of becoming president are one in 10 million, and your odds of bowling a perfect game are one in 11,500.

For odds that are less of a long shot, consider this: Your chance of living an imperfect life is one in one. Sin is the ultimate bracket-buster, and you'd be hopelessly lost without a Savior. "But thanks be to God, who gives [you] the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

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A Different Beautiful

Brenna Westlake, now 5, was born with a condition that makes her skin grow too fast, become thick and inflexible, and look red and scaly. While managing Brenna's complex care and helping her master developmental milestones, her parents have made new discoveries about beauty.

"Sometimes the most beautiful things ... come from the unexpected parts of life that encourage us to search a little harder to find where the beauty lies — to put aside preconceived notions about what beautiful is and what it isn't," writes Courtney Westlake in *A Different Beautiful* (Shiloh Run Press).

"There is a different beautiful than the perfection our culture often worships. That beautiful is found not when we open our eyes but rather when we open our hearts. That different beautiful is found in the uniqueness God has bestowed on every single one of us and the gifts he has placed within us to be shared with the world."

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True Friendship

A true friend knows your weaknesses but shows you your strengths; feels your fears but fortifies your faith; sees your anxieties but frees your spirit; recognizes your disabilities but emphasizes your possibilities.

—William Arthur Ward

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United Methodist “Coffee Church” Offers Warm Welcome

Church member Steve Spencer says, *“It’s probably the most loving church I’ve ever been to. We have a sign out in front of our door, ‘All Means All’.”*

Boise, Idaho’s Cathedral of the Rockies First United Methodist Church is one of the fastest growing congregations in the U.S. There’s always a hot pot of coffee to welcome visitors.

Cathedral of the Rockies First United Methodist Church member Cindy Todeschi says, *“We noticed that the Boise High students found the hot coffee, and gradually more and more were coming over from across the street. The coffee pot was empty more often.”*

This led members to have a conversation about the value of hospitality, says Todeschi, she added, *“We decided that it was absolutely appropriate. All means all. They call us the ‘coffee church.’ They just know they are welcome here.”*

Church member Jessica Holbert says, *“I never heard about like what a Methodist church is. So, I was really intrigued to ask. So, I sat down with this really nice guy and he talked more about Cathedral of the Rockies and I just loved it.”*

The Rev. Duane Anders of Cathedral of the Rockies First United Methodist Church claims, *“When we think of serving our community, or with our community, we use the words hunger, housing and health.”*

Anders has been pastor here since 2012, he adds, *“Some might say a free lunch or a cup of coffee doesn’t change the situation. And it doesn’t for the long term. These are acts of mercy as we work in larger ways to say, ‘How do we address the real issues that are present?’”*

Teens who come for the caffeine discover other activities like youth group. Youth Group member Zach Ravlin says, *“It’s always been a really welcoming church. I’m in the choir here. We get to go on and do a lot of fun mission trips. It makes people want to come to church, want to experience what goes on here.”*

Another youth member, Jenny Willison says her passion is being part of the praise band. She’s happy in a church that’s constantly looking for ways for

members of all ages to nurture their own unique talents, whether through worship, music, or the visual arts.

Willison adds, *“To be able to understand how that gift is vital in a faith community and how God can use you and your gift in a way that can reach people is amazing.”*

Church member and RN, Liz Price, leads a program at the church called Mirror Image. Members collect and sort toiletries for homeless and at-risk kids. Price says, *“We get requests from schools sometimes for just a couple of bags of products that a teacher can have in their room.”*

The mission statement here is *“reach, grow, serve and lead.”* Price says it means a lot that a church is willing to invest in ministries that members are passionate about. She adds, *“Sometimes people don’t know what their gifts are because they’ve never had the opportunity to try different things.”*

Some people find their place leading Bible study and social groups which keep families connected during the week. Willison remarks, *“They’re the first ones to find out when there is something that has gone wrong in someone’s family and are able to be the first responders in the ways of prayers, meals, of course alerting the staff and the pastors.”*

A favorite ministry of some young families is a program that helps refugees, new to Boise, get settled. There is always someone at the doors of the church to welcome any visitor or member with, *“Hi. How are you?”*

The key to growth at Cathedral of the Rockies is making it clear there’s a place for everyone here. Anders adds, *“When we work with Habitat and you bring your friend, I always say, you’ve started someone’s appetite for God. They may say, ‘This is fantastic.’ And their next thought might be, ‘I’ll come back in a year.’ ‘I’ll be back at Christmas.’ And that’s okay. You’ve started the conversation with God.”*

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Grace Enough Even For A President

Former US President Richard Nixon is infamous for his place at the center of the Watergate scandal. He disgraced both the office of the President of the United States and the United States itself in the eyes of the world. When Hubert Humphrey, a former US vice-president died, Nixon attended his funeral. Dignitaries came from all over the country and the world, yet Nixon was made to feel decidedly unwelcome. People turned their eyes away and conversations ran dry around him. Nixon could feel the ostracism being ladled out to him.

Then Jimmy Carter, the serving US President, walked into the room. Carter was from a different political party to Nixon and well known for his honesty and integrity. As he moved to his seat President Carter noticed Nixon standing all alone. Carter immediately changed course, walked over to Nixon, held out his hand, and, smiling genuinely and broadly embraced Nixon and said *"Welcome home, Mr President! Welcome home!"*

The incident was reported by Newsweek magazine, which wrote: *"If there was a turning point in Nixon's long ordeal in the wilderness, it was that moment and that gesture of love and compassion."*

Carter gifted Nixon with love and compassion. Nixon certainly had done nothing to deserve it. It was an act of pure grace on Carter's part. When the bible speaks of God's blessing it speaks in exactly the same way. Blessing is never a reward for good behavior. It's a gift, a gift of pure, unadulterated grace.