



Connections

Connecting the Dots to Our Faith

2015 Lenten Devotional

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the authors of this year's Lenten devotionals. They contributed their art and writings because they had something to say about the topic. They dared to share it with you. If you read something that resonated with you, please consider sharing your thought with them. It could very well lead to good conversation and ideally a few new friendships.

The Lenten Devotional is a congregation-wide ministry, led by the members of Foundry's Practicing Spirituality Sunday school class under the direction of Pastor Theresa S. Thames. The submissions from nearly 50 individuals were collected, edited and compiled by PS class members Jeanette Barker, Diane Seeger, Joanne Steller, Stephen Roberts, and Leo Yates, Jr. with support from all who contributed to the incubation of ideas and entries during PS classes held in the weeks preceding Lent.

Foundry's Practicing Spirituality class meets at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays in the Parlor, and is open to all who wish to explore ways to grow their relationships with God. You are welcome to stop by any Sunday and return as often as you wish.

The cover photograph was taken along the C & O Canal by Ta-Chen Wu.

Connections

Connecting the Dots to Our Faith 2015 Lenten Devotional



Because Lent is a time to review our lives and renew our commitment to Jesus Christ, many of us at Foundry are sharing our stories about connection. Some devotions are about God's love, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and reflections on Jesus. Others are about learning by experience how to connect with God and grow in faith, individually and together. We hope you ponder each offering, and perhaps find a way to explore new connections.

Foundry Lenten Schedule

Ash Wednesday, February 18

8:00 AM in the Chapel & 7:00 PM in the Sanctuary

Both services will include the imposition of ashes

Ashes will also be distributed at 16th & U and 16th & P Streets

Weekly Lenten Communion Service, February 25

8:15 AM in the Chapel

15min worship service each Wednesday during Lent

Lenten Sermon Series - “Lost Connections”

February 22 – “Who’s Your Carrier?”

March 1 – Guest Preacher, James Harnish

March 8 – “Can You Hear Me Now?”

Lenten Mass: Mozart Requiem—Part 1 at 9:30AM & Part 2 at 11:00AM

March 15 – “Who’s in Your Family Plan?”

March 22 – “Dropped Calls”

March 29 – “404 Error (Not Found)”

April 5 – “The Life App”

Palm Sunday, March 29

Worship services at 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM

Great Day of Service in Fellowship Hall at 12:30 PM

Maundy Thursday, April 2

Communion and Adoration of the Cross at 7:00 PM

This service will include communion, foot/hand washing, and time at the cross

Good Friday Services, April 3

12:00 PM and 7:00 PM in the Sanctuary

Holy Saturday, April 4

Easter Egg Hunt in Stead Park at 9:30 AM

Easter Sunday, April 5

Worship Services at 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM

**sight and faith
...a progressive journey...**

[We] have eyes to see but do not see. Ezekiel 12:2 NIV

...In the larger sense, we find only the world we look for... The question is not what [we] look at, but what [we] see....

--Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*

...The notion of attention...began simply enough: to see that the way the flies flicker is greatly different from the way the swallow plays in the golden air of summer. It was my pleasure to notice...it was a good first step. But later, watching M. when she was taking photographs, and watching her in the darkroom, and no less watching the intensity and openness with which she dealt with friends, and strangers too, taught me what real attention is about. Attention without feeling, I began to learn, is only a report. An openness — an empathy — was necessary if the attention was to matter... this deeper level of looking and working, of seeing through the heavenly visibles to the heavenly invisibles...the images of vitality, hopefulness, endurance, kindness.

--Mary Oliver, *Our World*

...here is... a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

We’re walking temples of noise, and when [we] add the tender hearts to this mix, it somehow lets us meet in places we couldn’t get to any other way.

— Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*

Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant?

--Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

...the journey continues...

Betsy McCrary

Sanctuary

*Praise the Lord.
Praise God in his sanctuary;
Praise him in his mighty heavens.
Psalm 150:1 NIV*



“Perhaps nothing helps us make the movement from our little selves to a larger world than remembering God in gratitude.”—Henri Nouwen

Prayer:

It is good to join with others to worship you, Lord. Praising you en masse makes believers' lives complete, essential and eminently more worthwhile. Amen.

Ta-Chen Wu

One Life: Staying Integrated through Spiritual Practices

The disintegration of our sense of self, our “center,” can easily happen in this culture that moves at the speed of light. We can begin to feel scattered, both physically and emotionally.

As a teenager, I began a nightly discipline of lighting a candle and practicing a form of what I now identify as “centering prayer.” This helped me to stay connected not only to my faith, but to my own sense of self. Spiritual disciplines—in different ways at different times of my life—helped keep me connected to my “center,” to the vision of wholeness that, I believe, is God’s desire for me and for us all.

We have one life and the ways that we attend to that life will either lead us toward greater health and wholeness or not. Daily prayer is one of my spiritual practices. Others include exercise and yoga, tithing, practicing Sabbath, nurturing friendships, hopeful perseverance in the face of challenge, serving others, reading poetry, worship, and much more. These things are woven into the fabric of my life and practicing them helps me—literally—to not fall apart.

One of the most profound and encompassing visions for an integrated life, grounded in practices of our faith, is found in Paul’s letter to the Romans.

...Take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life - and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for [God]. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out... (Romans 12:1-2a, The Message)

Through these days of Lent, place your life before God as an offering and allow God’s grace to reintegrate, reconnect, and restore your soul.

Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

Connecting the Dots

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 3:13

When I was small, my brother and I used to spend most weekends with my grandparents. Before going to bed, my grandmother would pray simple prayers with us. I didn't really understand this at the time, I just knew it was good, and gave me peace. As an adult, I now know that peace by another word, love.

My Grandmother taught me a lot about faith, and about being hopeful even in difficult circumstances. She lost her father, her sister, had her leg amputated and developed polio all within a short period of time. Yet I can never remember hearing her complain. She simply found joy in life and never let her physical challenges get in the way of doing things that at the time people didn't think she should be doing.

I wish I could always have the same upbeat attitude, but unfortunately hers weren't the only genes I inherited. However, the older I get, the more I find myself thinking about how my attitudes really do make my experiences. If I simply allow that peace, that love, that faith, to permeate my thoughts, I know that no matter what life brings, the experience can be one of beauty. I have a choice. I can act in love, for God, for others, for myself, or I can act in fear.

Connecting the dots of faith for me is experiencing again the feelings I had as a child.

Prayer:

God, thank you for the gift of so many beautiful people you have blessed me to experience walking with on this journey. May I honor them by living my life in a spirit of love.

Andrew Lee

Praying Keeps Us Connected to God

Dear Heavenly Father,
We want to thank you for sending Jesus, your son, to earth to save us from our sins. We love you God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

We also want to thank you for Foundry Church. We feel like we are one big family with a lot of brothers and sisters. We pray god that your love continues to grow in our pastoral staff and the Sunday school teachers. Foundry is our second home.

We pray for our families; parents, siblings and our pets. They are a blessing to us. Please keep them safe and healthy.

Father, please provide food for the people who don't have enough food to eat. And help the homeless people find homes and shelter where they can live comfortably.

One last thing Lord, we pray Father that you guide us and strengthen us as we grow and mature throughout our lives and help us keep you close to our hearts forever.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Foundry's Third and Fourth Grade Sunday School Class

Tristan C.S.E.
Abby
Maximo
Sophie
Roselee
Wesley

Connecting in the heart

Many years ago, I had the blessed opportunity to journey to the former Soviet Union. I was among five in a Peace Study Tour group who were fresh from college – late 20's. Most others were "older" folks in their late 50s to early 70s.

During the four weeks of learning about cultural diversity, political policies and religious freedom, a poignant and unforgettable moment happened. We attended a Baptist Church in Moscow and it was standing room only. As we made our way to the balcony, I saw women rising out of their seats. Our guide motioned for us to take the now vacated seats. One by one, the older folks sat down. As the seats began to fill with our group, more women offered their seats. I declined thinking that was a good thing to do. Many of the church women had swollen feet and legs. They looked tired and weary. I was fine standing as were many of our sojourners. Our guide made haste to inform us that it would be inhospitable to reject this act of graciousness. We quickly sat down.

The entire service was in Russian. I don't speak or understand Russian. Yet, I felt wonderfully connected.

Over the next two hours, I could see women nodding their heads and wiping their tears with stained cloths. One by one, women got up and offered their seats to their sisters standing along the back wall. Nodding heads, wiping tears, offering seats... I became so moved that I got up, went to one of the women and motioned for her to sit down. She refused. As I turned to walk back, she gently grabbed my hand, I put my arm around her and we both walked over to the bench. Somehow, that space became big enough for both of us. We sat, nodding heads, wiping tears--worshipping together in our hearts.

Prayer:

Gracious and loving God, thank you for teaching that even when words are not understood, we worship together by connecting in the heart. Amen.

Dawn Hand

Early Morning Connections

Good morning Holy One in whom I trust. Thank you for the arrangement of doves at my window and their velvety greeting. Thank you for the spirit of leisure when there is no leisure. For now, silence is my only need.

I think the Psalmist knows me by name – whether assisting my heart to praise or "Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord." Many are the faces I place in your lap, as well as our troubled world, our beautiful world.

Winter trees showing gaunt ribs invite my gaze in the season of Lent, the symbolism not to be missed. I admire their patience, waiting for the greening of springtime.

Distractions seek to throw me off-center. May they ever be my growing edge to return to Presence. The tone of this day is sweet and warm.

I call my sick neighbor. I slip a check in the mail – A's cupboards are bare. Goodbye God. More listening, more chats with you as the day progresses.

Prayer:

*Dear God,
Thanks for the nourishment of this day with you.
May we grow to be a living breath to you. Amen.*

Sunny Branner

Models for Godness

My connection to God's presence in my life has come through the models I see in people of deep spirituality. Pope Francis has inspired my vision and empowerment of God. In his biography, *The Great Reformer*, one of the most powerful stories about his ministry is reported: "When Francis kissed his painful growths, Riva's heart beat so fast he thought he would die. 'He didn't even think about whether or not to hug me,' he later said. 'I'm not contagious, but he didn't know that. But he just did it: he caressed me over all my face, and as he did I felt only love.'" "

When I read about this incident, I thought, "This man Francis really has soul." Soul is the deepest part of me; this is where I connect with God and receive unconditional love. This gift from God presses me forward to love others and myself. When I realize I've fallen short, I stop at that very moment and ask God to forgive me. Then I try again to follow Jesus who never fails.

The second part of embracing my soul-living is deep compassion. How incredibly compassionate one must be to kiss the sores of another person. I want to grow in compassion toward others. No matter life circumstances, we can transcend our ego that reacts to protect and enrich ourselves, and give compassion.

And finally, God's healing presence is always there for me. God wants us to be whole in mind, body, and spirit. God heals our wounds, and invites us into a trusting relationship with Him. We can only trust and give thanks that God plays a greater role in our lives.

The net effect of living from our soul is that we experience a partnership with God. As I meditated recently, I heard a whisper, "Remember, this partnership is not just part time." Thanks be to God!!

Don Lowe

Jesus Slept

Jesus was in the back end of the boat, sleeping with his head on a pillow. The disciples woke him up. 'Master,' they shouted. 'We will die! Do you not care?' Mark 4:38 WE
Jesus Wept. John 11:35 NIV

Jesus slept. Jesus wept.

Too often the church emphasizes Jesus' divinity and not His humanity. Jesus got angry. He got hungry. He was a baby. He walked around Palestine. At one point as a kid he got lost in a synagogue. He even fell asleep on a boat during a terrible storm! I can just picture Jesus there on the boat, sound asleep, while the other men row feverishly to keep the boat afloat around the big waves. I'm glad Jesus was human because I connect with His humanity. He was like us. He understands our joys, our pains and worries, being hungry, feeling bad, loving, being angry, being indifferent -- all of it.

Jesus wept. Jesus slept.

My brother has a real tough time with the Virgin Birth. He simply does not believe it could happen. He wants some proof. He clearly sees the humanity of Jesus, but perhaps not the divinity. Jesus was OK with that as evidenced by Thomas' disbelief until he felt Jesus' wound. Jesus invited the touch, and Thomas believed. Jesus understands our doubts, our fears, our humanity, our reticence.

Jesus wept. Jesus slept.

I invite you to connect with Jesus' humanity today. What a wonderful way God connects with us as humans, by becoming one of us.

Prayer:

In the mystery of being both man and God, we connect with you, Lord Jesus. You understand us perfectly in our humanity. Help us to be the best humans we can be with the help of the Holy Spirit.

John Godshalk

Finding Focus

So much suffering,
Disasters, crashes,
Innocents slaughtered,
Refugees freezing, starving,
Children fleeing on top of train cars.

Overwhelmed,
Can't watch it on the news anymore,
At a loss as to what to do.
What difference would it make, anyway?
Hope seems a distant dream.

Where is God? How can this be?
So much to bear,
Doubts surface,
Spiritual circuit breakers on overload.

In hard times long ago Isaiah heard God,
“Watch for the new thing I am going to do.
It is happening already – you can see it now!
I will make a road through the wilderness” Is. 43:19 RSV

How easy to miss what is already here
In the midst of chaos and human suffering.
Could this be what Jesus' death on the Cross
Is about, God with all people,
Even when in the darkest of times?

And there is more.
As resurrection people
We are drawn into a vision
Of New Creation
In which we participate.

God depends on us to
Make the difference:
To demand fair immigration policies,
To advocate non-violent conflict resolution,
To shut down the cradle to prison pipeline,
To get adequate humanitarian aid to refugees.

Hal Garman

Trust

In God I trust; I will not be afraid. Psalm 56:11 NIV

God gave me a priceless gift: parents who made no effort to force my mind. They left me free to play; this worked best for me. My parent' home was an atmosphere of joy rather than control. It was their philosophy that I be myself, give what I had to give and receive what others gave me. It was the foundation for trust.

My childhood home was three blocks from the Methodist Church in a small Mid-western town at the edge of nowhere. I knew the inside of the church almost as well as the interior of my home. It's no surprise, then, that I developed the same trust in God that I had in my parents.

Time passed. I left my parents' home and my hometown. I found Chicago that became my home, and in Chicago I transferred my membership to Broadway United Methodist Church. At Broadway I found people whose desires were intertwined with mine: to listen, to reveal and to not exploit.

When I landed in Washington, DC in 2004, I discovered Foundry United Methodist Church, and in Foundry a small group of spiritual people. For nearly eight years we have been studying together, and what we have created works well for us. I trust them, and they trust me, and we all trust God. Our mission is to practice our spirituality together. We meet in the church parlor every Sunday.

What is the source of my faith in the Almighty? From my parents I learned to trust people. From the church of my childhood I learned to trust God. Throughout my life God has gifted me, a faithful follower, with churches and dear people with whom I can freely and safely stretch and grow. I trust them unconditionally. I am not afraid.

Prayer:

You have my back, God. Please give me the same compassion and strength to support my friends as they have when supporting me. Thank you for bringing us together. Amen.

Stephen Roberts

Unless We Become Like Children

My grandchildren are precious. They live in South Carolina, a distance too far for frequent visits with their GiGi - my preferred moniker as their grandmother. Over the Christmas holidays, I spent ten glorious days feasting in the activity of these little people.

One specific event stands out in my efforts to connect with the 'grands.' On the first Sunday of January, I attended a Lutheran worship service in the companionship of my seven year-old grandson (his two siblings remained in the nursery). What joy filled my soul when I saw that communion was offered by intinction, a methodology that is wonderfully familiar in the Methodist tradition.

Upon heeding the call to commune in spirit and truth, my grandson and I knelt together at the altar rail. The minister delivered the bread and cup to my grandson first, so I watched in awe as he accepted this offering of love and grace. When we stood to return to our seats, we locked arms around one another, not daring to let go of the moment. Guided by my grandson's presence, this sacrament opened me to a new level of spiritual engagement – one of pure goodness and trust.

I am reminded of the scripture from Matthew 18:3 NIV – And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” This abiding connection to my grandson – his openness and innocence in the presence of the divine - led me to see a glimpse of heaven.

Prayer:

Lord, may we approach our daily existence with humility, trust, and faith. Teach us how to be your children, fully present for those mystical moments that allow us to experience your glory. Help us stay connected to what is real and valuable in your sight. Amen.

Paula Blair

Faith: The Promise of Firmness or Flight

In the back of my journal I have stored words that bring me calm whenever I read them:

*When you come to the edge of all the light you know,
And are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown,
Faith is knowing one of two things will happen:
There will be something solid on which to stand
Or you will be taught to fly.*

When something threatens my equanimity, I need my faith to come into play. For example, the executive director of the organization for which I work is dying. This man is not only a remarkable professional colleague but a dear friend. As his life wanes, how can I help him know that there will be something solid on which to stand or that he will be taught to fly. I've been offered a way to do so by accepting his position on an interim basis. He knows that his beloved organization will continue to have a dedicated person at the helm as a new leader is identified. I consciously brought to bear my faith as I accepted this arrangement. Now my friend can learn how to fly.

Sometimes, though, faith has undergirded my life without conscious invitation. Years ago when my then husband's life was threatened by peritonitis after a medical mistake during surgery, my mother came to the hospital to be with me. When she arrived in tears, I said without thinking, “Don't cry. It's going to be all right. Whatever happens, God is here.” I remember then thinking to myself: “Where did those words come from?” I decided later that God was speaking through me because, in crisis, both my mother and I needed something solid on which to stand.

Sometimes I call on my faith, and other times my faith arrives on its own. In both cases I am connected with God when I need to be. Thanks be to God.

Barbara Cambridge

Tuesday, March 31

Get Up, Let Us Be Going

"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going...." Matthew 26:45-46 NIV

When I reflected on the theme of connecting the dots of our faith, I remembered a retreat activity I once did where we made circles for each important event in our lives and then connected them. But instead of thinking about the circles, I found myself thinking about the lines between them.

A lot of life is lived in that journey between big events. That is where the real work is done and yet it is rarely acknowledged. It is on that line that we need faith and hope and the love of friends and family and God. But the thing I struggle with the most is discipline. Sometimes the thing that matters most is just showing up and paying attention every day.

Think of Jesus entering Jerusalem on that last week. His triumphant entry with crowds cheering is a big fun event. But that isn't why he's here. I love Jesus best in the Garden when he cries to God to let him skip the next couple of days. He's got a long way to go before he gets a little peace again. This makes me feel less wimpy when I am afraid of the work I know is coming. But Jesus calls his disciples to get started anyway in Matthew 26:45-46.

So this Lent, I'm focusing on that last sentence as I decide what's next in my life. There are so many people and situations that need my help. There are so many adventures to be had. So get up. Let us be going.

Joanne Garlow

Abundant Love

But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Psalm 86:15 NIV



Steadfast in my faith,
life can speed by while I stay
centered in God's love.

Prayer:

Your abundant love, dear Lord, never fails me. Always, in every way and every day, I am your beloved child. And, I am boundlessly thankful. Alleluia.

Ta-Chen Wu, photo
Joanne Steller, text

Connected by Doubt

Read Matt 28:16-20 NIV

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Matthew 28:17

The older I've become, the more complex the response to the question of what is it that connects me to my faith. From the crucible of my recent past, however, the simplest answer is doubt.

The only absolute belief I hold today is in the supremely creative and redemptive power of love, and I will always be a disciple of Jesus, the messenger of love. Any act of love stirs in me my sense of connection to the divine; because for me by definition, all love emanates from the divine.

Because of my culturalization my faith was rooted originally in an acceptance of certainty about doctrine, from the existence of God to the details of the Bible. But the circumstances of my life did not square with this and I began a youthful search for absolute truth that evolved with 'maturity' to a quest for spiritual principles with which to live consistently.

Scholarship exposed the divergence between religion and spirituality, and I lost faith in my religion. This was extremely troubling because I had to chart my own course through uncertainty, and I was distraught from doubts. Among other things reading Mother Teresa's own painful words of doubt helped me.

"Where is my faith? Even deep down ... there is nothing but emptiness and darkness ... If there be God—please forgive me." (Mother Teresa: [Come Be My Light](#). New York: Doubleday)

I realized doubt and weakness were consistent with our mortal existence, and turned to the certainty of my personal experience for places where I felt a tangible connection to the divine. Not surprisingly, those were in places where I shared in unconditional love. So, now embracing my doubts I try to orient all my life towards unconditional love.

Karl Marshall

Jesus Connected with Scripture

Before Jesus began his ministry, he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. The incident is in the three Synoptic gospels of Matthew (chapter 4), Mark (chapter 1), and Luke (chapter 4). When the devil asks Jesus to worship him and perform some magic tricks, Jesus answers him by quoting several laws from Deuteronomy and verses from Psalm 91 (11 and 12).

Jesus announced his ministry in Nazareth, as reported in the fourth chapter of Luke, verses 14-30 NSRV. He quoted the prophet Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2:

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn...*

Jesus ended his earthly life and ministry quoting psalms on the cross:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
22, v. 1
Into your hands I commit my spirit;
31, v. 5*

In this Lenten season, let us be as close to the scriptures as Jesus was, reading and meditating on them.

Ella Cleveland

Connections

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor." Matthew 11:2-5 NIV



John the Baptist was preparing the way of the Lord. However, John grew doubtful in prison. John wanted Jesus to assure him (John) that he (Jesus) was the Messiah. Jesus sent John's disciples back to tell John what they had seen and heard.

Jesus heals today as he did in the past. I have seen videos of deaf persons hearing again and blind persons seeing again. I have seen a person walk who had been confined to a wheel chair for eighteen years.

Thank you, Jesus for being Jehovah-Rapha (The Lord that Heals). This name is used in Exodus 15:26. How do I know the Bible is true? If John can ask his question, then I can ask this question. Personally, I am connected to my faith because I know the Bible is true by witnessing miracles small and large.

Thank you, Jesus, for being the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Paul Mulligan

Mind the Gap

On a recent trip to New York, I decided to catch the local commuter train from Long Island into Manhattan for a day of shopping and sight-seeing. The train made frequent stops during the picturesque ride into the city, but what I remembered most was the repeated audio warning that played at every stop, "Mind the gap."

There are moments in my life when I am overwhelmed by my schedule and demanding to-do list. There is always something to do, some place to be, and a task yet to complete. As a result, I go into autopilot mode in order to make certain that I meet the demands and check items off the list. The ability to "get it done" feels ambitious, effective, and productive.

I must confess, when my life is in autopilot my schedule is overflowing and yet my soul is empty. The late nights and early mornings rob me of time with family and friends. When I pour all of my energy into meeting multiple demands, quality time with my child suffers. It's difficult to get a restful night of sleep when there is a laptop, cellphone, and books taking up space in my bed. Not to mention that my morning meditation time with God disappears as I repeatedly press the snooze button.

During that train ride into the city, it dawned on me that my life was full – full of gaps. These gaps are created when I fail to make time for fulfilling relationships, self-care, and spiritual practices. Yet, when I 'mind the gaps' in my life, I gain perspective, my priorities shift, my schedule opens up, and my soul is full.

Prayer:

Dear God, fill every gap with your love and grace. Amen.

Theresa S. Thames

The Way to Love

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 1 John 4: 16 NRSV

Occasionally I rediscover books that I enjoyed by reading them as devotionals. Recently I was drawn to The Way to Love, the last meditations of Anthony de Mello.¹ He provides some insights on what it takes to love and know God and why I many times fall short.

In his meditation entitled *Be Awake*, de Mello cites the ingredients of love as twofold. They are to see:

1. A person or thing as it truly is -- without your desires, prejudices, memories and selective ways of looking.
2. Yourself -- ruthlessly aware of your motives, emotions, needs, dishonesty, self-seeking and tendency to control and manipulate.

He concludes that with awareness of the other and yourself you will begin to know what love is. He goes on to say:

*Once you begin to see, your sensitivity will drive you to the awareness, not just of the things that you choose to see but of everything else as well. Your poor ego will try desperately to blunt that sensitivity because its defenses are being stripped away and it is left with no protection and nothing to cling to. If you ever allow yourself to see it will be the death of you. And that is why love is so terrifying, for to love is to see and to see is to die. But it is also the most delightful exhilarating experience in the whole world. For in the death of the ego is freedom, peace, serenity, joy.*²

Pray and meditate on the sixth Beatitude (Matthew 5: 8):
Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Joe Steller

¹ (1931-1987), an Indian Jesuit priest, spiritual teacher, writer, public speaker and conference host

² Image Books edition (Doubleday), NY, 1995, pp 134-135.

Connected To and Through Each Other

"So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another." Romans 12:5 NRSV

Our Christian faith is truly communal in nature. We are intimately tied to and connected with one another. Just as all the different parts of our body must work together and support one another, so we, **together**, strive to be God's presence on this earth, Christ's body. When I come to Foundry each Sunday I get to be reminded of this. I get to be supported, challenged, pushed, and nurtured. I get to check in with the rest of my body, so to speak. It is this being in relationship with the body of Christ, of which I am a part, that most connects me to my faith.

A song I love by Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Choir expresses this sentiment well.

"I Need You to Survive"

*I need you
You need me
We're all a part of God's body*

*Stand with me.
Agree with me.
We're all a part of God's body.*

*It is [God's] will that every need be supplied.
You are important to me.
I need you to survive.*

*I pray for you.
You pray for me.
I love you.
I need you to survive.*

*I won't harm you with words from my mouth.
I love you.
I need you to survive.*

Juliana Bateman

What do you do?

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 NIV

Not too many years ago I was a newbie at Foundry United Methodist Church and to Washington, DC. Consequently, I looked forward to connecting with people on Sunday mornings. I would find people not already in conversation and introduce myself. The first question many of them had for me was: "What do you do?" I was fine with that. I buzzed and rang and lit up when people pressed me about my career as a teacher in the District of Columbia Public Schools.

After retiring in 2010, however, I became very wary when meeting new people, because after exchanging names and maybe neighborhoods, I anticipated what the next question would be. Awkward! What could I say? I practiced a few replies: "Eat." "Sleep." "Breathe." All were, of course, too glib. I asked the sky why our culture puts greater emphasis on *what we do* than on *who we are*.

I concluded that the best solution to the dilemma was to guide the conversation toward who we are. Are we friendly, unforgettable, distinguished by song, plumage or nesting habits? Are we one of the snooty ones? Are we someone to cultivate as a potential spiritual friend?

Foundry United Methodist Church can never be better than the people who constitute it, and the people can never be better than the Holy Spirit that inhabits them. It is beautiful that they are they and that I am I. Each of us has the one thing that matters. We are connected at various degrees to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and each of us has spiritual gifts that are our *persona grata*. Our gifts enhance the quality of life for everyone who worships at Foundry. Each of us is *sans pareil* because of who we are rather than what we do.

Prayer:

You know my heart, God. Give me the boldness to connect with others at a level more profound than our careers and workplaces. Amen.

Stephen Roberts

H.S.

Behold, the kingdom of God is within you. Luke 17:21 KJV

One day I was praying for a friend of mine, a pastor, who was going through a rough time in his ministry and personal life. I felt a prompting to send him some money to help him though. The Holy Spirit seemed to be saying "Send him a \$100 bill in the mail." To which I thought, "That sounds risky, how about a check?" Once again: "No, don't worry about it, just send him the \$100." To be honest, \$100 is not much to me, but I didn't want it to get lost in the mail. I have learned that arguing with H.S. is an exercise in futility! So, I wrote a little card and put the bill inside. I remember praying a blessing over that envelope, to bless him when it was received and to protect it on its journey.

A few weeks later I received an email from my friend, thanking me for the money and letting me know it was a blessing, coming when he needed it. I replied, "It wasn't my idea, it was H.S.' idea!" Not skipping a beat, he replied "Oh, well thank H.S. for me!"

Most other world religions are about what we have to do to get to God or to reach some higher state. Our faith turns that around--it is what Christ did on the cross to connect with us. Our redeemer, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, gave us H.S. to be part of, and connected with the Kingdom.

Meditation: In this moment I acknowledge H.S. within me. In this moment I am *being* rather than *doing*. Being is enough.

Prayer

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for living inside each of us as Christians. Help us to acknowledge your presence with us and bring your Kingdom to the world around us.

Anonymous

Getting to Faith through LOVE

Song was my first way of reaching out.
Singing was fun and required a little movement
When I was five – *Jesus loves the little
Children, all the children of the world...*

Study stretched my brain. Jesus, a master Teacher,
Gave lessons on journey, challenge and love.
My friends and I, students of peace and love, art and dance,
Listening to waves beat rock, read awesome stories.

Service was a way to pour my labor love into Habitat demolition.
Tearing up linoleum and pulling out nails were my exact chores
so a family could live in a safe home. In Foundry Housing, I
Cleaned, painted, and helped seniors with electrical and drywall.

Beauty shines from flowers that breathe pink – purple,
Leaves aromas of hyacinth and rose, twines around rough
Bark and smooth stone. God reaches out from the garden
Under sun and stars so far, we all taste sweet rain.

Prayer is how I met the Holy Spirit, gazing at icons, giving thanks
and praise, laying on hands for healing, *lectio divina*, the Psalms.
Back in 1995, I saw the bright light envelop my mother in ICU.
Fellowship here keeps me energized and it's how I practice faith.

Jeanette Barker

Building Carefully

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ” I Corinthians 3: 10-11 NRSV

I lifted this text up in worship at the Women's retreat in 2014. Nearly a year later, I come back to it, and savor the ways in which various builders have added to my faith foundation. A Sunday school teacher ensured I learned to read the Bible presented to me. Camp counselors humored me as a camper and then nurtured my potential to serve as a counselor myself. A campus pastor encouraged me to serve in worship and leadership. Each layer of instruction and nurture built upon the promise of my baptism.

But also, there were the layers of pain and damage mixed with wholesome, spiritual nourishment. There was the youth leader who urged me to love the sinner but hate the “sin” of my best (gay) friend. There was the tacit acceptance of a growing romance between a youth and a pastor. Later, as I struggled through coming out as a lesbian, a question loomed large: “Why do you stay?”

My answer is this: God chose me, at my baptism. The promise of baptism isn't only for sweet babies, but lasts our whole, messy, complicated life. This community nurtured me in grace. It is my privilege, honor, and blessing to choose with care how to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ in ministries of discipleship and mission at Foundry.

Prayer:

Gracious God, help us to be the nurturing community that edifies all that we touch. Amen.

Logan Alley

Connecting Through My Methodist Heritage

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV

My upbringing included attending worship at a nearby deaf United Methodist Church. My family and I were drawn into this faith community through worshiping and through other church-related activities. I still remember attending Sunday School, attending monthly potlucks, being a part of the choir, along with being involved in other activities. Our social calendar was often full of church-related events and activities. It wasn't until a few years ago that I realized that I became a part of something bigger - the Methodist heritage.

This connection to our Methodist heritage gave me a sense of identity. It helped me to see my part in the kingdom of God, instilling in me Methodist values, and to connect me to a faith community like Foundry. For example, when our Methodists roots began to take hold in Great Britain through the help of John and Charles Wesley, as well as others, Methodists would always gather together for meetings, worship, and to do mercy-type ministry in the community. This part of our heritage still continues to this day, connecting us to the generations of Methodists before us and sharing with them the grace Christ gives us all.

To this day, I have a better understanding of who I am, of what I believe, and how I wish to live my life, all of which helps to form my identity and how I choose to live in this world. The Christian (and Methodist) value of inclusion is important to me, which in part, brought me to Foundry. Inclusion was important to the Wesleys and it's important to me. After all, the Wesleys intentionally reached out to those not at church. In a way, I feel I am wrapped in grace and kept warm by our Methodist heritage.

Leo Yates, Jr.

Praying Ceaselessly

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 NIV

In urging the Thessalonians to pray, the Apostle Paul is giving advice about something that was a core practice in his life. What is it like to pray continually today? Who are our models? Several members of the Practicing Spirituality class described their active prayer life.

Years ago, one class member told us, she took on the practice of centering prayer every morning, and that became the beginning of an ongoing, everyday part of her life. She prays to be a good listener of God's word and to those around her, especially those in need. She also prays in praise, thanksgiving and hope for people known to her as well as those in her path. She's getting closer to praying without ceasing.

Another member shared that he has prayed actively since childhood. He appreciates and prays routinely, even making the occasional joke with God when he misplaces something and can't find it. Having a moment of humor with the Divine places forgetfulness in perspective! Seeing people who may need a prayer prompts him to pray. With gratitude for his own life, he asks God to help them, especially the stranger on the bus or train who appear in need of blessings.

Prayer is breathing to yet another class member. While more conscious of it at some times more than others, each breath is a reminder: "You're alive!" And so, he prays while living each day, when he wakes up, while running, eating, working and before sleeping. His favorites include the Lord's Prayer, the Prayer of St. Francis, the Beatitudes and the Twenty-third Psalm. These and others keep him centered in challenging situations. Taking a breath—praying—helps keep his ego in check.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, you are always there awaiting our call. May we be inspired by others to keep our conversation with you going all day, every day. Help us to listen joyfully and gratefully to what you have to say. Amen.

Is That the Right Way to Pray?

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. Romans 8:26 NIV

In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul shares his thinking about the facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection as well as the implications of each. When it comes to prayer, Paul might have been speaking directly to those of us who say that we don't know how to pray. We may judge our practice as inarticulate or inadequate. Is our way the right way? This question echoed throughout a Practicing Spirituality class discussion on prayer.

I don't pray as I was taught to or as I should, one member said to the concurrence of others. Yet, she said, she experiences God's protection in happenstances that seem to have no explanation. In these moments, she is awed and grateful—prayerful. Is that the right way to pray?

Another member described her praying as episodic. She said she prayed before meals, in Sunday school class and in worship. She lifted prayer-like feelings in meditations and when thinking of people who are ill or in need of healing. There are both occasion and spontaneity to her praying, but not discipline. Is that the right way to pray?

My praying is more a stream of consciousness, a classmate shared. I walk, and I pray. In family situations of all kinds, I pray. Upon hearing news of the landlord's plan to replace my windows *in winter*, I pray. I pray for guidance and for people in need, and all in my own way. Is that the right way to pray?

Another scripture, Luke 11: 9-10 made its way into the class discussion. Seek, find and receive the answer.

What we found was that the Holy Spirit moves differently in each of us. Even when our praying is unorthodox, undisciplined or unspoken like Paul's poetic "wordless groan," it's the one connection to God that's right for us at that moment.

Prayer:

Let us accept how we pray as the "right way" for us, Lord, as we maintain our dialog with you and strengthen our connection with our faith.

Practicing Spirituality Class

Connections: Service, Faith & Love

So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all others. Romans 12:5 NIV

In December of 2013, I went home to visit family and friends in Ohio. I stayed with my older sister Sandra at her home in Medina, Ohio. It was there a chance to connect in a way I never imagined took place.

Families on my father's side have been members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Medina since the early 1960's. I never attend services on Saturday, so I agreed to go when my sister asked. It was a beautiful Saturday in Northeast Ohio, and when we pulled into the church parking lot, the building looked great.

I was told by Sandra that my older brothers helped construct the church building when they were young boys. While my father was never a member, he attended faithfully. But then Sandra told me something that took my breath away – my family has attended this church for going on four generations!

On both sides of my family there are church founders, ministers, elders, deacons, gospel singers, and regular laypeople. Faith and service to Christ kept my family connected through Jim Crow segregation, World War II, the Great Migration to the North, to the present time. I believe God leaves his blessings through many people, and for me, this church personifies roots and permanence that keeps me connected and blessed.

Prayer:

Gracious Lord, you have brought my family through war, peace, and life-changing journeys. Thank you for having them remember Your Spirit and for keeping your commandments. I pray this in Your Name. Amen.

Serge Thomas

Connections/Disconnections

Depression led me back to church. Before 2008, when I moved to Nicaragua (as a result of a Foundry mission trip), I had attended Foundry, which was one block from my house. I was attracted by the progressive social activities Foundry offered, and I loved the sermons of then pastor Dean Snyder.

In the beginning of my stay in Nicaragua, I attended a small church connected with the U.S. Methodist Church and led by Pastor Elmer and his American-born wife. They were in an extremely poor, very dangerous neighborhood. Most taxi drivers refused to take me there. I liked the calm intelligent manner in which the two conducted the service, with pastor's wife contributing sweet music. Many children attended and often, stray dogs and other animals would wander through the door.

But fairly soon after I arrived, the pastor's family returned to the U.S. After that, I didn't attend service except one time for a rural wedding at a small evangelical church, typical in Nicaragua. There was much "alegría" (emoting, dancing, shouting, foot stomping), but I didn't like the noise or the pastor's constant talk about the devil.

I forgot about churches and started my own spiritual reading of the "Tao te Ching" and some Zen masters (won over by translator Stephen Mitchell), and going on to Stoicism (Epictetus), the Bhagavat Gita, the Upanishads and Tibetan Buddhism. But then, I fell into a serious depression ("burn-out" caused by trying to tackle the poverty of Nicaragua on my own). Just after New Year's, I received invaluable support from three Christians at a small evangelical church near my house. I may attend there from now on.

You cannot do it alone, I've finally discovered. You need a church, the warmth of human fellowship and close connection with others who are seeking God and a spiritual life. "It takes a congregation," to paraphrase Hillary Clinton.

Lucian Caspar, Managua

First and Everlasting Prayer

Do you remember the first prayer you ever learned?

I have vivid memories as a five-year-old, sitting on my mother's lap, and reciting the poetic verses of a prayer we had discovered in an issue of *Wee Wisdom* magazine. We prayed it together every night at bedtime, and it took root in me. It is "The Prayer of Faith" by Hannah Moore Kohaus:

God is my help in every need,
 God does my every hunger feed.
 God walks beside me,
 Guides my way,
 Through every moment of the day.
 I now am wise, I now am true,
 Patient kind and loving, too.
 All things I am, can do and be,
 Through Christ, the Truth, that lives in me.
 God is my health,
 I can't be sick!
 God is my strength,
 Unfailing --- quick!
 God is my all,
 I know no fear.
 Since God, and Love,
 And Truth are here.
 Amen.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for all those who teach us to pray. Let prayer take root in our lives that we may keep our connection with You, and share it with others. Amen.

Sunny Branner

Breathing In

The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life. Job 33:4 NIV

When we worry, we hold our breath. When we feel stress or anger or frustration, we hold that air inside our bodies. Yet breathing can be a form of prayer, a way to center ourselves and remember that we are part of God.

In "How to Meditate," Buddhist nun Pema Chodron suggests we see our breath, especially exhalations, as a way to "become part of the vast, open space around you." Breathing – deeply and deliberately – can be a moment of grace, an opportunity to reconnect with ourselves and the world outside of us.

We breathe in and we breathe out, and we remember that we are part of something bigger, something holy. The act of breathing becomes prayer.

Life is motion, and our hearts ache with its changes. Being aware of our breath pulls us out of our daily stresses and into our bigger connection with God.

Prayer:

Fall upon me, breath of God, and give me a new life with you. Amen.

Beth Scott

Relationship as a Ministry

Relationship, or connection, is a central biblical theme from the very beginning. Adam and Eve are made "in the image of God," a metaphorical and spiritual connection, and Cain cannot escape his connection to Abel, even if that relationship is broken ("Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain asks knowingly). In the New Testament, we find Jesus' entire ministry about relationships - to others, to God - and his inclusive embrace expands the boundaries of thought about who we can or should be in relationship with. A generation later, Paul reminded Christians in Corinth that they were all "one body" with constituent parts, establishing a central theological metaphor for relationship then as now.

Of course, the Bible provides plenty of examples of broken relationships and dis-connections, like that of Cain and Abel. Bible scholar Walter Brueggemann has spent his career explicating the ins and outs of the relationship between the Hebrew people and God in terms of orientation, disorientation, new orientation. In the New Testament, Jesus offers a new form of relationship – a new orientation - in himself and through his sacrificial love.

What does the Bible teach us about relationship? If anything, that it costs something, in terms of commitment and responsibility. Relationships are never free, because we have to give ourselves to them. Importantly, the Bible also insists that we remain incomplete outside of relationship with God and others. Finally, true relationship is founded on love– not power, success, admiration, or anything else.

Jesus teaches that love is the glue holding every true relationship together. It is the radical heart of one of his last instructions: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). In this season of reflection, may we seek the deeper meaning of relationship in our own lives, as well as in our life with God and with others.

Deryl Davis

Hear the Music

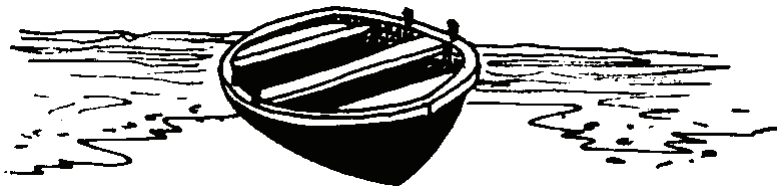
*Sing, sing a Psalm.
Make it simple to last your whole day long.
La, la, la, la...la, la, la, la...la, la, laaaaa.*

Is that Carpenters' tune an ear worm now?

Psalms, words of music, praises to God, his creation, represent a world of love and a second chance for someone like me. Jubilate and The Foundry Choir have saved my life.

Brahms, Mozart, Vivaldi, Bach, Mendelssohn, Rutter, Ives, Samuel Wesley have all put the Psalms into music. When reading the Book of Psalms, hear music. Meditate on the words lifting off the page, rising in song in praise of God. Pick your favorite Psalm – mine is Psalm 67 -- and read it today.

John Harden



Look Again

*Here's the church.
Here's the steeple.
Open the doors, and look at the people.*

Remember that? Do you remember who helped you arrange your little fingers to make the church – forefingers pointing up to be a steeple, thumbs turning outward as doors? And, there are the people! Amazing then; still is.

Barbara Slate

Connecting Through Time

You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew: 5: 14 –16 NIV

The Hirshhorn Endless Time exhibit spoke to me, inquiring “how do you spend your time?”

“Seeking God,” I responded, “centering on God in my life to guide me through the day,”

“How?” the Voice inquired.

“Through my reading, meditation, and daily walks,” I responded. “Mornings begin reading favorite newspapers and meditation, a blessing for each day. Afternoon walks in God’s world revive my spiritual and motivational growth, family dinner includes sharing daily activities and planning future strategy. Flexibility is the key.”

Sunday is set aside for my Foundry experience: spirited discussions and exploration of ideas in Practical Spirituality class. Worship service follows nourishing my musical appreciation, scriptural growth, and sermon inspiration.

My life is a blessing.

Prayer:

Dear God: Guide me in my exploration of your world and my place within it. Amen.

Diane Seeger

Saturday, March 7

Looking Back

Connecting 200 Years of Roots, Growth, and Branching Out

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4 ESV

On August 24, 2014, this congregation began an historic journey in time as we remembered an event 200 years ago to the day when the British were burning Washington's public buildings and Henry Foxall prayed for his iron foundry in Georgetown to be spared. We know how the story ended. With a fierce storm pounding the city and 100 British soldiers wounded or dead, the British retreated to Bladensburg and Foxall's foundry was spared. Henry Foxall, a lay Methodist minister and boyhood friend of Francis Asbury, was infused with Methodist principles from his early life in England. In gratitude to God, Foxall resolved to build a church that became Foundry Chapel, and later Foundry Methodist Episcopal Church.

Since Foundry's inaugural celebration held last August, the Bicentennial Committee has offered a variety of connecting experiences. September brought the energetic and divine testimonies of those attending a reenactment of an old fashioned camp meeting at the West River UMC Campsite. Then we remembered some of our saints on All Souls Sunday. Finally we recalled through dramatic reenactment the deep anxiety of our nation when President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill worshipped at Foundry on Christmas Day soon after the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor.

These experiences have brought us closer to understanding the people who populated Foundry's pews in the past. And, these bicentennial events help move us toward gaining perspective on how Foundry members, over two centuries, applied their spiritual beliefs, gifts, and talents to the service of our Creator.

Prayer:

Lord, we give thanks for the lives and acts of our forebears. Our church is rooted in them. Our faith is nourished by their example. May the hope they instilled continue to inspire us as individuals and as members of this loving church community.

Bicentennial Co-chairs

Paula Blair, Chuck Hilty, and Larry Slagle

Friday, March 20

Connecting With God Through Music

*Let everything I say and do
Be founded in my faith in you
I lift up holy hands and sing
"Let the praises ring"*

-- "Let the Praises Ring" by Lincoln Brewster

Five years ago I had never heard of Lincoln Brewster, a popular contemporary Christian singer, and I never imagined that I would lift up "holy hands" in church. I guess I thought the music was cheesy and not something I would enjoy.

This all changed when I heard contemporary Christian music at Foundry's former Sunday night service. To my surprise, I found the songs very moving. I loved how they beautifully expressed my feelings about God and the role of faith in my life. The following lyrics from a Chris Tomlin song are a nice example:

I lift my hands to believe again, you are my refuge; you are my strength, as I pour out my heart, these things I remember, you are faithful God, forever.

The songs express ideas that I may struggle to put together in my own words. They help me connect with the Lord; reinforce the Christian principles I try to follow; remind me of God's unconditional love; and help me express gratitude for God's grace.

Prior to singing these songs, my main way of connecting with God was through prayer. I still love to pray, but it's solitary, still and quiet. I appreciate having another way to communicate with God. With my favorite songs on a playlist on my iPhone, I get to communicate with God on the metro, while cooking, wherever I am so moved.

Prayer:

Lord, I ask that you open my heart and mind so that I may connect with you in new ways. Amen.

Alicia Gutierrez

Is He Still Singing?

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the even ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.
Isaiah 40:4 ESV

Music was a portal to my father's soul. Yet, when I wanted to reconnect with him, how could I find the portal?

I was not present when my father passed away in January, 2013. As I planned his memorial service, however, some memories floated through:

- I often as a child drifted to sleep to my father's sonorous tenor voice, as he accompanied himself on the piano.
- Just weeks earlier, I brought Dad his tattered copy of Handel's *Messiah*. He softly sang "Comfort Ye, My People." Despite his advancing dementia and weakened health, he did not need the music.
- Other residents on Dad's floor had joined our family's carol singing in the dining area. Dad had to leave my mother Josie's years of meticulous home care two months earlier due to a fall, and we were making the best of it.

Such memories, then, shaped a celebration of life, where the service notes asked: "Can you hear him singing with us?" The answer had seemed obvious when I wrote it. Yet, in the midst of people, logistics, and even the music making, it was a question I could not answer myself. I wanted a sign. I longed for connection.

After the service, I returned to my father's floor. Then, with neither greeting nor explanation, a resident whom I did not know turned to ask me: "Is he still singing?"

Stunned, I said: "Why, yes, I believe he is."

The mystery of that moment comforted me and still comforts me. Comfort ye, my people. Contemplate connection and God will find us, if only we are open to it.

Margaret Yao

Living Forward Connecting 200 Years of Roots, Growth, and Branching Out

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:9-10. ESV

In 2015 our bicentennial celebration will connect will connect us to current themes, as we examine some painful parts of our history around race, from exclusion to reconciliation and reconnection. and reconciliation to something else?. With our brothers and sisters from Asbury United Methodist Church, we will revisit the journey that began with separation in 1936 toward wholeness in our present. We will make this connection through a challenging study series designed for adults and youth, accompanied by a pulpit exchange between our own Pastor Ginger Gaines-Cirelli and Pastor Iantha Mills of Asbury. Later, we will examine the powerful role of our laity and clergy in seeking to eliminate discriminatory practices against LGBTQ persons within the United Methodist Church. These celebrations will conclude with a grand Homecoming on September 12th – celebrating the dedication of Foundry Chapel on September 10, 1815. The event will encourage our clergy, laity, friends, and alumni to connect our past to a future that will positively influence the role and mission of Methodism into the next century.

Foundry has experienced many historical highs and lows, living out our vision of God's will imperfectly. Through it all, our destiny seems to ultimately align more favorably toward justice and mercy, as we believe God intended. We define ourselves as a vital congregation with the culture and character to persevere in building and sustaining God's kingdom in Washington, DC. Like the many hands that joined together to present Foundry's bicentennial celebration, we remain connected by our faith to set challenging goals that make Foundry a place for solace, rejuvenation, healing, strength and action in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

Prayer:

Weariness is not an option at Foundry, dearest Lord. We pray we may be a shining beacon always and, without exception, welcoming and loving to all.

Bicentennial Co-chairs
Paula Blair, Chuck Hilty, and & Larry Slagle

Connecting Through Tradition

Paul wrote: *So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.* 2 Thessalonians 2:15 ESV

Traditions connect me to my faith by giving me a frame of reference in which I connect with the familiar, while further connecting me to God in a spiritual way. Having grown up in a Methodist family, tradition played a role in my faith formation in different ways, like with hopefulness and anticipation, and while instilling within me faith values. For instance, I always look forward to Christian celebrations, such as Easter and Christmas, with our extended family. Life can be busy; however, traditions associated with Christian celebrations have a way of helping me to slow down and be (spiritually) centered again.

Family traditions were mostly joyful and they also helped to bring us together and draw us closer. For instance, my immediate family often traveled to see our extended family in Virginia and Tennessee, helping us to once again connect, not just in a familial sense, but in a Christian way. Our travel reminds me of how Mary, the mother of Jesus, traveled to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. This family tradition of travel almost always incorporated a faith activity, such as bringing dinner to my grandmother's neighbors (the shut-ins), extending hospitality and sharing our Christmas cheer with them.

Church traditions also drew me into faith-related celebrations and activities, helping my faith to be an important part of my life. For example, our monthly potlucks helped to reconnect me with others and to deepen our friendships. This helps to connect me with others and to share our faith in a communal way.

While these traditions connect me with Christ, they have a way of wrapping me in grace and instilling hope for my journey.

Leo Yates, Jr.

Music is a Fair and Glorious Gift Of God

"Music is a fair and glorious gift of God." So said Martin Luther; and so says one of the Foundry banners that is hung periodically in the sanctuary. If memory serves, that banner was created at the time that the Cassavant Frères organ was installed.

Music connects with faith in two directions -- offering a means of expressing our faith when we sing out in church and a tool for teaching and reminding us about our faith. When I was a child in the Methodist Church, the very first hymn in the hymnal was "Holy, Holy, Holy" which taught the often hard-to-understand concept of "God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity." Many times when I feel frustrated and angry about injustices, both petty and grand, the words to the hymn "This is my Father's World" will come into my mind unsummoned -- "....that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet."

Music is a fair and glorious gift even to those of us who cannot carry a tune! Without thinking about it and while doing something else, I will often find myself humming the music of some of the great hymns of the church. Inside my head, it sounds just fine! And the music suffuses the moment with a general feeling of comfort and belonging to a long tradition of faith.

Margie Mckelvey

The Word of God and My Faith Connection

“The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding...”
Psalm 119:130 ESV

“Let us listen for the Word of God,” is the imperative sentence that Foundry uses to draw our attention to the reading of the biblical passages. Whether the Word is about God’s covenant in the law, history, poetry, or prophecies in the Old Testament, or Jesus’ teachings and miracles as captured in the gospels, acts, letters, or the revelation in the New Testament, the Scripture reader invites us to focus individually and collectively on the reading so that we might obtain insight, encouragement, and understanding.

Gaining insight into the Word is one thing. Allowing the Word to nourish our faith is another, because our cerebral and spiritual selves are continually competing for our attention and commitment. I am so very thankful that the first “cerebral” Bible verse that I heard and learned as a child, “Jesus loves me, this I *know*”, laid the foundation for my faith. This simplistic verse was my initial inspiration to trust God to direct my life path regardless of the challenges and not to rely on my own limited understanding. As I matured, I read and internalized additional “compass” verses. The “compass” verses increased my resolve to depend on God, and I added praying to my spiritual disciplines. I essentially kept adding more “God dots” to connect to my faith.

While the Word of God strengthens my faith, coordinating the 9:30 Service Scripture Readers enriches my connection to community. The twenty-five volunteers include youth, families, members of Jubilate, new and long-time members, and they represents a wide array of vocations and professional fields. Their talents add dimension to the written word and their commitment exemplifies servant leadership.

Thanks be to God for the Word, the faith journey, and the faithful.

Cheryl Gibbs

Connecting Through Nature

I found a beautiful justification recently for seeing God in the little things we do in our life’s work. One consistent connection for me is the silent opening of myself to God through the joy of noticing the beauty of God’s world. Taking time to look at a sunset can be a time to think about letting go. Feeling and seeing the force of the wind in a storm and the flexibility of the trees bending and swaying can remind us of God’s ability to use us in whatever way we are. Even noticing the trees that get blown down can remind us of what happens sometimes when we refuse or can’t seem to bend.

This poem, “God’s Dance of Creation,” by Kathy Keay calls to mind my best spiritual connections when I’m in the midst of nature.

In our quest for God,
we think too much,
reflect too much.
Even when we look
at the dance we call creation
we are all the time
thinking,
analyzing.
Words,
Noise,

Be silent
and contemplate the Dance.
Just look,
A star,
A flower
A fading leaf,
A bird,
A stone
any fragment will do

God wants us to know him. *“So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for him and find him, though He is not far from each one of us.”* Acts 17: 27 NKJV

Live and Let Live

Don't give evidence against others without good reason, or say misleading things about them. Don't say, I'll do to them just what they did to me! I'll get even with them! Proverbs 24:28-29 GNV

I have reached a point in my life where I am deeply concerned and bothered when I hear too much negative talk about people or observe meddling. I know that gossiping and meddling can cause pain and, at times, come between friends, co-workers and others affected by the interference of a busybody.

It is important to me that I take care in what I say to and about a person. I was sharing the other day how I had experienced recent instances of God's protection.

Negative information about another person's business is of no value to me. I don't need to know, don't care to know and it doesn't matter. There are countless pleasant things to talk about and I can start by saying how thankful I am to God for watching over and protecting me.

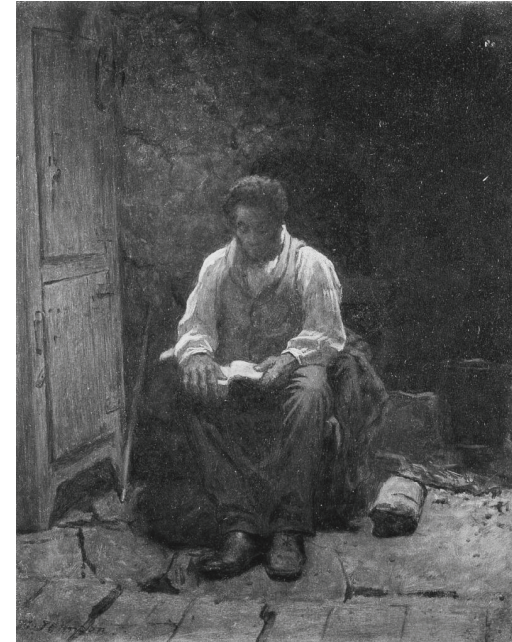
Prayer:

*Dear God,
I humbly ask for guidance and wisdom. Help me to block negative talk when it comes my way and to heed Proverbs 12:18 (GNV),
"Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as a sword by wisely spoken words can heal."*

Joan Williams

Scripture

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105 NIV



As a docent at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, I often introduce elementary and middle school students to Eastman Johnson's painting, "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Most see a humble black man reading from a book. Some predict that he is reading a Bible by the light of the embers in a fireplace. I share with them that Johnson completed the painting in 1863. Students jointly connect the dots and conclude that since the Emancipation Proclamation was signed on January 1, 1863 the man may be a former slave who is finally free to read the Bible on his own from cover to cover. It is an *aha* moment for them! From the wall text students learn: The simple act of the freed slave reading was itself a political issue. In the South, teaching a black person to read had been a crime; in the North, the issue was not "May they read?" but "They must read."

Prayer:

God, reading the Bible is not always easy. Some scriptures are difficult for me to understand. Please be with me as I make concerted effort to understand them in order to be well equipped for the good works I do in your name. Amen.

Stephen Roberts

Connecting with Foundry Youth

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”
Matthew 18:3 to 5 NRSV

About a decade ago, when I was attending another church, a woman approached me during coffee hour with a calendar. She put the calendar in front of my face and said, “Can you teach Sunday school one of these days?” I didn’t know what to say but, since I had no excuse, I said, “Sure.” This is how I became a Sunday school teacher. And I am forever grateful that God presented this opportunity.

This past Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend was one of the most amazing Sunday school classes I’ve ever experienced. I was teaching the high school and junior high youth groups about how religion influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement.

The best part of the class was when we came together to listen to the “I Have a Dream” speech. There were a dozen kids of different races seated in a circle, all focused on an iPhone in the middle of the floor. There was very poor sound quality, so they sat in complete silence, intent on hearing each word. I was in the front of the room, looking at them, with tears in my eyes. It was such a beautiful moment; a moment that is still all too rare in churches across country.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the youth at Foundry. We pray that you help us identify the unique gifts we can use to welcome them and nurture them. Amen.

Alicia Gutierrez

Our Daily Bread

And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
Colossians 3:14-15 NIV

Even at times when I’m tangled in life’s emotional brambles, God calls me to cook. It is the one daily act of caretaking that unfailingly binds me in perfect loving unity with my family and my faith.

For me, making a meal is a deeply spiritual state of being. I’m in my own zone of mindfulness, knowing that my self-taught practices and improvisational cooking style won’t always yield perfect results. Yet, my love of collaborating in this daily act of communion makes me a joyful, confident cook.

Preparing a meal helps me see God’s bounty in everything we bring into our home from the market, local farmers, or our garden. Anything we have on hand can inspire an idea to try a new recipe or prepare one I know by heart. Possibilities leap from imagination when I am in my apron, attentive to the rhythms and flow of converting ingredients into a finished meal. Time and growling stomachs may limit the number of menu options, but in my cooking zone, I know tonight’s best choice will present itself.

Most days, the evening meal serves to refuel loved ones after a busy day. On special occasions, I strive for a beautiful, aromatic array of tastes to become the centerpiece for celebration. Every day, cooking is an expression of love from God to me, and from me to those who come together at our table. When we do, we become that which Colossians reminds us is possible -- one body, called to peace. And, we say grace because we are indeed thankful.

Prayer:

Lord, give us this day our daily bread. Let us take only our share, giving thanks for your bounty on earth and all its beautiful, creative, loving, and nourishing possibilities. Amen.

Joanne Steller

Connecting to my Faith

I have chosen you...So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. Isaiah 41:9-10 NRSV

So many things help me connect, however children of all ages are my best connection.

I often tell others that my best worship experience is with the children in the Sunday school classroom. The children challenge me. You should stand outside my door and hear me fumble as I try to explain what faith means to the first and second graders and hear them really clarify things for me.

They do their best to keep me focused and true to what I believe. They are very happy, if I go off track, to remind me what I said last time and how it has changed. So they will ask, "Are you sure? The last time you said..."

Recently I have had the joy of seeing some young people come home to Foundry. They continue to help me connect and remain humble, because despite my fumbles in first and second grade, they have grown and are now ministering to me in all the ways they alone can. There is so much negative around us and I could certainly despair but when I see the children I am hopeful and reminded that there is a 'Power' larger than whatever is making me anxious, fearful or concerned. At those times words from the song, "What a Wonderful World" come to mind.

"I hear babies' crying and I watched them grow
They'll learn more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself what a wonderful world."

What a wonderful and amazing GOD.

Prayer:

Lord, help me remember your request to "Let the little Ones Come."

Fay Allen

Loving-kindness

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5 NIV



"Through the eyes of a child you will see the world
just as it ought to be." —author unknown

Prayer:

Help me make spiritual connections with everyone I meet, God, and give me patience when I cross paths with those individuals who have difficulty being emotionally honest and are challenged when it comes to playing well with others. Amen

Ta-Chen Wu