

Second Thoughts

AUTUMN 2023



SECOND



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Alpha

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end...
Revelation 22:13

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Signs of Our Faith

In the Gospel of John, the miracles of Jesus are described using the Greek word *semeia*, best translated into English as “signs.” Like the signs on the side of the highway or the entrance of a building, the actions of Jesus point beyond themselves to the power of God alive and active in the world. They are markers of divine presence and love.

At the end of the Gospel, John writes, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.” *Many other signs.* I take this as a statement of faith. God is still alive, still active, still moving in the world. How do we know? We are blessed with signs pointing the way to the presence of the divine.

Second Thoughts is a wonderful example. The beauty of these words and images is that they point beyond themselves. As you receive the gift of our third edition, keep your heart and mind open for *signs of our faith* in each piece. Enjoy!

Rev. Christopher A. Henry
Senior Pastor



The Woman at the Well
Sadao Watanabe (1913 - 1996)

*"Whoever drinks the water that I give him will never thirst;
the water will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*
John 4:13-14 RSV

Prayer of Adoration

God of Love... as we turn our hearts, our minds, and our souls to you, may this be a time of renewal, restoration, and reconciliation.

May we find here a time and a space to recharge as we deeply breathe in your Spirit of compassion and kindness.

God of Redemption... full and fulfilled, may this time of praise also be a time of Divine surprise!

As we are stirred by your Spirit, may we be left unsettled — yet sure of your call and claim on our lives, here and beyond.

God of Hope... our souls are waiting and watching. *Amen*

Tom Markey

Ideas are...

Ideas are water.

They flow into each other,
They intermiss, they blend.
They resolve in brief moments
They progress irretrievably
Running ahead of us.

Ideas are music.

They are composed of ancient words,
They take us to new, beautiful places.
They touch our emotions,
For better, for worse —
They carry us away.

Ideas are art.

They are woven from the weft and
The warp of human history —
Becoming the built world of
Our architecture, surrounding us
With the designs of Creation.

Ideas are culture.

They are our arts, our writings,
Our joys, as we channel them
Through The Spirit to some purpose —
And, as purposes become our
Intentions, and actions, we evolve.

Ideas are prayer.

They encompass our darkest fears
And our most endeared dreams —
They give voice to our Hopes,
They give gratitude and honor
To our great Instigator, our Creator.

Ideas are ephemeral.

They are here, then they morph —
Then they get away from us;
Or they sweep us along, and
Become a symphony,
A theory, or a language.

Ideas are eternal.

They can bring blessings, or
They can beget war.
They can create freedom, and
They can take it away,
As the World and God will them.

Ideas are thought.

They are the currency of our minds,
They are the blood in our systems,
In our bodies, through our hearts —
Ideas are really what we are —
The offspring of God's generosity.

William Alfred Ghormley

At the summer solstice, 2023

Westfield, Indiana

Tellers of Stories

“We humans are...tellers of stories that aspire to truth.
I can only answer the question, ‘What am I to do?’
If I can answer the prior question,
of what stories do I find myself to be a part?”

(After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory by Alasdair Macintyre)

All my life I have been intrigued by the stories told in the Bible. As a small boy my mother would read to me a Bible story each night before I went off to sleep. The stories were mesmerizing, peaking my imagination. In my mind David was my age; a five-year-old who with slingshot in hand ran on stubby legs to dethrone the giant Goliath. Samuel was tucked away in a bedroom like mine, at the back end of a hallway that ran forever, when God called his name sending him tiptoeing to the distant room where the priest Eli slept. Joseph’s coat of many colors was the bathrobe I wore when I pattered down the back stairway to the kitchen where my family gathered and shared our nocturnal dreams.

As a preacher I was captivated by the way Jesus used stories to unveil the mystery of the kingdom he envisioned. He responded to provocative questions by telling a story. He told stories to tilt the world of the inquisitor upside down so life could be viewed right-side up. His stories often punched holes in the tawdry truisms of everyday life. Jesus’ stories were arresting and life changing as he challenged his listeners to “think again.”

The power of stories is that they catapult us into another world. They wake us up to the larger realities of life as they unearth eternal truths nestled in the craggy hollers of everyday life. A good story reminds us that we live in a cosmos cratered with a sense of the divine. A well-told story has a way of standing us on our head, leaving us to ponder the sheer glory of a presence beyond words.

The Bible is God’s “storybook.” As an octogenarian I am increasingly fascinated by the stories found in the Bible. So, for the past year I’ve been reading and reflecting on the stories told in the first book of the Bible, Genesis.

Genesis is a mind-popping read raising an armada of critical questions: scientific, rational, historical. Sadly, as we move from childhood to adulthood, we tend to lose our innocence and sense of wonder. We are tempted to dismiss stories framed in mystery as mere fairy tales or naïve cultural myths. The upshot is that we find ourselves trying to make sense of a flatlined world.

So, I’ve been reading *Genesis* with what scholars call a *second naïvete*. The *second naïvete* invites me to read and listen anew to the stories of Scripture by asking a different set of questions. What’s-going-on-here questions; not how-can-this-possibly-be questions: What question or questions gave birth to these stories? What wisdom is the story seeking to unravel? What is this story wanting to tell me about God and what it means to live in a God smudged world?

As I read and reread Genesis, I imagined myself huddled around an ancient campfire; listening as heirloom tales were passed down from one generation to the next, family secrets unveiled, and the story of faith pieced together in all its messiness and wonderment.

Day after day I come away mesmerized, only this time in unchildlike awe and wonder. I live in a God framed world. I am part of something bigger than myself. And — wonder of wonders — I was created to live life in relationship to this Creator God who, as a Christian, I have come to know in Jesus Christ!

Rev. Dr. William G. Enright

Senior Pastor, Second Presbyterian Church 1981-2004

Life Lines

I have creases around my eyes.
Some would call them wrinkles,
crow's feet.

I call them proof;
proof of belly laughs,
of driving West into adventure,
of work put in to be where I am,
of smiles freely given,
of the love and the joy and the peace
and the pain.

Of the delicate moments –
like the bite of citrus
from a freshly picked orange,
or the wonder of a child
finding a purple flower.

Tiny instances of wonder that add up
to a life well-lived.

Do not fear the furrows, the creases,
the proof of life.
A face of marble
Is not worth the price.

Cynthia Roush

What is Faith?

When I was first seeking faith I asked the question, "God, are you up there?" A better question to ask would have been, "God, are you down here?"

Faith isn't something that can be felt so much with our senses, but for me, it was a conscious intellectual decision. I discovered there was something profound about the universe waiting there for me, so I chose to partake of it!

Faith becomes visible when we interact with other believers. We can see it in action every day — if we choose to look. It cannot be denied. It's that connection we have with God that offers us an opportunity to be selfless.

Faith is reassurance that you have a place, a purpose, and unconditional love waiting — whenever you call upon it!

Faith is what gives life meaning. It is sublime...

Janet Blank

Here & Now

Tik tik
tik
only a week away
a whole week away
Tik tik
tik
How much longer
You only live once
Tik tik

Our swirling contradictions push us
deeper into the wrinkles
of Time's ancient face.

Release me
from the low persistent ache for yesterday
from the sharp incessant tap
of reminders for tomorrows —
to revel
in the constant impermanence of now.

Oh to live

without clock or calendar

Cynthia Roush

Second Thoughts... and a Bit More

The thirty-second chapter of Exodus relates a story I find endlessly fascinating. In response to the golden calf debacle, God instructs Moses to stand clear so the blazing wrath of the Almighty can turn the Israelites into smoldering briquettes. Rather than dutifully don his asbestos robe and hunker down until the inferno blows over, Moses takes the extraordinary step of giving God public relations advice.

Moses says, with my liberal paraphrasing, “Lord, take a deep breath. If you go through with this and the Egyptian tabloids get hold of it, you’re going to have a huge image problem!” The astounding fourteenth verse says: “...the Lord changed his mind.” NRSV (*New Revised Standard Version*)

I’m aware that scholars and theologians who far outrank me prefer a different translation, and they are certain God’s mind has never changed and could never be changed. Though I am a buck private in matters of scholarship and theology, I can’t help being intrigued by the NRSV rendering.

Perhaps this translation appeals to me because I’ve had “second thoughts” since way before my wife and I started attending this congregation. I’ve come to think that these cerebral reconsiderations must be deep fat fried into my DNA. Ask my opinion about something at breakfast and there’s a chance my view might shift by the time mid-morning coffee break rolls around.

Some folks that I highly respect give the impression that they climbed out of the cradle knowing exactly what they believe. They have honed in on the truth and the correct course of action and feel it their duty to ardently affirm them. To change their minds seems to them as foolhardy as switching planes in midair over the North Atlantic.

I’m not saying that my ruminating proclivity is superior to those who always seem to rest assured. I’m simply saying that I take some comfort in the possibility that God might cut me some slack when I find it impossible not to take second, third, and even double-digit looks at a lot of things. This includes matters of Christian faith and practice. Perhaps God is gracious enough to make allowance for me to reflect and reconsider rather than repeat and reaffirm.

But perhaps I’m wrong about that. Maybe, just maybe (I say, stroking my chin), the matter bears a second look.

Sam Collins



The Boat in the Storm
Sadao Watanabe (1913 - 1996)

*"The disciples marveled; they asked:
'Who is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?'"*
Luke 8:25

Something Was Wrong

Something was wrong — *I could feel it.* I needed to check on my brother.

Ted and I had a similar routine each week. Seeing him today was not on my schedule. Yet, I couldn't ignore the increasing sense of urgency to check on him. Nothing had really happened that I could put my finger on, yet there were conversations that didn't make sense and changes in his grooming and eating habits—very subtle, but I had made a mental note of them.

My brother's unusual behavior won him the title of 'class clown' in grade school. The deaths of our grandfather and sister were the final trigger. It was like his brain was cross wired. As our family shed tears for the loss of our sister, Ted would laugh. One day he hit Mom! He was soon diagnosed as Schizophrenic.

When the nudge to check on him persisted, I called several times with no response. Despite my busy schedule, I dropped everything and rushed to my car. As I traveled to his apartment, my anxiety increased. From experience, when Ted was not following the correct schedule for his medications, emergency assistance was needed. Often, he *quickly* became violent.

Family members were unreachable — I was on my own. Or was I? On the way to Ted's apartment, I prayed the entire time and realized that the peace I felt was God given. I was not on my own at all.

When I pulled up to his building, I noticed right away the window blinds looked funny. I peeked into the apartment and saw that he had blocked his front door with an artist's easel. My keys would do me no good this day. Why were his keys hanging from the ceiling fan? How did his chair get turned over?

I banged on the sliding door. Eventually he came out of his bedroom looking like he didn't know where he was and like he'd never seen me before. How long had it been since he'd bathed? He looked like a small, scared child – in an adult body.

My heart was breaking. I smiled and waved, and tried to choke back any tears so he wouldn't be afraid of me. The knuckles on my hand hurt from pounding on the door, and I hoped my anxious grin didn't look too goofy. He stood there it seemed forever. I prayed again that Ted would let me in. Calling the police would scare him—it did the last time. All too often, the police are not trained on the behaviors of people with mental illness; but I understood and had come on a nudge from God to help my brother.

Slowly Ted came closer to the door and looked at me through glazed eyes. If he didn't open the door soon, I would have to call for help. Just as I started dialing 911 on the cell phone hidden behind my back, Ted opened the sliding door. Somehow, he remembered that I was nice to him. When I entered his apartment, the smell was overwhelming. His clothes and his hygiene were horrid. How could he get like this in such a short time? He had been stable... *what happened?*

That sense of calm again came over me as I reminded him that I was his sister. I hugged him slightly so he wouldn't be afraid of my touch. Did he remember me? I casually walked around the apartment. Ted's obsessively neat apartment was a mess. His open kitchen cabinet doors showed no food. Where did it all go? His coat was in the freezer, and he had stacked several things on a table and it looked like they would topple at any time. An ashtray had been thrown into a distant wall and left a hole. What on earth was that in his oven?

I invited him to go with me to get something to eat and gently encouraged him to take a shower and take care of other grooming needs. Meanwhile, I frantically called his case worker. I also called a friend of mine who worked with schizophrenic patients. She agreed that Ted was probably off his meds. The confirmation wasn't needed — just the friend's ear.

My cell phone camera documented all the bizarre things a doctor would want to see. Despite being so upset, that day I conversed with Ted in a level, friendly tone that was unlike my typical behavior when extremely scared. I encouraged him to sit beside me so we could decide where to go eat.

As we talked about places he might like to eat, a case worker returned my call. The hospital Ted should go to was about thirty minutes travel by highway. The police would handcuff Ted, and the paramedics would tie him to a gurney. They always did. That scared Ted and then he would really act out.

A voice told me to drive Ted to the hospital myself. Where did that come from? Ted was rambling about nothing and wasn't making any sense at all. He wanted to draw a picture for me, so I gave him paper and hoped he wouldn't stab me with the pen. I admired his picture and continued my search of his apartment.

As I searched, memories of Ted's illness returned. Like the time he threw football sized rocks through all the downstairs windows in our house. And when he shattered the glass on the car windows with a bat. He threw furniture that day like sticks! Hearing voices, Ted had once tried to slice his wrists! I'm still haunted by the image of those red stains on the beige carpet.

We talked about his not feeling as well as normal. I asked whether he would go with me for some food, and maybe see his doctor. I was so scared! If Ted flipped into a rage, I could wreck the car and might hurt or kill someone. Begging God for some confirmation that I could get Ted to the hospital by myself, I asked Him to stop me if I was wrong to try.

Gradually, I got Ted settled into the car and as I buckled his safety belt, he looked again like that scared little boy. Once more I prayed for God to guide me and reminded Him that He needed to hurry! If I started the car and got on the road it would be too late!

Buckling my seatbelt, I locked the car doors and started the engine. Just then, my Christian radio station sprang to life. Without a doubt in my mind and heart, God gave me the answer to my prayers. The lyrics I heard were...

“...You will be safe in His arms. You will be safe in His arms.”
from ‘Safe’ by Phil Wickham

Now my tears were happy tears! Ted spent several weeks in the hospital, and the doctors confirmed that he had not been on his medication schedule. He’s stable again and is receiving help monitoring his daily medicines.

I got a good reminder that day that God is not limited to one way of answering prayers, or letting us know He is with us. He protected both of us that day, and through that radio tune confirmed that we would get to the hospital safely. Without His nudge to check on Ted, there’s no telling what I would have found the next time I went for our routine grocery trip.

Sometimes I joke with friends that if God sent a billboard with

This is what I want you to do! Love God

on it, following His will would be so much easier. But that is not what faith is about. God wants us to trust Him and to know in our heart that He will not forsake us. When I am overwhelmed with the weight of caring for Ted, I often hear that powerful song in the back of my mind...

“He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.”
by The Hollies

God will be there to guide you too, and to lighten your load. He promises that, and I believe.
Oh, how I believe!

Beth Dawson

The Least of These...

*Just as you did it to one of the least of these...
you did it to me.
Matthew 25:40*

Who are the least of these? It is intimidating, as a layperson, to try to offer ‘wisdom’ on this question when there are many who have spent their lives studying these issues. Reflecting on my journey, I feel that my life has been enriched in so many unanticipated ways by so many people that perhaps there are helpful lessons woven into it that can be learned.

At first blush, it seems that we are commanded in Matthew 25:40 to address injustice wherever it exists, to care for those who are oppressed, impoverished, hungry, homeless, prisoners and all who live on the margins of life. As I have grown older, I have found it more difficult to determine where the margins of life are.

As a neonatologist, I have been privileged to take care of newborn infants. I have thought these fragile newborn babies with complex birth defects or extreme prematurity are also on the margin and are among the least who are most vulnerable. Or are the least of these their mothers or fathers and all those family members who feel so powerless to protect them?

I have been involved in caring for children in Kenya, often dying remotely and in poverty – are these among the least? Or are their mothers, dying of HIV, or the thirteen-year-old orphan who is now the caretaker of her three younger siblings? I have learned so much from those often seen as least. These children often see the world with greater clarity than those who are ‘whole’ might see it.

There are many dimensions to poverty, but the inability to love our God, and then to love others as one would wish to be loved, may be the greatest poverty of all. I believe it is important to try to be aware – to recognize when someone might be in a place of the least. We need to try to be non-judgmental and learn to love more like our Lord. *We must learn to recognize that we may find ourselves among the least of these, and that love is the only and the best answer!*

Jim Lemons

A God Wink?

My son-in-law decided to make a surprise birthday cake for my daughter. To keep it a surprise, he brought all the supplies to my house – even the mixer.

On the day of the birthday, we had dinner at a restaurant, then came back to my house. My daughter was quickly diverted from the kitchen until all was ready. The cake turned out to be a delicious surprise, but the cake was left behind at the end of the evening.

Later I got a call from my daughter asking me to email her a picture of the cake. I turned the cake so the missing pieces did not show and sent the picture.

Within a few days, I received an email from a close friend. This was a shock because she had died two months earlier. It turned out that the email was from my friend's daughter. In the message she thanked me for sending her the photograph of the coconut cake.

I immediately called my daughter to see whether she had received the picture. Then I texted the daughter of my late friend and told her I had no idea how the picture had come to her – I had only sent it to my own daughter.

She responded that she had no idea, but that either her mother or God had wanted her to have it since it arrived on her own birthday! She had received the picture while on a business trip, where celebrating was not the top priority. “Thanks for sending my favorite – coconut cake! Hope you are doing well.”

Amazed, I said: “I love this. I'm sure God and your mother took my poor technology skills and used them to give you a gift. Happy birthday! Hugs to you!”

I'll never know how that picture turned out the way it did. I double-checked, and that email had only one recipient – my daughter. Upon reflection, I like to think God knew this birthday cake photo had more than one purpose. He knew my friend's daughter was celebrating a birthday without her mom . . .and the rest is a God Wink?

Ina Van Duyn

Lean Not...Be Still and Know

I learned a long time ago that trying to understand all that happens in life would never bring me peace. Most of us have insatiable appetites for trying to figure things out. We try to figure out God's timing on certain events in our lives and our relationships with others. We wonder why things happen to some people and not to others — both good and bad.

We try to figure these things out to gain a sense of mastery over our lives. But the world has a different plan. As soon as we think we have things figured out, a new crop of circumstances arises, causing us new challenges. So we gear up again, trying to sort it all out, categorizing our thinking.

The wisest people in history knew they could never think their way to permanently solving life's mysteries. Solomon, Plato, Einstein — all knew that too much thinking led to futility rather than fulfillment.

Therefore, I have adopted two verses from the Bible as my mainstays. They have been useful in difficult times, and both have set me on the right course of thinking. They remind me that we are always enveloped in God's peace, even during turbulent times.

As I ponder these simple verses, I gain awareness of His abiding peace...

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and lean not on your own understanding.*

Proverbs 3:5

Be still and know that I am God.

Psalms 46:10

Janet Blank

Voices...

I have been complimented on my speaking voice many times over the years. I am told I speak clearly, distinctly, and in a low register. People assume it's because I used to be a singer, but they are off base.

You see, I was the third of four children. At the dinner table I sat by my mom — furthest from my dad — on his left side, where he was deaf. All of us were taught to speak distinctly in a low register. This was the only way we could be heard over the others — *and that Dad could hear.*

Years ago, I could call our children from several blocks away. I've been told that I'm incapable of whispering — my voice carries!

Our voices matter! My children knew that if I said, “STOP!” they were to stop immediately -- not ask why or just look at me — but stop in their tracks. It was to protect them from danger, and they knew it.

So, when are we, as Christians, going to say STOP? What danger level does the world need to reach? How many terrorist attacks and what group must be targeted before we say STOP?

And what do we do after we say STOP? I cry in frustration for those displaced from their homes, and for members of faiths targeted for murder. I cry for those facing unspeakable living conditions each day. I cry for evil doers thinking the world is theirs. Is there nothing we can do to stop the daily tragedies?

But I have a voice! God gave me this voice to speak His words to the best of my ability. So, I gather my thoughts, fearlessly open my mouth, and say ‘Stop.’ We cannot let extremists win. We cannot be afraid to share God’s word with all people. We must speak truthfully — without malice — that God wants this selfish violence to end.

We’ve been given one world to share. Why can’t we? May our voices rise above the trouble as we share the Good News with others.

Becky Hagarty



The Entry into Jerusalem
Sadao Watanabe (1913 - 1996)

*"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!"*
Matthew 21:9

Transformation

“I have always relied on the kindness of strangers...”

from ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’ by Tennessee Williams

Palm Sunday morning... and we were late for the 11AM service. We slipped into an aisle seat near the back just as the Palm Sunday processional, led by a live donkey, was coming down our aisle. Alan took a photo of Enright, the donkey, and we exchanged smiles with people as they passed. We all knew that Palm Sunday begins Passion Week, and it was a joyous service.

As the service moved toward the sermon, I sensed something was troubling Alan. He began to behave strangely. He seemed to be shutting down. I asked him if he was okay. He responded with a nod, but then lost consciousness and slumped against me. I was terrified and did the only thing I could think of—I asked the woman next to me for help.

Within seconds, we were surrounded by kind, caring strangers. A woman knelt beside Alan and began monitoring his pulse. The head usher and several men came. An ambulance arrived, and I followed the gurney out. I heard Pastor Chris Henry pause the service to pray for Alan.

I was not alone. Those same strangers were still with me as Alan was loaded into the ambulance. Elise, the woman seated next to us, brought my coat. She and her husband stayed with me as we waited.

The service ended before the ambulance was ready to leave. Pastors Chris and Brian joined other members offering their reassurance. Elise and her husband drove me to the hospital, retrieved our car from the church, and stayed with me until I was allowed to join Alan.

Sunday afternoon we waited in the Emergency Room. Alan was admitted to the cardiac unit around seven, and I went with him to his room. We knew he had suffered a heart attack, and tests had been ordered for the following day.

As we talked about next steps, there was a knock at the door. It was Pastor Brian Shivers, who had also known Alan through Taylor University. His hugs and prayers were truly comforting, and Brian secured a room for me at the Vincent House near the hospital. He even brought me food.

I stayed with Alan as long as I could, then a nurse ushered me to the door where the security shuttle took me to Vincent House. The woman at the desk was very warm and

welcoming as she checked me in and took me to the room where I would spend the next nine nights. The staff of Vincent House were so caring.

Monday morning... The surgeon met with Alan and told him what to expect during the next day or two. Later that day the entire team of doctors met with us, explaining in more detail the test findings and plans for the surgery. This new group of strangers quickly transformed into kind and caring friends.

Tuesday and Wednesday... We stayed in his room, and each day we met new strangers whose kindness turned them into friends. Pastor Gracie Payne arrived with a beautiful lily. She prayed with us, and we knew the Second Presbyterian pastors were praying for us.

A hospital chaplain appeared out of the blue. She said, “I sensed joy coming from this room, and decided to pop in.” She entered a stranger -- and left as a friend!

Maundy Thursday... Surgery day! — the shuttle picked me up. The drivers were aware that my husband was having major surgery, and they became caring friends. Although Thursday was a long day, I did not feel alone. I went with Alan to the surgery. Everyone’s kindness and concern were amazing!

Some friends stayed with me all day, and Tom Markey visited with me in the waiting area. Alan was sent to the ICU and the surgeon met with us. He was gracious and positive as he explained that he had done three bypasses and a valve replacement. He answered questions and said he thought it had been a very good day.

Thursday evening, I was allowed into the Cardiac ICU. I met Alan’s nurse and sensed her kindness, along with efficiency and competence. She encouraged me to hold his hand and talk to him, although he probably would not respond yet. She said he was doing very well, and I could be with Alan as much as I desired.

Friday morning... I saw Alan, then went to the lounge area near his room where Pastor Nancy Frick found me. Over the next few days, Nancy and I became friends. She contacted me every day and took me to lunch twice. After Alan was released and felt better, Nancy drove all the way to Upland for lunch!

Easter Sunday... Alan was still in ICU but feeling strong enough to watch the church service on his IPAD. The joy of the Resurrection swept through our souls in a new way. We even shared parts of the service with his nurse, a Taylor graduate!

The next Wednesday... We finally returned home! That Passion Week — *especially Easter Sunday*—has never been forgotten. We remain deeply thankful because we learned a great deal about loving kindness. Kindness that transforms strangers into friends. *Thanks be to God!*

Jessica Rousselow-Winquist

The Perfect Word

Lightning and the lightning bug, said Twain
It's all the difference between the nearly right
And the exactly right word. When we strain,
It slips elusively just out of sight.
We know it's there – it's been supplied before –
(Sometimes too late: *esprit d'escalier*, you know);
So tantalizing, close, it seems the more
Tongue tippingly, the more frustrations grow.
Then just in time it flashes on our mind.
Aha! We fit it into place, it's spare,
Precise, *le mot juste*; then no surprise, we find
We needn't be anxious; the word was always there.
Just so, the Word made flesh has come in time:
The perfect word to fill our little rhyme.

Thomas Bast

Beautiful Brokenness

*Holding the broken pieces of my life, again, gluing, holding, praying
Exhaustion is all too common.
With a head full of worry,
You did not create me to carry,
yet worry resides anyway...
Constant pressure with the briefest of respite
in passing moments that don't sustain.
These worldly expectations, so heavy and impossible to achieve.*

“Just be Kind,” as we judge, outcast others,
and ourselves.

*Turned in shame and with doubt.
Hiding from the world, retreating
Refusing to include those who are different,
Though they too are a unique, God-created self.
Why? To feel ahead? Better? Free? Superior? Right?
Have we arrived yet? Is it ever enough?
Still a lingering thirst that cannot be quenched, alone.*

Whispering,

He says, “To find your own voice, you must first listen to Me.”

*Be Bold! Be strong!
Not like that, you're doing it wrong!
Move faster at this pace, be an innovator!
You chose wrong! Laughs the great imitator.
Work, create, but within these worldly perimeters,
Extreme pressure performing to unachievable standards.
Pat words, false phrases
Ridiculous acronyms, jargon, and made-up languages.
You must always be right, but still tell yourself, you fall short.*

Are you listening?

Who told you that?
You keep moving so fast that you can't even hear.
You are just getting nowhere faster my dear.
The knot is tied at the end of the rope,
you can hardly hold on.

Why grip so tightly?

Let go

Fall
Into His arms.

*Whose expectations are these?
Whose rules are you living by?
Rules in your head that you were taught or made up for yourself?
Or His?*

*In my overwhelming helplessness, at my most weak
Just as I break again, I hear my Savior speak.*

“If it is supposed to make you happy, then why are you so sad?”

Step off the wheel of constant motion, disguised as a race.

There is no finish line,

certainly not at this crazy pace!

This is not your dream; it is a lie.

Stop running!

Step off!

Let go and I will catch you.”

“Slow down my child,

You don't have to run.

I know your story, I wrote it.

The beginning and the ending too.

I wrote every detail of you.

Created with purpose, to walk in step with me,

aligned in my love.

And along the way yes,

to also have fun!

Of course, there will be troubles, of course there is sin.

I am your relief.

Rejoice, sing, laugh, love, shout, cry, collapse in my arms.

I am your strength.

In me, you can disarm.

Lay these burdens down at my feet.

Take a walk with me, I will carry you when need be.

Come see what I have prepared, a table where you have a seat.

You are loved,

forgiven,

made in my image.

You are a uniqueness formed in the heavens.
Born with purpose,
to serve me and fulfill my will.
Revealed in my time when you listen, still.
With your most broken pieces,
I make you most beautiful.
Let go my child, be free.
Be gentle with yourself.
To me, humble your heart.
Find soul rest in me.
For you have been set apart.”

“My yoke is easy.

My burden is light.
When they say you are wrong, I’ll make your paths right.
In your weakness, my greatest strength is revealed.
In your brokenness, you are born again as a beautiful, new creation.
New in my grace and redemption.”

*Yet still the temptation...
A crack in the mind,
a crack in the clouds.*

“Reveals my light.”

Look up child, show your face to me in the darkest of night.
Reach out!
Take that step,
My beautiful broken child.
I am the Great Creator of all things beautiful, wonderful, and wild!”
“Untame your heart, untame your mind
from the distractions of this world.
Take a step, seek my face.
You will find rest and peace at my pace.
Eyes up!

I am here right now, for all eternity.

Does your burden feel too heavy?
You were not meant to carry it alone.
 In the mundane, I call you home.”
“Give up your worry and your troubles,
I already have them.
To you, your load feels so heavy.
My strength is effortless and steady.”

I am with you.
I have been here all along, tending to your care.
Even in the smallest of moments,
I have always been there.”

“I am carrying you now, you cannot hide.

Look up and see my smiling face, silly child!
I have prepared your place,
but you continue to doubt and worry.
In all your sin you still cling with such great need.
I am right here with you, even as you bleed.
I will fill you with peace and assurance.”
“You are loved, my child.
You’ve got this, because,
I’ve got you.”

*Meet me in my mess oh Lord,
as I lay my broken pieces at your feet.
You are my constant, Great Comforter, perfect in every way.
The price already paid that I might afford
through your grace alone.*

“In me you will not be destroyed,

but made new.
Ever growing, ever changing,
my molded unique image of you.”

*In my brokenness you are my Deliverer,
Creator, Redeemer, Life Giver.
Thank you, Lord, for seeing me,
Allowing space, just to be.
Your love calls me still...
Eyes up as I face Your Son
Set free in your Spirit, God, my Chosen One!
Beautiful, broken me!*

Amos Tilly



Jesus Washes My Feet
Sadao Watamabe (1913 - 1996)

*"If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.
Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!'"*
John 13:8-9

Taking time...

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you claim to have faith but have no deeds? Can such faith save you?

James 2:14

“I wish Santa would bring me a baby doll for Christmas.”

These words were heard by a church volunteer as she brought groceries to a grandmother living in a small, shabby inner city house. Both young granddaughters spoke with anticipation about receiving dolls, but it was obvious that these children would not have their wish granted.

The volunteer, a young Christian single mother of two, gathered her own children and took them to purchase two dolls and clothes for those little girls. She knew her own holiday spending plans had been made, and this was not part of those plans.

When the gifts were delivered, the joy that the receiving family expressed, and the joy my children experienced through giving, will be long-lasting.

The giving of yourself and your resources for the good of others, above what is expected, draws us closer to God. It is giving from the heart, the unselfish sharing with those who have less, that is significant.

It may mean that we venture into different parts of the city, or to far off places, to touch lives and help others. For most of us, it may require that we are sensitive to the needs of others and minister to one another, whether young or old, and whether pleasant or not-so-pleasant people.

We touch God when we touch each other...

We can be there as Jesus was. He took time to talk with individuals – the poor, the blind, the people with leprosy. Surely, we can also take time to talk with those who are homebound, or who may need a ride to church.

Let us pray that Jesus will show us the way, granting us the courage and strength to be all that we can be through Him – today and in the future. Amen!

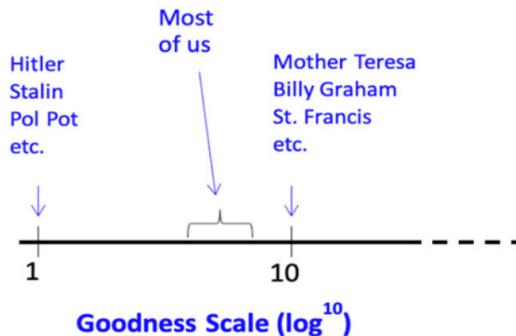
Cynthia H. Wilkens

The Goodness Scale

I would like to take one of the lessons of our Sunday morning studies and express it from the perspective of those who tend to be more comfortable with facts and statistics.

Following is what we call a visual acuity scale. In this case the x-axis is a relative measure of Innate Goodness. At a value of 1 (one) are found some of the worst characters we can think of: Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Pol Pot, the cruel tyrant of Cambodia. At a value of 10 (ten) are some of the best people we can think of: Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, and St. Francis, for example.

Most of us fall around the 70th to 80th percentile. We don't rob convenience stores or kick dogs. We go to church most Sundays. We are only overtly selfish a couple of times per week, and we only hate a few selected people who deserve it. Generally, we can make a fairly strong case that we are reasonably good.



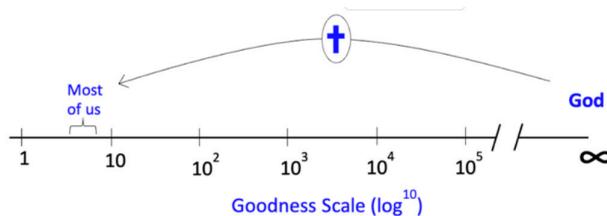
Pantheists and some of the humanist philosophies place God and humans pretty close together on the goodness scale. The Bible teaches that God is way out at the infinity end of it. In fact, God is so far out there it is unfathomable. *The only media we have that even comes close to being able to express it are music and art.*

God is so far out on this scale that, compared with His immeasurable goodness, there is not much difference between the best and the worst of us. The Bible says: *“Be perfect... as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* *

What are we supposed to do with that? You may think you are a nice guy, but even if you are Canadian, you cannot be nice enough to save yourself.

God does not compare us with each other. He gauges us against the ultimate standard, which is Himself. If the Reformed Doctrine of Total Depravity is true, then we are incapable of reaching that far out to God.

Our only hope is to have God reach back to us...



Stephen Lambert

* *Matthew 5:48*

Welangundewakan

(Peace, Friendship: Lenape/Delaware)

Oh God, Where is thy Eternal Peace?

Grace enables Faith,
Faith begets Hope,
Even reconciliation — finding Peace
With our Fate, our Destiny.

But Destiny's blade
Moves around us — cutting
And prodding us
Toward cliffs of Oblivion.

We dodge and weave
To slip the steel,
Too often sliced, burning,
We fall into confusion.

In exhaustion, having battled Desire,
We feel rays of sunrise
Touch our face, as we turn
To see a Solstice Dawn.

Silently, serenely, it reaches us,
And the Holy Spirit enfolds us;
We are sweetened to Her touch —
Unworried in Her arms.

And, so, the Creator frees us,
Comforts us through Son and Spirit
In kind, as though put to bed
By our father and our mother —
In His eternal loving care.

William Alfred Ghormley

Winter Solstice, 2023

Conner Prairie, Indiana

What Are You Waiting For?

This verse is from a song entitled ‘*What are We Waiting For*’ by the contemporary Christian group named *King & Country* and has really stuck with me during these recent times of unrest, unknowns, and drastic changes in weather.

The song reminds me of Matthew 6:27: “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” I have found that people in today’s times appear to be in their own world and not aware of what is going around them. Those closer to us, perhaps in the workplace, can be a perfect example.

I find this to be very frustrating as I enjoy being around people and at times can feel a bit hurt when I am the only one to say hello or ask about their weekend. Simple things, but important nonetheless, in a workplace setting.

I tend to “stew” on things and one day I felt God telling me to be the difference and be the one to say something first. I had to “stew” on that a bit as well, and soon came to the realization that as a Christian, I may be the only one at that moment to show the love of Christ during these difficult times.

I soon softened to this new idea and really enjoy seeing a smile or a face light up when I say hello. In my workplace we work independently, so there are no group projects or opportunities to connect with colleagues other than asking a question or having lunch together. Headphones are a popular choice for working independently, but they reduce the opportunity for communication.

In closing, another line from the song: “*Put the pen on a new page, dream about what you could change, and live it out before it's too late.*”

My challenge to you is... “*What are you waiting for?*”

Deirdre Westrate

"getup-getout-getonwithit"

A Christian Password

Some years ago, a poster was displayed in the foyer of a Lebanon, Indiana church. It depicted a person standing in the Roman Coliseum. The caption asked, *"If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"* That poster and its question often comes to my mind as I try to understand what my commitment to being a Christian really means.

If Jesus Christ came to Indianapolis today, how would we be able to recognize Him – by His looks or by what He says and does? When we are observed going about our daily lives, how will others know we are Christians? Certainly, the evidence to convict us comes from our actions, not circumstances.

Please understand that BECOMING a Christian and BEHAVING like one are two distinct aspects of BEING a Christian. The Bible is consistent in its position that we cannot serve our way into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Regardless of the amount of good work we may accomplish, *"all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* Eternal life is not a matter of payment earned for good deeds done, but a matter of the grace of God given to those who simply accept it. However, faith that is only an intellectual belief falls short of life-changing faith. Being a Christian becomes truly evident in the change of one's behavior. Such evidence of faith in action will gain the "conviction" that we are seeking.

Although we are not saved BY deeds, we are certainly saved FOR deeds. Reflect on the truth of this short rhyme,

The ROOT of faith will be confirmed by the FRUIT of faith.

Does "being convicted" sound a little scary to you? In the late 80's, Christian singer Scott Wesley Brown pricked my conscience with his sermon in song, *"Please Don't Send Me to Africa."* Then, in the early 90's, he again made me squirm with another musical message entitled *"Living in the Comfort Zone."*

Well, I still haven't moved to Africa, and my lifestyle is still quite comfortable, but I have changed my mind about serving others, even when it isn't easy. I am giving more generously of my talent, time, and treasure. The difference is the “*BE-attitude*” with which I serve others. Now serving a meal and talking to men living in the New Life Recovery Home has given me more satisfaction than watching pro sports. Singing hymns and telling stories with the elderly at a nursing home gives me more joy than playing a round of golf.

During mission trips, this “*BE-attitude*” convinced me that mixing and hauling concrete in 100-degree heat was worth the effort. We helped provide a church for my Christian brothers and sisters in Mexico.

Our Lord has shown me that being a servant is the only way to demonstrate my commitment to Jesus Christ. Guilty of being a Christian means there is evidence in our lives of the answer to “*What would Jesus do?*”

Consider this example of a “convicted” Christian:

A small child had been orphaned during the terrible conflict of war. While wandering the streets of a city that was virtually destroyed in bombing raids, the child chanced upon a pastry shop that had escaped disaster and was open for business. Being very hungry, the child stopped and pressed both hands and face against the shop's window, longing for just a taste of the sweet treats inside.

A soldier with the occupation army was walking along that same street and noticed the child. Realizing what was needed, the soldier entered the shop to purchase some freshly baked pastries. Returning to the street, the soldier gave the small sack to the wide-eyed child and then walked away.

Unable to comprehend such good fortune, the child called after the soldier, “Hey, mister!” Stopping and turning to hear what the astonished child had to say, the soldier heard the child ask, “Are you God?”

What would it take for you and me to be mistaken for Christ? Perhaps “getup-getout-getonwithit” would be just the thing to “convict” each of us as we follow Jesus Christ...

Casey



The Last Supper
Sadas Watanabe (1913 - 1996)

"Do this in remembrance of me..."
Luke 22:19

Post Tenebrae Lux

For many years, I have known and admired elderly saints who had so immersed themselves in scripture that almost every event in life, whether great or small, was a cause to recall or apply some passage of scripture to illuminate or interpret their experiences. This blessed gift has also been mine on occasion.

Over a decade ago, I traveled with my wife, Nancy, to Trieste, Italy at the invitation of a professional colleague, Francesco. Since we had not been there before he eagerly ensured we saw all the important sights of that historic city and gave us his full attention until one afternoon, when he, as a physician, had to be at the hospital. He passed us along to his Jewish practice partner, Uri. Uri was a man who was short in stature and slight of build, but he possessed abundant energy and enthusiasm.

Uri's fondest desire was that we should see the Trieste Synagogue on the castle hill, and he led us on foot, fairly scampering up the steep hillside. Due to the waning light of that afternoon we gave full effort to keeping up with him.

The better part of a century ago, this synagogue was home to one of the largest Jewish congregations in Europe, numbering about six thousand by 1938. But during the war the Nazis closed it, citing their race laws as justification. However, while Jews were being displaced from their homes and places of worship, their privately owned artwork was being hidden in a secret room of the synagogue. This was not only a house of worship, but also a historically significant building; It remains so today.

We followed closely with Uri on a seemingly endless, tortuous route. Then with darkness rapidly approaching, we reached the synagogue and went in. It seemed nobody was there, but Uri was not deterred by the uninhabited space. He led us through the shadows to a box outside the sanctuary where we donned yarmulkes and entered the dark sanctuary.

In the darkness, Uri tried to point out the features all around that cavernous room containing obviously beautiful objects, but which were hard to discern in the shadows. I thought of Jesus' disciples walking with Him through the Jerusalem temple pointing out the beauty of the stones, to which he revealed that the building would be demolished soon and replaced by a living temple. As we tried to appreciate the elements of that dark interior, someone else suddenly came into the room, surprising and unsettling us momentarily. It was someone official, a watchman or building supervisor. We could not tell because the ensuing conversation occurred in Italian. As the man left, Uri explained that the man had gone to turn on the lights for us. We waited in the darkness, then the sanctuary suddenly burst into light.

We will always remember the words of Uri, who had no idea his remark was so profound. He said, "Now you can see what you could only imagine before." Nancy and I have often recalled this moment, as it so clearly spoke to us of a time "when faith shall be sight". We marveled that this Jewish man unwittingly preached a tersely eloquent sermon to these Christian strangers, who now saw the beauty of the place while being quietly reminded...

*I will make You a light to the nations,
that My salvation may reach the end of the earth.*

Isaiah 49:6

*...Now we are children of God,
and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be,
but we know that when He [Christ] is revealed,
we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

1 John 3:2

*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard...
the things which God has prepared
for those who love Him.*

1 Corinthians 2:9

Bryan Larsen

The Garden of Gethsemane

Reach out your hand, reach out, reach out.
He's there, He's there, I want to shout!

He's been there before – but heavy with sorrow,
Knowing what waited on the morrow.

So why do we procrastinate?
Keep on worrying about our fate?

Leave it all in the Father's hands, as did He.
We are saved. We are free.

Reach out your hand, reach out, reach out.
He is the Messiah I want to shout!

Cynthia H. Wilkens

*It Was Friday . . . **

It was Friday . . .

His disciples were scattered.
A friend had denied him.
He was alone.

Yes, it was Friday,

but Sunday's coming.

It was Friday . . .

The Sanhedrin was confident.
With a cross, they claimed triumph.
Religion will win.

Yes, it was Friday,

but Sunday's coming.

It was Friday . . .

Condemned though innocent,
'Twixt two thieves He was hung.
All motherhood wept.

Yes, it was Friday,

but Sunday's coming.

It was Friday . . .

And Jesus was dying.
The grave kept its own.
Sin seemed victorious.

But then it was only Friday . . .

And, praise God,

SUNDAY'S COMING!

Casey

** Inspired by a phrase coined by Tony Campolo when preaching in Philadelphia*

Five of Hearts

Ninety minutes alone with my questions, reflections, fears, and tears. That's how I spent most Wednesday nights during the winter and spring of 2019. After dropping off my daughter at Confirmation class, I would drive a half-mile to a local restaurant where a private, comfy booth had become my midweek church.

I usually felt a twinge of guilt for not walking through the limestone edifice of the church to attend a Bible study or meditate in the chapel. But entering those doors felt too demanding, too exposed. Sitting in a dark corner eating dinner alone and reading a self-help book was all my bruised and battered soul could handle.

My marriage of twenty years was imploding, and my family of five was on unsteady ground. The kids had not yet been told, but life as they knew it was going to change. Add to that stress the responsibility of caring for my mom who had suffered a serious stroke the previous autumn. I prided myself on being tough and level headed during a crisis, but the circumstances of my life were a lot, even for me. I was emotionally raw and worried about my family's future.

I had tried several restaurants near the church, until finally finding one that was perfect. One evening, while lost in my thoughts, something caught my eye. I stared, unsure my brain was correctly processing the image. Stuck to the ceiling was a five of hearts playing card with 'Ellen' written on it in black marker.

My name is Ellen and it's somewhat uncommon, yet in this comforting booth — on the ceiling above me — was a five of hearts playing card with *my name* inscribed on it! My mind went into overdrive... There were five people in my family, and there were five hearts on the card. Hearts signify love. And my name was floating in the middle of the hearts.

When the server walked by again, I asked about the card. She explained that a magician had performed during Sunday brunch, and there were numerous playing cards inscribed with patrons' names on the ceiling throughout the restaurant.

My therapist had encouraged me to observe everything around me, and to notice my feelings as I gathered information. She said I might be surprised by messages the universe sends me. I had questioned her, because it sounded weird, but in this moment, I was willing to consider the five of hearts a message from the universe — *especially if the message was that my family would always know and feel love.*

A year later life had changed. My husband and I were separated, and our family was navigating a new normal. Beyond our little sphere, the world was navigating its own new reality — a pandemic. When businesses finally began to reopen, my favorite restaurant did not, but I never stopped thinking about that five of hearts card. I resolved that if I ever saw the building being prepped for a new business, I would stop and look for the card. I dreamed of framing and hanging it in my home as a reminder that my five would always be a family.

When divorce happens there are many choices to make, especially if children are involved. Regardless of the circumstances leading to the divorce, parents choose to be civil *or not*, to be united in parenting decisions *or not*, to talk negatively about one another *or not*, and to show respect for one another *or not*.

They can make life difficult for one another, or they can make life as easy as possible for their children. My former husband and I made the decision to put our children's mental and emotional health first. It's not always easy, and there have been times when different choices surely would have resulted in a fracture of our family.

In 2023, nearly two years after the divorce was finalized, my mom passed away. Her health had gradually declined due to numerous issues that had left her bedridden. My Second Church family — the staff I now call colleagues and the many members who became friends over the last twenty-five years — provided compassionate support with visits, prayers, flowers, and home communion.

A week after the funeral I was back at work. One afternoon at lunchtime I drove up the street to indulge in one of my few vices — a fountain Diet Coke. I drove past the empty restaurant and noticed a dumpster in the parking lot and the doors of the building propped open. This was my chance to get the card! I couldn't help but think of my mom and wonder if she was looking out for me at that moment.

Dust billowed out of the building and a construction worker walked out wearing an N-95 mask. I called out and tried to explain why I was there. He did not speak English but gave me the universal 'one moment' sign. Then another worker appeared, but again the signal to wait. The third construction worker seemed to understand what I was saying and was able to tell me in broken English there were no cards on the ceiling. I thanked him and headed to my car as tears welled up in my eyes.

I was sobbing so hard by the time Cindi answered the phone that she struggled to understand what I was saying. It was the most I had cried since my mother's passing, and the most since my divorce was finalized. I eventually got out the words. "I just wanted that stupid card so I would always know my family is still my family."

Cindi listened with empathy and lovingly responded. "You don't need the card, Ellen. You did it. You kept your family intact. Your kids know they are loved by both you and their dad and that you will always be there for them." I realized she was right. We had made the choice to continue to be a family. We were a modern family, if not a traditional family, and I knew that those hearts were still beating together.

The following week I contacted another friend who is an artist and whose works of realism I admire. I asked if she would paint the five of hearts card for me. She was thrilled to hear my story and told me she had been hoping for a commission that was personal and meaningful. We both knew immediately this project was meant to be a project commissioned by the universe.



I texted Kathy a grainy, poorly lit photo of the playing card I had snapped that night at the restaurant. A few weeks later she texted me a photograph of the final project. I wept. When I picked up the painting, I embraced Kathy and thanked her. She had given me proof of my family in the form of a five-by-seven acrylic painting on canvas. *Five of Hearts* hangs in my bedroom. It is a daily reminder that my family was able to rebuild following a difficult season of life, and that we will always be anchored in love.

Ellen Gullett

Within Me

Within me lies
A river of living water
In this chaotic world
It is flowing not seen
I can reflect on it

I see it within my soul
It's clear water reflects the Light
That comes between the trees
It radiates of blue, white, silver
As the clear water flows
It is pure, refreshing cleansing
It is abstract, in this physical
World of doing, performing versus being
This stream of living water, refreshing, cool water
To experience its healing
Its peace apart from Christian works
And demands of man-made programs

It can only be experienced as a gift
Did Jesus understand it, when He said
Martha, Martha why do you toil
Mary desires the best gift
I can listen, fill the essence of the stream from my soul
When my Faith isn't enough
This river of my soul, refreshes me

Helen L. Poynter

A Joyful Call!

As we consider ‘*Signs of Our Faith*’... God’s infinite Wisdom calls us to put on the creative lenses of hope and delight.

First is the lens of abundance. Then we see through the lens of faith, that there is more to go around than meets our naked eye. At last, we begin to recognize the gifts and vitality that are hidden in plain sight. They’re in this room. They’re just outside. They’re down the street. God has been “.... *rejoicing in His inhabited world and delighting in the human race,*” as Proverbs says.

If God can rejoice in creation, why shouldn’t we? Perhaps God sees through lenses of wisdom and creativity that we simply need to try on. Perhaps we are too nearsighted and have tunnel vision as we navigate this complex world. The gifts from God may become obstructed if we view them through human eyes.

Through our faith, God’s wisdom widens the lens and reorients our vision to see a much larger picture. We can now see the bounty of God’s gifts as a community – the gifts that are already there! Beyond our limited viewpoint God has wisely and graciously been adding layers to a scene that we perceive only narrowly.

God’s wisdom delights in the latent possibilities ready to be built up as the Heavenly Kingdom that Jesus described is revealed. Those possibilities are bubbling up just beneath the surface of life, or as the *Confession of the Presbyterian Church (1967)* states: *Already God’s reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope and preparing the world to receive its ultimate... redemption.*

God’s work at Second Church is fun: bringing each other into deeper discipleship, baptizing one another, blessing each other’s work, naming the gifts that others have, delighting in the world around us, and worshipping side by side. How can we keep from singing in response to this joyful call?

God is with us. We are here, ready to go! And we have *signs of our faith* to guide us as the Kingdom of Heaven is unveiled.

Rev. Tyler Brinks

Lake Fellow 2021-2023

Wonder.....

I wonder what life would be like without Christmas...
For over two thousand years we have been counting the days.

What would winter be without Christmas hope and joy?
Our days would become pale soldiers in the cruel march of time.

Where would we be without tales of the Nativity?
The humble shepherds would never have come.

I wonder what we would believe in without the gift of Jesus...
Let us walk with those Wise Men who still seek Him.

Kevin Gardner

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Fruits of the Spirit

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Omega

*Let not your hearts be troubled... I go and prepare a place for you.
I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*
John 14: 1-3



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