



THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

March 2022

Discoveries from the Surfboard: Lesson One- Go Slow.

On the first day practicing yoga by the beach and breathing mask-free and swimming outside and deciding what to do with a free afternoon, really adventuring in a new place, I thought, going slow...no problem. Upon the coaching of expert surfers, I stepped up to the surfboard balanced on towels in the yoga shala. I practiced moving from my belly to the crouched "hang loose" stance of any great wave catcher. I found a rhythm of adjusting my body weight to change directions of the board on the imaginary water beneath. I breathed with calm knowing, go slow...how else would I go?



The next afternoon, slathered in about three coats of sunscreen, tethered to the board with the foot leash, and ever more sure I was ready to go (slow?), I waded out into the warm Pacific ocean for my first surf experience ever. Several things in a growing list of things I didn't quite know needed to be considered or practiced went fine, right in fact. I boogied on my belly with several waves. But looking back, that may have just been the gentle grace and generosity of the ocean despite me- me with all my rushed, fast, quick, impatient efforts.

"Go slow," my surf coach reminded me.

I am! I want to, but I don't have time to go slow. Look, here comes another wave. I'm missing it. I need practice. I want to be on my feet. Grrr...

On the first day of baking in the sun, drenched in salty water, pulling out wedgies, and watching everyone else surf, I thought, this is just not for me.

(It's ok. You don't have to join my pity party. I was in Panama in 80-degree weather while back home 8 inches of snow fell. I adventured with moderate success despite my attitude. Really, what's there to complain about?!) Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and author, wrote in *Falling Upward*, "I have prayed for years for one good humiliation a day, and then I must watch my reaction to it." He explains that in the midst of adulation and praise, he got use to it.

His ego was stroked! But he didn't want it to destroy him. So he keeps praying for that one humiliation.

"What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets."

Jesus in Luke 6:26

The last day of retreat and yoga and afternoon naps and walks along the volcanic-black sand and deep conversations and replenishing food and company, I took up the board one more time. Mainly in companionship with new friends, but also as one refined, humiliated, and smoothed by the water (literally and figuratively), I went with nothing to prove...or at least not as much! Going slow...works.

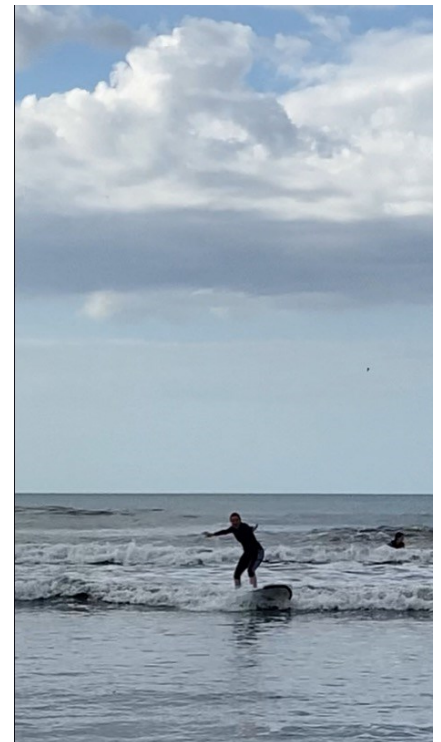
Lesson One: Go Slow

On dry land: It's practical and fantastical because I can easily put my body in the shape and flow that my imagination justifies in this visualization but even the acting, the intentional slow motion exaggeration, the focal points all have their limits. So go slow on land, in hindsight, is much more a philosophy, mantra and encouragement for the real thing as it is the actual peace of movement.

Turtle In the water:

1. Getting to standing position on the first try are like expectations that are unrealistic and too ambitious. Falling is not failing. But racing to get there will rarely feel like anything but failing.
2. Waiting for the right wave in active attention, discernment and wisdom needs partnering with pursuit. This yielding provides an important level of engagement even with cooperating & learning.
3. Moving into position is all I can control in an otherwise wily and wild environment. To be in sync with what I can control gives me a better chance to sync up with the ocean and other out-of-my-control elements.
4. At a pace that doesn't force opposing energies and goals to be at odds, the slowness attunes me to the deeper longing, pace, and flow of the inner world. I appreciated and recognized how my attitude changed, calm washed over, and satisfaction settled with a peace. I couldn't prove anything- didn't need to since the goal switched from dominating to dancing.

Humbly, Pastor Sarah





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Lent 2022 ~ Good Enough: Embracing the Imperfections of Life and Faith

Turning the calendar into March, invites us also to turn inward for a season of self-reflection with humility, grace, and wonder at the ordinary and gentle things during Lent. March 2- April 16 opens a time this year to consider how we can embrace “good enough” as God embraces us in infinite love. We can see the imperfections of life and faith as a lens through which we might see something deeper, wider, more whole...or we’ll honestly say, “I’ll have some more ice cream and Netflix.” The Gospel stories for the Lent season lure us into what is holy in the human and ordinary, even beautiful when broken.

Throughout the season we will host special services to live into the stories of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Please consider these services as a time and place for a meaningful rendezvous with God.

Ash Wednesday, March 2, 6-6:30pm: Open House ~ Receive ashes and a prayer while taking time in stillness to recognize your humanity in the eyes of a loving and gracious God.

Maundy Thursday, April 14, 6-7pm: Shared Meal & Hand Washing ~ Together in community, like the disciples and Jesus at the Last Supper, we will make bread, break bread, serve each other in hand washing, and remember the story of when Jesus experienced both great trust and betrayal. This simple meal and devotion will be in the Fellowship Hall.

Good Friday, April 15, 6-7pm: Worship of Lament ~ With candles and readings, we will retell the story of Jesus’ last hours on earth, in all his suffering, doubt, grief, and compassion.

Easter Sunday, April 17, 10:30am: Resurrection Celebration ~ Let flowers, songs, light, and awe gather us on this Easter morning for worship as we celebrate that Jesus Christ is alive ALWAYS, restoring beauty and love that invites us still to be amazed.

Other Ways to Engage:

- ♦ Participate in weekly worship in person and online
- ♦ Join the Wednesday Morning Bible Study
- ♦ Follow SteviUMC on Facebook for daily Lenten devotions
- ♦ Read *Good Enough: 40ish Devotions for a Life of Imperfections* by Kate Bowler and follow the individual reading plan at steviumc.org
- ♦ Share a story about how you have met God through this community of faith

"And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
- Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21



March 2022 Worship

Good Enough:

Embracing the Imperfections of Life and Faith

A Worship Design Studio Lent Series based on the work of Kate Bowler.

We live in a culture bent on definitions of a good life as continuous upward mobility—climbing ladders of prosperity with increasingly fabulous experiences that we can post to ever-more-likable social media accounts. We may comb the shelves of the self-help section in search of just the right formula to gain success. Perhaps we even gravitate towards spiritual leaders who promise great rewards if we only do “the right thing.” But life happens, right? Most times we are not moving upward but trying to repair the rung we’ve just slipped from. So what if we stopped climbing and started fertilizing, watering, and blooming right where we find ourselves? Welcome to a Lent of affirming a faith in which we are blessed, *regardless*, and where we can lean into embracing our “good enough” lives.

A Blessing for a Joyfully Mediocre Journey

*"Blessed are you who realize there is simply not enough—time, money, resources.
Blessed are you who are tired of pretending that raw effort is the secret to perfection.
It's not. And you know that now.*

*Blessed are you who need a gentle reminder that even now, even today,
God is here, and somehow, that is good enough."*

from Good Enough: 40-ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie.

March 2: Ash Wednesday: Perfectionism is impossible. Transformation isn't.

Jesus used the word “hypocrite” to describe those who put on airs in public to make people believe that they were holy, that their religious practice was... well... perfect. But their hearts were actually not in the practice, rather in the rewards that public approval could bring them—which is here today, often gone tomorrow. Sometimes it is life itself that robs us of the shiny, perfect life that we had planned for ourselves. A diagnosis. A broken heart. A lost opportunity. This Lent, rather than change for “the best,” we’ll seek to gain momentum one day at a time, “to reach for a faith that is never perfect, but good enough” (Bowler/Richie).

Scripture: "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." - Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

March 6: Ordinary Lives Can Be Holy

We find ourselves hungry for many things that we believe will bring us satisfaction. The devil lays a bet that Jesus will jump at the chance for glory, fame, and the quick fix. Who wouldn't? But Jesus keeps up the pithy one-liners long enough that the Tempster just has to slink away. What are the temptations that catch your ear, singing out promises that your life should be more special than it is? What if ordinary life is already holy—as is?

Scripture: Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" - Luke 4: 1-13





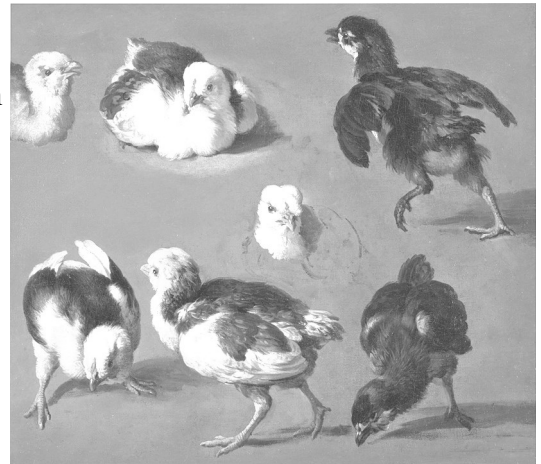
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March 13: So Much is Out of Our Control.

Even Jesus got dang frustrated when folks didn't behave as he would have liked. We probably aren't receiving death threats from Herod as Jesus was, but our wellbeing could be threatened by the idea that if we just try hard enough, are nice enough, say just the right thing, life will always go our way. We run around in so many directions, trying to herd the chicks into some imagined semblance of perfect formation (have you ever tried to herd chicks?). What if we could let go of needing all things and all people to be "just so" and instead learn to dance with the unfolding of that which is not ours to control?



Scripture: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'" - Luke 13: 31-35

March 20: Lots of Things Can be Medicine.

Oh, the shame of the unproductive fig tree. Cut it down! Make room for a more dedicated and hard-working fig tree! Who among us is living up to our fullest potential? The productivity experts these days can diagnose what's wrong and sell us the antidote in 3 amazing sessions for a low-low price that is guaranteed to turn our lives around. But the gardener offers an alternative medicine—nurture it slowly, letting it soak in the manure all around until it can get the good stuff out of it. Lying fallow and getting fertilized with laughter and tears at the crappy stuff of life can help heal what ails us and that is sometimes productive enough.

Scripture: Then [Jesus] told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" - Luke 13:1-9

March 27: We Often Believe We are the Problem

The Prodigal Son lives high on the hog and then famine strikes in the land of his dream vacation. And so he heads home, tail between his legs, expecting that he has lost it all. To his surprise, his extravagant failure is met with extravagant love and grace. We can be pretty hard on ourselves when things don't go as planned. Guilt, shame, and fear of being seen as a failure can leave us wallowing in the pig pen. Our delusions of a perfectible life keep us disappointed in ourselves. Truth is, life is a big ole risk every single day and facing whatever each day holds is not only good enough, but worthy of love and grace.

Scripture: "I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. - Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32





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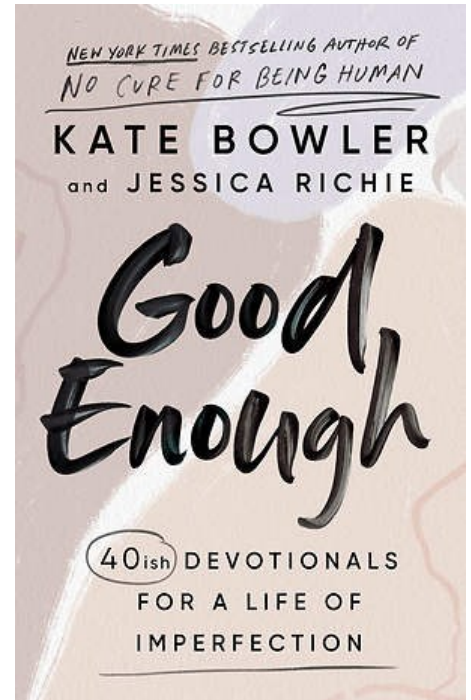
Wednesday Morning Bible Study ~ 10am in the After School Room

A gathering of people grounding their life in faith, fellowship, reflection and study meets each week at 10am on Wednesdays. Come at any time even if you don't have the materials because the conversation and prayer is rich.

March 2 begins a new Lent study:

Good Enough: 40ish Devotions for a Life of Imperfections by Kate Bowler. Bible Study will include a short Ash Wednesday service on March 2 and introduction in the Lent book followed by 6 weeks (March 2- April 13.) of discussion and sharing. Books available to buy.

"Written gently and with humor, Good Enough is permission for all those who need to hear that there are some things you can fix – and some things you can't. And it's okay that life isn't always better. In these gorgeously written reflections, Bowler and Richie offer fresh imagination for how truth, beauty, and meaning can be discovered amid the chaos of life." - Kate Bowler's website



March Liturgists

3/6– Howard Young

3/13-Vicki Vernon

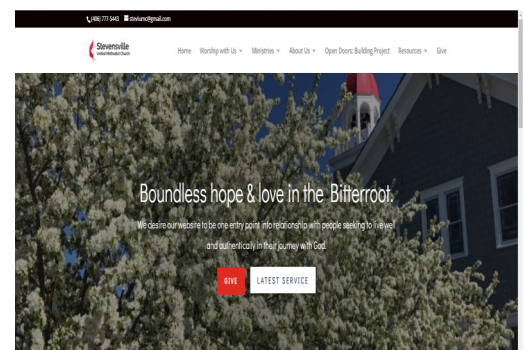
3/20–Molly Hackett

3/27-Jenna Wright

Checking the SUMC
Calendar online

Go to the Website:

www.steviumc.org





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Partnerships Abound at SELC!

Invigorating news concerning partnerships, grants and upcoming learning center programs greeted the SELC Board of Directors who met on Monday, February 21.

SELC began the process of partnering with Early Head Start, a state program of early education for children in need. Early Head Start works to provide low-income families with children, birth to age 3, with enhanced curriculum and social service connections. As their partners, teachers at SELC gain extra training while the center receives financial support for each child enrolled at SELC through EHS.



EARLY HEAD START
Learning Begins at Birth



SELC will also join the State of Montana Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. This is a continuous quality improvement program for early childhood education. The center earns stars by completing several levels of requirements designed to improve the quality of care. The stars qualify the center for quarterly financial incentives to be used for staff bonuses and quality improvements. The higher STARS rating is an attraction for parents looking for quality childcare and early education.

In March, SELC will mark 6 months of operation.. This is definitely a cause for celebration! The Board is planning a meet and greet appreciation dinner for all SELC staff on Monday, March 21. If any of our congregation would like to write a thank you or other note of appreciation, that would be wonderful! And much appreciated by our hard working teachers and staff. Your notes could be dropped off in the church office or mailed to the church.



A state-funded grant is due April 1 that can cover 40% of operating costs. Also, just around the corner will be summer along with a Summer Camp Program for kids K-4th grade. With the goal to be active in the community, students will go on field trips, serve in community projects, and explore the outdoors. Registration for the 20 full-time slots begins in March. Breakfast, lunch and snack will be included along with a quality summer camp experience.

At this time, we have 31 children enrolled. Two new teachers will join the staff this month as another teacher leaves for a new opportunity. We have names on a waiting list for kiddos and yet SELC still needs more team members to enhance the experience for everyone.

As a reminder, your SELC Board members from the church are John Fisher, Judie Fisher, Julie Ludington, and Pastor Sarah. Please reach out to any of us if you have questions or concerns, or are interested in volunteering.



SELC Mission Statement

“Where We Move Mountains”

At Sapphire Early Learning Center, we believe in the value and uniqueness of each child we serve. Our childcare experience is designed to promote each child’s own individual social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

We strive to bridge gaps and move mountains.

- Encouraging and supporting developmentally appropriate learning
- Building a foundation where children become life-long learners
- Empowering families through education and opportunities





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March 6th: Marking the Anniversary of Dreams and Reality

Let us delight in the incredible leap of faith that took place just 2 years ago when the people of SUMC said, “Yes, let’s see where this idea could take us!” The idea: a new building to house a learning center and ministry post. Now Sapphire Early Learning Center is celebrating 6 months in operation! Plus the facility has hosted community groups and church functions. Come enjoy fellowship, a shared gift, and stories together.

SELC Fundraising

Cookie Dough delights: in just the one-week fundraiser, SELC made \$1400.00 toward playground equipment. The goal of \$25,000 will cover brand-new, creative playing equipment for all ages. With a few other grants and fundraisers, the snow will melt into climbing, squealing delight outside. Thank you to all who contributed to this effort.



March UMW

March 19th at 10am

Mary Blankenbaker will be sharing about the Linda Massa Youth Home in Hamilton. There are many opportunities to offer help by volunteering or providing some basic necessities. The Home is also one of our community mission projects and Mary can share how our donations are utilized. **Please plan to attend.**
God Bless . Bev. Schneider

The Stevi UMC Book Club will meet March 13th at 3 PM.

Our reading choice this month is “Pony” by R. J. Palacio. It is a children’s book highly recommended for adults.
Maybe a nice change for some of the more serious books we have been reading!!
You are all invited to join us for a discussion for this book!!

Recycling Program

- Good News! Our church recycle program is expanding beyond plastics to also include aluminum cans.
- These will be collected by me, Lisa Nicholls, on the 4th Sunday of each month. Please drop them directly into the back of my black Ford Escape which will be located in the church parking lot, before and after service, tailgate open. (This plan seems a lot easier than dumping them in the Pastor’s garage!) Please make sure they’re empty and rinsed if they contained beer.
- The cans will be donated to AniMeals, a Missoula nonprofit organization dedicated to rescuing, feeding and healing cats. AniMeals is a No Kill Adoption Center. **Check out their website: www.AniMeals.com**



Ways to Contact Us

Office phone: 406-777-5443
Office email: steviumc@gmail.com
Pastor Sarah's email: revsarahmerchant@gmail.com
Church website: steviumc.org
Office hours: Tues, Thurs, Fri. 10:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.

Sapphire Early Learning Center 406-625-2660
Sapphireearlylearningcenter.com
director@sapphireearlylearningcenter.com

Worship Opportunities

In Person Worship: 10:30 AM

Live Streaming Worship at 10:30 on

YouTube Channel & Facebook.

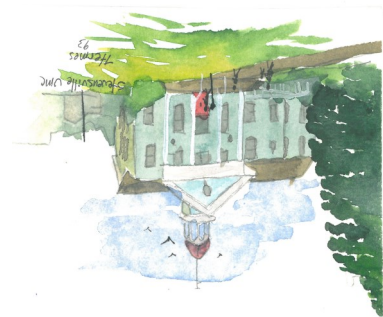
- o YouTube: Search for "Stevensville United Methodist Church." Look for the video that says "Live" in the bottom right corner.
- o Facebook: Search for "@Steviumc." Scroll till you see the service.

Nursery & Sunday School
For kids during worship service,
10:30-11:30am

Sapphire Early Learning Center is Hiring!

If you are passionate about learning and growing in the Early Childhood Education profession this may be the career for you. We are now accepting applications Pay is DOE. Early Childhood experience, High School diploma/ GED, CPR and First Aid are a plus, but not necessary. All training will be provided at no cost to you. Please contact SELC at 406-625-2660, director@sapphireearlylearningcenter.com

PANTRY PARTERS, Stevensville's Food Bank is looking for new volunteers to help with its tri weekly schedule. If you are interested in helping in this worthwhile community service, please contact Dawn Richard at [406-360-4637](tel:406-360-4637). Volunteers must be Covid vaccinated and willing to wear a mask in doors.



~ CHANGES OF ADDRESS ~
Bulk-rate mail is not forwarded.
If your address changes, if we have it wrong,
or if you no longer want to receive this newsletter,
please let us know.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

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The Glad Tider

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