



## What does it mean to love God for God's sake?

This question has percolated through my heart and mind for a good long time now, partly in the reflective moments of Lent and partly in the high stress, spiraling moments of life that call out for a stillness. Despite seeming so profound to me, this is the heart of Jesus' message and only commandments: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37) And even for Jesus and his first century listeners, this was old news because he was quoting the Torah, the Jewish scriptures of Deuteronomy. Still even the things we know and hear and even repeat need time to take root and be the reference point in a fully integrated way.



### Does another angle help?

The opposite might be an angle to begin unpacking. If I love God for my sake, there's an implied return on investment, a blessing that I'll get. Without deeper care of theology, this reasoning can lead to seeking out "The Vending Machine God"- I put in and get something out. Or a little sweeter perhaps but just as of the mark, "The Santa Claus God"- if I'm good (i.e. love), I'll get what I want. Perhaps more innocently, in comparison to God's love, I can only love so much so loving for my sake doesn't compare my finite capacity to God's infinite capacity to love. I'm pardoned for the amount and depth of love I can give love. Finally, if I use this equation with me at the end, I can judge myself against others to who may or may not live up to my standards of what good love is. This judgment can also circle back to me and make my efforts about meeting perfection in love. Clearly this misses the boat altogether and seems to leave God entirely out of the process.

### To love God for God's sake

I can only humbly begin to approach this because I only know in part and also I suspect there's something unique and intimate for each person. First, I see this intention being clearly centered on God. Yes, dear one with your ego and cute shoes and degrees, you're not on stage. It's not even your stage. Centered on God doesn't make God unreachable or indifferent like some powerful dude watching us grovel. By virtue of God's nature of infinite love and mercy, the centering is a movement by us toward God. In this reorientation, we become sincere and can recognize the greatest act we can live ever is to love God, crying out with all we are. Second, loving God becomes an experience of the divine in you being one with the divine of God and all things. This may sound mysterious, mystical, so far from reality, and yet the subtlety of it can be just a taste of what you have experienced or know to be true. We may desire this oneness always but then there's dinner to make or a meeting to attend. So loving God for God's sake gives us the motivation, longing, and even assurance that we can ask that this thread to God's heart not be broken in daily life. We're asking that we stay pointed in the right direction toward God (rather than "off the mark," the definition of sin.)



**A little sincerity goes a long way, especially in love.  
May it blossom in you for God.**

Pastor Sarah Merchant



# THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

May 2022

## Easter People! What a Celebration!



I am ever grateful for the many hands who helped make Holy Week so meaningful, community-connected, and beautiful. Thanks to Cammie, Sara, Bob & Dusty for introducing our kids to the Jewish Seder Meal observed over Passover during the Palm Sunday service. Thanks to Beth for delicious bread to build tradition, break bread together, and send us on our way remembering- remembering important moments of the year and Jesus in our midst. Thanks Choir and Julie for stunning pieces on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Thanks Gretchen, Sara, and all who sponsored flowers to beautify the church. Thanks to the cooks and egg-hunt helpers for a fun time of fellowship for all generations. Thanks to Paul and Rollie for your technical care.

## THANK YOU ALL OF YOU!

Thanks for celebrating this Easter after what seems like two years of Lent. We are an engaged community with so many gifts, passion, service and hope. And we are a village beyond these walls that continue to share and be Good News. May you continue to be revitalized and encouraged by Christ's presence in your life, naming you as good enough and trustworthy servants to remember and serve.

In gratitude and celebration, Pastor Sarah



All Easter pictures, courtesy of Sara Malo. Thank you Sara!





## May 2022 Worship

### The Call of God: A Transformation of Heart

From Easter Morning, Christ Jesus called people to share the GOOD NEWS! God is alive! Death does not have the final say! Love and justice, mercy and compassion provide real ways forward, real ways to life abundant even in the current circumstances. Sharing this Good News takes on various expressions so we discover in this Eastertide season God's call for each of us in the how, why, for who and by who, and why even in the uncertain, surprising, or inescapable realities of life. May we be emboldened to let our lights shine in Christ for all the world.

#### May 1: Called to Lead, But What about Fishing?!

##### Communion Sunday

Throughout Jesus' ministry with the disciples, Peter stayed close by-watching, waiting, wanting, probing, learning. And then, at that crucial moment, he denied everything. Still, Jesus had called him to lead and in these post-resurrection encounters with the Risen Christ, Jesus tells Peter again that he is the disciple called to "tend my sheep." Is Peter trustworthy? Is he able to listen? Does he have the heart to drop his fishing net for a web of benevolence and obedience? Peter says, "Yes!" three times, one for each time he denied. He took his calling to Love Christ to heart and thus could lead from there.

##### Scripture: John 21:1-19

**Prayer in Song:** Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same? Will you let my love be shown?  
Will you let my name be known, will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?  
Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name. Let me turn and follow you and never be the same. In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show. Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me. Amen. (*"The Summons"* by John L. Bell & Graham Maule)



#### May 8: Called to Compassion, Even After Death

One way God calls us is through particular activities and relationships. Do this. Go here. Be with them. Still Apostle Paul reminds us in the famous scripture used at weddings so often, "I may do and say all the right things but without love, I'm nothing." (Sarah's paraphrase of 1 Cor. 13) Tabitha exemplifies this truth as her life and actions touched so many, especially the outcast widows, but it was her compassion and generosity that made her work and relationships come to life...made her come to life. The call of God holds specificity, especially in the how.

##### Scripture: Acts 9:36-43

**Prayer in Song:** Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you. These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love, all these are neighbors to us and you. Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you. Loving puts us on our knees, silently washing their feet, this is the way we should live with you. Amen. (*"Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love"* by Thomas Colvin)



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May 2022



## May 15: Who Called? All Called...To a New Heart

The book of Acts utilizes literary techniques like parallel stories and repetition to capture the essence of the message. Through this scripture, we hear the message that is repeated throughout the Gospel, Prophets, and Hebrew Scriptures. Who matters to God? All! Who are called to know God? All! Who are called to share God's love? All! How? Each one loves what God loves. This is a calling of heart transformation for ALL.

### Scripture: Acts 11:1-18

**Prayer in Song:** Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me. Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord. And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me, the joy of Thy salvation and renew a right spirit within me. (*"Create in Me a Clean Heart" by Keith Green*)

## May 22: Calling is True Even If Path is Murky

Apostle Paul followed the spiritual insight to seek out people, even those who lived far away. He wasn't certain about who or why that place, but he remained obedient. Along the way, the calling wove another beautiful and powerful experience into the story of telling the Good News as Paul met Lydia. Even though the path seemed murky, meeting Lydia and her worshipping household confirmed that God uses even the process to bring life abundant to all through welcome and open hearts.

### Scripture: Acts 16:9-15

**Prayer in Song:** As I went down in the river to pray, studying about that good ol' way and who shall wear the starry crown, Good Lord, show me the way. O sisters, let's go down, let's go down, come on down. O sisters, let's go down, down in the river to pray. Amen. (*"Down to the River to Pray," an African-American spiritual*)



## May 29: Called to See Like God

Apostle Paul and Silas praised God with songs into the night, even after an earthquake shook their shackles free. Why? Why didn't they run for it? Why were they so joyful in prison? Why were they even in prison? Despite their cultural context, they still knew how to see like God- to see people for their dignity and worth beyond position (or lack thereof), wealth (or complete absence), and role to society (or unnamed and underappreciated). To be called by God requires a lot less skill and much more heart, obedience, and true desire to see as the Caller sees. Are our eyes open to see injustice just as Paul saw 2000 years ago?

### Scripture: Acts 16:16-34

**Prayer in Song:** Open my eyes, Lord. Help me to see your face. Open my ears, Lord. Help me to hear your voice. Open my heart, Lord. Help me to love like you. And the first shall be last, and our eyes are opened, and we'll hear like never before, and we'll speak in new ways, and we'll see God's face in places we've never known. I live within you, deep in your heart, O Love. I live within you. Rest now in me. Amen (*"Open My Eyes" by Jesse Manibusan*)





# THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

May 2022

## The REAL SUMC Spring Clean-up

- ♦ Get your rakes, spades and knee pads ready....the return of the annual spring church grounds spruce up is coming. , on May 14th at 10:00 am after the United Methodist Men meeting. Along with the usual clean up this year, we will be doing some furniture rearranging.
- ♦ We will need a crew of 3-4. Shape up the SELC playground in for the kids to get outside and enjoy the spring weather.
- ♦ Declutter the School-aged class room in preparation for the summer program. *Lots to do this year, so please put this on you calendar.*



**United Methodist Men  
2nd Saturday of each month Come for breakfast!**

**MAY United Methodist Women  
May 21st at 10am**

**Program to be announced. Please plan to attend. God Bless, Bev Schneider**



### **Music on the Lawn**

**Summer Concert Series featuring musicians from Bitterroot Valley & University of Montana.**

**Fridays, June 3, July 15, Aug. 12 at 7pm.**

**All concerts are outdoors so bring a lawn chair, blanket, even picnic to enjoy.**

**Free will offerings support local organizations.**

**The Stevi UMC Book club will meet May 8th at 3pm in the Fellowship Hall**

**We are reading "How It Looks Going Back" by Doris Knowles Pulis. It's a fun read about living in the Yaak area, in Northwestern Montana during the winter.**

### **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](http://www.AniMeals.com)**





# THE GLAD TIDER

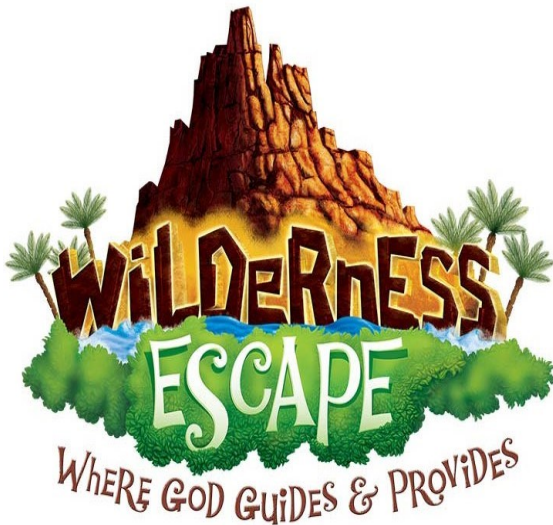
Stevensville United Methodist Church

May 2022

## 2022 United Methodist Summer Camps in Montana

Luccock Park Camp is searching for employees for the summer 2022 season  
Contact Steve Tongue, [luccockmanager@gmail.com](mailto:luccockmanager@gmail.com) for any questions about the position or the application.

Flathead Lake United Methodist Camp ~ Open year round  
Physical: 21339 Methodist Camp Road, Rollins, MT 59931  
Camp Phone/Reservations: 406-844-3483



### Vacation Bible School: A Wilderness Escape!

Open for students ages 5-12, free of charge.

June 20-23, 9-11:30am. Special BBQ on Thursday at 11:30.

Join Moses and friends through the desert to discover God's AMAZING LOVE that never stops.

**It even springs out of rocks!**

Registration open now. Contact [steviumc@gmail.com](mailto:steviumc@gmail.com)

Volunteers needed to host, provide snacks, and lead crafts & games. Contact Gina Farnham at 406-426-0799



### Kid's Summer Camp at Sapphire Early Learning Center

Begins June 13, Monday-Friday from 8am to 4pm

For students age 5-12

Activities include Storytelling, painting, Arts & Crafts & Local Adventures

For mor info & registration visit  
[sapphireearlylearningcenter.com](http://sapphireearlylearningcenter.com)



A world of children is a world of delight! Sapphire Early Learning Center is hiring teachers, Part-time and full-time positions are available. We train you and offer continued support for you. We are looking for committed people ages 19 through 99 who are able to manage small classrooms of children with another team member. Call Sapphire Early Learning Center at 406-625-2660 to learn more.





# THE GLAD TIDER

Stevensville United Methodist Church

May 2022

## Welcoming the Stranger: A Study of Compassion in Difference

From the heart of the scriptures is a welcome to all, especially strangers from foreign lands, different backgrounds and unique experiences especially determined by race and ethnicity. As diverse humans, this can describe each of us and our ancestors in some way. How might hearts and relationships be transformed with new or refined desire and tools to *welcome the stranger*?

The curriculum comes to us from Pastor AJ Bush as part of her doctoral program.

Join Wednesday Morning Bible Study at 10am to be a part of this important study.



## Busy Bunnies



Check the Stevensville United Methodist Calendar online

Go to the Website:  
[www.steviumc.org](http://www.steviumc.org)  
Click on Calendar



### May Liturgists

5/1 Sara Malo  
5/8 Dave Maclay-Schulte  
5/15 Janice Belcher  
5/22 Gretchen Spiess  
5/29 Dean Diers

### May Greeters

5/1 Vicki Vernon  
5/8 Lenny /Karen Johnson  
5/15 Bob/ Cammie Edgar  
5/22 Dave / Julie McGarvey  
5/29 still open

## Ways to Contact Us

Office phone: 406-777-5443  
Office email: [steviumc@gmail.com](mailto:steviumc@gmail.com)  
Pastor Sarah's email: [revsarahmerchant@gmail.com](mailto:revsarahmerchant@gmail.com)  
Church website: [steviumc.org](http://steviumc.org)  
Office hours: Tuesday through Friday 9am to 12pm  
Sapphire Early Learning Center 406-625-2660  
[Sapphireearlylearningcenter.com](http://Sapphireearlylearningcenter.com)  
[director@sapphireearlylearningcenter.com](mailto:director@sapphireearlylearningcenter.com)

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

## Worship Opportunities

**In Person Worship:** 10:30 AM

**Live Streaming Worship at 10:30** on YouTube Channel & Facebook

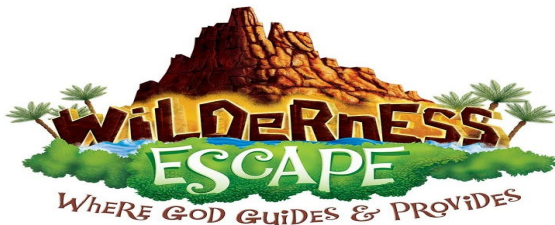
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~ CHANGES OF ADDRESS ~  
Bulk-rate mail is not forwarded.  
If your address changes, if we have it wrong,  
or if you no longer want to receive this newsletter,  
please let us know.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Stevensville United Methodist Church  
216 College  
Stevensville MT 59870

**The Glad Tider**

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