



The Glad Tider

Pastoral Pondering: The Courage of Love, Lament, and Hope

MATTHEW 5:3

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.” (TR. NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION)

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO KNOW THEIR NEED, FOR THEIRS IS THE GRACE OF HEAVEN.” (TR. JOHN PHILLIP NEWELL)

I have been reveling in and holding tightly to the recent words of Dr. Vivek Murthy about love as a strength which he spoke to in an interview with Krista Tippett with On Being and an essay entitled “Letter to a Young Activist During Troubled Times” by Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés which speaks to a robust and grounded love that guides. Both of these deep thinkers and prophets of our time have the ability and even courage to name how things are. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy speaks to loneliness as a public health crisis, a truth that he sees born out in the conversations he has with people all over the United States and the statistics brought forth from research and doctors visits. Dr. Estes acknowledges fear and uncertainty, a lament that has no answer or certainty but still anguish, helplessness and deep longing.

These voices and their sense of how it affects us individually and collectively as a society and community echo the cries of the ancient prophets- those who weep over the people’s distraction or purposeful neglect of what is good and whole; those who cry out that justice and mercy and humble footsteps after God be the way for all people and societies; those who long for water to run down in abundance, not just to flood the land as it washes over a parched ground, but be absorbed for nourishment, new growth, and healing.

It’s possible to say that now more than ever before we need that awareness spoken with clarity and truthfulness. Such awareness beckons from within a mutual awareness that may evoke lament, desperation, grief, and heartache that we will often rush through for sunshine and ease and joy. Is it possible to sit for a moment and be in the discomfort, even despair? Maybe you try the practice of crafting your own lament by reading Psalm 42 and writing your own version of its cries and longings as you would name them in your own metaphors and images... This is an invitation to your soul.

It’s also possible to say that there is no time like now to recognize the hope and calling for courage to step into the tragic gap of our longings and realities with a kind word, stance of curiosity, a willingness to engage where it has felt fraught.

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Dr. Murthy and Dr. Estés evoke a hope that such small acts not only work and are possible, but they can happen by and through anyone: today in a 15-minute conversation or an attention offered without distraction of a device. The hope finds substance/essence in love, deep wisdom, courageous showing up, and listening with trust to the inner teacher of yourself and the one you're with. A certain compassion is possible when lament is acknowledged and cared for and hope through faith lifts your eyes. That compassion might look like a spark of love that encourages another one to shine. The compassion might give you permission to be a floating lantern that ventures out into the unpredictable waters where it trusts other "able souls" to meet and join the effort of lighting a new or uncharted way.

In any of these efforts of being true to your soul, building self-awareness, courageously loving, lamenting and hoping, and cultivating compassion, you are blessed in your emptiness to be filled by God's grace.

The peace of the resurrected Christ be
with you today and always,

Pastor Sarah Merchant



“

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

Giving frees us from the
familiar territory of our own
needs by opening our mind
to the unexplained worlds
occupied by the needs of
others.

BARBARA BUSH



Summer Worship

Two services June 11- July 23, 9am & 10:30

Beginning June 11, worship opportunities will encompass the outdoors and indoors, the contemplative and the traditional, the early and the later. All are welcome to encounter God when and where fits your soul. Child care will be available at both times inside, though young people are welcome to chalk color or swing while others worship outside. Please bring a lawn chair for the 9am service.

The 9am service will be a meditative gathering that includes songs, prayer, scripture and a “Third Thing.” This third thing- a song, writing, image, short mediation, or scripture- will invite a focus of thought and reflection that can be quiet enough for the shy soul to emerge and speak its deep wisdom. Some days we will receive the “Third Thing” and reflect in silence or writing for several minutes. Other times we will be invited (not a share or die moment) to share with one or two other people what emerges. The message for the morning will embrace the wisdom within you as much as any shared by the pastor, prayers or music offered out loud.

The 10:30 service will look similar to the current worship expressions with children’s time, sermon, congregational songs and prayer. Similar themes will cross over from the 9am service to 10:30. In June we will conclude our series: Resurrection Unbounded: Reclaiming the Thrown Away. In July we will explore Jesus’ two commandments: Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, body and soul and Love your neighbors as yourself. Songs from musicals, operas, or anthems will ring forth as a guiding expression toward oneness with God.

Calendar Highlights for Worship:

- June 4 will be one indoor service at 10:30 and include communion.
- July 30 will be one service OUTSIDE at 10:30 with a community Potluck Picnic following a celebratory worship highlighting Vacation Bible School: The Tree of Healing.



With All You Are, Love God and Neighbor

Worship Series June 11-July 30

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." ~ Mark 12:30-31

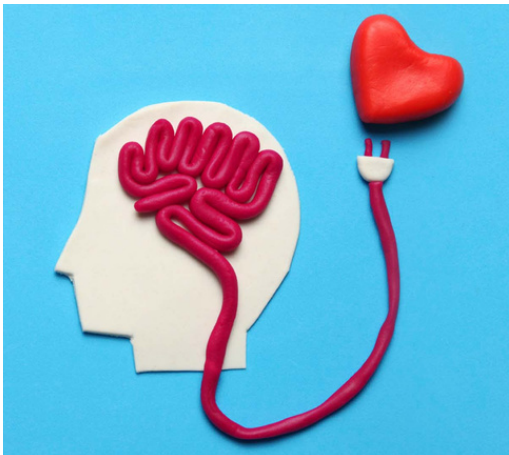
Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ urged all who follow him and want to live his teachings to do so with two simple commands to guide the Way: Love God. Love your neighbor. They are simple because they are straight forward without a hidden agenda. But many would say they are not easy. Even during his lifetime, people asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Do I really have to love everyone or just the neighbors I like or that agree with me.) Likewise, how does one love with ALL our heart, mind, soul and strength? Uncovering the depth of Jesus' call and modes by which followers can live into this call can encourage individual and communal fidelity to the act of Love.

In this two-month series, we will unpack these two commandments through the arts- music, movies, and musical theatre. Likewise, this series invites us to live out the commandments in life together in Bible Study, fellowship at Summer Concerts, contemplative practices, shared excursions of discovery and fun, and service particularly with Vacation Bible School.

With all you are, come, see, and love.

June 11: "With All Your Mind"

Science, spiritual practices and our own bodies can remind us over and over again that we can only do one thing at a time. Multi-tasking usually diminishes the effort and product. Likewise, it leaves our brains overly tired and less satisfied. When Jesus called his disciples to follow him, he not only wanted their physical bodies to walk alongside him, he wanted their minds to be unencumbered, undistracted by all the other claims that could grab their attention and devotion. What do we gain with a mind only focused on God, what God loves, and how God calls us to follow such ways? How are communities and relationships enhanced with this single-mindedness? Let us explore how we might love God "with all our mind" through the traditions of artists and poets.



June 18: “With All Your Strength”

Strength manifests itself most obviously in the body- the fortitude, endurance and might that dictate every move. Likewise, the absence of this strength can feel and result in very real changes in daily routine. This strength and weakness exist in how we enact our character and live out choices. And here, according to Jesus and the Apostle Paul, sometimes that which seems weak or vulnerable is the strongest. Paul experienced many afflictions from person health and societal disapproval that could have left him “weak,” but God assured him, through it all, God’s strength flowed through him. When we offer all our strength, how does God get to flow through our body, behaviors and choices, even and especially when others might judge those actions as wrong or “weak” in character or effort? Through the music of Ragtime: The Musical sung by Arielle Nachtigall, we’ll explore this call to “love with all your strength.”



SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13,
2 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10

June 25: “With All Your Heart”

Pentecost is part of our spirit still even if it’s not the day of new reckoning. In fact, during the seemingly hum-drum days of hot summer or regular routine, we might stop short to say- is this really what life is about? Is this my purpose? How are my thoughts helping or distracting me in the ways I am meant to live? As we explore what it means to “love God with all your heart,” we come to listen to our personality and how it uniquely loves God. Summer is a great time for books and movies, and our illustration for this week can inspire both spiritual reflection as well as new idea for reading. John Irving’s book A Prayer for Owen Meany and the movie adaptation called “Simon Birch” will offer guidance in the journey of claiming our purpose in spite of stubbornness or doubt.



SCRIPTURE: ACTS 9: 1-12, 15-19

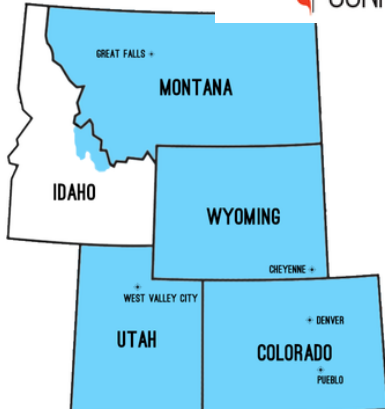
July 2: “With All Your Soul”

Oh the soul! It can seem like a rascal that is full of passion and longing. And yet, to attend to it, to hear it, to even know its presence, the soul needs quiet, still, gentle and safe invitation. Parker Palmer describes the soul as a “wild animal,” easily spooked. It is this very space, quality and voice within us that is the closest to the infinite essence of God. The Psalmist writes, “the deep cries out to deep.” How can we let our soul speak and God’s very desire planted within us to take shape in daily life, the distractions and delicacies mixed together? Cheyenne Brown will illuminate some beauty and subtly by singing “My Feet May Take a Little While” by Errollyn Wallen.



SCRIPTURE: PSALM 42:1-8,
MATTHEW 10:26-31

Mountain Sky Annual Conference- You're Invited



Looking for a representative for Annual Conference June 23-26. The in-person experience is held in Colorado Springs, but a layperson could join Pastor Sarah and others in our area for the Zoom experience. Please contact Pastor Sarah.

Annual Conference is a connectional meeting for United Methodists to order the church and fellowship. The term “holy conferencing” coined by John Wesley reminds us that the work of churches is the work of God moving and acting in the Body of Christ, each group & individual in its unique ways to share the Good News and be transformed by and into God’s love. Even our meetings and organizational life has purpose when it commits to embodying God’s love in its conduct, policies, and witnessing to the life, death and resurrection realities that exist in the church.

The Unified Board

Trustee's Report: Clean-up went very well, and there are still some ongoing projects. The cell phones for the church and the parsonage have arrived and are installed. Board discussed the long term plan for our church service’s streaming service, discussion will continue next month with help from Paul Ludington. The Facility Use agreement will be approved next month.

VBS will be held July 24th-27th, the theme is “The Tree of Health”. If you would like to help please call Gina Farnham 406-426-0799.

The Care Team now consists of Shepherding, Lay Leadership, and the Prayer Chain.

SELG: There will be 55 students enrolled by June 30th including full enrollment of the summer program.

Two worship services will be held during the summer and summer concerts are in the works.



Greeters & Liturgists

We are seeking Greeters and Liturgists to help weekly with worship. Beginning in May this sign up started through the website **sign up genius**, which helps you pick a date, and reminds you when your Sunday is coming up. To sign up:

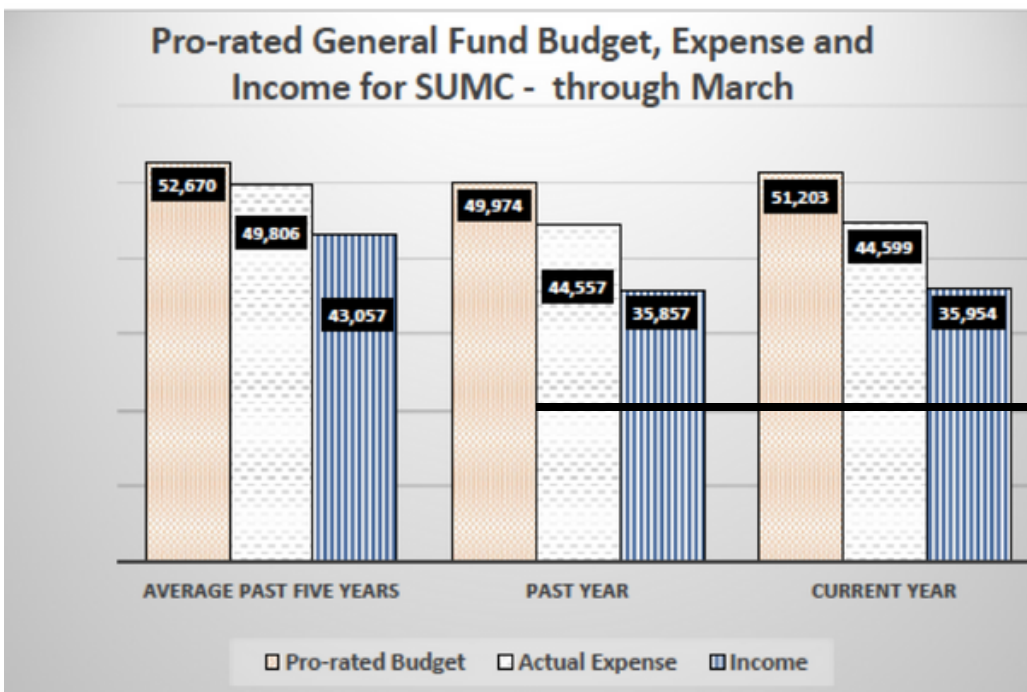
1. Click the link in the Monday or Friday email
2. Select the date(s) you would like to serve.
3. Enter your email and finalize the sign up.

If you have any problems signing up or would like Hannah to sign up for you, she can be reached at steviumc@gmail.com or 706-755-9868. Updated directories of engaged people within the community of SUMC are ready for May Day!

Finance Report following April 2023 Giving

Income-Expense to Date		Month > 4		April			
	Annual Budget	Pro-rated Budget	Actual Expense	Percent of Total Budget Spent	Income	Percent of Total Budget Given	(Deficit) or Surplus
Average Past Five Years	158,011	52,670	49,806	31.5%	43,057	27.2%	(6,749)
Past Year	152,583	49,974	44,557	29.2%	35,857	23.5%	(8,699)
Current Year	153,610	51,203	44,599	29.0%	35,954	23.4%	(8,645)

In efforts to keep the congregation up to date on the current financial situation, please consider the following graphs and reports. Thank you for your generosity and consider how you can be part of the broad and robust ministry at SUMC through your financial giving.



We had a better giving month in April but still fell behind expenses by \$2300. This brings our total deficit in the general fund to -\$8655. As the graphs indicate, this is consistent with where we were at this point last year and is above the deficit average of the last five years.

Service Opportunity: Kitchen Help at SELC June 20-29

The cook for Sapphire Early Learning Center is going on vacation and family leave for two weeks in June. Help with simple meals (Breakfast, Lunch and snack) would be greatly appreciated.

Assistance is needed for Monday- Friday, June 20-29, to serve 60+ kids and staff. Training will be given at the time of service. The time commitment is about 2 hours of prep and 1 hour following the meal. Breakfast is served at 8:30, lunch at 11:30 and snack can be prepared in advance of snack after lunch clean up is finished.



DIVERSITY SERVICE

we are all created in God's image

Monday, June 12 at 7pm at Faith Lutheran Church, 171 Lewis Lane, Hamilton MT



CO-SPONSORS:

St. Paul's Episcopal Stevensville United Methodist
Faith Lutheran Corvallis United Methodist

This ecumenical worship service invites all people to a spiritual grounding event that uplifts the dignity and sacred worth of each person in honor of Pride Month. Pastors who serve in the Bitterroot Valley, including Pastor Sarah Merchant, will participate together to offer hospitality and God's generous spirit of love through worship. Stevensville UMC joins Corvallis UMC, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Faith Lutheran Church as sponsors for this service.

Diversity Service ~ Monday, June 12 at 7pm

The Thoughtful Christian

As Christian believers, we are confronted daily by radically differing claims of what it means to be a Christian in contemporary America. We've all pondered the competing visions, the earnest explanations, and the shrill voices telling us what we must believe if we are to call ourselves Christian. What do you think? What is The Lord whispering in your ear?

The Wednesday Study Group will begin a new session this summer looking at and discussing some of the range of issues, ideas and opinions that fill the news reports and our mailboxes. Our summer sessions begin on June 21st at 10 AM in the sanctuary.

The first couple of sessions will talk about the Christian revival that began this past February at Asbury University, and the resulting worldwide impact. Our initial point of reference will be an article in the April 3rd edition of TIME magazine entitled "Christian Revival's Unique Opportunity", by Aaron Griffith.

Contact Dean or Joey Diers for a copy of the article and the questions to begin the study. After that we will move to other issues that confront us. All points of view are welcome! The only requirement to participation is an open heart, an open mind.

In Christ,
DEAN DIERS



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
Stevensville United Methodist Church

July 24-27, 2023
9am-11:30am



**Stevensville United Methodist
Church presents**

2023 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

June 9: Indoor Concert featuring
7pm music for strings by female
composers. Doors open at 6:45.

July 21: "Sing a Little Song of Summer"
7pm Outdoor Concert featuring
professional local vocalists.

August 18: Outdoor Concert featuring
7:30pm Big Band of Missoula.

Outdoor concerts in July & August on the front lawn are
wonderful opportunities to bring a picnic and a friend
along with your lawn chairs or blankets.

**We will take up a good will donation to pay the
musicians and support local ministries.**

Coming Soon

STEVENSVILLE UMC APPLE DUMPLINGS

PREP YOUR PEELERS
POUND YOUR PASTRY
PACK THE POCKETS

***THIS TRADITION JUST TASTES
SO GOOD.***

RETURNING FOR A LAST BLAST TOUR
THIS OCTOBER FOR SCARECROW FESTIVAL
***DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO
CREATE & EXPERIENCE THE
BEST OF THE BITTERROOT
MORE DETAILS OF HOW TO PARTICIPATE
COMING SOON***



Communion as Community

This sacrament of grace is a gift to all of us. Typically we celebrate
communion on the 1st Sunday of the Month.



Did you know?

These flowering crab trees on the south lawn were
planted in memory of Ben Longbottom's mother,
Ruby, long time pianist and organist for the church.

Details about Pastor Sarah's Renewal Leave:

Aug. 1-Oct. 15, 2023



The lush green grass uplifts my spirit and excites me anew for my upcoming Renewal Leave. I'm ever grateful for the permission, support and extra effort to make this time away from the day to day duties of being a pastor fruitful and rejuvenating. The book I recently read, *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest: From Sabbath to Sabbatical and Back Again* by Ruth Haley Barton, states that the gift of rest 1 day a week and in sabbatical every 6-7 years is a gift from God. I'm looking forward to unwrapping it even as I commit anew to the weekly practice of sabbath rest.

Some have asked what is in store for this time.

For two weeks in August, my family and I will make a big loop through Washington and Oregon, staying at United Methodist camps on the Oregon coast and at Lake Wallowa. This will be a new area of exploration for all of us but just the right amount of play and relaxation near and in the water, in the mountains and with sand for castles.

As the school year begins, I pray to fully commit to a presence of mind, heart and support as mom and wife. I plan to do activities that spark joy and offer rest including reading, writing, watercolor painting, taking long walks/hikes with my dog, and napping. I might do a day trip or two to explore this beautiful land of MT.

Finally at the end of September I will fly to Ireland for 2 weeks. The lush green grass of Montana in May brings to mind this pilgrimage through the Emerald Isle. I plan to use this time as a spiritual quest to become more aware of the mystical and grounding attributes of the Holy. Likewise, this will be a trip of continuing education as I learn how to lead pilgrimages and curate experiences of inner growth and trust.

The efforts by Ben, Sara and Dean for worship and a newly formed Care Team are instrumental in the ongoing health and vitality of SUMC. Even upon my return, I trust this congregation to claim its role as a partner in ministry. Thank you for your commitment to me in this time of renewal and commitment toward each other to love and strengthen each other in mind, body and spirit. (Romans 12:10)



Peace, Pastor Sarah

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: Tuesday through Friday 9am to 12pm
Sapphire Early Learning Center 406-625-2660
Sapphireearlylearningcenter.com
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



ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Stevensville United Methodist Church
216 College
Stevensville MT 59870

The Glad Tider