



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR – by Juhee Lee

My beloved Haven family,

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” - Ephesians 4:15-16

We are in the midst of spring. As you know, I enjoy indoor and outdoor plants. In my yard, there are many different flowers and in my sunroom various succulents are growing, which grants me a feeling of God’s providence. I hope God rejuvenates your body, mind, and soul again this spring.

I believe many of you might have had growing pains in your legs when you were kids, although I never experienced such pain because my legs did not grow as much as others. Every form of life that grows must go through painful moments. This universal principle should also be applied to our church community as long as we are the body of Christ, for as an organic life form we should keep growing. Therefore, we may also have growing pains in various forms for different reasons in the process of growth, whether spiritually, structurally, or in number. When that happens, what shall we do in Christ?

We need to remember that we are parts of Christ’s body, connected to each other. Each part of the body has its unique, indispensable role in the continual growth of the body. Thus, each of us should be aware of the importance of the others’ existence and roles and care for them in the love of Christ. I believe our God will help us become one body and one family in Him by getting us through inevitable growing pains with His binding grace. When we abide in the love of Christ, that is, when we love and support each other in solidarity, I believe our God expands our joy and provides new hope for the ongoing growth of our church. Amen.



Peace,

Pastor Juhee Lee

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Mission Statement:

We are a haven for those who would seek to know God better while spreading the love of Jesus Christ.



Together in Christ

A letter from Bishop Devadhar

May 1, 2021

"... Reconciliation is a journey; a long and rocky one, and few of us reach its destination in this life time. But it is a ministry that Jesus gives to us, and for that reason it is an indispensable part of Christian discipleship." — Archbishop of Canterbury website

Beloved in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

May is a month of many celebrations: National Day of Prayer, Mother's Day/Festival of the Christian Home, Ascension of the Lord, Pentecost, Heritage Day, Aldersgate Day, Trinity Sunday, Memorial Day, and countless graduations. Each celebration is unique and meaningful!

As we continue to live amid uncertainty and fear, it is important to pause and reflect on what it means to be people of the Pentecost with a United Methodist heritage. To guide your reflection, may I encourage you to watch the 2020 Heritage Sunday sermon titled "Through it All" by Rev. Dr. Alfred Day III, former General Secretary of the Commission on Archives and History.

This sermon on "the power of through" offers us hope in these days of being weary of physical distancing, our church's long struggle with differing theologies on sexuality, and the constant realities of economic disparity, gun violence, and racism.

Though we may all have been critical of our beloved church at one point or another, Dr. Day reminds us of the beauty and power of our heritage.

He says, "... many contemporary United Methodists asked to describe the denomination will likely use words like stuck or divided. I want to introduce these people to the power of 'through' because the sweep of history shows the Spirit moving through whatsoever and whosoever moving through old brokennesses to new lands of hope and promise."

As I was writing this letter this week, the Council of Bishops was meeting. The first day of our meeting included a very insightful and heartwarming experience as several bishops shared what their conferences are doing to end racism.

I had the opportunity to share our painful discovery at Wellspring UMC and what we have been doing in New England to bring healing and change. Acknowledging that ending the pandemic of racism will take a concerted effort from all people of God, we recognize we have a long way to go, but as our United Methodist history shows, we can overcome!

How can we move on toward perfection as good United Methodists and do something specific to help eradicate racism? In my search for an answer, I came across the website for the Anglican Church (the church from which our founders John and Charles Wesley came).

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a five-week training program, "Difference," exploring how Christians can be peacemakers.

Archbishop Justin Welby rightly points out, "Reconciliation is not the ending of all difference, but the transformation of how we deal with difference."

These five 90-minute sessions are being provided at no cost and include films of stories from Christians facing conflict, Bible study of how Jesus dealt with difference and division, interactive exercises, prayer and discussion.

It is my hope and prayer that during the seasons of Easter and Pentecost, at least 10 people from our Conference would volunteer to be trained and upon completion, lead study groups on reconciliation in our districts. If you are interested, please contact Brenda Borchers at the episcopal office, who will register our participants as a group. If you would like further information, please visit <https://difference.rln.global/run-the-course>

As your episcopal leader, I am grateful to each and every one of you for your faithfulness and for being part of the church in these challenging, yet hopeful, days! Together we can make a difference in our churches, community, nation, and world.

As Archbishop Welby says, "When the church is working it is the most mind-bogglingly, amazingly, extraordinarily beautiful community on earth. It heals, it transforms, it loves, and it changes society."

Let us strive to be that church today and always.

In Christ's love,



Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

Transformed by the Holy Spirit, united in trust,
we will **boldly** proclaim Christ to the world.

The Knot Prayer

- Author Unknown -

Dear God,

Please untie the knots that are in my mind, my heart, and my life.

Remove the have nots, cannots, and the do nots.

Erase the will nots, may nots, might nots that may find a home in my heart.

Release me from the could nots, would nots, and should nots that obstruct my life.

And most of all, dear God, I ask that you remove from my mind, my heart, and my life all of the "am nots" that I have allowed to hold me back. Especially the thought that I am not good enough.

Amen





Our Daily Bread

Love God. Love Others.

“May Day”

By: Anne Cetas



May 1, 2005

While the earth remains . . . day and night shall not cease. **Genesis 8:22**

Today's Scripture: Genesis 8:15-22 (NIV)

¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷ Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.” ¹⁸ So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. ¹⁹ All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another. ²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹ The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done. ²² “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

When I was a young girl in West Michigan, we always celebrated spring and the blooming of the first flowers on May 1. I’d make a basket out of construction paper and fill it with any flowers I could find—mostly daffodils and violets. Then I would place the basket on my neighbor’s doorstep, knock on her door, and quickly hide behind a bush. I’d peek out to watch her as she opened the door and picked up her surprise. When she went inside, I’d run home.

The beauty of springtime flowers and the regular changing of the seasons reminds us of God’s faithfulness. When Noah and his family and the animals came out of the ark after the flood waters receded, God gave them this promise: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). And He’s been faithful to keep that promise ever since. God “made the worlds,” and He continues to uphold “all things by the word of His power” (*Hebrews 1:2-3 - ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*).

Let’s thank God today for His beautiful creation and for His faithfulness in sustaining His world and us.

Reflect & Pray

For the beauty of each hour Of the day and of the night, Hill and vale and tree and flower, Sun and moon and stars of light, Lord of all, to Thee we raise This our hymn of grateful praise. —Pierpoint

Look at the wonder of creation and say, "What a wonderful God!"

Korean, Native faithful join to fight virus

By Barbara Dunlap-Berg and Ginny Underwood
April 28, 2021 | OKLAHOMA CITY (UM News)

The Rev. Donna Pewo (right), director of connectional ministries for the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, distributes masks, gloves, hats and blankets to the children at Petarsy United Methodist Church near Lawton, Okla. The National Network of Korean United Methodist Women connected with the OIMC to offer support during the global pandemic by providing clothing items, hand sanitizer, water bottles and 6,000 cloth masks. Photo by Ginny Underwood.



When the National Network of Korean United Methodist Women connected with the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, few anticipated the spirit of generosity that would result.

Wondering how COVID-19 had affected the conference and how the network might help, Sung-Ok Lee, UMW connectional officer, approached the Rev. David Wilson, assistant to the bishop. The Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference includes 81 Indian United Methodist churches representing more than 45 tribes in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.

"I shared the need of basic necessities of winter items that included socks, stocking caps, scarves, cloth masks, sanitizer and water bottles," Wilson said. "(Lee) shared the information with the network, and within a few weeks, the items began to arrive at our office in Oklahoma City. We received boxes of these items, along with an order of 6,000 cloth masks, donated by the Chang Corporation through this network."

Among the contributions was a check for \$8,000, used to purchase gift cards and other items for children.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Native Americans in the United States have the highest rate of chronic disease among all ethnic groups in the country. "This means," Wilson said, "that more indigenous people are at higher risk for severe outcomes when it comes to COVID-19. In addition, Native people are 1.4 times more likely to catch COVID-19 than their white counterparts."

Wilson and his colleagues have personally witnessed the devastation of COVID-19 within their communities. "We have lost dozens of tribal church members of all ages since last year," he said.



Alyssa Underwood gives two thumbs up during an Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference COVID-19 vaccination event at Mosaic United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City, Okla. Underwood, a senior in high school and a member of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, is looking forward to being able to attend in-person classes again. She is the daughter of Ginny Underwood, who contributed to this report. Photo by Ginny Underwood.

The Rev. Donna Pewo, a local pastor and the conference's director of connectional ministries, has seen the loss of grandparents and parents. "Just recently," Pewo said, "two of the children at the Clinton Church and Community Center lost both a mother and father to COVID-19. We were

most fortunate to be able to assist these young girls as they ponder their future without parents."

Pewo thanked the National Network of Korean United Methodist Women, whose generosity has offered hope and inspiration.

"It has been a joy to share your gifts with all of the churches in OIMC," she said. "We have been able to take them personally to ministries in Kansas such as the Kahbeah Fellowship on the Kickapoo Reservation in Horton and the Wichita Indian UMC. We have shared with urban ministries such as Tulsa Indian UMC and in places such as the Petarsy UMC in southwest Oklahoma." The Petarsy congregation, she added, comprises mainly Comanche children.

Other recipients have included homeless Native American communities in Oklahoma City. Masks were sent to all 81 churches in the conference, as well as to schools that relate to OIMC congregations.

“Although we are United Methodist,” Pewo said, “we work ecumenically, especially with denominations that include Native ministries in Oklahoma. We shared the contributions with the Murrow Indian Children’s Home, which is run by the American Baptists. We also shared with the Oaks Mission School, operated by the Evangelical Lutherans.”

The Rev. Elizabeth Horton-Ware, Oklahoma City University director of religious life, mobilized university students to package UMW-provided children’s masks that were distributed to several OIMC churches and to the White Swan community on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.

“We also purchased gift cards for use in both the Oklahoma City Native Student services program and the Sovereign Community School, a Native American charter school in Oklahoma City,” Pewo said. “The list goes on and on.”

Children at Petarsy United Methodist Church near Lawton, Okla., received gifts of clothing and masks through a donation by the National Network of Korean United Methodist Women to the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. The OIMC includes 81 Indian United Methodist churches representing more than 45 tribes in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas. Photo by Ginny Underwood.



COVID-19 prevention also has taken center stage as OIMC churches serve as vaccine sites.

“For some areas of Indian Country,” Wilson said, “the challenge for the disproportionately affected communities is due to their lack of infrastructure.”

As an example, he cited the Four Corners Native American Ministry in Albuquerque, New Mexico. That community lacks access to basic elements of life such as water.

“Many homes are in rural areas,” Wilson said. “If they have no wells, they go to centers to draw water. And because many of our families are very intergenerational, there might be three generations in one household. That has spread COVID-19 in many situations.”

Working with the Clinton Indian Health Services Unit are the North Oklahoma City Native American Ministry and Mosaic United Methodist Church, Wilson said. Two other United Methodist churches have hosted mobile clinics with the Muscogee Creek Nation: Davis Chapel at Coweta and Concharty near Preston, Oklahoma.

Earlier this month, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation sent two mobile health units, dubbed “Little Caretaker on the Go,” to provide COVID-19 vaccinations.

Targeting tribal events and gatherings such as wild onion dinners, the units make scheduled stops at various locations, including Springfield United Methodist Church in Okemah. According to the Rev. Clarence Yarholar, about 100 people were vaccinated at the church.

Because tribal communities are so confined in certain areas, vaccination is critical. “Luckily,” Wilson said, “our tribes in Oklahoma have worked hard to get the vaccine out to everyone, and not just to tribal communities. That is some of what we are doing at Mosaic. It reaffirms what we believe about the importance of community.

“Indigenous peoples understand that decisions made in our lives do not just affect one person, but they are made knowing they affect the entire community. We understand our community as the whole world. We care for all and we pray for all people.”

He quoted Chief Seattle, a Suquamish leader: “Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”

Dunlap-Berg is a freelance writer based in Carbondale, Illinois. Underwood is a communications consultant from Yukon, Oklahoma.

Ask the UMC: Why do we baptize at different ages?



Photo by Alex Ramos, courtesy of Pixabay.



*All baptized persons are members of their local church, the denomination, and the church universal.
Photo by Mary Catherine Phillips, Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference.*

Many Christians understand the witness of Acts 16, where whole households were baptized (likely including infants and children), to mean baptism is for people of all ages. Baptism of new converts to the faith, as well as infant baptism, has been a common practice among Christians since the third century.

As Mark Stamm, a professor at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, is fond of saying, "We always baptize babies."

What does he mean by that? That we require every baby to be baptized? That we do not baptize children, youth or adults? Or that it's too late to be baptized if you weren't baptized as an infant?

No. He means that at whatever chronological age we are baptized, we are always, at that moment, babies or new creatures in Christ.

United Methodists are glad to baptize people at whatever age or stage they come for baptism. There is no time too soon, and no time too late, to begin one's journey with Christ and life in the community of faith. Baptism marks the beginning of all of that, whenever it may come in our lives.

And, unlike what some may tell you, just because you are an adult does not mean you have to be ready to profess the baptismal and membership vows yourself in order to receive Christian baptism. You do not.

You may be ready for baptism, just as a baby may be ready to be born, but you may not necessarily be ready at that time to do everything a more mature Christian may do. And that's OK. It's perfectly acceptable for a child, youth, adult or senior adult to receive Christian baptism, but not yet take the vows for themselves.

In these instances, just as at the baptism of an infant, one does not yet "speak for oneself" but others — typically parents or other sponsors for an infant, child or youth, or another adult sponsor for an adult — may publicly reaffirm their own baptismal vows and commit to walk with you and work with you until you are ready to confess the vows for yourself and become a professing member in The United Methodist Church.

Baptism is all about beginnings. Whenever you're ready to begin a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ with the church, and the church is ready to help you take your next steps, that's a good time to be baptized.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.



Faith is a verb

Commentary by the Rev. Mel West
April 28, 2021 | COLUMBIA, Mo. (UM News)

The Rev. Mel West.
Photo courtesy of the author.

Faith is a verb. That is the answer I give when I am asked what I have learned in my 97 years of living.

Faith is a verb. And there is an addendum to that: "The cross was not meant to be a piece of jewelry or an expensive top to a church. The cross is meant to be a lifestyle."

That sums up 97 years of living – faith is a verb, and the cross is a lifestyle.

I will tell you two stories to illustrate what I mean. The first is a fable, and the second a personal story. The fable first.

A professional tightrope walker was preparing to walk a tight cable between two 40-story buildings, pushing a wheelbarrow and with no safety nets. A reporter was there beside him to get the story. He asked her, "Do you believe I can do this?" "Oh, yes, I believe you can do it," she replied. "Good," he said. "Get into the wheelbarrow."

Belief and faith are not the same. I began to understand that as a teenager. When we would recite the Apostles Creed at church, I would say, under my breath, "So what?" We had six books in our home as I grew up, and one was "In His Steps" by Charles Monroe Sheldon. I read it over and over again, convincing myself that what I saw in our church was more belief than action. The wheelbarrow story was just what I needed to deal with my questioning. And it confirmed my love for the Book of James and his insistence that "Faith without works is dead."

It is not enough to say, "I believe every family should have a decent home in a decent community." That will accomplish nothing until we pick up a hammer or write a check to some group like Habitat.

It is not enough to say, "I believe that no child should go to bed with an empty tummy." Only as we give food or write checks are those tummies filled.

It is not enough to say, "I believe our world should be just, civil, loving and kind." Only as we become the world we want, will it happen.

My wife, Barbara, and I have had 76 years of married life together that have been exciting, inspiring, challenging, satisfying and productive. Acting upon the truth that indeed "faith is a verb" has been central in those years, and I welcome the opportunity to pass that truth on to others and add to it. Here is our story.

We were born 10 days and 200 miles apart in rural Missouri. We met at Missouri University in 1942, and married at the end of WWII, where I was stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The GI Bill enabled us to finish our last year at MU, and we stood together to receive our diplomas in 1947. Barbara's degree was in Home Economics and mine in Dairy Husbandry.

We moved back to my home turf in southwest Missouri and took over my grandparents' 200-acre farm, turning it into a model Grade-A dairy farm with a program called "Balanced Farming." Purebred Jerseys provided the milk that was our income and ate the feed that the land produced. County Extension had a demonstration day on our farm that attracted some 5,000-plus persons. I report that not to boast, but to say that we were secure in an established business operation.

The Methodist Church was central in our lives. For four years, 1955-59, I served as the lay pastor for a circuit of four churches, as well as operating the farm. All grew, and we received awards. But life was to change. A missionary to India, the Rev. Robert Marble, came to speak at our churches, and he came to our farm for an evening meal. In the course of the evening, he quietly said to me, "Mel, a lot of people can milk cows. Your passion and graces are needed in the full-time ministry, and that will mean seminary."

We sold our cows and equipment, rented out the farm, and moved to Dallas in 1959 to attend Perkins School of Theology. Our children were moved from a one-room rural school to the inner-city schools of Dallas. We lived in a very small parsonage, and I served an inner-city church that had 27 members come to greet the new preacher and his family.

In the first mid-summer I was in the Perkins Library, asking myself some serious questions. "Mel, what in the world have you done – leaving the security you had and moving the family away from family, home and security?" I was searching for direction. I turned to a scripture that had always intrigued me, Luke 9:23, where Jesus says, "If any person wants to come after me, let him first deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Every word of that verse seemed directed at me. But in practical terms, just what did it mean? In real life, how was it to be put into action? Fortunately, the writer went on to explain. It was a call to action. When the line of human need (any need, large or small), the horizontal line of the cross, crossed the line of our ability to respond, the vertical line, then we had a RESPONS-ABILITY to meet that need, to pick up that cross.

The cross was to be a lifestyle! We are to go about this world with our antennae out, looking for human needs. When we see one we can meet, that is our cross for that moment or a lifetime. We began to live with that understanding of the cross.

In our inner-city Dallas church, we built our congregation from 27 members to 276 in six years. We put "The Church That Cares" on our billboard and went about the community, NOT asking for church members, but saying (on calling cards), "If you ever have any need, large or small, day or night, call us." We then built a church program in response to those needs.

In Columbia, Missouri, we have been instrumental in starting, or helping start, Koinonia House, a lodging place for low-income persons with family members in the hospital; "Fun City Academy," a summer program for inner-city children and youth; and Show Me Central Habitat, which has built 150 houses for immigrants.

Statewide, the office I directed, the Office of Creative Ministries, developed youth work camps that worked on the housing needs of some 900 homes of low-income widows, widowers or single mothers. We had an extensive summer ministry at the Lake of the Ozarks that included reaching out to soldiers who were in training to go to Vietnam and experiencing frequent rejection by society. We trained and sent college students to help small churches with their Bible school programs.

In response to poverty and hunger in the world, we started The Festival of Sharing, an annual ecumenical fall festival that raised money for distribution to state and world causes. A project called "TRAG" (TRansportation AGriculture) provided a simple little truck for overseas needs and projects.

The most major project has been Mobility Worldwide (PET), which began in my garage in 1994 and has grown to provide some 90,000 hand-cranked, three-wheeled, sturdily built wheelchairs for leg-handicapped persons who have suffered from polio, landmines, snake bites, birth defects and other causes. All were built by volunteers and were donated.

There has been much more, but it has all been an effort to "take up our cross" by being alert to human needs around us and being "respons-able" by taking action. We recommend that lifestyle to individuals and to the church in general.

Faith is a verb, and the cross is a lifestyle. Get into the wheelbarrow!

West is a retired United Methodist pastor living in Columbia, Mo., and he is a cofounder of Mobility Worldwide (PET). News media contact: Tim Tanton or Joey Butler at (615) 742-5470.

May 2021



Connected is a publication of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. This monthly insert is designed put Conference news directly into the hands of our local church members.

Find more at www.neumc.org.



Give the Laity Address

The Conference Board of Laity is pleased to invite all laypersons in the New England Annual Conference to enter the Laity Address Challenge to have an opportunity to give the Laity Address at the 2021 Annual Conference.

The 2021 Annual Conference will be held online June 10-12. The Laity Address will be pre-recorded. The specific date/time of the Laity Address broadcast has not been set.

Our Annual Conference theme is "Building Beloved Community." Our guiding scripture Psalm 137:4 NIV: "How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?" The

address must use those as its theme.

The address should be 15-20 minutes long. Entrants must submit a written copy of their entire pro-

posed address along with a video of themselves delivering the first five minutes of the address.

The deadline to submit your proposed address and video is May 7.

For more information on how

to submit your entry or to ask any questions about entering the challenge, please email Co-Associate Conference Lay Leader Joan Farrar at cw.dll.acll@gmail.com or call [978.582.4670](tel:978.582.4670).



Registration now open

The 2021 Annual Conference will be a multi-day online session June 10-12.

Voting members must register to get credentials to access the meeting. Only voting members need to register; others can watch the session via livestream on the Conference YouTube channel.

There is no registration fee.

Visit www.neumc.org/acsessions to find a tentative schedule and all of the latest news and information.



GET THE LATEST NEWS AND INFO ON ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021
www.neumc.org/acsessions

Conference Resource Day

'Deep and Wide' with Leonard Sweet

Hosted by the Granite District

"There's a fountain flowing deep and wide."
We will travel together simultaneously deep (local) and wide (global) in looking at the importance of four key metaphors for the future:

- 1) Do Little Large: Small is All. The Particular is of Universal Significance. Can you taste your church's terroir?
- 2) Sozo Jesus (Sozo means "save" or "heal").
- 3) Mandorla Sweet Spot (Jesus always comes in surround sound). Can you hear the double ring?
- 4) Deep Breathing exercises (Holy Spirit Breathings and Breathology)



All districts are invited to participate. This online event takes place from 10 am to noon May 22, 2021 via Zoom.

Find the event on our calendar (www.neumc.org/events) to register.

Sweet is the author of more than 200 articles, 1,500+ published sermons and 60 books. His recent publications include the groundbreaking textbook on preaching, *Giving Blood: A Fresh Paradigm for Preaching*, the best-seller *From Tablet to Table*, *The Bad Habits of Jesus*, and the fall 2019 release of the twenty-year successor to *Soul Tsunami*, *Rings of Fire: Walking in Faith Through a Volcanic Future*.

Celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday

Thank You for your generosity in 2020!

You gave \$288,487 to the Peace with Justice Sunday offering. Peace with Justice is a faithful expression of shalom in the Bible. It calls the church to strengthen its capacity to advocate publicly in communities and nations throughout the world.

The offering is administered by the General Board of Church and Society and benefits peace with justice ministries in the Annual Conferences and around the world.



Online conversation: Intersectional Theology

Join an online conversation with Dr. Grace Ji-Sun Kim, co-author of "Intersectional Theology."

Dr. Kim is professor of theology at Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana, has written numerous books and articles on the social and religious experiences of Korean women in North America.

The event will be 9:30 a.m. to noon on May 29 and is hosted

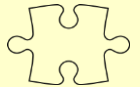


by the North Shore Regional Hub of the Commonwealth East District.

It is sponsored by the Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR) and the Provisional Leadership Academy.

Find the event on our calendar at www.neumc.org/events to register.

Coming up ...



Let's Connect

Do you have a story to share? A feature idea? A question to ask? Contact Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications, at communicate@neumc.org or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150

Bible Quiz: Samson and Delilah



1. Samson was a hero of Israel -- a "judge", or military leader, who served his country for 20 years. He lived around 1100 B.C., and was noted for both his great physical strength and moral weakness.

Samson became infatuated with a young Philistine woman, but his parents opposed the marriage because the Philistines were Israel's enemies. However, Samson persisted with the intention of using her to take revenge on the Philistines. As Samson was going to visit the woman he was attacked by a wild animal and used his great strength to kill it with his bare hands. What kind of animal was it?

- A behemoth
- A bull
- A lion
- A tiger

2. Samson eventually took the Philistine woman as his bride.

He proposed a riddle at the wedding feast to entertain the guests and said he would give thirty sets of clothing to anyone who could solve it. What was the riddle?

- "What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?"
- "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet."
- "They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence."
- "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest."

3. Samson had not been married to the Philistine woman for more than a few days when she betrayed him. What was her act of betrayal?

- She bound him with ropes while he was sleeping and turned him over to his enemies.
- She stole his amulet and gave it to his enemies while he was sleeping.
- She gave away the answer to his riddle.
- She had an affair with his brother.

4. Samson committed several acts of revenge for the betrayal until finally the Philistine army came to arrest him. How did they finally take Samson into custody?

- A party of 400 men finally surrounded and subdued him.
- His countrymen bound him and handed him over.
- His countrymen talked him into surrendering so they wouldn't all be killed.
- Samson fell into a deep pit they had dug in the road and covered with leaves.

5. Samson, using his great strength, escaped from custody and killed 1000 Philistines in another act of revenge. What implement did he use for this slaughter?

- A stone hatchet
- The jawbone of a donkey
- A boomerang
- The jawbone of a lion

6. Sometime later Samson became infatuated with a woman named Delilah, but she too betrayed him. The lords of the Philistines offered her 1100 pieces of silver if she could tell them the secret to overcome Samson's great strength. So Delilah enticed Samson to tell her the source of his strength. But Samson didn't trust Delilah and gave her several false answers. What was one of the false answers he gave her? He would lose his strength if:

- bound with freshly harvested grape vines.
- his sash were taken away.
- bound with seven new leather thongs made for bowstrings.
- he did not eat spinach every day.

7. What was another false answer he gave her? He would lose his strength if:

- bound with new, never used ropes.
- his cloak were taken away.
- taken to the pagan temple.
- bound with ropes staked in the ground.

8. But Delilah, not wanting to forfeit her bribe, nagged and pestered Samson every day until he finally told her the truth. What was the real secret to his strength? He would lose his strength if:

- his hair were cut.
- he were bound with twelve new bowstrings.
- bound with new, never used chains.
- his sword were broken in two.

9. So, when Delilah told the Philistines the real secret and collected her bribe. The Philistines captured Samson, blinded him, and made him a slave. What kind of work was Samson forced to do?

- Cleaning stables
- Cleaning outhouses
- Carrying stones to build a pagan temple
- Grinding meal

10. However, Samson regained his strength while in captivity and managed one grandiose final act of revenge against the Philistines. What was it?

- He slew 5000 Philistines with his sword.
- He slew 5000 Philistines with the jawbone of a lion.
- He knocked down the temple of the pagan god Dagon, killing thousands of Philistines.
- He knocked down the royal palace, killing the Philistine king and all his lords.

Answers can be found on the next to the last page. Quiz taken from The Christian Bible Reference Site, www.christianbiblereference.org

Connecting with your body: A spiritual practice

By Whitney Simpson This story was posted April 19, 2021.



Practicing embodiment helps us become more aware, remain present, feel whole, love ourselves better, and get to know our Creator better. Canva photo provided by Whitney Simpson.



United Methodist Deaconess and Spiritual Director Whitney Simpson encourages us to find ways to connect with our physical selves. Photo courtesy of Whitney Simpson.

God created you.

Genesis teaches that God filled humans with life through breath, the gift of God's Spirit.

Pause and take a deep breath as you soak in the reminder that the Spirit of God is as close as your breath. That may sound silly. And yet, that deep breath will invite your whole self into this invitation of embodiment and connection with your Creator. Because you are a whole person, created by God and filled with God's Spirit.

Connecting with my body

Over 15 years ago, my body went through a health crisis (a stroke and brain surgery on my 31st birthday). At this time, I did not always feel like a whole person; I often felt disconnected and broken. While my body was in chronic pain, my spirit was also discouraged.

In that time of frustration, a physician prescribed yoga. I am unsure if it was the last resort on their part, but I was hurting and willing to try exercise and mindfulness. What did I have to lose? I did not know that yoga would be an invitation for embodiment and an opportunity for healing in my whole self—body and spirit.

Now, more than 15 years later, I not only practice living embodied, I am passionate about inviting others into caring for their bodies and spirits through embodied practices. If you are not interested in down dogs, I understand, but please know that yoga is not the only way to become more connected and present with yourself (although you may also be surprised).

Embodied living

Embodiment practices like yoga, contemplative prayer, breath-work and mindful eating help us grow in self-knowledge. They allow us a chance to slow down and simply practice being in our bodies.

Practicing embodiment means using the body's sensations to become more aware, remain present, feel whole, love ourselves better, and even get to know our Creator better. Embodiment practices can help you more fully discover the person God created and become more connected to the one who created you!

As Christians, this matters because the more connected we are to ourselves, the more we can express our God given longings, needs, gifts, and desires. The body of Christ needs each of us to live into our best selves!

Try it yourself

Becoming embodied is a practice. If we are mindful and aware, there are plenty of opportunities to be present within our bodies. Additionally, there are many scientifically studied benefits of breath-work, meditation, and mindfulness. These practices have been found to reduce stress and help

balance the nervous system, decrease experiences of anxiety and stress, and provide a sense of overall well-being.

Here are some practices to explore (talk with your doctor if you have medical concerns about beginning a breath-work or yoga practice):

- **Breath-work:** Your breath is always accessible and yet often underused. Even a few full slow deep diaphragmatic breaths can allow you to feel more present and grounded at any moment.
- **Contemplative Prayer/Christian Meditation:** Explore silence for your brain and body through a regular practice of silent prayer or meditation. You may discover better sleep or an improved memory with a sustained practice. Consider using an app or podcast to companion you if this type of silent prayer is new or feels intimidating.
- **Ground in Nature:** Get outside and place your feet in the grass as you ground in nature and feel refreshed. Or, take a slow prayer walk to surround yourself in God's creation and be reminded you're part of that creation. Use your senses to notice what you hear, see, smell, etc.
- **Mindful Eating:** Discover mindful eating to not only grow your appreciation for and enjoyment of your meal but also to improve digestion. Consider where your food comes from when offering a blessing. Give thanks to those who helped bring it to your table.
- **Yoga:** A regular practice (even a few minutes daily) can increase flexibility, help build strength, improve chronic pain, and invite you to love better the body God created. Online and in person resources for Christ-centered yoga are growing. Search for local classes or ask a teacher to offer one at your church. You'll not only connect with yourself, but you'll also connect with others.

You are more than a body. You are a whole person, created by God and filled with God's Spirit. How will you embrace your body and grow your connection with yourself, your Creator, and the body of Christ?

Deaconess Whitney R. Simpson is passionate about helping others reach their fullest human potential as they explore the gift of God's peace. She is a trained spiritual director and E-RYT 200 yoga and meditation teacher. Whitney is the author of "Holy Listening With Breath, Body, and the Spirit." You can practice yoga with her online or find her free guided prayer and meditation podcast at ExploringPeace.com. Connect with Whitney directly at WhitneyRSimpson.com.

United Methodist Prayer for Families

In the United Methodist calendar, May is designated as Christian Home Month. Discipleship Ministries offers many resources to help families on their spiritual journeys, including this prayer for families written by MaryJane Pierce Norton.

Gracious God, who created all of humankind and showed to us the importance of relationships with one another, we commend to your care all the families of our community and our world.

We pray that each home may be a home where love is felt.

We pray for homes where, instead of love, hurt, abuse, and suffering abide.

We pray for children, youth, and adults, recognizing the importance of and the gift of every age as we grow.

May your grace be present to all.

Grant us wisdom to know where there is no love, courage to act out of love for others, and peace to trust in your grace.

Help us to live so that the commandments of love for you and love for others are shown in the ways we live together.

Amen.

Ways United Methodists can stand against racism

A UMC.org feature by Joe Iovino*



In our baptismal vows, United Methodists "accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves." Photo courtesy of the Rev. Anita Mays.

Those living in the United States exist in a culture permeated with racial bias. We may not be able to avoid racism, but we don't

have to accept it. If God's kingdom is to come, and God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven, things need to change.

We United Methodists can be agents of that transformation by changing our beliefs, changing our actions, and working to change the world.**

Change beliefs

Becoming an agent of transformation includes focusing within ourselves. We need to allow God to shape our inner thoughts and attitudes toward race.

Pray – Prayer "is foundational to everything we do as Christians," writes Katelin Hansen, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Training, at the United Methodist Church and Community Development for All People. Ask God to change your heart and attitudes. Hansen offers a sample prayer:

Triune God, help us be ever faithful to your example: affirming of our unique identities, while remaining unified as one body in you. Help us seek out the voices that are missing, and empower the marginalized. Let our witness of repentance, justice, and reconciliation bring glory to You, O Lord.

Listen inclusively – It is important to hear from a variety of voices. Find authors and thinkers with racial and cultural backgrounds different from your own. In a video produced by the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) Hansen shares, "I turned to the digital world to continue my racial education, to serve as the professors of justice and theology that I never had."

Seek new relationships – There is no substitute for sharing consistent, ongoing, authentic relationships with people of color. Hansen and her husband became members of a multi-race and multi-class church. "We joined out of a belief that isolating ourselves among believers of similar backgrounds just deprives our own souls of God's majesty," she says in the GCORR video.

Understand that forming new, authentic relationships takes time.

Change behavior

Next, live out your changing beliefs through changing your behavior.

Empower leaders – Use your resources to promote and equip leaders of color. Then, be willing to follow. Listen and act on opinions, activities, and points of view different from your own.

Show up – "At the guidance and invitation of leaders of color," Hansen writes, "show up when called upon." As we come together for conversations and demonstrations, we build a culture of justice in our community and model multi-cultural love and understanding.

Spend responsibly – Support racial equality through your shopping and donations. Shop at local markets owned by people of color. Donate to charities and ministries led by and supporting those of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Katelin Hansen teaches about these concepts in a free video called "Being an Ally With People of Color." Image courtesy the General Commission on Religion and Race of The United Methodist Church.



Examine your media intake – Expand your social media follows and news sites to include voices and opinions different from your own. For big stories, be sure to consult multiple sources from a variety of points of view. Don't rely on just one.

Consider your entertainment choices also. Select movies, music, and television shows that promote equality. Listen to more voices and be aware of how they shape you.

Change society

Author and professor Robin DiAngelo reminds us in a Vital Conversations video from GCORR, that racism is "group prejudice backed up by institutional power." Therefore, to take a stand against racism we cannot simply change our own beliefs and behaviors. We must also work to change the world.

Advocate – Written and unwritten policies in our neighborhoods, workplaces, churches, schools, and nation disadvantage certain ethnicities. Learn from the people of color in your neighborhood about the ways they are disadvantaged and find ways to participate in changing those systems.

Sponsor – People of color sometimes struggle to access public services, opportunities, and more. Use your money, gifts, and sphere of influence to make a difference. Sponsor friends and coworkers who need assistance to attend a career seminar. Encourage and lead your congregation toward creating programs like a Freedom School. Invest in people and programs that work toward racial justice.

Take a risk – Meaningful change requires risk. We may put our reputations, money, and leadership opportunities on the line because shaping our society and institutions to reflect more fully the kingdom of God will not always be appreciated.

Changing our beliefs, behavior, and the society are long processes that may never be complete. Yet we continue to work for change in all three areas as God calls us.

"These steps aren't so much a progression as they are a cycle," Hansen concludes. "Advocacy without relationship is empty. Education without changed behavior is hollow. Sponsorship without humility and trust is misguided."

What steps will you take to participate in God's transformational work of moving our society toward racial equality?

This story was first published on Aug. 15, 2017, and edited on April 18, 2018.

**Joe Iovino works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications.*

Please Pray For... Frontline Workers ~ Those affected by COVID-19 ~ All veteran's dealing with PTSD, addiction, physical injuries ~ John Bentz ~ David ~ Manny Fernandes ~ Brian Higgins ~ Raymond Smith ~ Lisa ~ Heidi Bentz ~ Matt ~ Robert Fernandes, Sr. ~ Amelia ~ Mila ~ Jimmy ~ Emily Bentz ~ Amy Bentz ~ Jean James ~ Mary ~ Steve & Debbie Bentz ~ Mike & Ellie Pickering ~ Kenny ~ Delores August ~ Steve Robinson ~ Angell Rodrigues ~ Joseph Thomas ~ Rev. Julia Doutaz ~ David ~ Andrew Anguita ~ Mike M. ~ Marge Lavoie ~ Paul ~ Bert Dorrance ~ Rev. Emmalou Kirchmeier ~ Joan Chase ~ Joanne ~ Jamie & family ~ Kurt ~ Deborah ~ Ginny Melo ~ Sue Dorrance ~ Alex Holt ~ Justin Johnson ~ "Winkie" Chrystie ~ George Glover ~ Michael Tonry ~ David Springer ~ Teachers, students and staff

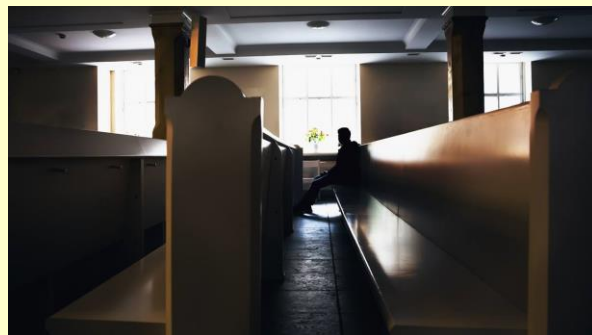
Why church

By Rev. Joseph Yoo

Dear Vince,

Is it necessary to go to church?

Your words about why you're leaving the church have been ringing through my mind and heart ever since we spoke.



Is it necessary to go to church?

I know how deeply disappointed you are with the church. Church can hurt.

And I fully understand why you want to walk away from the church and organized religion altogether.

Nothing more has challenged my call into ministry than those who claim to be followers of Christ. I mean, generally speaking, people are draining. But church people? Many are draining and exhausting.

Why do I need church?

You explained that “you and God are good” and then asked, “Why do I need the church?” It’s a legit question.

I’ve never stopped questioning the institutional church and things about the institutional church: like the ordination process. We spend far too much time making sure we are good company persons; persons who not only toe the line of the institution but uphold and defend it. We’re asked questions on how we will help keep the institution alive rather than asking things like, “When was the last time you extended grace?” Or “When was a time you shared the love of Christ in a transforming way?” We seem to care more about saving the institution than “saving souls” (for a lack of better phrase).

I’d be lying if I told you I never thought about walking away from the church. I’d also be lying if I told you I never tried. But...

Two thoughts always kept me anchored. The first one is: I’m not perfect either. I know that I’ve been a terrible witness to the ministry and presence of Christ. I, too, am deeply in need of God’s grace.

The second thought is like a quote from Dorothy Day: “As to the Church, where else shall we go, except to the Bride of Christ, one flesh with Christ? Though she is a harlot at times, she is our Mother.”

Oh — the other thing is that I can’t shake off the fact that God has called me here no matter how hard I tried. I guess that’s three thoughts. This is why I’m a preacher, because I can’t math well or English well.

Look. People are broken.

In a community that is supposed to be built on love, grace, and mercy — we simply, always get in the way because we’re broken. and our brokenness is contagious. We’ll always be imperfect, at best. Which is why I totally understand when one is disappointed in the church. Which is why I totally understand people walking away from the church. Which is why I feel so helpless when people carry deep wounds given to them by the church.

Why do I go to church?

Yet...

I, personally, can’t throw in the towel and wash my hands clean of people who routinely misplace grace for merit. The thing is we’re not meant to be on the faith journey alone. From the get-go, community has been embedded in our DNA. We put trust in a God that is Three-in-One; a God that is communal.

Our community was disrupted when Cain dared to ask God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The answer, as a disciple of Christ, is always and profoundly yes! We don’t grow without community. The church

provides tensions within us that push us, tests us and challenge us. Something as beautiful as a pearl isn't formed without tension and pressure.

When we go on this faith journey alone we may never fully be who God intended us to be. There will be no one to hold us accountable, or to help shape us or to push us to be better. The "it's just me and Jesus" and the "me myself, and Jesus" mentality stunts our growth as disciples because we never live out the 1B part of the greatest commandment: loving our neighbors as ourselves.

We truly love our neighbors — not from afar — but in community; doing life with one another. Likewise, if we consistently surround ourselves with people who think like us, talk like us, vote like us, dress like us — there will be no real growth there either. Diversity pushes our boundaries further.

Community — at its best — teaches us to embody the love of God and reflect the diversity and inclusivity of God's kingdom. And I still think that's worth pursuing, though we fail over and over again. But with and by the grace of God, we try again. Because there is beauty in the broken.

When we get it — when we work towards building God's kingdom and not our own — we are a force that is both unstoppable and irresistible. Can we practice faith without the church?

An incomplete one, yes.

But the Spirit always and continuously ushers us into the lives of others. It calls us to do faith and life together. When we attempt to do faith alone we stunt our impact: we make our world smaller and we limit what God can do through us and in us and with us. God's miracles always happen in the context of community.

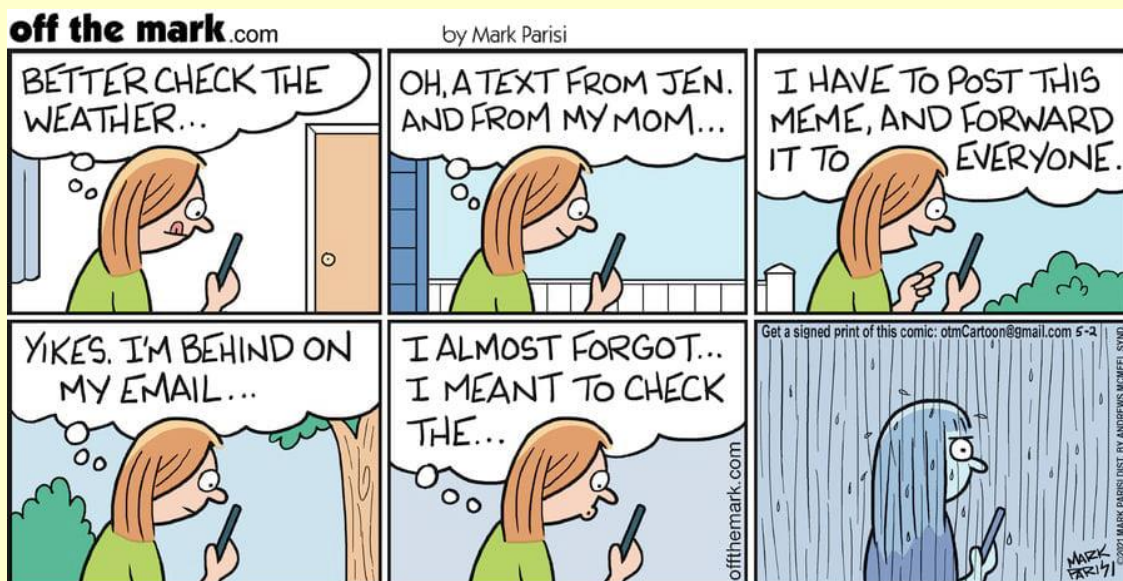
Remember. We are not merely baptized for just our salvation. We're not baptized to live isolated lives. We are baptized into the community. We are joining the community of other Christians.

It is impossible to isolate or privatize Jesus if we're following him faithfully — which is why I believe that church and community not only matter but are vital. Which is why I'll always work on building the kingdom of God here, together with others. And I hope, one day, you'll partner with God and God's people to do the same.

Your friend,

Joseph

Joseph Yoo is a West Coaster at heart contently living in Houston, Texas with his wife and son. He serves at Mosaic Church in Houston. Find more of his writing at josephyoo.com.



When the Holy Ghost makes
you delete the whole text
and just reply with OK.



The Knot Prayer

- Author Unknown -

Dear God,

Please untie the knots that are in my
mind, my heart, and my life.

Remove the have nots, cannots, and
the do nots.

Erase the will nots, may nots, might
nots that may find a home in my heart.

Release me from the could nots,
would nots, and should nots that
obstruct my life.

And most of all, dear God, I ask that
you remove from my mind, my heart,
and my life all of the "am nots" that I
have allowed to hold me back.
Especially the thought that I am not
good enough.

Amen

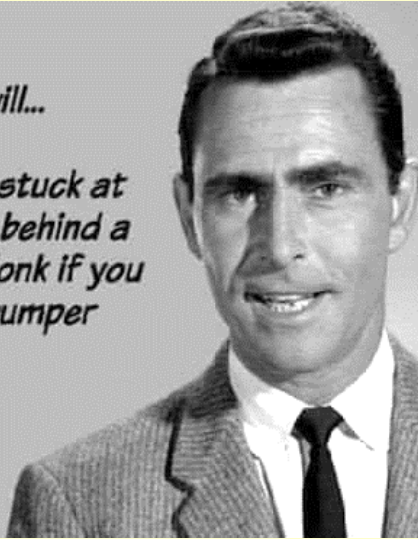
**WHEN YOU
FIND YOURSELF
IN DEEP WATER
ALWAYS TRUST
THE ONE WHO
WALKED ON IT**

Quiz Answers

1. A lion. Judges 14:5-9. Samson lived during a dark time in Israel's history. Law and order had broken down and it was every man for himself. The Israelites had lost their faith and no longer observed the laws of Moses. The Philistines, with their military might, dominated and suppressed the Israelites. Samson was considered a hero for his daring and bloody acts of revenge against the hated Philistines.
2. "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." Judges 14:14. It was customary for the bridegroom to entertain the wedding guests with riddles, dancing, etc. Samson's riddle came from the slaying of the lion in Judges 14:5-9 -- something no one would be able to guess.
3. She gave away the answer to his riddle. Judges 14:15-20. Samson took revenge by killing 30 Philistines and using their clothing to pay off those who explained the riddle.
4. His countrymen bound him and handed him over. Judges 15:1-13.
5. The jawbone of a donkey. Judges 15:14-18.
6. He would lose his strength if bound with seven new leather thongs made for bowstrings. Judges 16:7-9.
7. He would lose his strength if bound with new, never used ropes. Judges 16:10-12.
8. He would lose his strength if his hair were cut. Judges 16:15-17.
9. Grinding meal. Judges 16:18-21. This was considered women's work and was intended to degrade and mock Samson.
10. He knocked down the temple of the pagan god Dagon, killing thousands of Philistines. Judges 16:22-31. Samson's Philistine captors were apparently oblivious to the fact that Samson's hair (and thus his strength) were growing back during his captivity. One day they took him to the temple to show him off and make fun. But Samson found his way to the two central pillars holding up the temple. He pushed with all his might, broke the pillars, and the entire temple crashed to the ground. Samson's final words were, "Let me die with the Philistines!"

Imagine if you will...

*...an atheist stuck at
a green light behind a
car with a "Honk if you
love Jesus" bumper
sticker.*



NOT QUITE SURE.....IS THIS A COPY CAT



OR A CAT-SCAN?

**Driving home with my kids & my son
didn't like the song I was listening to. He
said, "Thank God we're 10 seconds from
home!" & then I took the long way home
because that's what parents do.**

**In other countries, they have an
elf on a shelf. In Canada, they
have:**



**Fear does not stop death.
It stops life.
And worrying does not take
away tomorrow's troubles.
It takes away today's peace.**

