



March 7

One of the practices learned in meditative walking is the awareness of silence. When you are engaged in meditative walking you may begin to notice that your mind begins to settle and you come to a place of silence. It is these quiet moments that a space is created for God to enter and speak to you. Be aware of the rhythm of your steps with the rhythm of your breaths and listen for the voice that calls to you. Rest in the comfort it brings and the holy space that is created.

This week I have included a *Wholeness Wheel Labyrinth*. Walking a labyrinth is another way to invite Christ to walk with you. I invite you to read *How to Pray the Wholeness Wheel Labyrinth* and then to try it in the quiet of your home.

This week Jim and Dot Settlemire share their journey as members of Messiah and the United Methodist Church. Theirs is a message of deep commitment and service that serves as an inspiration to us all.

JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Dot and I came to Parkers Lake Methodist Church (now called Messiah) sixty years ago as a young couple in our twenties with a 7 month old baby. Willing and anxious we were ready to serve our Lord because of the Christian heritage we received from our parents. Now, most of those families and friends we left behind have passed on, and you, the Body of Christ, are our family.

During these years we have had a lot of time to savor our fellow Christians and our experiences that shaped our lives, led by many of you, which made us who we are today.

Now in our mid- to late-eighties, we feel the hand of age descending upon us, but realize that is what the journey of life is all about, a beginning and an end.

We have had wonderful opportunities here at Messiah that opened up our Christian lives to spiritual growth and service through the years.

While the local church has been all these things to us, we have been able to enhance our Christian depth and faith by seeking activities **outside** of Messiah to prepare our lives to serve the Lord. Everybody is different, so we don't necessarily recommend these events, but we want to illustrate what possibilities they can afford. We have attended the following activities together or individually through the many years:

- Lay Witness Missions – These were inter-denominational weekend spiritual retreats that were held in the five state area led by mission teams. Teams would be requested to

conduct weekend retreats by local churches. After a retreat was held at Messiah Church, I was inspired to join a team and traveled around to churches in North and South Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin for several years. One of the lead couples that inspired me was a farm couple who raised wheat on a very large farm in North Dakota. The husband's calling card had the inscription "wheat farmers with God."

- Marriage Encounter Retreats – Held to stimulate couples, not to "encounter each other in a negative way," but to "meet again," and establish Jesus Christ as the head of your family. We attended the retreat on our 25th wedding anniversary. After we attended this retreat we joined with several couples from this church who also attended and we met for another five years as a small group - a special time.
- Walk to Emmaus – Retreats (men and women separately) to deepen ones spiritual life and develop the skills to better serve in a leadership role in your local church. We both attended these retreats and I participated on multiple leadership teams to "Walk the Walk" to Emmaus with Jesus through the years. I think we have about fifty women and men from Messiah who have "Walked to Emmaus" through the years.
- Bible Study Fellowship – This is a five year in depth bible study to lay a scriptural foundation for your life. Weekly group meetings are led by speakers and leadership teams followed by small group discussions. Men and women usually meet separately.
- UMC Certified Lay Speaker Training – This course trains the individual to be a lay speaker and respond to requests by local churches or other organizations for speaking engagements. These can range from giving the sermon at a local church for a Sunday worship service, to leading small study or prayer groups, to responding to UMC conference requests for speakers on a variety of topics. I think we have four or five members that are currently qualified Lay Speakers.
- Autumn Gathering – Annual spiritual retreat made up of committed senior Christians who take the Christian faith very seriously, held at camp Koronis in Paynesville. (Rev. Richard Harper, a former pastor here at Messiah, helped start this retreat many years ago.) Dot and I have attended this spiritually based gathering annually for a number of years. One of the regular attendees at this retreat is the Rev. Dr. Lowell Gess from Alexander Minnesota, who is one of our Christian heroes. He has crossed the Atlantic Ocean 175 times by air in his role as a Christian medical missionary doctor. At the age of 93, he returned to Africa at the risk of his own life to serve the people during the dreaded Ebola Plague in 2016.
- A few years ago I was invited by a fellow employee to attend a three day silent retreat at Demontreville Retreat Center in North Saint Paul. When you arrive at the retreat they put your car in the garage and you give them the keys for the duration of the retreat. You are then assigned to a private room. Yes, the retreat is silent for the whole time, even during meal times when a speaker provides a spiritual message for digestion. The retreat is held in their chapel and on the center's beautiful grounds. Chapel services are held throughout the day and into the evenings. Throughout the time you are led by the retreat master through the retreat. When the retreat was over and I was driving home to live back in the world, I had the distinct feeling that I had been living in a spiritual "green house," sheltered away from the worldly ways during those days.

Some might be thinking "don't these activities **detract** from the local church mission?" On the contrary, the stated objective of many of these opportunities is to prepare the individual to be an effective leader in the local church.

Dot's Dad lived to be a 101 years old and served the Lord by his many singing solos in the life of his church (one of Dot's favorite is *His Eye is on the Sparrow and I Know He Watches over Me*). I think he was her inspiration and advocate for classical church hymns and music which is probably why she sang in the Messiah Chancel Choir for sixty years!

In my many years at Messiah about the only one responsibility that I was not willing to or able to assume (and not qualified for) was the President of the United Methodist Women (although Dot did hold the position of president for a term...so I guess we have that covered). Dot and I are impressed and thankful for the younger generation here at Messiah that has stepped up to fulfill the commitment and provide leadership to the Body of Christ at Messiah Church!

Are **you** ready and equipped to minister to the people around you at Messiah and out in the world? If not, determine what God is calling **you** to do – and get busy!

The scriptures give us the admonition in 1 Peter 3:15

“Quietly surrender yourself to Christ your Lord and if anybody asks you why you believe as you do, be ready to tell him, and do it in a gentle and respectful way.”

Our beloved Global United Methodist Church is under extreme duress right now with the issue of sexual humanity in order to remain one single Body of Christ around the world. Dot and I have already declared our intention to stay right here no matter which way the struggle and decision making process goes. And we mean this to be both organizational wise, and also literally, since we have a double niche in the Columbarium Celebration Garden out by the lake. After all, as I like to remind my wife, she has always said she would like to have a “nice quiet place by a lake!”

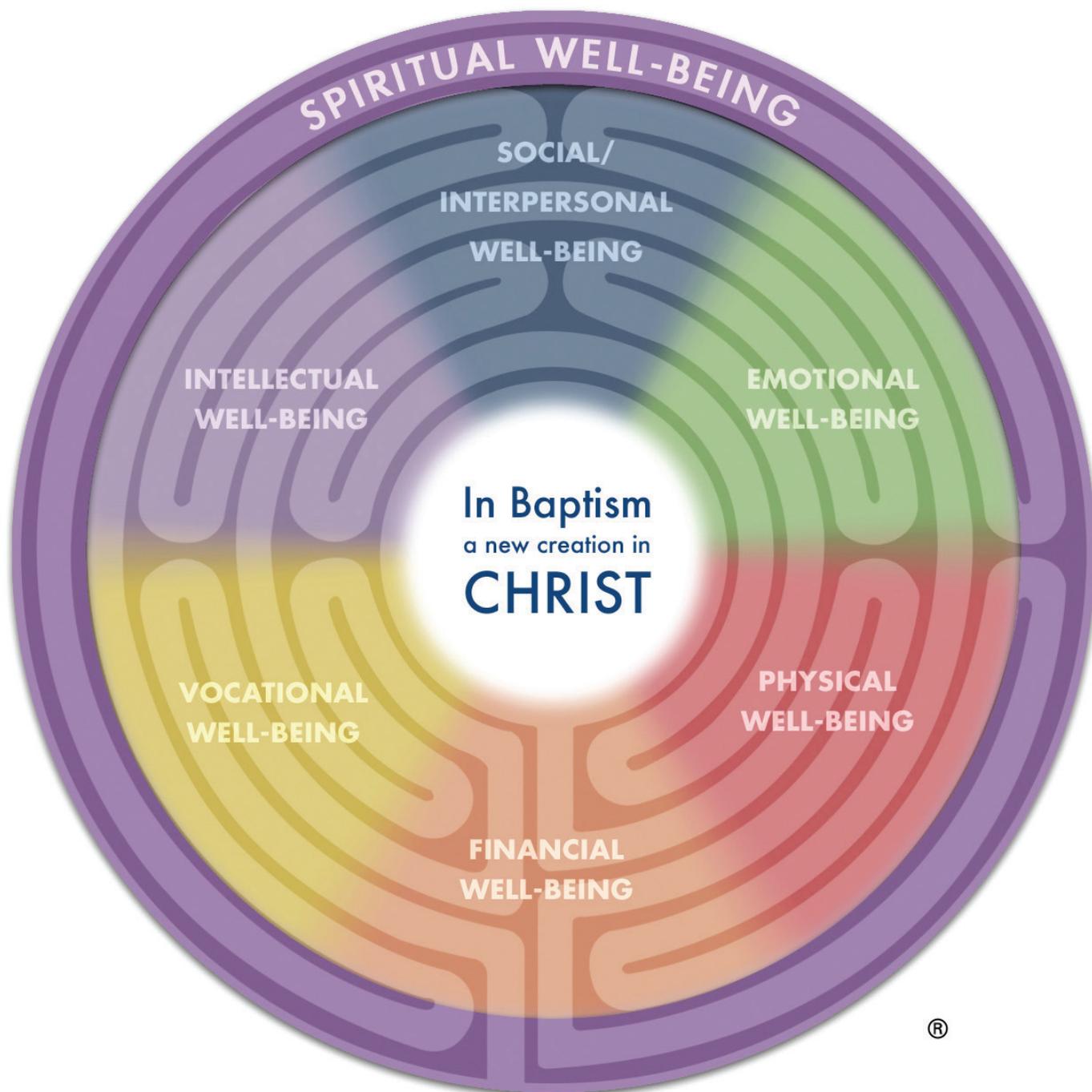
The UM Wesley Covenant Prayer, reads in part:

“Lord, make me what you will put myself fully into your hands; put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and with willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal. Amen.”

Dot and I have known each other for 72 years. We met as teenagers in a little Methodist Church in New Jersey, and we have been married for 66 of those years. And we are moving towards being one in the Spirit with the Lord for eternity!

Dot and Jim Settlemire

THE WHOLENESS WHEEL LABYRINTH



Note: Portico Benefit Services' wholeness wheel emblems are trademarks of Portico Benefit Services (U.S. Patent and Trademark). Certificate of registration numbers: 4,637,260; 4,637,258; 4,637,259; 4,636,828; 4,677,811; 4,769,984.

Pray the Wholeness Wheel Labyrinth

Sit comfortably in a quiet place. Breathe deeply. Let go of tension in the shoulders, forehead, chest. If you wish, light a candle.

Place your finger at the entrance to the labyrinth. Invite Christ to walk with you.

Trace your finger slowly along the path. Prayerfully consider your stewardship in each dimension of well-being. Pause to wrestle with difficult steps and embrace easy ones.

Rest in the center. Reflect with an open heart and mind on where and how God is nudging – even inviting – you to steward your gifts for the sake of the whole body of Christ. Ask God for what you need.

Return slowly on the same path. Affirm the steps you'll take to share your gifts with your family, work or ministry setting, congregation, and greater community. Consider who will help you to be the gracious, whole-person steward God has called and gifted you to be.

Be Still: Open Your Heart to God's Suggestion

The labyrinth is part of Be Still, a Portico wellness activity. As you pray the labyrinth, carry one of the following with you. Visit PorticoBenefits.org/BeStill to learn more.

- What am I most grateful for?
How is God present in that?
- What is troubling me?
How is God present in that?
- In which areas of my life am I strong?
How is God present in that?
- In which areas of my life am I vulnerable? How is God present in that?
- What area of my life might God be nudging me to tend?