

# The Accessibility Project

## *Spiritual Guide*



*Adapted from Devotions Written by  
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2009 Capital Campaign*

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## Pledge Campaign

*May 3 – May 17, 2015*

**May 3. 2015**

**"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us -and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or a sister in need, yet refuses to help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."**

**-1 John 3:16-18 (NRSV)**

Our church needs us now, plain and simple. Will we be counted on to help? We know we have needed the church in the past and will in the future. Get excited!

When I was young I'd sit in the pew and look up at the stained glass window. The one in the middle, "Come Unto Me". And I said "Yes, Jesus, I will come". Come, I took the word and made an acronym from it: - Christ Offers Me Everything, COME. And in that window He invites us to church and to Him with open arms. He says, "Come, come to me with all your needs."

This church has the opportunity to grow because, quite simply, God will bless our work. We are out to help people, in this life, and in the next. Quite simply, there is nothing about our winning people to Christ that is complicated. It can be summed up in one word, COME.

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, help us to serve you by serving others and your church in time of need. We give thanks to you even in hard times and times of trial. It is in those times that we realize you never leave us alone.

Amen

**May 16.2015**

**"In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus for He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."**

**-Acts20:35**

In Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders he reminds us that by our hard work we should always care for the needs of the poor and the weak; always remembering Christ's teaching that it is better to give than receive.

**Prayer:**

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is discord, union;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love.

For it is in the giving that we receive;

it is in the pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen

*-A prayer attributed to St. Francis*

May 15, 2015

**"God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for His sake in serving the saints as you still do. We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end."**

*-Hebrews 6:10 (RSV)*

Think of your wedding day; your mind pictures a joyful couple starting a new life together. Without mutual giving of both, one to the other, there would be no marriage. It is the closest of human relationships. "To have and to hold, from this day forward ... til death do us part." It takes work and cooperation to build up and strengthen that relationship as you build your home life together.

More wonderful still is God's use of this picture to describe His love for us. He longs that we become His and take Him as ours. Without this mutual consent of giving and receiving of one another, there would be no adequate relationship between us and God. Once in that relationship not everything will be sunshine and roses. The love is there, constant, but it still takes effort to build a strong commitment to the Lord.

Christ did His part. He spread His arms wide and died for us. We must reach out now with our hands, hearts and resources to fulfill our part in the closest of all relationships. For marriage is "til death do us part", but not even death can part us from God.

**Prayer:**

Dear God, thank you for accepting us as your willing servants. May our service please you. Thank you for being with us every step of the way on this life's journey.

Amen

May 4, 2015

**The Rich Ruler**

A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered "No one is good, except God alone. You know the commandments Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother. All of these I have kept since I was a boy." He said.

**When Jesus heard this, He said to him. "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."**

*-Luke 18:18-30*

Sometimes in life it feels like we are right on Christ's heels. Walking in step with Him. Other times He may seem on the distant horizon.

Are we told this story so that we know material wealth is too great of a burden to carry on the journey? Do we carry it, or the cross? Let us follow with our hearts and try to keep up.

**Prayer:**

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation. Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Amen

May 5, 2015

**"Lay up not for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth & rust corrupts and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also."**

*-Matthew 6:19-21 (KJV)*

God gives us courage to face change. Let us trust in the Lord to provide the desire and hope we need to fulfill our call to stewardship to West Branch UMC. We need to embrace the promise in Philippians that "we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us." Sometimes we think "Maybe I won't bother .. I can do so little."

I am reminded of an experiment I saw when I was young on Mr. Wizard. He demonstrated how the power of the magnet attracted a whole pile of pins. Then he showed how one pin on its own could not attract another pin. But with that single pin, suspended from the magnet, you could get it to attract another pin. That pin in turn had the power to lift still another and so on.

We can compare God's strength and love to the magnet and, we can compare ourselves to the pins. Not one of us has the ability to rebuild the church alone but that 'first pin', held fast to God, attracts another 'pin', who attracts another, and so on, until the whole 'pile of pins' - the congregation of West Branch UMC - finds themselves "all lifted". Then all of us together, joined, can rebuild the church together, which will in turn lift our neighborhood and beyond.

**Prayer:**

Thank you God for giving us the opportunity to be faithful in Your service in our neighborhood. We know there is much work to be done. Help us to serve, seeing where each of us can best use our resources of prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

Amen

May 14, 2015

**The Widow's Offering**

**As He looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth", He said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.**

*-Luke 21:1-4*

It is not the monetary sum that God looks at. But the amount of faith and trust the individual shows toward their God that's of great value.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

He leads me beside quiet waters,

He restores my soul.

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

for His name sake

Even though I walk

through the valley of the shadow of death

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

In the presence of my enemies

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup overflows

Surely goodness and love will follow me

All the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

*-Psalm 23*

May 13, 2015

**"Our brothers, we want you to know what God's grace has accomplished in the churches of Macedonia. They have been severely tested by the troubles they went through, but their joy was so great that they were extremely generous in their giving even though they were very poor. I can assure you that they gave as much as they could, of their own free will, they begged us for the privilege of having a part in helping God's people."**

***-II Corinthians 8:1-4 (TEV)***

Our house is situated on our lot in such a way that it receives the morning sunshine. The sun then works its way around our house. It returns to shining through the front of the house in the late afternoon. We enjoy the last rays of the early evening.

Many times I think about how this applies to life. The sun shines joyously on us. The shadowy clouds of life fall upon us. We see God's loving rays, but behind the clouds is always the sun. Sooner or later the sun breaks through the clouds, sometimes unexpectedly. Even when it rains, sometimes surprising us, the sun produces a rainbow.

So it is with us. Sometimes we bask in God's love. We know His love is freely given. At times, life can be discouraging. Our vision will be clouded that God is present. But the clouds in life move on and God's presence is again felt shining upon us. He was always there, just as the sun is always there. He is ready to bring us rainbow moments of hope and assurance.

**Prayer:**

Precious Lord, we thank you that even in the most trying times you grant those that follow you the privilege of refuge and comfort. Amen

May 6, 2015

**The Parable of the Rich Fool**

**And He told them this parable: The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, "What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy: eat drink and be merry.'"**

**But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"**

**This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.**

***-Luke 12:16-21***

We must remember to use our time and wealth properly. Always keeping God and God's kingdom at the forefront of our minds. Not making the same mistake as the rich fool. Hoarding our wealth and completely losing our relationship with our heavenly Father. We may never know when the journey will come to an end, and material wealth we have held back selfishly will be of no use.

**Prayer:**

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to thee, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly thine, utterly dedicated unto thee. And then use us, we pray thee, as thou wilt, and always to thy glory and the welfare of thy people: Through the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen

**May 7, 2015**

**"Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. Be shepherds of the church of God which He made His own through the death of His son"**

*-Acts 20:28 (TEV)*

We are being called on to continue to give in stewardship. We are to go a step further than our regular offering pledge. This special campaign building fund is necessary if West Branch UMC is to continue its ministry and mission. God has bestowed much upon us, His children. In love and gratitude we should reach down into our "stores from His bounty" to give back proportionately.

Many are struggling, yet will prayerfully contemplate and then give cheerfully. If all of us in this "flock" at West Branch UMC would in stewardship be shepherds of the church, we can make the building campaign a success.

I believe the highest kind of giving is done from the bottom, the bottom of the heart. Let us all look into our hearts, appreciate the Lord's blessing and give back to Him a portion of what is rightly His. In this way His work can continue to be done in the community through West Branch UMC.

**Prayer:**

Our loving God, thank you for your presence in the world, in your church, and in our lives.

Amen

**May 12, 2015**

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

*- Reinhold Niebuhr*

We might not be able to end world hunger, but we can give to our local food bank and help a family in financial crisis.

We may not be able to end drug addiction or alcohol abuse, but we might help one person overcome their addiction.

We may never see an end to malaria, but we can help purchase nets to stop it from spreading.

We may never stop hatred, but we can love.

**"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."**

*-Matthew 6:19-21*

**May 11, 2015**

**"In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than receive."  
-Acts 20:35 (RSV)**

I was a young mother and it was my turn to be a care provider in the church nursery. I had my own toddler on my lap and another little child wanted some loving attention as well. I motioned for her to come. I repositioned Faith so the little girl could climb onto my lap. I felt Faith's body stiffen. Her lower lip dropped and her eyebrows came together in a scowl. She obviously did not want to share me. Faith proceeded to put out her hands to try and push her new lap mate off. Before she had the chance the little girl leaned over and planted a kiss on Faith's forehead!

In shocked surprise, Faith looked up at me. "She likes you" I said with a smile. Faith giggled and looked pleased. Both little ones snuggled on me. Soon I let them down to play.

I thought, how an unexpected expression of love has power to penetrate defenses. What a church lesson!

**Prayer:**

Great and merciful God, help us to see and fulfill Your will. Give us the hope, desire and energy it will take to sustain us as we rebuild your church.  
Amen.

**May 8, 2015**

**"If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."  
-1 Corinthians 13:3**

Paul's words remind us that our love is the greatest thing we can give. It is by God's grace that we are saved so that no one may boast. It is only through loving that we keep the greatest commandments.

**Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it; Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments."  
-Matthew 22:37-40**

**Prayer:**

Ever living God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ. Inspire our witness to Him, that all may know the power of His forgiveness and the hope of His resurrection. He live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
Amen

*From the Book of Common Prayer: Prayer no. 8*

**May 9, 2015**

**"On every Lord's day each of you should put aside something from what you have earned during the week and use it for offering. The amount depends on how much the Lord has helped you earn."**

***-1 Corinthians 16:2 (LB)***

In a small town recovering from a flood, a woman was overheard at the grocery store saying "Now, all I can do is pray". The words "now" and "all" in that sentence implied she had exhausted every avenue and decided now, all she had left to try was prayer.

I felt sad for the woman's loss, and sad that she resigned herself, that she'd give God a try ... after everything else. I feel prayer should be our first, and continuing pillar of hope and strength. Do not leave prayer as the last resort when all else fails. Prayer connects us to the most reliable and powerful source of power at all times, God.

Jesus set the example for us by His life of prayer. In His time of uncertainty in the garden of Gethsemane prior to His trial and crucifixion, He first prayed.

May we in the weeks ahead remember to make God our first and continuing resort. As we face the difficult task of building our church, our finances, and our lives, let us remember to pray to God and search our hearts. God hears our prayers and He answers.

**Prayer:**

O God, may we treat our stewardship responsibility with ever deepening gratitude and reverence for the works your hands have made.

Amen

**May 10, 2015**

**Consider the lilies**

**"Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagans run after all such things and your Father knows you need them. But seek His kingdom and these things will be given to you as well."**

***-Luke 12:27-31***

It seems that when we are asked to give. Part of our nature wonders if we give too much, will we have enough. We sometimes worry on top of our own worry. Jesus reminds us that our Father has it all covered. "Don't worry!" He tells us. Seek His kingdom and our Father will take care of us.

**The Lord is my light and my salvation -  
Whom shall I fear?**

**The Lord is the stronghold of my life -  
Of whom shall I be afraid?**

***-Psalm 27:1***