



Heartbeats along the way: The Heart on Pilgrimage

"Blessed are those whose strength is in You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage." Psalm 84:5

We, as Carlisle United Methodist Church have been on a journey for nearly six years, beginning with the legendary snowy night in January 2011. Recently, with God's help, we began the last two major activities to finish the trip: raising money for a new church, and actually building it.

During the Capital Campaign, we were challenged to ask ourselves, "Lord, what do You want to do through me?" The focus of this prayer was our willingness to make a financial commitment - a sacrifice of our treasure to build a church and worship center to fulfill God's vision and our mission of inviting all to become disciples of Jesus Christ serving Carlisle and beyond.

Now we need to ask what God wants to do through us for the last part of this pilgrimage. To help us complete the journey to the Spring Garden Campus, CUMC is offering "Heartbeats Along the Way," brief notes for reading, meditating and praying our way to the end of our pilgrimage.

These notes, appearing twice a month, will use the theme of the heart as expressed in the Bible. As one person put it, "The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart."

May these notes comfort, challenge, encourage, and guide us to answer that question, "Lord, what do You want to do through me?" as we make our pilgrimage together to the opening Sunday at Spring Garden Campus.

"O Lord, our strength, show us all what You want to do through us. May we arrive as one body in love and service. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Nobly Stirred Heart

*"My heart is stirred by a noble theme." Psalm 45:1
"I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations;
therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever." Psalm 45:17*

On September 24, CUMC members have the opportunity to make some preliminary choices on the building and finance plans for our new home at Spring Garden Campus. This is not the final vote, but it is important because it will express our confidence in the actions and direction forward proposed by the Leadership Council and the Building Committee. It is more than a vote on the building: it is a measure of the trust we place in each other and the God who goes before us.

Several times during the desert wanderings of the newly freed Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land, they lost heart. They cried out for the old days, fearing the way forward. They had personal agendas. They lost their infant-sized faith in God and Moses, his chosen servant. Their hearts were not nobly stirred.

But God tells Joshua and the next generation of Israelites three times to be strong and courageous. With hearts nobly stirred, they cross the Jordan, conquer Jericho, and win the land promised them by the God their fathers turned from so often.

Ours is a noble cause - one worthy of hearts nobly stirred. We are voting for a future we may not see clearly. This is not a vote for a personal agenda. Consider voting forward, not backward.

"O Lord, our strength, show each of us what You want to do through us. May we arrive as one body in love and service. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Encouraged Heart

"But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Matthew 14:27

On this day, Jesus learned about the execution of His cousin, John the Baptist and tried with His disciples to get away from the crowds by sailing across the Sea of Galilee. But thousands walked along the lake-shore following Him. So Jesus stopped, because He had compassion for them and healed their sick. As the day turned into evening, the disciples urged Him to dismiss them so they could find food. It was a kind thing they intended. But Jesus, after perhaps hundreds of healing miracles, provides one more gigantic miracle using His disheartened disciples as agents and five loaves of bread and two fish to feed the multitudes.

After dinner, Jesus sends the Twelve off in the boat while He dismisses the crowds and heads up the mountain to pray alone. By now the boat is somewhere out on the lake battling a fierce windstorm. Just before daylight Jesus comes walking toward them on the water. Believing they are seeing a ghost, twelve grown men begin to cry out in fear. But Jesus reassures them saying above the noise of the storm, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Disheartedness ran through this day for the disciples: John's execution, Jesus turning away from a retreat to minister to the crowds, His command to feed everyone, and now this life-threatening storm. Yet in every situation, Jesus was with them, giving them reason to, and finally telling them to "Take heart."

The Holy Spirit is just as close to us as Jesus was to the Twelve on that day. When you are disheartened, take a lesson from the disciples. As a wise old Chief Master Sergeant told me years ago, "Illegitimi non carborundum." Take heart!

"O Christ of the healing and feeding miracles, let our ears hear You above the storms of life. Let us take heart, knowing the Holy Spirit is near. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The God-Guarded Heart

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

Paul and Silas planned another missionary journey to Turkey, but... Can you believe it? The Holy Spirit FORBADE Paul and Silas from preaching the Gospel there this time, so they went to Europe. Philippi became the first church in Europe. It began by a river bank when, on a Sabbath day, Paul and Silas talked with some women who were worshiping and doing laundry. Acts 16 tells the full story: preaching, beatings, jailing, praying, singing, release, and Gospel victory!

I imagine Paul was thinking about his days in Philippi when he wrote this inspiring message to the house churches there.

"Surpasses all understanding" - what does this mean? Who could understand how forbidding Paul to preach in one place would lead to a greater opportunity to announce the Gospel elsewhere; how a cruel beating and imprisonment would lead to establishing the Gospel in Europe.

It's a lesson to Paul and us, that in everything God will guard us - hearts, minds and souls - if we follow where God leads in proclaiming the Gospel. We don't need to explain or solve some equation about God's peace. We just need to accept the promise that God guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

There's a lot we can't explain as we journey to the Spring Garden Campus. But we can experience God's peace because God guards our hearts and minds every step of the way.

"Gracious God, fulfill Your promise to guard our hearts and minds as we make our way to the place You have called us to build to offer the Gospel and to serve Your children everywhere. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Instructed Heart

"I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me." Psalm 16:7

This is a Psalm of David sub-titled as a song of trust and security. Its eleven verses encapsulate the life of a child of God. There is petition, observation, declaration, affirmation, and faithful promise to follow God. Please read it yourself and imagine you are its writer. It's printed below.

David was as human as the next person. He had his share of challenges in his life; he had his share of sin; but he had more than a normal share of triumphs and blessings.

On our journey together toward a new church, we will face all of the experiences David had through his life as shepherd, warrior, king, sinner, and penitent. We can learn the lessons David leaves us in this psalm. We can offer our lives to the Lord and declare, as David did, "You are my God." We can praise the Lord, and even as we sleep, let our hearts instruct us.

What does that mean? I believe it is Night School for the Faithful! God is at work even as we sleep, speaking to our own hearts to teach us what God wants us to learn.

The Psalmist declares that the benefits of an instructed heart are gladness, joyfulness, security, eternal pleasures, and a beautiful inheritance.

I believe our new House of Worship at Spring Garden campus will be our beautiful inheritance.

"Lord of our lives, bless us with Your good counsel. Instruct our hearts in Your ways. And give us courage to respond. Amen."

~ cl reynolds

Psalm 16

1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. 2 I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." 3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. 4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips. 5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. 6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. 7 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. 8 I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. 11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.



Heartbeats along the way: The Thankful Heart

"I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds." Psalm 9:1

This is the season for national Thanksgiving, although in the big box stores it's usually the start line for an orgy of buying. This season is sandwiched in between Halloween and Xmas. (I use Xmas because in most of those places the "Christ" is completely missing.)

This psalm, like so many others is a combination of many themes: human thankfulness and hope; God's majesty, power, and judgment; and petition for God to rise up.

In the life of the Christian, every day is a day of thanks. One of the blessings we have is a thankful heart. Oh, sometimes it's missing or pushed aside because of something else. But God has put out lots of signs that point to thankfulness. So, ask yourself this: "How large a part of my prayers is devoted to genuine thankfulness?"

Let your hearts always be thankful for blessings great and small. Let them give thanks for what has happened in your life, and in what is happening in the life of our church family. Let's tell everyone of the wonderful deeds God has done. Remember, as Pastor Jim said, we're part of Jesus' Nation, and every day is a great day to offer grateful thanks!

Our pilgrimage to the soybean field we bought for our new church building has been paved with God's miracles and many reasons for thankfulness.

"Lord of our lives, Your mercy and love deserve our joyful thanks every day! Lend us voice and courage to tell all about Your wonderful deeds. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Pondering, Treasuring Heart

"But Mary treasured all these words, and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2:19

The writer of Luke points us to the Pondering, Treasuring Heart of Mary as she faces two times when Jesus surprises everyone - one when He comes as a helpless infant - not to the "royalty" of the time, but to a near-homeless, barely-married family, heralded by an Earth-shaking chorus of angels. Again, not to the High Society of the day, but to outcast, nameless shepherds.

The second time is when the young teen Jesus scares and shocks his parents by disappearing for days into the Temple to chat with the scholars there. Jesus astounds and surprises the rabbis, and what does Mary do? She doesn't scold, but again treasures these events.

The writer uses the same Greek word as he shows us Mary's heart as she deals with these wild times. Our translators say she "kept," "pondered," and "treasured" them in her heart. Evidently the writer wants us to know that Mary never turned away - that when Jesus did unanticipated things, Mary kept her eyes on Him and remembered who He was and what He did - treasuring every moment - guarding always every move, "lest she forget."

Let us pray that as Jesus leads us at CUMC to do painful things - to leave our old buildings, to build new kinds of rooms, to embrace new kinds of neighbors, to go to places unknown - that we, like Mary, never turn away, but keep our eyes on Jesus, keep remembering HIS commands: "LOVE each other as I have loved you; love (even!) your enemies!"

"Lord, as we move toward a "new" CUMC, may we, like those other unlikely shepherd pioneers in The Story, go quickly into the uncomfortable part of the city; for there, we shall find Him!"

~ Don Schoeps



Heartbeats along the way: The Treasure-filled Heart

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12:34

"...but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:20-21

What is it that you treasure most? Can you store it on a shelf, in a garage, in a safe deposit box? Can you store it in your heart? Can you store it in Heaven?

The treasures Jesus is speaking about are not wrapped in dazzling paper. The treasures are perhaps not even tangible. But they are very real: precious memories of events in our lives; the faces of dear ones living and long past; times and feelings of great joy and peace. These treasures shape our lives and our conduct.

Jesus reminds us of a truth that is so humanly real: our hearts abide where that which we love and treasure most abide.

There is no limit to the treasures we can store in Heaven. If you think about it, God invented the "Cloud" long before any software company. And perhaps these treasures are the only ones that can transfer from earth to Heaven. Perhaps you CAN take these with you.

This Christmas season, remember some special gifts you received, and perhaps some special gifts you gave from your heart. And let's put our hearts into something we can all treasure - the vision of our Spring Garden Campus. Even though we can't yet fully visualize everything, we are good friends with the Architect. After all, he did build all of Creation, and called it very good.

"O Beloved Jesus, May our hearts always treasure the gifts You give us. Inspire us to share these precious gifts freely. Help us to treasure these times of building the Spring Garden Campus for Your everlasting glory. AMEN."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Courageous Heart

*"Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart."
2nd Corinthians 4:1*

Under the leadership of our Building Committee, we are engaged in an exciting and challenging ministry: to create a Worship Center that will serve this fellowship and Carlisle for generations to come. Today Jeff and the team will give us another status report. They have been working hard with the contractors, re-viewing the proposals, re-sizing and re-organizing spaces to achieve the most useful and flexible building possible within the defined budget, building code, and legal restraints.

It's a time for us to praise and thank the Building Committee for what it has achieved and how they have been guided by God. We must also applaud their courage in shouldering this monumental project. They are: Jeff Barnes, Ryan Heishman, Colleen Kulp, Mike Landis, Joanne Monoski, Joanne Reynolds, Courtney Svirbly, Rick Washinger, & Brad Weiser.

We've just begun a new year, one that will be very significant for Carlisle UMC and our journey to a new worship center. By year's end, we should be looking at new construction rising from a 25-acre soybean field. As Sir Winston Churchill said "This is not the beginning of the end; it is the end of the beginning."

So, let's not lose heart. Let's speak encouraging words to one another this year. Let's count and share the miracles God has showered upon us, and digest the latest miracles we hear of today from the Building Committee. And remember, in less than two years we will walk into CUMC- Spring Garden, and it will be beautiful!!

"O God of Mercy and Might, please continue to bless our Building Committee with Your Presence and Wisdom. Give us the words of encouragement to share with one another through this year of great expectations. We ask this for Your Glory. AMEN."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Strong Heart

*"My flesh and my HEART may fail, but God is the strength of my HEART and my portion forever."
Psalm 73:26*

These next few months are not for the faint-hearted. The final decisions on the Worship Center design must be made wisely so that the paper plans can be turned into the choreographing of bulldozers, back hoes, and purchase orders by late summer. Imagine the weight on the shoulders of the Building Committee as it digests and remedies the results of planning commissions and official government bodies so that we can move dirt.

Although the first shovel may happen about the time the 2018-19 school year starts, almost every week between now and then will seem like running a marathon up a mountain, and sometimes at a sprint. Strong hearts are required for the Committee and for those of us who are the fans and cheerleaders.

Although we may not personally be in shape, as the Psalmist confesses, our God is the Strength of our hearts, and our portion forever. Trusting in this, we can succeed; doubting this, we're bound to falter or fail.

May our hearts be strengthened in all this by our faithful God.

"O God of the faithful, grant us strong hearts to face the challenges that lie ahead. Help us to put all our trust in the promise that You will never abandon us. Be our portion and strength to build something spiritually significant for Your Glory and for the redemption of many. In Jesus' name, AMEN."

~ cl reynolds

The snowy night was Jan 26 2011, 7 years and 2 days ago.s



Heartbeats along the way: The Deeply Loving Heart

"Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart." 1 Peter 1:22

If you ever wanted a concise sermon about God's calling and equipping the saints for kingdom work, you cannot do better than Peter's first letter to the new church dispersed throughout what is now Turkey. I strongly encourage you to read and think on it from these perspectives: the dangerous and exciting early years of the Church; the calling to us as the family of God known as Carlisle UMC; and Peter's command to love one another deeply from the heart.

It always fascinates me that when we follow God's recipe, how fresh and hot from the oven these words are to this day. Baked by faithful Christians, symbolically eaten together during Holy Communion, and freely shared with one another through trials, temptations, joys, sorrows, uncertainties – personal and collective. And there's always enough to go around with some to spare.

God deeply loves us. God sent Jesus to show how deeply. And I believe God implanted this deeply loving gene in our DNA so we can act as God does.

Don't you see? God isn't just leading us to a new place of worship. God is preparing us for greater works in His name when we go forth from the Spring Garden Campus. After all, it's not only the building; it's the commission to deeply love in the name of Christ!

"O God, Healer, Redeemer, Dearest Friend, As Jesus showed the disciples of the early church, guide us to have nothing but deeply loving hearts for every member of our church family. Gently move us to rejoicing together as we journey to the Sanctuary. You are inspiring us to build. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

~ cl reynolds

1 Peter 1

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever." That word is the good news that was announced to you.



Heartbeats along the way: The Waiting Heart

"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." Psalm 27:14

Around this time of year, my mother would settle into her chair and look at seed catalogues and imagine the vegetables and flowers she would plant. She was a woman of the soil and always enjoyed planting and harvesting.

We had a small patch of tillable and fertile ground, one too small for her imagination and too big for the work she expected me to invest in her dream. I was just a kid and was more interested in airplanes and the Lone Ranger when it came time to turn imagination into vegetable and floral reality.

However, as years passed, I grew into the same mold (except I'd look online rather than sit with a paper catalogue), imagining an Eden in my back yard.

You and I have that opportunity to imagine the beauty and usefulness of our Spring Garden Campus. But all we can do right now is to wait. No, that's not true. We can do something. We can be strong, take heart, and pray with all the passion and faith we can muster for the fulfillment of God's marvelous plan for our church family. We can do this for ourselves and all who come after us.

So, let's wait for the Lord together. In the next few weeks this wonderful dream will be more fully disclosed. So as David encouraged, "...be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

"O God, who fashioned all Creation, give us the strength to wait for the revelation of Your Will for Spring Garden Campus. Give each of us encouraging words to speak to one another and share our imagination of this place that You are preparing for us in Carlisle."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The God-directed Heart

*"May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."
2nd Thessalonians 3:5*

I imagine the believers at Thessalonica held a very special place in Paul's heart. He and Silas spent three weeks there arguing for the Gospel, basing it on the Hebrew scriptures. Eventually, some Jewish citizens became jealous, stirred up a mob and sought out Paul and Silas to harm them. Not finding them, the mob attacked some of the believers, hauled them before the authorities, charging them with acts contrary to the decrees of the emperor. But the believers sent the two missionaries to another nearby town.

Now Paul was used to this sort of reaction, but I believe it was the courage of these brand-new believers that led him to write two letters to them, and send Timothy back to complete their understanding of the Gospel and to report to Paul how this young church was doing.

You can read, and should read aloud, the enthusiasm and joy Paul shows for these faithful Thessalonians. In fact, take time over these next two weeks to read (aloud) a chapter of 1 & 2 Thessalonians daily. I believe it will stir your hearts as it must have the first readers and hearers of Paul's epistles.

Imagine such a letter addressed to us at 333 S. Baltimore St. Some of the phrases will be familiar to you: respect those who labor among you; be at peace among yourselves; seek ways to good to one another; Rejoice always; pray without ceasing, give thanks in ALL circumstances; test everything and hold fast to GOOD.

We are the inheritors of these words to the Thessalonian Christians. Let's strive to let God direct our hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ as we journey to our new house of worship.

"Almighty and Merciful God, Let us celebrate that Your Holy Spirit is with us in all things, directing us on our journey. May we be worthy of the inspiration and response of the Thessalonian Church as we build for Your kingdom in Carlisle. "

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Grateful, Joy-filled Heart

"You turned my wailing into dancing; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing Your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise You forever." Psalm 30:11-12

As I looked around in worship this morning I thought there's hardly a pew that doesn't have one of "us" sitting in it - one of "us" who would surely have died, had we been born just a few decades earlier - one of "us" whose hearts beat today, thanks to recently advanced medical technology. We live with that special reminder to be grateful for the miracle of life, don't we? But are we so unique?

Thousands of years ago, long before even aspirin, the Psalmist wrote our song - "You turned my wailing into dancing and clothed me with Joy!" He knew! He, along with St. Paul (who wrote from prison) that we should rejoice in all things. He knew too! They all knew what each of us remembers now and then - that the life we live is a miraculous gift far beyond our understanding, wildly outstripping all the joy we can express and all the gratitude we can ever give back.

So we praise Our Lord and struggle to find ways to sing back the joy - not the Pollyanna "joy" that comes from putting on blinders to the real world, but the real joy of living IN the real world - quite like the boys in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, who found Life and God Himself INSIDE the fire that this world thought would destroy them; as surprised as the father in Jesus' great story who finds himself joyfully running toward his returning prodigal son - joy as surprise, joy as a gift, joy as the hallmark of God's persistent love for us all!

Let us pray together to be open to God when God calls us to new paths, to new buildings, to new ways of singing back in joy!

Lord, "Be Thou our vision," O Joy of our heart! Thank you for all your steadfast love and care for us. Show us now new ways we can run after You in Joy! Amen.

~ Don Schoeps

Please consider attending one or all of the services at CUMC this week:

The CUMC Holy Week morning services and breakfasts.

- Beginning at 7:00am with Worship in the Chapel, followed by a hearty breakfast and fellowship in the Multipurpose Room
- Worshipping on Friday morning in the Sanctuary, with Holy Communion and the combined CUMC Adult choirs

The March 29 Maundy Thursday service at 7:00 PM in the Sanctuary

The Friday March 30 Community Cross Walk from Noon - 2:00 PM, beginning at New Life Community Church, North & Bedford streets (the original First UMC building)

The Easter Sunday Services

6:45am - Sunrise Service on the Spring Garden Campus, 333 South Spring Garden St

8:15am - Traditional Service (Sanctuary); 9:45am - Contemporary Service (MPR); 11:00am - Celebration Service (Sanctuary)



Heartbeats along the way: The Humble Heart

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:29

The Easter celebration is over until next year. The Easter baskets (are there still such things?) are either put away or embarrassing in lingering around. All the candy and chocolate crosses are eaten. What's left for us to do in the remaining weeks until Pentecost, the birthday of the Church?

I challenge you to use this time to complete our Lenten introspection and self-examination. If you ask the question, "What does Easter mean?" most answers will be about Jesus' victory over sin and death for us, the children of God. I completely agree, but I also am driven to ask what this means to me.

I believe the answer is Jesus' invitation to His followers to take up His yoke and learn the gentleness and humility of Christ Himself. The idea of a yoke sounds like drudgery and hard labor. But, remember who is our Partner. It's the Lord Jesus, and because of that, any burden is light for He bears the burden with us.

What can we do after Easter? We can start servant-living by being yoked to Christ and learning from Him, as those first Apostles and Disciples did between Easter evening and the day of Pentecost.

As we journey to the Spring Garden Campus, let's put on the yoke of Christ's service, and may we more diligently understand and embrace our new tasks. Remember, it's not just a building we're building. We must renew ourselves as a church family dedicated to Jesus and ready to "Follow God and Build Community."

"Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent Reigns! Fit us with our yokes. Open our souls and let us use these days till Pentecost to learn Your way of service. Grow us into a humble and faithful family worthy of the gift You are giving us in the Spring Garden Campus. Amen."

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Foolish Heart

"The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good." Psalm 14:1

"We are fools for the sake of Christ." 1 Corinthians 4:10a

What are we talking about, you're asking? These letters are about hearts. But, all varieties of adjectives are attached to hearts. It's important to understand hearts that are not God-believers. If you look at the first verse carefully you will understand that the Psalmist immediately dismisses the unbelieving fool stating they are corrupt, are doing horrible deeds, and not working for good.

The foolish heart disdains God. We all know how hard it is to deal with fools. (Look at ourselves some days.) But that is what God calls us to do. Fools are enemies of God and God's people. Fools are precisely the group of people Jesus, when he hung on the cross, asked His Heavenly Father to forgive.

So, fools are the fish we are to fish for. Fools are one reason we're building Spring Garden Campus; it's the foolish fish we're called to lead to the love of Christ. We must offer Christ to the thirsty, the suffering, the despairing, the scoffer, the doubter, and even the unbelieving fool.

We are Christians: we confess and believe in God and God's amazing love. Our simple tag line is "Follow God, Build Community." And yes, we're sometimes even labeled fools, but we are fools for Christ.

We're not building the Spring Garden Campus to be simply a 'Come to" place. That is just half of the reason. We're building it as a GAS station: God's Amazing Salvation station, where we fill up with worship and grow and drive away to connect and serve.

We must not ignore the foolish heart. And we must also guard ourselves from the foolishness of denying God.

"Lord of my life, may my heart always be a fool for you, and never a fool that denies You. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Open Heart

*"A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; ... The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us."
Acts 16:15*

"After leaving the prison they went to Lydia's home; and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters there, they departed." Acts 16:40

Her name was Lydia, a business woman from what is now Turkey a dealer in fashionable purple cloth. She met Paul on a Sabbath by some river near Philippi. She was a God worshiper, although there's no evidence she was Jewish. Yet, somehow, in listening to Paul that morning, her heart was opened to the Gospel. (Wesley's was strangely warmed centuries later listening to a passage Paul wrote.

Clearly her heart was ripe for opening before Paul began to talk about the Gospel. I can imagine she was thirsty for a deeper relationship with God. Hearing what Paul was saying, she eagerly opened her heart and opened her home to him and his companions as well. As a result, she and her entire household were baptized.

Later, after Paul was beaten, jailed and released, Lydia welcomed him into her home to rest a bit before going on his way to proclaim the Gospel.

We may have been like Lydia when we began our Christian journey: a worshiper, but incomplete. And like Lydia, the Lord opened our hearts to receive grace beyond measure when that moment arrived.

Like Lydia, we can practice welcoming strangers to our church home, even after bad things have happened to them.

"Lord Christ, open my heart to receive Your Gospel. Quicken me to respond to its command to love and to employ all I possess for Your sake. Let this church family practice sincere welcoming. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Rejoicing Heart

"We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you." Psalm 33:20-22

Happy Birthday Church! May the Holy Spirit anoint us anew.

On May 13, our collective hearts experienced what the Psalmist wrote so long ago about rejoicing when this congregation approved the final plans to move forward to create a new Worship Center at the Spring Garden Campus. And, like this psalm, we waited in hope for many months to get to this milestone. So let's raise rejoicing thanks to Jeff Barnes, the entire Building Committee, and the Design team for the inspired and Spirit-led work accomplished so far.

But let's remember that this is a milestone, and not a destination. Think of this journey as a triathlon. The first event is waiting for the approval of several government agencies. The second event, the first Capital Campaign, is at the 50% mark. And the third, ground breaking and construction, we pray will start in a few months.

The last chart Jeff showed us on May 6 had this quote:
"God never gives you a dream that matches your budget.
He's not checking your bank account; He's checking your faith."

May we grow more faithful in trusting the Architect of all Creation to bring our dream into being. And may we continue to grow in faith, hospitality, and service that Christ may be introduced and glorified. As we build this facility, let us steadily recommit ourselves to following God and building a serving community.

"Blessed Jesus, we rejoice in the blessings You have poured upon us in preparing a new place of worship at Spring Garden Campus. Let us respond to Your unfailing love by trusting You even more as we move through the next steps along the way. Asking this in Your Precious Name, Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Christ-dwelling Heart

"I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love."

Ephesians 3:16-17

Centuries ago, Paul wrote this inspiring prayer to the churches in Ephesus. It is completely relevant for us in 2018 and for the years ahead. It is a prayer we can all pray for Carlisle UMC.

As we continue to praise God for the steady forward progress of our building program and for the steadfastness of the committee in maneuvering us through the several earthly approvals that will lead to the groundbreaking event later this year, let us also prepare our hearts to receive this new church building, and to use the gifts God gives us to invite and bless many others who do not know Jesus to experience the love of our Savior.

I'm a firm believer in this: that God has called every one of us to this time and to this journey to be a bright light of the Truth of the Gospel in a world desperately seeking peace. To do this, I believe we must let God shape ourselves into the church family that is able to welcome our neighbors all around us, and demonstrate the Love, Mercy, and Power of God as shown in Christ Jesus.

Paul reminds us that we did not get to this point on our journey by our own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit working within us, individually and as a fellowship. It's the same Spirit which has been working in the world since the first Pentecost. Let's remain open to the power and inspiration of that same Spirit. Let's give our hearts to be its dwelling place so that even as we journey we can remain rooted and grounded in agape love.

"O Christ, as You led and inspired your Church through ages past, lead this church family to be your instrument for witness and service in this community and to the ends of the earth. We pray in your name and for Your Glory. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Joyful Heart

*"Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice."
Psalm 105:3*

Next Sunday we'll celebrate the fifth birthday of Carlisle United Methodist Church. It's been an exciting, stressful, trust-building and miracle-filled five years! God has given us countless gifts, including the precious gift of our Christian fellowship as a family. God has also given us the opportunity to welcome new members to our family. We've seen small children grow into wonderful witnesses before our eyes during the weekly Children's Chat time. And we've witnessed sisters and brothers become more deeply involved in Kingdom work through Serve and Connect activities. But wait! There's more!!

We can also celebrate the achievement of a milestone on our pathway to breaking ground later this year. South Middleton Twp. Planning Commission unanimously approved our land development plans for the Spring Garden Campus. We're on track to break ground by early autumn!

We've faced a number of decisions in the past, but in every situation God has led us on the way through. There will be more challenges to come. And God will continue to guide us.

This psalm, copied in part (below), was ascribed to David as a praise psalm when he rescued the Ark of the Covenant and returned it to Israel (See 1 Chronicles 6). It was a time of great excitement for a nation in the making.

There will be more days of celebration ahead, but this one is also important. See you at the birthday party!

"O Lord let us give You the full measure of Glory for all you have done for our church family. May our hearts always seek You and rejoice always. For the sake of Jesus, our Lord, Amen."

~ cl reynolds

Psalm 105: 1-6a

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.

Glory in his holy name;

let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually.

Remember the wonderful works he has done.



Heartbeats along the way: The Living Heart

"The poor will see and be glad - you who seek God, may your hearts live! The Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his captive people." Psalm 69:32-33

Recently Kathy Charette circulated a document listing many ways that we can volunteer to be part of one of our four Pillars – Worship, Grow, Connect, and Serve – inside and outside CUMC. The passage from Psalm 69 encourages us to step up as a volunteer.

We are truly a serving church as well as a giving church. Our time in serving others is just as important as our tithes and offerings when it comes to following Christ's call to be disciples and to make disciples. Of course we are not perfect, and sometimes we're accused by others of a sort of hypocrisy. But we mustn't let those criticisms deter us from bearing one another's burden.

The Heartbeats series has two main themes. One is to encourage us in creating the Spring Garden Campus as a place where we may practice the four Pillars. The other theme is to prepare ourselves for performing those services for others. We're building a living heart to serve God and others. We have these remaining months to prepare ourselves for a greater level of service and witness. Otherwise, we're just building a museum for Christian artifacts.

I can't imagine God just wants us to build a building. I believe God is challenging us to fill it with living hearts that seek God and bring hope to the poor, the needy, and the captive. After all, Jesus didn't command us to build the church as a property, but to go and make disciples.

"May our hearts come alive in You, O Savior. May we dedicate our lives to Worshiping, Growing, Connecting, and Serving this broken world as we build our new worship campus. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Christ-ruled, Thankful Heart

*"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body, And be thankful." ~
Colossians 3:14-15*

Recently I wrote that the purpose of the Heartbeats letters was twofold: building a facility to be a base of operations for our calling as a church in this community and in the world; and a disciple-building program that prepares us for the new things God has for us.

St. Paul always gave sound guidance for the churches he started. Using his writings as a sort of parallel, let's take the time we have from now till we walk in the doors of the Spring Garden Campus, to think of our personal preparations in building-related terms.

Let's examine and refurbish our spiritual foundations. Take account of those internal fixtures that could be replaced. Replace some of our "me" time with service to others time. Polish up our memorizing parts of the Bible.

It's time to invest in our own very personal Capital Campaign, converting the most precious commodities we possess - our time and our motivating self-interest - to become more deeply committed and skilled in serving, caring for, and encouraging our sisters and brothers in faith. That way we can be better equipped as Committed and Serving Christians for the great works that will pour forth from God's gift of this new worship and serving space we're building at the Spring Garden Campus.

Let's pledge to make our lives match the beauty and newness of our new building, so that the peace of Christ will always rule in our hearts - something for which we may forever be thankful.

"O Lord help us prepare our hearts for this new thing You are doing for and through us. For the sake of Jesus, our Lord, Amen."

~ cl reynolds

Paul's Guidance to Churches (informal)

If you are interested in what Paul wrote regarding living as a member of a Christian community, I offer a brief list of passages from Paul's writings to churches and individual persons.

· Romans All of chapters 12-14; 1 Corinthians. All of chapter 12; 2 Corinthians. Chapter 2:5-7; Galatians. 6:1-10; Ephesians. 3:14-19; all of chapter 4; 5:15-20; 6:10-18; Philippians. 2:1-18; 3:12-21; 4:4-9; Colossians: 3:1-17; Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:5-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Timothy 1 Timothy 6:11-19; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus. 2:1-10; 3:1-2, 8-11



Heartbeats along the way: The Zion-directed Heart

*"Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion."
~ Psalm 84:5*

Psalm 84 is a song about the great joy of worship in the Temple. Its verses express many beautiful thoughts about being in God's presence on earth. I've included it on the back of this note. You've heard the statement, "All roads lead to Rome." In this psalm the verse above expresses a far better destination and declares that all who love the Lord can find their way from wherever they are to the presence of God in the Temple.

We are like this psalmist on a journey to a holy place and we have our own set of directions to arrive at our 'temple,' the Spring Garden Campus. We've been on this pilgrimage since March 4, 2012, and now our destination is just beyond that gentle rise. Not in our eyesight yet, but within our heart-sight. The recent CUMC Building Committee BLOGs, posted on the website, give us some very encouraging news. By mid-September, the Timothy Grass that now covers the ground will be replaced by earthmoving equipment scraping, digging, and re-forming our land to prepare for construction. As the earth is reshaped, all the many legal and financial processes that finalize the building plan, which are moving in parallel, should be completed so that the actual building can begin.

Surely this news calls for offering prayers of rejoicing in our God! Surely, also it calls for prayers of safety and blessing on all engaged.

Prayer. How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts! We are so grateful that You have inspired, strengthened, encouraged, and led us on our journey toward that Holy Place from which we can worship You and serve Your children for the next generations. Let our hearts always find our way to You.

~ cl reynolds

Psalm 84

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.



Heartbeats along the way: The Believing Heart

"Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you." ~ Mark 11:23

It was the last week Jesus spent on Earth. Mark records that earlier that day Jesus put a curse on a fig tree because it had leaves and no fruit. As they were returning to Bethany, the disciples noticed that the tree, once flourishing in greenery was now withered to the root.

In a sense that fig tree was a sacrifice to make a point about real faith, trust, and belief. Jesus then uses some extreme language to make a point about believing in our hearts what we say with our mouths about God and God's power available to us.

If you read the story closely, Jesus was hungry and believed that the fig tree would have fruit, even though it was not yet fruit season. Think of others who are hungry for the Word (which is never out of season.) What a disappointment for them when their souls are unsatisfied. They turn aside from believing and are lost.

We have the opportunity for CUMC to be a fruitful fig tree, one whose fruit is never out of season. God has proven faithful to our big prayers, particularly those prayers we pray in agreement with one another that have led us to Spring Garden Campus. We've had mountains moved by our praying. We are witnesses to believing in a magnificent God. Let's invite all to come for a bite of fruit that will satisfy their souls.

"Gracious Jesus, You reward all who believe in their hearts that You can do mighty miracles for their lives here on Earth. Let us share everything that makes our hearts believe in You. Let us be more than just pretty fig leaves to a world of hungry souls. Let us always bear refreshing fruit. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Untroubled Heart

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"
~ John 14:1-2*

This is a day of great rejoicing! Today we go to Spring Garden Campus with shovels and cameras to turn over some soil and record the event. But take a look back at how wonderfully God has led us.

Nearly every Wednesday morning since before CUMC became CUMC, the Bridges Prayer Team has met to pray specifically for our church family and all our endeavors, asking God to guide and encourage us along the journey.

Looking back at all the prayer requests and the answers to them, there is no doubt that God inspired and is leading this adventure, from the out-of-the-blue (or snowy night) thought of unification, the calling and commissioning of marvelous talent already in place in the three churches to form teams and tackle a tidal wave of issues and unknowns, to instilling this church family with courage, patience, financial dedication, and a greater love for God's people than for our buildings.

Yet, in all of this, our hearts were sometimes troubled; sometimes worried about what we were giving up; sometimes unsure of the next steps, unable to see as clearly into the future as we would like.

In the Upper Room, when Jesus spoke to a troubled, worried, unsure, and doubtful band of disciples who had been with Him almost daily for three years or so, He encouraged them to let go of worrying about the future and instead to double down on believing in God and Himself, whatever might happen.

Never let Satan's storms of doubt trouble your heart. God is always at work for us and within us. Hallelujah!! Let's rejoice!!

"O God, let nothing about this journey trouble our hearts. Help us believe more strongly in the promise of Jesus Christ. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Honest and Good Heart

"But as for that (seed) in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance." Luke 8:15

This will be the first year that our part of the original Smith Farm will not have a crop. No longer will soybeans, corn, grain, or some other cash crop take root, because our Spring Garden Campus is being built to grow a different kind of crop - new Christians. Our job is to make this piece of ground as fruitful as it was when it was farmland. To make it good soil for the Kingdom.

Jesus' Parable of the Sower, found in three of the four Gospels, tells us that the soul who hears the Word and holds it fast in an honest and good heart is the soul that will bear fruit with patient endurance.

As I envision this for CUMC, I see a fresh yearly crop of souls growing in love with God, nourished by the Word, through reading and study, and enriched by example of our faithful fellowship. Some of these are among us now; but many others are not yet reached, perhaps not even born.

As our building takes shape, let us prepare ourselves to be finders, inviters, welcomers, nurturers, encouragers, consolers, and mentors to the new crop of souls who find their way to our good soil.

Think of it as a Little Lights Learning Center for persons new to a relationship with Jesus.

"O Holy Spirit, hold our hearts in honesty and goodness to the task of showing our Savior's love to everyone who does not know or understand it. Let us be good soil. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Refreshed Heart

Philemon 1:7. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

In this brief personal letter, Paul is writing to Philemon, a Christian whom Paul introduced to Christ. Philemon had a slave, Onesimus, who ran away to join Paul and serve him while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Paul points out that earlier in his life Onesimus was considered 'worthless,' probably the reason that Philemon did not pursue the slave.

But Paul declares that he is now useful, and that he (Paul) wishes to do the right thing and return Onesimus to Philemon. So Paul pleads that he be welcomed back as Paul himself would be. And he points out the excellent Christian witness that Philemon has become, giving Paul joy and encouragement while he is in prison. He concludes that Philemon's example has refreshed the hearts of the saints.

We have the opportunity to be a Philemon - to express our joy and encouragement to the Building Committee for all its work to date. Consider this halftime. It has performed splendidly for two quarters. And yes, there is a great deal more to do. So let us refresh the hearts of our Building Committee by telling them how much we appreciate their steadfast, Holy Spirit - inspired work on behalf of us and on behalf of the future of CUMC. Their names and responsibilities are on the back.

"Lord Jesus, we humbly thank You for the gift of encouragement from our Building Committee, and the opportunity to encourage and refresh them. Their work refreshes our hearts and helps us to go forth in Your Name. We especially lift up our Building Committee, thanking you for their faithfulness and success. Amen."

~ cl reynolds

Carlisle United Methodist Church Building Committee

Jeff Barnes - Staff liaison; Land Development; Co-Construction Project Management

Brad Weiser - Accessibility and Special Needs

Rick Washinger - Adults and Outside Groups

Joanne Reynolds - Worship & Music; Amenities & Decorating

Colleen Kulp - Children & Little Lights Learning Center

Ryan Heishman - Finance & Stewardship; Technology, Security & Audio/Visual/Lighting

Joanne Monoski - Hospitality, Kitchen, Cafe

Mike Landis - Maintenance

Courtney Svirbly - Youth

Wayne Henderson - Co-Construction Project Management



Heartbeats along the way: The Trusting, Exulting Heart

Psalm 28:7 The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

Of all Life's lessons to learn and appreciate, I imagine the most difficult one is expressed by the Psalmist in the verse above. Mature Christians affirm this verse; growing Christians seek to stand on this verse; and joyful children always seem to live this verse instinctively.

We are given opportunities every day of our lives to practice and test these words. Every day we have the chance to soberly reflect on how we have grown in this, and gauge our progress.

The world offers us many substitutes in which to put our trust - to invest our energies and efforts - to receive gratification in order to satisfy ourselves. But none of these will stand the test of our lifetime.

The thing we're looking for is safety and security: a state of being that we can count on to protect us and give us comfort.

In the business of building Spring Garden Campus, we also have the choice of trusting in ourselves or going all in for God.

Now that's a very scary choice. But the only option that will truly satisfy God and our own collective souls is to declare for God.

As I write this, our nation is voting for the future of our country. But this choice between ourselves and God regarding how we will build the new church is more vital. Remember, it's not just a church of wood, stone, steel, and glass; it's a church of redeemed souls declaring the Lord as its strength and shield, and giving itself to loving God and building community. Trusting God, we can exult and sing! By the way, do you have a favorite song for God?

"Great Lord of the Universe, give us courage to declare for You as our strength and shield. Put us to trusting you fully, and let us declare Your love and power with song and exultation evermore. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Ever-living Heart

Psalm 22:26. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord.

May your hearts live forever!

This is the week of Thanksgiving. Pilgrims, Indians, corn, turkey, cranberry relish, non-stop shopping and football games. (Oops, got carried away.) It's been a tradition at our house to share this day with family, as is it for many of us. The first Thanksgiving was a feast of faith and gratitude for preserving those first settlers whose numbers had been halved by disease and malnourishment. Every one of those gathered around the tables was grateful that God had spared and provided for them.

You know how far we've come from that day of remembrance and gratitude. We bless the meal, gorge ourselves, and break into small bands of cleanup crew, snoozers, shoppers, and sports fans. We go on our way that day never looking back on how this day became so especially important to the DNA of this nation.

This Thanksgiving, let's do two different things. First, as Pastor Mira suggested, take five. Take five minutes to be still before God. Think of God's cornucopia of blessings to you, your family, our church, and our nation.

Second, since CUMC has contributed food and money to help Project SHARE provide others a fulsome Thanksgiving meal, pray for Project SHARE and the recipients. At least in that way we can repeat the verse above without being embarrassed. May your hearts live forever in the love of God and in the work of serving others.

Washington's and Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamations are on the back. It's uncanny how appropriate they are for us today.

"Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices, who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices. May we provide bread for the body and through Jesus Christ, the bread of Heaven to satisfy the souls of all who hunger for salvation. Amen."

~ cl reynolds

Excerpt from Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation Oct 3 1789.

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of...the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be. That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks, for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country...for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have...enjoyed, for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have...established a National [constitution]...for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed...and...for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us. And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions, to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually, to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed...To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the encrease of science...and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

– George Washington

Excerpt from Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation Oct 3 1863.

I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens...to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him,... they do also...commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it...to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.



Heartbeats along the way: The Abundant Heart

*Luke 6:45. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good... for it is out of the abundance of the **heart** that the mouth speaks.*

This is the season for gratitude. And our church family can count many blessings this Christmas season. God has blessed us with leadership, serving opportunities, steady progress on our journey to a new location, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in all our doings. All this adds up to a very good treasure in our hearts. And from that treasure we can produce Good.

The Good that Carlisle UMC has produced so far can be measured in many ways: assisting in disaster relief; providing monthly and holiday meals; helping the children of Carlisle with education and opportunities to understand God's love for them; caring for our LAMs and others in our congregation; participating in Samaritan Fellowship; giving overnight shelter to the guests of Carlisle CARES; and the active work of our Children's and Youth ministries in our neighborhood.

God's abundance and the good we create in response to it speaks to our desire to fulfill God's command to be a neighbor. But we need to "stay on top of our game" when we relocate probably in just over a year to the Spring Garden Campus.

Imagine how we can use our new Worship Center for the activities of our four pillars: worship, grow, connect, and serve. May our prayer in this season be to prepare ourselves to receive God's abundance and produce good for all around us.

"O Jesus Christ, as we celebrate the anniversary of Your birth, we thank you for the abundance of Your blessings upon us. We ask that you continue to invest in us so we may produce abundant good for all whom You call us to serve. In Your Holy name we pray. Amen."

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Seeking Heart

Ps 119:10. With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments.

Caesar Augustus was seeking answers to two questions: how many people are under my power; and how much can I tax them for my pleasure. Zechariah, an old priest, was seeking to regain his speech after he distrusted an Angel. The Magi were seeking the answer to an astronomical mystery, based on some ancient writings. Joseph was seeking an answer to how to deal with a young, pregnant, betrothed girl he truly loved, and not bring her to shame. Mary was seeking comfort and answers from an older cousin, Elizabeth, who was amazingly pregnant. The shepherds were seeking the clues that the angels told them would lead to a newborn babe in a cattle shed. God was seeking to fulfill the promise in the scriptures of a Messiah, both kingly and humble.

What do you seek? I trust you are seeking God with your whole being. As we enter 2019, let us covenant together to seek the completion of a years-old dream of a new Worship Center that will introduce other seekers to Christ here in Carlisle, in this land, and to the ends of the World.

I commend to you John Wesley's Covenant Prayer:

"I am no longer my own, but Thine. Put me to whatever You want from me; rank me with whomever You wish. Put me to doing; put me to suffering. Let me be employed for You, or laid aside for You; exalted for You, or laid low for You. Let me be full; let me be empty. Let me have all things; let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, O Glorious and Blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are mine, and I am Yours. So be it. And this covenant that I make on earth, let it be ratified in Heaven. Amen."

**Sing like the Angels,
Be amazed like the shepherds.
Smile like Jesus' Mom.**

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Epiphany Heart

Matthew 2:10-11a: "When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."

This Sunday, January 6, is Epiphany Sunday, signifying the appearance of Jesus to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi. Epiphany is a moment of sudden realization or revelation that dramatically changes oneself. We read this in Matthew's story of the Magi and their journey.

I believe the Magi had more than one Epiphany. The first was when they discovered the astronomical event that drew them to ancient writings. The second was when they appeared in Jerusalem and discovered no one in the land of the Jews had a single clue of what was happening, although the Jewish leaders and intellectuals finally found an obscure verse in a minor prophet that pointed like a laser at Bethlehem. The third was when the star reappeared and the Magi found themselves face to face with Mary and the babe in Bethlehem. Their reaction was to fall down and worship. How did they feel, do you think? Their persistence was rewarded, but not at all like they probably imagined when they set off. They were seeking a royal celebration appropriate for a kingly birth. That led them to the fourth and greatest epiphany: instead of an earthly king in a mansion with the pomp and trappings of other rulers, they discovered the King of the Universe (who commanded the stars to announce his birth), a little child with his earth mother in a humble dwelling, a far cry from Herod's palace. And they recognized at once that their gifts were very important for the future of this Holy Family. Think on this awhile this week.

"O God, may our hearts always be open to the Epiphanies you present to us as we build our new Spring Garden Campus. Amen"

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Generous Heart

Acts 2:46-47. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Ever since the first Christian community, generosity has been a vital sign of Christian behavior. This generosity has always borne fruit for Christians and non-believers. Setting an example for the world of the love of Christ and the command to love one another was the single most important way the pagans learned about Christ. It wasn't just what was written or spoken, but what was lived that brought people to Christ. This generosity among the believers themselves created the capacity for generosity toward others.

Recently, we demonstrated generosity by giving substantially to our annual budget, by donating selflessly to the Letort elementary school students, and in joyfully providing generous Alternative Gifts to eleven special activities.

We are also generous with our time, serving others and volunteering in church activities. This is a very encouraging pattern that reinforces our desire to respond to God's incomparable generosity. As we think about our transition to the Spring Garden Campus, we have time to consider other ways we can practice and grow in generosity to our church family and to others, near and far. More than a new building, a church family with generous hearts will promote the good will of those who encounter us. And in turn, as in Jerusalem two millennia ago, the Lord will add to our number those who are to be saved.

"O Life-giving God, may our hearts enjoy and freely share the generosity You have shown us through the building of the Spring Garden Campus. Teach us to grow in sincere generosity of prayer, purse, and practice, sharing all you give us for Christ's sake. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Rejoicing Heart

Psalm 105:3. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Psalm 32:11. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

This month Pastors Jim and Mira are speaking from Paul's Letter to the Philippians, a beautiful Christian testament of encouragement, inspiration, and instruction. Paul was imprisoned in Rome by Nero, one of the wickedest Emperor-gods that the Western known-world endured. But at the time he wrote this letter, Paul was enjoying considerable success in preaching the Gospel - even to members of the Imperial Guard and the Emperor's own household servants, just as an angel told him in Acts 27:24, before he sailed under guard for Rome.

How could Paul write so cheerfully? Because God told him this is where his job was. And Paul rejoiced because he could be useful in this situation, surrounded by enemies of the Gospel. He told the Philippians: "Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ... And because of this I rejoice." Paul's ministry was always pressing forward toward Christ, who awaited him at the end.

And as with Paul, so God has given us a job - to press on toward our prize by continuing what we've begun and filling the Spring Garden Campus with a vibrant, attracting ministry that shares Christ, beginning in Carlisle and reaching to the whole world. Let's live out the story of Paul and the Philippians today so that our ministry may always be alive with rejoicing. And may we always pray rejoicing for one another!

"Dearest Jesus, Friend and Lord, thank You sincerely for the joy that abounds in serving You. Though we don't suffer chains and beatings, or death as early Christians faced and many do today, we pray that joy may fill their hearts, as well as ours. Inspire us to always pray as Your servant Paul did by rejoicing always. Amen"

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Consoled Heart

Psalm 94:19. When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.

This has been quite a time for me. I've been dealing with serious medical issues, and am grateful that God continues to see me through. And I have no doubt that God will restore me to health. So, as the psalmist wrote, "When the cares of my heart are many, Your consolations cheer my soul." Each of us has passed, or is in the middle of, a season of uncertainty, facing illness or loss of a loved one, worries about work or one's future. We all need God's consolations to cheer our souls. But we can find it hard to pray for ourselves, or for anything while we're ill or in some dark corner. That's when the prayers of others bring consolation to our hearts. In my case, I've been blessed with the steady prayers of so many, and those prayers have been answered in so many ways, helping me overcome the cares of my heart.

We offer prayers of consolation as an ongoing ministry of CUMC for those listed in our weekly bulletin wrap, announced from the pulpit, or passed through the Prayer Chain. Even as we move to the SGC, our church family will continue to encounter low points where the cares of our hearts will need the healing balm of consolation. We must continue to be part of God's consolation wherever we go, offering prayers and consolation, and accepting it ourselves.

Consolation restores our trust, cheers our souls, and carries us through the dark times. As Jesus said, "What you do it for the least of these, you do it for me." Always offer prayers of consolation.

"O Holy Spirit of consolation, be among those whose hearts are filled with care and fear. Lead your servants to be the embodiment of Your consolation to all in need that their souls may find comfort and cheer in the face of all adversity. May this be a true sign of our love for You and for all in need of consolation. Amen"

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The God-cleansed Heart

Psalm 51:10. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

In this season of Lent, we are reminded of the great love God has shown to us through the life and suffering of Jesus, God's son. Psalm 51 is a psalm of David after he committed a grievous sin. His words are sincere and absolutely heartfelt.

After the plea for mercy and his confession of guilt, David acknowledges God's righteousness and authority to judge him. David asks for a purging and cleansing as he would understand the steps for purification, and makes a final plea that his sins would be forgotten.

Then these words: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

May this prayer of David's be our prayer as we journey to the Spring Garden Campus. We have the blessing of knowing Jesus Christ, and Christ's love and willingness to forgive a sincere heart.

As we journey to our new physical house of worship, let our prayer always be - for ourselves, and for one another - that God daily creates in us clean hearts filled with the Holy Spirit that we may be witnesses to all around of God's great love for all God's children.

The psalm in the King James Version is printed on the back. I've done this for the richness of the language. *"Merciful and Glorious God, as we travel toward the new place You are preparing for us, cleanse our hearts that we may be faithful servants of your Divine Will. As we pass these days of Lenten reflection and confession, restore us and make us fully ready to serve you and our neighbor with all our hearts. In the name of Jesus, the Christ, Amen."*

~ cl reynolds

Psalm 51. A Psalm of David.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. 13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. 15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. 16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.



Heartbeats along the way: The Heart of Wax

Psalm 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast.

As Jesus was dying on the Cross, he remembered and uttered this psalm of David. We know it as Psalm 22, and we generally look on it as a hopeless plea, full of terrible images. But just a few verses later, the direction of this lament changes to a song of gratitude and praise, and we read these words:

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

Sometimes our situations may be likened to having a heart of wax, with no hope for redemption or restoration. But we have a Savior bigger than all our problems - one who faced far worse than we've ever faced. And He set an example of trust and victory we can all share.

When we are faithful to the God who leads us forward, Spring Garden Campus will be a place where anyone who feels their hearts are melting like wax because of their hopeless situation can be redeemed and claim victory in Christ. And, even with hearts of melting wax, we can all proclaim as the psalm concludes:

Posterity will serve Him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim His deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that He has done it. (Ps 22:30-31)

"O Jesus, our Christ, we greet you with palms and hosannas on the first day and curse you as an imposter five days later, shouting Crucify!! Forgive us. Heal our hearts of wax. Carry us through this Holy Week, hearing Your message, sharing Your passion, and celebrating Your Resurrection and triumph. In Your Holy Name, Amen."

~ cl reynolds

I commend Psalm 22 to you for reading and meditation this week.



Heartbeats along the way: The Seeking and Called Heart

Mark 10:49: Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you."

This is the story of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar living in Jericho, who insisted that Jesus show him mercy. He is surrounded by a religious crowd that doesn't want this beggar scum to interrupt their moments of adulation. But that doesn't stop or silence him.

Bartimaeus will not be quiet, especially when there's a chance that Jesus would cure his blindness. He thought, "Jesus cured others, so why not me?" The crowd wanted to show piety and respect, not have their moment with Jesus spoiled by a noisy beggar.

It's a miracle in itself how the crowd who is all over this guy one moment is turned around when they hear Jesus say, "Call him here!" You may read the rest of this story for yourself in Mark 10:46-52. I imagine a school of fish moving in one direction and suddenly reversing.

We have a long tradition stretching back through our three root churches of seeking and serving the blind Bartimaeus within and outside our fellowship. Let it never be said that Carlisle UMC was too busy with appearance and deportment to hear the cries of a hurting world! Let us never become a club of sanctimonious Jesus followers.

Let's pledge to continue to grow this ministry of service to the physically and spiritually blind at our Spring Garden Campus, to be better witnesses than the pious followers of Jesus in Jericho.

"Dearest Friend Jesus, we want to adore you with the finest of our lives. Please keep us from emphasizing our piety over the call to servanthood. Teach us how to leave things at the altar and take care of someone's deep need. Don't let us be ashamed to do this act of service over an act of piety. In Your Holy Name, Amen."

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Fervently Praying Heart

*Luke 18:1. Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.
Luke 18:7. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them?*

A previous note told about Blind Bartimaeus and his desire for Jesus to heal him. Today's note reflects a parable Jesus tells about a widow seeking justice (another class of persons on the bottom rung of the success ladder) to emphasize our job in bringing God's Kingdom to earth. Both the healing event and the parable share one common thrust: Pray -- talk fervently with God and don't let others keep you from doing it.

There is a great deal to pray about on our journey to the Spring Garden Campus. And each of us has some specific area in this effort for which we can dedicate some fervent prayer time. All of us can pray in rejoicing and thanksgiving for everything God has done and seen to in the creation of our new worship site at Spring Garden. We've also been asked to pray for those who work there, that they may be safe, that they are able to work cooperatively, and that they understand that they are working on holy ground. And we can ask God to continue to bless the work remaining. Finally, let's pray for our Visioning Teams that God will inspire and energize them to prepare us for the work we will do to fulfill our vision and mission and Live like Jesus.

Jesus used hyperbole to make the point that if even the most heartless of persons, for the most self-ish of reasons, would grant the widow justice, how much more is God ready to hear our prayers and answer them?

"Heavenly Father, hear our fervent prayers for our life at the Spring Garden Campus. Even as we prepare the building, prepare our lives to live more like Jesus and offer the Gospel to all. In Your Holy Name, Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Pure-Hearted

Matthew 5:8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

What is a pure heart? At first blush, I think it's easier to say what is not a pure heart: everything that puts our self first and everything else a distant second.

I believe a pure heart is one that is stayed in Christ. It is a heart that considers others before self. In fact, a pure heart is very much like what Paul describes in the "Love Chapter," 1 Corinthians 13, or like the Fruit of the Spirit Paul describes in Galatians 5.

Over the past several Sundays, Pastor Jim and Pastor Mira have challenged us to Live like Jesus. We've been listening to sermons on what Jesus would say to different segments of humanity. These messages are inspirational, instructional, and important to us, because we often lose sight of the goal to Live like Jesus.

As our excitement grows with the progress on our new Worship Center, may we seek God's help to free ourselves from anything that would make our hearts impure. This will take self-discipline and the encouragement of others.

And as we let Christ's blessing of purity of heart control our thoughts, deeds, and actions, we will become a people ready to live more like Jesus.

"Lord Jesus, purify our hearts that we may see You. May we see You in the faces and lives of the sisters and brothers of our church fellowship. May we see You in the faces of the stranger, the visitor, the homeless, the needy, the addict, and in those who do not know of Your Law of Love for all. We confess that we cannot do this by ourselves. Please grant us the blessing of a pure heart. In Your Holy Name, Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Grateful & Singing Heart

Colossians 3:16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

In his brief letter to the house churches at Colossae, a city in what is now modern Turkey, Paul encouraged these new Christians in the Way of Christ. It doesn't appear that Paul ever visited Colossae. But that didn't prevent him from sharing the Gospel, giving sound advice for living in this world, and offering strong words of encouragement.

Imagine if Paul learned about Carlisle UMC and wrote (or e-mailed) us a letter. What do you think he would say? I imagine he would commend us for our trust in God for creating the Spring Garden Campus. I can imagine that he would congratulate us on our involvement beyond our church walls. I can also imagine he would challenge us to continue to Live like Jesus, and always live to with gratitude in our hearts.

John and Charles Wesley believed strongly that music and singing were essential to strengthening and proclaiming our faith. Congregational singing is deep in the Methodist DNA.

As we build our new campus, let's apply Paul's advice and encouragement to each other that our hearts may also be grateful and full of music. Let's prepare ourselves to arrive mission-ready: to teach, encourage, and if necessary, admonish one another. And let's always sing songs that reflect our gratitude for God's love for us.

A key passage from Colossians is below.

"O Heavenly Father, You are surrounded by choirs of angels praising You. We here below wish to praise you in song that comes from deep within our hearts. Hear our solos and group songs of praise and gratitude. We bless you with all the joy our grateful hearts can generate. Hallelujah to Your Holy Name! Amen."

~ cl reynolds

Colossians 3: 12-17. As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



Heartbeats along the way: The God-Delighted Heart

Psalm 37:4 - Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

This psalm is attributed to David. It is one of overall encouragement in the face of many challenges. The verses are filled with the counsel of patience, righteous behavior, and trust that God will rescue and reward the faithful. The psalm could be read as an expanded theme of Psalm 23.

On our six-year journey to the Spring Garden Campus we have faced and surmounted many challenges, thanks to faithful leadership and a committed church family, and most of all, thanks to God's guidance and answers to our prayers. The Bridges Prayer Team has met since the beginning to regularly pray for our church, our church family, our pastors, staff, volunteers, Leadership Council, and the building program. As one who has served on this prayer team, I am a witness to the marvelous and frequently unexpected answers to our prayers. Truly God has given CUMC the desires of our hearts.

I believe that God has provided encouragement from the very beginning and all along our way. Today we see encouraging signs in the rising cinderblock and cement floors. We see it in the greening of the future athletic fields and the slope behind the Sanctuary. We sense it in the optimism of one another and in the initial steps of the Visioning Teams.

Days of challenges lie before us. But when we follow David's exhortation to commit our way to the Lord and trust in him, God will act. And we who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

"O Heavenly Father hear our prayers of gratitude for Your steadfastness and granting us the delights of our hearts. Continue to encourage and guide us through the creation of Spring Garden Campus. And prepare our hearts to Live Like Jesus now and always. In Jesus' name, Amen."

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Dull-Hearted

Matthew 13:15. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them.

Jesus is explaining the parable of the sower to his disciples. I believe He wanted the people to miss the point of the parable at that time in His Ministry. To me, it's like a coded message. But when Jesus ascended, He commanded the Disciples to go and preach the Gospel to everyone. This is now our task and challenge to preach the Good News to our neighbors next door, in this community, and in this broken world, and if necessary, to use words.

Who are the dull hearted? Let's say they are persons disinterested in Christ, perhaps unaware of Christ.

How can we bring them to life? I believe we are already hard at work in this. CUMC is known in Carlisle as an active, hands-on church. Our doors are always open to visitors; we've an active ministry among the youth and children. And by following God's calling to create a new worship space at the Spring Garden Campus, we demonstrate our wholehearted commitment to being Christ's servants for generations to come. Our new building is more than a new facility. It is a physical expression of our faith in Christ for this community and the world.

Can we do better? Yes! We can continue the conversation to encourage one another. And we can take inspiration from the progress at the Spring Garden Campus. And we can pray that we find new ways to help others come alive in Christ.

"O Gracious and Merciful God, make our hearts fertile ground. Let the Seeds of your Grace fall on us and bear fruit. Let us witness to the dull-hearted and bring them Life in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen. "



Heartbeats along the way: The Wholly Thankful Heart

Psalm 9:1. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Psalm 9:18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

God has blessed this church family with an immense number of wonderful deeds for which we can give thanks daily. We have the wonderful blessings God has given us since that snowy night in January 2011 (and even before). We have the exciting news of progress and miracles in building the Spring Garden Campus. We are grateful for contractor teams who are diligently applying their trade skills and talents to build the structure that will be our Worship Center.

And we already have in place and functioning a great number of experienced and wonderfully engaged SERVE Pillar volunteers who will grow in meeting the cares and concerns of our new neighborhood and ourselves. We also have visioning teams working on how to best use our new facility and engage the community in our new neighborhood.

Truly Carlisle UMC has a wonderful, compelling story to tell the world. Why don't you take time to list some of the stories you think should be told that show how much God has given us? They may be simple; they may be very personal; they will always be worth telling to others and even to one another.

Please share a story of something about this journey to the Spring Garden Campus that has inspired or overwhelmed your heart. Drop me a line, send me an email, or call me. Let's practice telling others about God's wonderful miracles.

"O God, our hearts overflow with thanksgiving and praise for the wonderful deeds you have done for us. Give us what it takes to share Your miraculous deeds with ourselves and strangers alike. In Jesus' name, Amen."

~ cl reynolds cell 717.713.9447 papoo99@comcast.net



Heartbeats along the way: The Hardened Heart

Mark 8:17-18. And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember?"

Out of His great compassion for the crowd that had gathered and listened to him for three days, Jesus had just performed the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand, multiplying seven small loaves of bread and a few fish. As the crowd dispersed to their homes, the clean-up crew gathered seven baskets of leftover bread - one basket for each piece of bread over which Jesus gave thanks.

A day or so later, as the Disciples were getting back into a boat to return to the west shore of Galilee, they began to fret that they had only one loaf of bread. Jesus asks them why, after two significant miracles involving large crowds and a total of seventeen leftover baskets of bread, they don't get it. "Are your hearts hardened? Don't you see, or hear, or remember?"

I believe some hearts, like those of the Pharisees, were severely hardened by tradition and a narrow understanding of their faith. I believe the Disciples' hearts weren't completely 'softened,' but were in the process of being remolded by the Master. I believe Jesus is using this as a teaching moment about completely trusting God.

Sometimes we see the need but miss the opportunity standing behind it. May we never be that way as we continue to walk with Jesus toward our Spring Garden Campus! Let's take time to see beyond the needs and challenges to the great soul-nourishing opportunities God presents to us as we near the next stage of our Spring Garden Adventure.

Let's use this teaching moment to open our hearts, our eyes and ears to remember to fully trust the God we confess, and the Son He sent to save us. Miracles are all around us. We just need to receive them - be they bread, or fish, or teaching moments.

"Dear Christ, prepare our hearts that we may become more aware each day of the miraculous deeds you do for us, our church family, and strangers alike. In Your holy name, Amen."

~ cl reynolds

The Feeding of the Four Thousand and What Followed

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance." His disciples replied, "How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. 7 They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over; seven baskets full. Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod." They said to one another, "It is because we have no bread." And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"



Heartbeats along the way: The Questioning Heart

Psalm 28:7. At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?"

Four friends had just lowered a paralyzed man through a hole in a roof because they believed Jesus could heal their friend. On seeing this act of faith, Jesus told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. In the middle of all this, some lawyers sat around silently questioning if Jesus had committed blasphemy. Before he healed the man, Jesus turned to these legal experts and asked a question of his own: "Why do you raise such questions in your heart." He puts another question to them: "Which is easier? To forgive his sins or to cure him?"

Jesus then proves His authority over both the spiritual and the physical realms by commanding the paralytic to stand, roll up his bed, and to home.

Most times we concentrate on Jesus dressing down the lawyers. But I want you to think about the sick man and his four friends. Imagine the challenges to their faith: their friend's illness; big crowds; climbing to the roof with a stretcher; figuring out how to open a hole big enough to lower their friend; finding ropes to make that possible; and trusting that Jesus would do something for the sick man.

On our journey to the Spring Garden Campus, our church family has faced many questions, and has experienced challenges to our individual and collective faith. Even facing daunting odds we chose not to be cheese-paring, questioning legalists, but faithful and committed friends.

"O Great Physician of body and soul, help our faith to overcome any questions that linger within us about Your absolute power to make all things happen for our good. Let us never, ever, ever surrender to doubting Your love for us. Amen."~ cl reynolds

Mark 2:1-12. When he (Jesus) returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'?"

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"



Heartbeats along the way: The Victorious Heart

Psalm 20:4. May he grant you your heart's desire, and fulfill all your plans

This verse is part of a Davidic psalm that reads like a glorious benediction on the one who has triumphed through serving the LORD. It also looks to a future that will be filled with further challenges and opportunities to overcome them. These challenges will become victories not by relying on earthly things, but with "mighty victories by God's right hand."

It's like this psalm was written to describe our journey to creating the Spring Garden Campus. Count the times that God intervened and gave us clear direction and support. Consider how we arrived at this plot of land. Consider how many other obstacles were removed in the course of getting approval and beginning to develop the campus. Consider how richly God has stirred us to commit ourselves spiritually and to support the first Capital Campaign. Consider how effectively our contractor teams are working, and how our Leadership Council and the Building Committee have been led and inspired. Truly this is a great big "God Thing!"

I ask you to sing or pray this psalm (on the back) sometime in the next two weeks. And let it bring a smile to your face and a joyfulness to your heart.

"O Heavenly Father, we kneel in deep gratitude for your guidance and nurture during these times in growing the Spring Garden Campus. May we always trust You that, as the Psalmist, "we shall rise and stand upright." Amen"

~ cl reynolds

Psalm 20.

The LORD answer you in the day of trouble! The name of the God of Jacob protect you! 2 May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion. 3 May he remember all your offerings, and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. 4 May he grant you your heart's desire, and fulfill all your plans. 5 May we shout for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the LORD fulfill all your petitions. 6 Now I know that the LORD will help his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand. 7 Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the LORD our God. 8 They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright. 9 Give victory to the king, O LORD; answer us when we call.



Heartbeats along the way: The Daily-Renewed Heart

II Cor 4:16. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

Paul wrote this to his beloved Corinthian churches. It's part of a passage about having the treasure of the Gospel in clay jars - in our fragile, earthly bodies.

Next week is All Saints Sunday when we remember those who were once among us in clay jars of flesh, but who now belong to the Church Triumphant, where there is no emptiness, no pain and no death; just the glorious joy of being united with our Heavenly Father and with those who were faithful on earth.

My dear friend Bob Hench died recently. He was a faithful serving Christian man who was overjoyed when our three church families united in March 2011. He soon began visiting LAMs and doing many other kindnesses by delivering delicious meals, and by his cheerful presence and optimistic conversation. He was truly interested in the Spring Garden Campus and would visit it frequently to see its progress. He looked forward to worshipping there. Sadly, he was called heavenward, but he was completely prepared for his departure.

Many others of our saints now reside in Heaven. Many of them were also looking forward to worshipping in our new sanctuary and were just as excited as Bob with each new bit of construction news, because, like Bob, they knew the Spring Garden Campus was being built for future generations of Christians.

Like Paul, they did not lose heart, because even though their outer natures were wasting away, their inner beings were being renewed every day. May it be so with us.

"Dear Jesus, thank you for the Spring Garden Campus and all those working to complete it. Let us remember with joy those saints who had looked forward to this place and are now resting with you. Amen."

~ cl reynolds

II Corinthians 4. Excerpts.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.... So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal



Heartbeats along the way: The Joyfully Singing Heart

Psalm 84:2. My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Singing joyfully is a hallmark of United Methodism. It's part of both personal and corporate worship. Indeed, John Wesley wrote some 'rules' for Methodist singing that are still very useful. Psalm 84 expresses the hunger for and joy of worshiping in God's sanctuary. It ends with these words: "No good thing does the LORD withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you." For the next days, please join me in praying and singing with joy, thanking God for all the good gifts we have received. For me that means thanks for my life and all its adventures, whether I understood them or not; thanks for family by blood, by marriage, and by communion with Christ. Thankfulness for short term immediate blessings, and for those overarching blessings that encompass my life. And thankfulness for the inspiration and progress of our Spring Garden Campus, and all who labor for its completion.

Try writing down the gifts you're thankful for and put the list somewhere that you may glance at them regularly or even add more. I've left space on the back to start.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving this year, may this psalm remind us of the joy we share in singing the praises and majesty of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"God of our Forebears, let us sing joyfully of Your majesty, kindness, and the good things you have given us as persons and as a church family. We especially thank you for the new Worship Center You are creating for us. Help us to appreciate this great gift and opportunity to worship You and serve Your children, our sisters and brothers, with the love and grace you bestow on us. Amen."

~ cl reynolds

Psalm 84

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the LORD withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.



Heartbeats along the way: The Pondering Heart

Luke 2:19. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Only the writer of Luke's Gospel captures this intimate scene of Mary digesting what had happened since the angel Gabriel's visit, her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, the journey from Nazareth, the birth of this precious child, and the jubilation of the shepherds. Ever since the annunciation, Mary had collected and stored these strange events, which amounted to the most significant event in all of human history.

It seems that she is trying to figure out what all the fuss is about as the shepherds gather to see Jesus. These are the kinds of people she has known in her young life. She never saw grown men so awe-struck over the birth of a child. How did they know the secret she and Joseph shared?

We need to ask ourselves and ponder what's happening to us as a church. Considering the events we have cause to ponder: from that snowy January night, the vote to "March Forth" (on March 4th), the land purchase, the approvals, the beginning of construction, the unqualified success of the first capital Campaign, and all the miracles large and small which God has given us.

This gift to us - the Spring Garden Campus - is not nearly like the birth of our Savior, but it should cause us to do some pondering and treasuring of our own.

"Gracious God, as we approach another anniversary of Jesus' birth, help us set aside time to be with you and ponder the many good deeds you have granted us in our conviction to follow you and commit ourselves to building the Spring Garden Campus. Continue to give us moments to treasure and ponder all our days. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: Close to the Father's Heart

John 1:1-4,18. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

These are the opening words of John's Gospel that present the coming of Christ in a very new aspect. Perhaps we're more comfortable with Jesus' birth stories from Matthew and Luke because we can relate to them on a physical, tangible level.

But the first eighteen verses from John (printed on the back) deserve prominence in our Advent and Christmas experience. I think this because John speaks with full confidence to the overarching divine nature and purpose of this event. Jesus is the co-Creator of all there is - absolutely everything. Jesus is Life - Life to all people everywhere, no exceptions. Jesus is the Light - the Light that completely defeats darkness. Jesus grants kinship with God to all who receive and believe in Him. Finally, Jesus is close to His Father's heart. And only someone who is intimate with God, and who possesses all these divine qualities is able to be our Lord and King and Savior. We cannot settle for anything less.

"Almighty and Gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, behold your children as we remember, contemplate, and celebrate the anniversary of the Divine Birth. Purify us. Make us whole. And always keep us in the Light of Christ. Amen."

~cl reynolds

John 1:1-18. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.



Heartbeats along the way: Close to the Father's Heart

2nd Thessalonians 3:5. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

We are in the season of the Church Year called Epiphany, which will stretch to Transfiguration Sunday. In Jesus' life, it's the time of His earthly ministry before He sets His face toward Jerusalem and Calvary. I believe it's a good time to use the remaining Heartbeats letters to help prepare us for life in our Spring Garden Campus.

Our mission statement is "Inviting all to become disciples of Jesus Christ serving the greater Carlisle community and beyond."

The contractors, the Building Committee, the Leadership Council and its Visioning Teams are working diligently to complete and stand up the Carlisle United Methodist Church at the Spring Garden Campus as soon as practical.

Dates are still fluid, with the final date dependent upon an occupancy permit.

Things will change for us as well: new neighbors, new opportunities, new aspects for our four Pillars - Worship, Grow, Connect, and Serve.

I believe this is our time as a church fellowship to take stock of where we are as persons, groups and a congregation of believers. We need to begin the thinking and training that will make us ready to continue our mission.

Our journey as a church is changing. We'll have arrived at our new church building, but another journey will begin. I imagine this place as a number of things: A sanctuary and learning center. A training, supply, and equipping center. An airline terminal and a hospital for souls. A respite from the world, and a center of peace. An oasis for refreshing our spirits.

You might want to start this preparation by thinking along these lines as well. I imagine this place and the people who worship here to be the voice, face, arms, hands and feet of Jesus - to be little Emmanuels to people who don't know that God is really with them.

I imagine us as encouragers, cautioners, partners with one another in doing more than just Sunday church. I'm really anxious to hear what you imagine.

If you were applying for a job, you'd have to go through some basic job training, or refresher training. So, over the next eight or so weeks, we have a chance to think how we can be active in at least one of our four Pillars, and perhaps how we can enlarge our participation.

It's time for us to get ready within ourselves. Not simply to relocate ourselves in the sanctuary or find a parking spot. We need to renew, to replenish, to repair, to refresh, and to recommit ourselves. We have a great opportunity to do what Paul told the house churches in Thessalonica: to let the Lord direct our hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. That's how we become the heart and soul of Carlisle United Methodist Church - Spring Garden Campus.

Please share any comments or ideas. I really want to hear from you.

"O Gracious God, thank you for our new church building. Grow us as our building takes shape that we may enter it renewed and ready to invite everyone to become disciples of Jesus Christ serving the greater Carlisle community and beyond. In Christ's name we pray. AMEN"

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: A Pure and Undivided Heart

1 Timothy 1:5. But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.

Psalm 86:11. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

I'm asking you, dear reader, to take the next days to take stock of where you are on your personal journey. I'm asking you to do a personal spiritual inventory. Why? Because if we are to be fit and worthy of our new church location, we must be prepared to keep it alive and growing and to be the inviting place where neighbors and strangers may meet and share the Christ we worship and follow.

Perhaps you have well used skills that need a little refurbishing. Perhaps you have talents that need to be developed or increased. Perhaps you feel a calling to some new ministry or service for Christ.

So, let me encourage you to examine your prayer life, your reading and meditating on the Bible, and the ways and times you talk about your trust in God. Let your spirit explore new ideas of serving, and even how you may increase your comfort zone in Living Like Jesus. Maybe there is a wrong that must be made right, or a need that is as yet unfilled. Please devote some time to this process. And remember God does not always call the equipped, but God ALWAYS equips the called!

Perhaps the thoughts below can help you.

"Teach me Your way, O Lord, and give me a pure and undivided heart that I may be prepared to serve You more faithfully. Prepare me for the gift of a new church building. Help me increase my involvement in living daily like Jesus. Teach me how to invite and encourage neighbor and stranger alike to worship and serve You. In Christ's name I pray. AMEN"

~cl reynolds

Some Thoughts on Preparing Oneself for the Spring Garden Campus

1. Regularly pray the prayer on the front page about the new church building and what you are called to do there.
2. Listen for God's voice, even at the most unusual times.
3. List what you are doing now in terms of volunteering or involvement.
4. Inventory your current skill sets.
5. Think of the top three or four things you like most about our church fellowship.
6. Ask yourself what CUMC could do better, or what new activity we should consider.
7. Imagine the other ways or things you'd like to do.
8. Write down what keeps you from doing these other ways or things now.
9. Pray every day that you can overcome these obstacles.
10. Talk with others about these things and get their opinions.
11. Examine yourself to identify anything that holds you back from doing more.
12. Pray every day that God will release you to do what God intends for you.



Heartbeats along the way: A Thankful, Worshiping Heart

Psalm 138:1-2a. I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness...

Worship is an innate desire of humankind. Worship of God began in Genesis and continues through the Revelation all the way to this very moment. It can be corporate or private. It has taken many forms of expression over time. The essentials of worship haven't changed since Abram called upon God. First is a sense of awe. The second is the awareness of our frailness and inadequacy as humans. The third is knowing that God earnestly desires a close and loving relationship with every soul. And fourth, although private worship is important, Christ calls us to gather and worship in community whenever we can.

Our Worship Pillar encompasses all of these elements of community worship and offers them in various styles suitable to our personal inclinations and approaches to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. And after worship, we can enjoy the moments of fellowship when we gather to share our joys and concerns with one another.

Many little things will feel and be different when we worship at the Spring Garden Campus. BUT the purpose and object of our worship will never change! We will worship in a new worship space. We will get to meet and know new neighbors through worship, and to offer and share Christ with them. As we move toward our new place of worship, let us focus our attention on worshiping God. O Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! [1 Chron 16:29b]

"We give You thanks, O Lord, with our whole hearts. We bow before you in praise and supplication. Let us always trust that You are with us when we worship. May our worship glorify and magnify You. And may you never abandon us, for we are the work of Your hands. AMEN"

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: A Well Rooted Heart

Ephesians 3:16-17. I pray... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

GROW is the second Pillar of Carlisle UMC. It includes the learning activities for all ages and stages of our personal and community life in Christian fellowship. Sunday School classes, studies such as those centering on the season of Lent, women's and men's groups, and all sorts of children's and youth activities help and encourage GROWth. This pillar has something valuable for every one of us, so that we may continue to GROW in the soil of Faith.

Jesus told a story about seeds falling into various soils, and how those soils influenced their fruitfulness. We want to make sure everyone who participates in the GROW Pillar programs is rooted and grounded in the fertile soil of Christian learning and fellowship. Is it just a coincidence that we are building our new church building in a fertile field?

Our Spring Garden Campus will indeed be a campus of learning to foster and share the love of Christ with one another and with our neighbors wherever they live.

Our regular participation in GROW activities positively influences our personal and community participation in the WORSHIP, CONNECT and SERVE Pillars. This GROWs our church. Through this, we can be a community of souls growing in the soil of Faith and producing the Fruit of the Spirit in abundance - enough for our own spiritual nourishment, and plenty to share with others.

"O Christ, please dwell in our hearts that we may always be rooted and grounded in Your love, that we may GROW further into a more fruitful and serving community of believers. AMEN."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: A Connected Heart

1 Cor 12:27. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

2 Cor 3:3. You are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

We are the Body of Christ, individual and distinct members with different parts, different capabilities, and different functions, but one body, fully capable, with Christ's message written on our hearts. The CONNECT Pillar knits our church family together so that we are able to fulfill our purpose and commitment to Christ.

We're following the game plan of the first churches that sprang up in and around Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension. Read the first chapters of Acts to learn more. Although many organizations take care of their own; Christians do it under the leadership of Christ, AND do it for everyone! No membership card required.

What about CONNECT at the Spring Garden Campus? Will this be different? Can it be better? Michelle Williams, the Leadership Council member responsible for Connect, offers this:

Jesus' greatest commandments are to Love God and Love Others as ourselves. The better we Connect to God and each other, the deeper we can connect to our community. God has a grand plan for Carlisle United Methodist Church and connecting is one part of God's larger vision.

The CONNECT Pillar will focus on two kinds of connections: Those within the church family across the generations and styles of worship, and as one family, connecting with the community. The beautiful new church facility and outdoor spaces will allow us, as the body of Christ, to invite our community neighbors to experience spiritual renewal and growth. We will show our community what it means to Live Like Jesus through events, programs, and everyday hospitality."

"O Christ, please dwell in our hearts that we may always be connected in Your love to one another. Use us to care for our own and draw others to you by connecting with our community. AMEN."

~C.L. Reynolds/Michelle Williams



Heartbeats along the way: The Servant's Heart

*Luke 6:45. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, ...
for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.*
*Psalm 22:26. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord.
May your hearts live forever!*

Christ, the Son of God and Son of Mankind, spent much of his ministry serving the poor, the sick, the mentally afflicted, and the repentant sinner. In some Bibles, Jesus' words are in red. But His deeds are simply in black print. Perhaps this is as it should be, for Christ continually refrained from calling attention to himself. From its first days, the Church has been engaged in acts of kindness and service, initially to the followers of The Way, but very soon to all humankind. There's an old and very true standing order: Preach the Gospel; if necessary, use words. As Christ himself said in the passage above, "...it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks."

Carlisle UMC has been a serving fellowship well-rooted in our three parent churches. It's in our DNA. But what might SERVE look like from the viewpoint of the Spring Garden Campus? Debbi Goeltsch, the Leadership Council lead for the SERVE Pillar sees CUMC enlarging our current SERVE activities and engaging with the low-income families near the Spring Garden Campus, complementing Community CARES, and combining with Adult GROW on SERVE pilot projects. Indeed, our Pillars may become more productively entwined. Please talk with Debbi about your own thoughts. The back page of this note has some of my ideas.

"Heavenly Father, You provide us with every resource and every talent needed to serve Your children in a turbulent world. Inspire each of us with Your vision and our part in serving the poor and rich, the beloved and unwanted, the wounded and the warrior. AMEN."

~cl reynolds/Debbi Goeltsch

I believe the purpose of SERVE is to increase Good in the world. Good is the currency God gives us to freely spend to introduce others to Christ. This comes from the enormous treasure of Good that God has waiting for us to draw upon.

John Wesley is traditionally identified as having written the words below, which, in my mind, fully show his indorsement of our SERVE Pillar:

Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can. To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.

Do you notice those tiny stickers they put on every piece of fruit, or the labels of ingredients on boxes and cans? I like to think that a label is attached to every bit of Good we do, and that it reads "Made from God's 100% fresh and everlasting Love for you."

In that way, those whom we serve shall be satisfied, and will seek and praise the Lord.



Heartbeats along the way: The Heart of Christ

Deut. 31:6,8. Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you....It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

John 14:1 Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

"These are the times that try men's souls," wrote Thomas Paine. Everything that we considered as normal "church" is suddenly changed. We are under a Stop Gathering order, for the good of the community. There is a sudden attention to public health and welfare, something that Christians, and particularly Methodists are keen on. But don't forget, the First Century church faced equivalent dangers that could lead to death.

In this time of pandemic and dread, we are called to witness to one another in a new way, by a new medium, but for the same purpose: to knit and hold our church family together so that none are lost or forgotten. What are our tools or practices? They are the same through the ages: fearless trust in God, fervent prayer, sacrificial deeds of love, and edifying and encouraging words. All these are necessary to build up the Body of Christ in Carlisle Church.

Paul lists the variety of jobs the families of the Corinthian churches are called to do. In this world at this time, the names are a bit different, but the purpose remains the same: to train, equip and operate as a body of Christ.

Under our pastoral, lay, and individual leadership, let's continue to train and equip ourselves to use whatever spiritual gifts God imparts to us to be Christ's ambassadors, first responders, consolers, prayer warriors, intercessors, encouragers, and servants. Let's all practice Grace and Peace. And remember,

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic, and Christ over ALL.

"O Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, rescue us from the horrors that surround us. Wrap us in Your Peace and Grace. Make us brave and bold, wise and completely confident in answering Your call to care for one another. Put in us Your Heart that we may be Christ for one another. AMEN. "

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: Marking Time

Colossians 3:15. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Isaiah 23:6a. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.

Welcome to the time of virtual church, social distancing and COVID-19. To adapt Julie Andrews from "The Sound of Music," "Two of these are my least favorite things."

Like the earlier letter, I'm encouraging us to hold our church family together in a new way: to knit, edify, and hold our church family together so that none are lost or forgotten.

I offer some thoughts based on "Life Together," a very worthwhile book by the German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, written almost 90 years ago as Nazism was changing the religious landscape in Germany. I've extracted and updated these passages.

What is an unspeakable gift of God for the lonely person is easily disregarded by those who enjoy the gift of Christian fellowship every day. One easily forgets that Christian fellowship is a gift of God's grace, and that any day it could be taken from us, leaving us utterly lonely.

Always praise God for the privilege of sharing a common Christian life with fellow Christians. Let's admit that it's grace, nothing but grace, that lets us live in community.

I might add that this reflects our present condition under social distancing, gathering restrictions, and travel limitations.

Only the one who gives thanks for little things receives the big things. We prevent God from giving us the great spiritual gifts He has in store for us, because we do not give thanks for daily gifts.

We sometimes pray for the big things and forget to give thanks for the ordinary, small (and often overlooked) gifts. How can God entrust great things to one who will not thankfully receive from Him the little things?

Make it a point to give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed, even where there is no great experience, no discoverable riches, but much weakness, small faith, and difficulty. For if we keep complaining to God that everything is so paltry and petty, and not what we expected, then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ.

If this attitude begins to creep in, we must combat it and stop despising our current pandemic-induced situation. God called us to these times. They are for us to live through, not on our own, but with steady trust and thankfulness to God. In return, God will give us the continued blessing of peace in Christ, perfect peace. I believe it's summed up in that old saying: Grow where you're planted.

If this corona catastrophe starts to get you down, spend some time in Exodus with the Hebrew children in the wilderness for forty years. I think you'll understand what Herr Bonhoeffer is saying about being thankful for what you have.

Prayer. O Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord and Savior, we your servants praise Your Name and give thanks for every blessing from Your gracious hand. Let us trust Your word and that of the Prophets and Psalmists who declared that You would never leave us nor forsake us. Let Your perfect peace dwell in us - in our hearts, our souls, our bodies and our minds. Give us grace, so that whatever happens, we may conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. AMEN. ~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Upright, Spirit-Filled Heart

Psalm 78:72. With upright heart he tended them and guided them with skillful hand.

Romans 5:5....and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Psalm 78 is a concise recitation of the Twelve Tribes' cycle of faithfulness and failure, punishment and redemption that ends with God choosing David as king, and God's response and unfailing love toward God's Chosen.

Paul wrote the second verse, which is part of a well-known passage about a Christian's progression from suffering to endurance to character and to unfailing hope in Christ.

Today, a small group of the Funk Construction team is back to work at the Spring Garden Campus. This is wonderful news and maybe this is how these two verses fit together.

God's unfailing love did this, through our state government. And God guided the upright hearts of the Funk Team, the Building Committee, the Leadership Council, and the pastors to respond skillfully to the opportunity of completing the Spring Garden Campus. God has blessed us in our faithfulness and patience.

Thus, our hope that God is watching over the Spring Garden Campus has not, nor ever will, disappoint us. We can now look back and see how the Holy Spirit has sustained us through the past two months in so many ways. And will forevermore!

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over ALL.

Prayer. Most Wonderful and Gracious Father, thank You for overlooking our worries and inspiring us with Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for providing leaders with upright and obedient hearts, completely dedicated to Your guidance. May we all serve You in deeper love and gratitude. AMEN.

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: Believers of One Heart & Soul

Acts 4:32a. Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul.

Today is Pentecost, the time we celebrate the birth of the Church. While he walked among the disciples, Jesus told Peter that he was the rock, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church " (Mt 16:18a)

Forgive this author's sense of humor when he notes that, considering the amount of rocks the landscapers moved to prepare the foundation, some people could say we are erecting a church building on rock as well.

It is surely a great leap of faith to become like those first followers of the Way, but I believe that our church family has become, over the years since our unification, one heart and soul in the truest sense of that first church family after Pentecost.

I see this in our social activism through the SERVE Pillar. I see it in our adjusted WORSHIP experiences that refresh all who view them. I believe you can see it also in the ways we have regularly CONNECTed with one another by phone, message, email, and regular mail. And even in these times we are actively participating in GROW activities and groups at all age levels and interests. Our dedicated pastors and staff continue to work on more ways to present Christ to all - member, visitor, and any willing to hear the Gospel.

As we transition from 45 S. West St to the Spring Garden Campus, pray that God continues to keep us as those who shared life in that first fellowship of believers - of One Heart and One Soul.

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over All.

"O Lord Jesus, we pledge ourselves to Your Gospel. Fill us with just as much of the fire as at that first Pentecost, that we may be afire and alive for You, and that this fellowship will be of One Heart and One Soul under Your Banner of Love. In Your name, and for Your glory, we pray. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: Hearts in the New Land

Psalm 31:24. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 3:13a. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father.

Pastor Jim said recently that the Spring Garden Campus is our statement to the community that God wants us to serve it in love. He illustrated that by a map showing the Promised Land God had ordained for Israel, a large slice of the Middle East from Iraq to Egypt, and compared it to the actual land conquered by the Israelites after they crossed the Jordan under Joshua's leadership. If we look only at our 25 acres, Pastor Jim said, we're not looking big enough. He then showed a map of greater Carlisle, saying that God gave us that whole area to serve, as God gave the Israelites. We're surrounded by the community where we are to share our hope and confidence in Jesus, the very things Pastor Jim said that those around us really crave.

As we move and settle into the Spring Garden Campus, let's not define our boundaries by the land we occupy. Let's share God's perspective that sees all the people and problems around us as our mission field. We can surely invite others to our campus, but we must not fail to take the Spirit of Christ out the cul de sac and left or right on South Spring Garden St to every place we're led by that Spirit. And that also means to anywhere there's a human habitation in God's Green Earth that needs hope and confidence in Jesus.

To do this, we must let our hearts take courage, as the Psalmist wrote, and to let God strengthen our hearts in Holiness, as Paul exhorted the Thessalonians. Let it be so with us today!

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over All.

"Almighty God, we thank You with all our hearts for this time in our church family's life. As we draw closer to the move to our new church home, prepare us with a spirit of courage and boldness to wage love and grace to neighbor and stranger wherever we are led in Christ. Amen"

~cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: Take Heart

In four Gospel passages: Jesus tells someone, "Take heart."

We continue to live in a trifacta of convergence: Covid-19, economic uncertainty, and social upheaval. No one knows what will be that New Normal people talk about. For our church family, we don't know when we can return to the form and style of worship we once knew - one of gathering, singing, personal fellowship, and loving embrace. We can only turn to God.

The Gospels contain four specific passages in which Jesus says, "Take heart." In one, Jesus tells a man his sins are forgiven (Mt 9:2). In another, he says to a woman with an illness that her faith has made her well (Mt 9:22). And he tells the disciples, "Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid," (Mk 6:50) and "Take heart, I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33) Jesus gives us complete assurance of victory over sin, sickness, and fear. And most important of all, Jesus assures us that nothing on earth can stand between God's love and the salvation of our souls.

On July 19, we'll have the opportunity to sign the Worship Center floor. What will you write there? A beloved Bible verse? Words that express your joy or hope? Perhaps a prayer that a worship experience inspires someone who walks on this floor? Will you remember until you reach Heaven's Gate what you wrote? (You can take a photo of it.) Because, after the carpeting is laid, only God will see what you wrote. You have this week to consider that question.

Whatever inspires you, may your message reflect your trust in Jesus Christ. Jesus still calls us to "Take heart." Let your message be a witness that you take heart.

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over All.

"Dear Savior, as we prepare to occupy the Spring Garden Campus, let us take heart in You for all things. Inspire us, equip us, nurture us, and employ us in the business of Your Kingdom. Give us the heart to take heart in Your mercy, grace, and overwhelming Love. In Your blessed name we pray, Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: An Enlightened Heart

Ephesians 1:18. "... with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you..."

Have you thought about what the first Christians faced in their attempts to worship together? The Followers of the Way frequently had to act as a secret society in the atmosphere of hatred from Jewish and Roman authorities. They were endangered by pagan worshipers who made a lucrative business in fashioning objects for worship to the various gods.

Christianity has survived internal schisms and grave external earthly powers bent on its extermination. And, through God's mercy, grace, and inspiration, this small band of Twelve became a body of billions across two millennia. We are the saints on earth, along with countless souls on the other shore cheering us on.

Are these times of pandemic and social distancing a temptation to turn aside from worship, from one another, from Godly service to others? Or are they reminding us of the struggles of our Christian heritage, calling us to be steadfast in worship and service. I think we know the answer.

I wish I could channel the steadfast spirit of St Paul as he declares the riches of Christ to the house churches of Ephesus. He had lived in that city for around three and a half years, possibly the longest time he spent anywhere since he became a follower of Christ. His letter to them is brimming with encouragement and reminders of the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ. Paul reminds them that "By grace you have been saved, through faith."

It is the very same for us.

Countless things have changed, yet, for us as believers in Christ, nothing has changed. We are always called to worship our God. Led by God's Spirit and inspiration, our CUMC pastoral and lay leadership have actively sought and adapted ways to keep worship alive and meaningful for our Christian family. I believe God hears our songs and prayers even from our homes and our cars. May the eyes of your heart be enlightened. May you always know the Hope to which you are called.

And as for outdoor worship, remember some of John Wesley's most effective preaching was done outdoors.

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over All.

"Dear Savior, help us to keep faith sweet and strong, even in the face of our physical separation from one another. Let us always remember we are never separated from You. Continue to honor and hallow our worship. And may nothing keep us from the Hope to which we are called. In Your blessed name we pray, Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: The Faithful, Trusting Heart

Psalm 44:18: Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way.

Mark 11:23. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.

Next Sunday, we are invited to take a tour of the Worship Center and some of the rooms of the main building on our Spring Garden Campus, 333 S. Spring Garden St. Before you and your friends step off on the tour, properly observing COVID-19 precautions, (and if you are symptomatic, you'll withdraw from attending out of love for your fellow church family members) I want to offer these thoughts.

Can anyone of us total the miracles and blessings that have built the Spring Garden Campus and sustained all of us involved with it? Consider that snowy night when God, out of the blue, opened our eyes to the concept of unification. As I recall the conversation, "Dude, what just happened in there?"

Consider the work of Cooperative Ministries that began ten years ago this month to knit our three church families with shared worship experiences during Maundy Thursday and New Years Eve Communion. And remember the Music Fests that, unbeknownst to any of us, happened just before significant dates that led to our unification.

God led us through the co::lab, the March 4th 2012 vote, the year of the Transition Team, and the formation of the Leadership Council.

And on July 1, 2013 we formally became Carlisle UMC. During the next two years we settled into becoming one church in spirit, developing worship patterns and fulfilling the missions of the Four Pillars: Worship, Grow, Connect, and Serve.

Through the Spring and Summer of 2015, our Site Selection Committee thoroughly examined a number of potential locations for the new church building. When all was said and done, we found that God had nudged us to purchase 25 acres of corn, soybeans, and woods that was the Smith farm, and is now the Spring Garden Campus. And on November 15, 2015, we voted to do just that. Thirteen months later, we "bought the farm," and the land was ours. Shortly afterward, we began what turned out to be a highly successful first Capital Campaign. God inspired us to accept the challenge of the first Capital Campaign, and to exceed even its most optimistic forecasts of success.

CUMC spent nearly three years, interviewing and hiring the team of architect, builder, and civil engineer, researching similar churches, holding several congregational meetings to make sure everything was transparent and that all had a chance to give their counsel and opinion and do diligent, careful, deliberate planning for the building you'll walk through next Sunday.

This place is the sum of many God-inspired people, moments, and visions - a dedicated Building Committee with a myriad of subgroups, a splendid, responsive, and totally involved construction contractor, unanticipated financial gifts both large and small but each divinely timed. I believe this Spring Garden Campus and its 25 acres are covered with God's fingerprints and footprints!

Oh, at times I've felt a hint of doubt about small things, but not about the main thing. I'm believing you have felt the same, and at those times have turned to Christ to quell our doubts and reveal the clear path of God through the thicket of uncertainty and confusion. But, just like taming the ground at the Smith farm, we had to clear trees and brush to get to what was important.

"O Blessed Lord, How You have blessed us every step along this journey to this new place of worship! How You have kept our hearts from turning back! As we near the end of construction and prepare to move our mission and ministry to the Spring Garden Campus, keep us always mindful of Your Presence wherever we go. May this campus be a place of worship, comfort, sanctuary, learning, and blessing to all who enter its doors. And may our hearts never doubt the power of asking to move mountains in Your Name. Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: Strong and Holy Hearts

1 Thessalonians 3:13. And may He so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Imagine that the apostle John wrote an eighth letter in the Revelation from Patmos, to us. I'd hope it would read like this.

To the angel of the church fellowship that abides in Carlisle: Grace and peace be to you always from God the Father and Jesus Christ, our Savior. I am overjoyed that you are held in high regard in your community, and am very pleased with the success of your building program in which you chose to follow God along a difficult path, turning neither to the left or right. God has seen your generosity in giving to others as well as to the construction of the Spring Garden Campus. Indeed, your underwriting so many worthy causes with volunteers and money stands out, and the angels applaud you.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is also pleased with the ways you have adapted to the recent constraints of government and the pandemic in order to continue to worship and keep your fellowship connected and supported. The Holy Spirit urges you to keep fast to your faith and your steadfast commitment to the Gospel. But this one thing concerns me: you may begin to feel that you have earned the privilege to linger in looking back along the road you have taken and rest on these accomplishments. To gaze back over your recent achievements and the path you traveled, thinking that you've accomplished all that was required of you, is too much like Lot's wife who looked back to Sodom and became a pillar of salt, or like the Israelites who longed for the fleshpots of Egypt after they were freed. You are not finished.

Now it is good to look back to see how far you have come through the grace of the Almighty One, to remember how He led you through the valleys of deep uncertainty, across the years you have committed to be guided, equipped for every challenge, and blessed with every opportunity. But do not look back in yearning for what was, for it shall never be again. God is making ALL THINGS NEW. If you are steadfast in worship and your yielding to God, those things that are being made new will be revealed, and you will know that God equips His saints for all holy work.

My prayer is this: May God strengthen your hearts in holiness that you are found blameless before God when Christ returns. Continue to be active in your good works. Do not diminish your witness or your faithful service. Always stay fruitfully connected to one another. Faithfully study and share God's Word with friend and stranger. Explore more ways to worship together as best you can. God is with you, always and forever. You are being equipped for much to do, which God will reveal in time. He will send the Holy Spirit to breath energy and purpose into you, and to remove any doubt.

Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. You may need a permit to occupy your new house of worship, but you need no permit to continue and grow your witness to proclaim and share the Gospel of Christ in word and deed!

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over All.

"Dear Savior, may we never neglect to give You praise and thanks for guiding, inspiring and equipping us for the days behind us. Now let us turn our gaze into the future You have laid out for us. Continue to equip, energize, and enable us for Your Kingdom's business in our community, our Commonwealth, our country, and wherever You call us. In Your blessed Name we pray, Amen."

~ cl reynolds



Heartbeats along the way: Steadfast Hearts

*Psalm 108:1. My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make melody.
Luke 18:1. Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.*

I was a pilot what seems a lifetime ago. I flew the C-130 Hercules, logging nearly 5,000 hours in the cockpit. The "Herk" first flew slightly more than 66 years ago, (when I was 12). My crewmembers and I were responsible for moving cargo from A to B and for arriving on time. It was always frustrating when, on reaching our destination, we were directed to remain at altitude and enter a "holding pattern." That was an imaginary racetrack around some electronic signal. We weren't allowed to descend or land until the traffic below us had taken their turns in the holding pattern and been given clearance to land. The holding pattern was the simplest and safest way to separate us from the other aircraft seeking to land, so we wouldn't wind up with a mid-air which would really ruin our day.

Eventually it was our turn and we descended, rolled out on final approach, and touched down, safely, but sometimes up to half an hour late.

The reason for the holding pattern was to ensure no one was in danger in the air, because normally things were a bit dicey, weather-wise. I remember distinctly sometimes making turns in the pattern and looking down to earth and seeing part of a runway - so close, but so far away.

As I write this, it feels we are in a holding pattern, ready to land and take over our Spring Garden Campus, but not yet. We can see the building, but we cannot pull into the parking lot, get out, and go inside. At least not yet.

It's not the weather that's put us in the holding pattern. It's the novel coronavirus, and the precautions we need to follow to prevent spreading it. Just like the holding pattern kept us safe in the air, the precautions our church leadership is taking are meant to prevent Covid 19 problems for all of us. It would be a dangerous thing to ignore the well-established precautions, so we don't spread this deadly disease to our sisters and brothers.

So, while we're awaiting our turn to land and occupy this beautiful, new Spring Garden Campus, let's sing and make melody and encourage one another to maintain a steadfast heart. God never disappoints us. We will get there!!

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over All.

"Almighty and Eternal God, as we prepare to inhabit the new place you have created for our corporate worship and for equipping us for ministry, let us take these moments to rejoice, make melody, and sing praises to Your Name. Make our hearts worthy of Your beautiful gift. Lead us in making use of this place for the worshipping, growing, connecting, and serving those around us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

~cl reynolds

"We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion.

We're marching upward to Zion, Zion,

The beautiful City of God!!"



HEARTBEATS

Heartbeats along the way: First Worship

*Psalm 122: 1-2a. When they said, "Let's go to the house of God," my heart leaped for joy.
And now we're here! (The Message)*

*Matthew 28: 19. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name
of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

This day marks both an end and a beginning. We are now in a new phase of our lifelong journey. It's the end of our construction and relocation/move-in. It's the first worship inside the Spring Garden Campus. We need a bit of time to square ourselves away in our new, beautiful spaces. But at long last, we are able to enter our new church building for worship, learning, and fellowship. Although the Pandemic Precaution Rules limit some of our 'freedoms,' we can enjoy one another's presence. We will adapt to the work of the Four Pillars in this new place, in WORSHIPing, GROWing, CONNECTing, and SERVing. With God's continued guidance and insights, we can't wait for the challenges and opportunities we will face.

We can look forward to the special times of Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter - to enjoying some of our seasonal traditions and to discovering wonderful adaptations.

We have received the answers to as many prayers as there are sands on the beach, or stars in the sky. As God has answered our prayers along this ten-year journey to the Spring Garden Campus, so has God prepared us to be the answers to prayers of others.

Let that sink in a moment. As I write this, I'm beginning to understand that sentence: we are the answer to someone else's prayer. We hold in our hands, hearts, and souls that certain God-something someone else desperately needs to make their life whole in Christ. Indeed, not only is Pastor Jake's message that "When God guides, God provides," applicable to this blessed church family, it is a universal statement that reflects God's gracious care and love for God's children everywhere.

What do we hold in our hands? We already have in our hands the tools, skills, and incentive. And now we have a new base of operations that is both holy and with holy purpose. This new church building is a sacred tool for ministry to our community, our Commonwealth, our country, and our world.

Very soon we'll need to put on our boots and head out to carry the Gospel down the cul de sac and onto South Spring Garden St. and wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

As a closing and a beginning to our next assignment from God, I offer Wesley's Covenant Prayer to remind us whose we are and to encourage in the times before us.

I am no longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will. Rank me with whom You will. Put me to doing; put me to suffering. Let me be employed for You, or laid aside for You; exalted for You or brought low for you. Let me be full; let me be empty. Let me have all things; let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal. And now, O Glorious and Blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am Yours. So be it! And this covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in Heaven.

Faith over Fear; Prayer over Panic; Christ over All.

~ cl reynolds

Dear Reader, I trust these sixty-eight Heartbeats notes have blessed you as they have blessed me. I witness to the inspirational gift of the Holy Spirit, for God's thoughts are so much higher than mine. I will, to my last breath, be thankful for that which God has entrusted to my labor.

And I am indebted to my Beloved who has been my faithful editor and sounding board for these past three years, perfecting these writings.

~ cl reynolds

Finis. Amen