

*Listen to your life.*  
—Frederick Buechner



becoming good news for everyone

Share the Story

March 17, 2024



PRELUDE     *If You But Trust in God to Guide You*  
Neumark/Organ

PRAYER FOR PREPARATION

**Loving and Lively God, thank you for the sheer privilege of joining freely with others to hear your word and sing your praise. Help us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Send your Holy Spirit to encourage, challenge, and correct us, that we leave equipped to be faithful servants in a broken and confused world. Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Here, in this place, God welcomes dreamers, and doubters, worriers and wanderers.

**Here, in this time, we can remember all the ways God has graced us: God is with us, always!**

Here are gathered those daring enough to step out of comfort into the unknown.

**Here we worship our mysterious, merciful, miraculous God.**

HYMN             *Lift High the Cross*             no. 159

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, you have searched us and known us. You know the old heartaches that still pain us and the restless worries that rob us of rest. You see the good things we do in secret, as well as the sinful things.

**Forgive us, gracious God. Help us lay aside our faithless fears. Forgive our inability to trust you in all things. Help us to overcome the hurts of the past and give up using them as excuses for our present situation. We are the works of your hand; fulfill your purpose for us, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Be at peace. God is still at work in your life.  
Your sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God!**

SIGNS OF PEACE AND UNITY IN CHRIST

FAITH SHARING VIDEO

*Sharon UMC Mobile Evangelism Station*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE     Romans 10:11-17 (The Message)

Scripture reassures us, "No one who trusts God like this—heart and soul—will ever regret it." It's exactly the same no matter what a person's religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. "Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help." But how can people call for help if they don't know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven't heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? That's why Scripture exclaims, a sight to take your breath away! Grand processions of people telling all the good things of God! But not everybody is ready for this, ready to see and hear and act. Isaiah asked what we all ask at one time or another: "Does anyone care, God? Is anyone listening and believing a word of it?" The point is: Before you trust, you have to listen. But unless Christ's Word is preached, there's nothing to listen to.

PASSING OF THE FRIENDSHIP FOLDERS

MESSAGE FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS

FAITH SHARING VIDEO

*Sharing Our Faith Stories - Ashley Green*

MUSIC     *Cross of Christ, O Sacred Tree*     Lloyd Larson  
Chancel Choir

*Cross of Christ, O sacred tree,  
hide my sins and shelter me.  
Claim or merit have I none,  
yet my salvation has been won!  
Cross of Christ, O sacred tree,  
let me to thy shadow flee.  
Here the mocked the crucified,  
here the royal Suff'rer died.*

*Here was shed atoning blood,  
here expired the Son of God.  
For my soul Christ's love was poured,  
precious Lamb and Holy Lord.  
At the cross of Christ I am restored.*

Cross of Christ, O sacred tree,  
gift of God, love's mystery.  
'Twas my sin provoked this love,  
matchless gift from God above.  
The cross of Christ, O sacred tree,  
this my boast shall ever be,  
that Thy blood for me was shed,  
that for me He groaned and bled.

Here was shed atoning blood....

Cross of Christ, O sacred tree,  
hide my sins and shelter me.

#### SCRIPTURE John 9:1-12 (The Message)

Walking down the street, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?" Jesus said, "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world's Light." He said this and then spit in the dust, made a clay paste with the saliva, rubbed the paste on the blind man's eyes, and said, "Go, wash at the Pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "Sent"). The man went and washed—and saw. Soon the town was buzzing. His relatives and those who year after year had seen him as a blind man begging were saying, "Why, isn't this the man we knew, who sat here and begged?" Others said, "It's him all right!" But others objected, "It's not the same man at all. It just looks like him." He said, "It's me, the very one." They said, "How did your eyes get opened?" "A man named Jesus made a paste and rubbed it on my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' I did what he said. When I washed, I saw." "So where is he?" "I don't know."

HYMN *What Wondrous Love Is This* no. 292

MESSAGE *Share the Story*

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

#### OFFERING

You may give your offering by text- Text UMCWC \$50 to 73256, by using the QR code on your screen, at [umcwc.org](http://umcwc.org), through the mail, by automated giving through Realm, or by dropping it off at our office.

#### FAITH SHARING VIDEO

Harry Denman Evangelism Award Winner - Sadie Kollias

#### OFFERING RESPONSE

no. 463, vs. 1 & 5

**Lord, speak to me, that I may speak  
in living echoes of thy tone;  
as thou hast sought, so let me seek  
thine erring children lost and lone.**

**O use me, Lord, use even me,  
just as thou wilt, and when, and where,  
until thy blessed face I see,  
thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share.**

#### OFFERING PRAYER

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

HYMN *The Spirit Sends Us Forth To Serve* TFWS no. 2241

#### BENEDICTION

Friends, we are sent so that we might proclaim Jesus in our thoughts, words and deeds, so that all might hear and believe.

**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved and experience, full, rich, abundant life.**

Go now and proclaim the peace and joy of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and grounded in the love of God. **Amen.**

POSTLUDE *My Inmost Heart Now Yearneth*

arr. Walther

**Bold text indicates congregational response.**

#### \*\*Homework

Answer These Questions as Part of Your Faith Story

1. What has Jesus done in my life?
2. What is God doing in the life of my faith community?

Share your answer with a friend, relative, associate, or neighbor after going through the B.L.E.S.S. process with them.

**Bold text indicates congregational response.**

#### WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Message: Rev. Dr. Truman Brooks  
Liturgist: Rev. Mercedes Case  
Reader: Valerie Douglas  
Organist: Steve Campitelli  
Chancel Choir Director: Tom Sabatino  
Children's Message: Jacqui Rothera  
Live Stream Team: Tim Case, Holly Grimm,  
Todd Grimm, Jake Joslin, Heidi Krug, Brad Rush,  
Zeke Shappell Smith, Cory Smith (leader)

#### Daily Prayer

Lord, I realize sharing the good news is part of each member's calling. Let it begin with me. Open doors for me to share the gospel with those around me. Help me to recognize the opportunities you place before me and to have the courage and boldness to speak up and authentically share my faith experience with creativity and joy. Amen.

## B.L.E.S.S- Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World

BE  
in

Pray for people who need faith, abundant life, and Jesus.  
Pray that God would prepare your life as well as theirs.  
Ask God, "How do you want to use me to bless the people around me?"

LISTEN  
With  
Compassion

Listen for the Holy Spirit. Listen for evidence of God's work in people's lives.  
Ask questions that invite others to tell their stories, share their hurts,  
and reveal their hearts.

EAT  
Together

Share meals, coffee, and life with people who do not yet know Jesus.  
Friendships deepen when we share a meal.

SERVE  
in  
Love

Be attentive to the opportunities God gives you to care for people and attend  
to their needs. Invite them to serve along with you helping others.

SHARE  
a  
Story

Once you build a relationship and earn trust, look for ways to share a story  
of how Jesus has transformed your life and the world. Invite them to join you  
in a church activity that you love.

**B.L.E.S.S. will help each of us understand our mission to reach our neighbor with the love of Christ, create disciples for Jesus, and fulfill our mission as a church. We are building a spiritual home where all are family. The B.L.E.S.S. process is an important part of welcoming our neighbors home.**

### Your Life Story

*\*The way we tell our life story is the way we begin to live our life. -Maureen Murdock*

*\*A memoir should have some uplifting quality, inspiring or illuminating, and that's what separates a life story that can influence other people. - Mitch Albom*

*\*Recounting of a life story, a mind thinking aloud leads one inevitably to the consideration of problems which are no longer psychological but spiritual. -Paul Tournier*

*\*We understand ourselves through stories, by making stories out of our lives. Storytellers give people structure with which they can begin to look at their own lives and try to make sense of them. -Bill Harley*

*\*Good writers show rather than tell. Stories are told in action. Life stories are no different. -Donald Miller*

*\*Anytime you share life stories with other people, you know, you are acknowledging their humanity and kind of accessing some things about yourself, and other people start to expect things about themselves. It's kind of like a fellowship. -Jill Scott*

*Your life is a sacred journey. It is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. You are on the path... exactly where you are meant to be right now... And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing, of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity, and of love. -Caroline Adams Miller*

### Tips to Sharing Your Faith

-Build a soapbox and find yourself a busy street corner.

-Buy a bullhorn.

-Practice shoving a medium sized Bible down an average sized throat.

-Learn to talk over the top of anyone who might ask questions or raise objections while you are talking.

Actually, no. Don't do any of that. Be the good news. Be authentic. Let people know that faith matters in your life. Share a story of a time when God was there for you or when you saw God at work, or how you find joy in your faith. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear will notice. Don't worry. Trust God. He's got this, you know.



## Simple Tool for Storytelling



from the book B.L.E.S.S. by Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson

### Three-Part Story

Let's use the once-blind man's story and simple tool for learning how to tell our own story in three parts. I've used it to help me share my story with others and have taught numerous others to use it too. You wouldn't believe all the amazing stories that have come out of this simple framework. It looks like this:

#### Part 1: My Life before Jesus

What was your life like before you met Jesus? Or if you grew up in the church knowing all about Jesus, what was your life like before you got serious about following Him? Your story begins with who you were.

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#### Part 2: How I met Jesus

How did you become a Christ-follower? Did you go through a particularly tough time in your life that led you to God? Did a friend invite you to a church service? Did a family member introduce you to Jesus? Did an experience inspire you to get serious about committing your life to Jesus?

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### Part 3: My Life Since I Met Jesus

What difference has following Jesus made in your life? How has knowing Him impacted how you walk through both the good and the hard times in life? Yes, when you tell your story include both the good and hard times. People will be more impacted when you're honest about the challenges you continue to face even since choosing to follow Jesus. And don't give the easy Sunday School answer. Talk about how your life is different and how God is growing you in certain areas, but make sure you're sincere about how it's a process and how you still often get it wrong. Saint Francis Xavier said it well: "Speak to them the great mercy of God....Sometimes people are helped by your telling of your own lamentable past."

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Here are five tips to help you put your story on paper and memorize it.

**ASK GOD FOR HELP.** Before you write out and share your story, ask God for the words to say and insight about how to say it so that He can use it.

**YOU BE YOU.** Write out your three-part story the way you speak. Don't try to sound like someone else. It's your story and you just be you.

**KEEP IT REAL.** Don't sugarcoat or overdramatize your story. Tell the good, the bad, and the ugly just the way that it happened. Your authenticity will connect with others.

**KEEP IT SHORT.** Aim to keep your story three to five minutes long. At that length, it's easily something you can share in a conversation without turning it into a monologue or a sermon.

**PRACTICE OUT LOUD.** Once you have written your story out, practice it out loud several times until you feel like you are comfortable and could do it from memory.

Remember, you don't have to write a book. Just follow those five tips and compose a simple three-to five-minute version of your story in those three parts. Now you are ready to share it with your neighbor when they are ready.

Peter, Jesus's close friend and follower, challenged us in this way:

*"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).*