

MEMBERS OF CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PRESENTS



I AM THE
Church

21-Day Devotional

Table of Contents

Day 1	Dean Odiorne
Day 2	Anonymous
Day 3	Susan Good
Day 4	Joel Malone
Day 5	Michelle Garcia
Day 6	Steve Rodier
Day 7	Bernie & Lennette Horton
Day 8	Robin James
Day 9	Danny Lantz
Day 10	Rita Smith
Day 11	Kris Rice
Day 12	Anonymous
Day 13	Rebecca Smith
Day 14	Lisa Thompson
Day 15	Cristiana Wright
Day 16	Mike Stockham
Day 17	Lori Hall
Day 18	Anonymous
Day 19	Sharon Lantz
Day 20	Steve Gillman
Day 21	Katie Bellnier Thomas

Introduction

This devotional was written by members of Central UMC. Each of them reflected on what “I Am The Church” means to them.

This is more than a devotional book; this is a collection of personal stories of our Jesus, who became real to them. The church is not a building; it is the people of God.

I want to thank Katie Bellnier Thomas and Rebecca Smith for their editing of this devotional. May the words of this devotional inspire you to live for Christ and share your story!

- Pastor Scott

I Am the Church - Message Series

Every day we are faced with the needs of those around us. Emotional. Physical. Spiritual. What are we to do about it?

During this three week series, we will consider how we can live as an outwardly-focused Christian. In response to the many needs of the world, what will our response be: I might help, I should help, I will help!

October 26 - *I Might*

Theme: Exploring the possibility of Generosity
Scripture: Luke 18:18-23.

November 2 - *I Should*

Theme: Understanding the responsibility of generosity
Scripture: Luke 19:1-10.

November 9 - *I Will* - Commitment Sunday

Theme: Committing to a Life of Generosity
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

Day 1

By Dean Odiorne

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." – Hebrews 12:14

I have been a part of the Methodist church for over 80 years now. For a long time, I thought the church was just a building. But when I was in college, I heard the phrase "I am the church" – that changed things.

Attending church recharges my spirit with Christ to face the world. Everything I do, say or think reflects Christ. I ask myself, "What kind of Christ am I showing to others?" "Who's watching, and when?" "What if they see me not acting like Christ?"

Failures are a part of life; we have all made our share of them. But God doesn't give up on us, and neither should we. Supporting the church provides us with a place to gather, to learn, to pray, to fellowship, and to recharge our spirits. Then, we can go into the world showing what FUN a Christian life can be. We are the church!

Day 2

By Anonymous

"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you..." – Timothy 1:6

There are seasons when something begins to shift inside you. It's not loud. It's not dramatic. But it's unmistakable. A thought keeps returning. A burden grows heavier. A dream begins to glow again. That's the stirring.

God often moves in whispers before He moves in waves. The stirring is His invitation—not to rush, but to respond. It might be a call to serve, to give, to create, to forgive, or to lead. And while you may not have all the answers, you do have the spark.

The enemy wants you to ignore it, to stay passive, to wait for perfect clarity. But God says, "Fan it into flame." That means nurture it. Pray over it. Talk about it. Take one small step. Because what's stirring in you isn't random—it's divine.

Prayer

God, I feel something awakening in me. I don't fully understand it, but I know it's from You. Help me not to dismiss it or delay it. Give me courage to lean in, to listen, and to act. Fan this spark into a flame that brings light to others and glory to You. Amen.

Day 3

By Susan Good

"He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."
- Psalm 23:3-4

Life is messy, life is complicated, but if we are open to the Holy Spirit, wonderful things can happen.

My life has had many ups and downs, and I've faced numerous challenging adventures where I wasn't sure I could make it. However, in reflection, I realize that God always sent someone to help me navigate the new terrain. I was terrified when I was first diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma in 2016. I had two teaching jobs: educating students in the morning and teaching their parents ESL two nights a week. I was also taking care of my mom, my boys, Wesley and Trevor, and my husband Eric.

It was a balancing act, but I quickly learned that I couldn't do it all by myself. I learned to lean on others, and the Holy Spirit definitely provided the help I needed. I decided I needed to make changes and turn unhappy things into joyful ones. Losing my hair was devastating, but I discovered I could wear wigs in every color, which made me smile and made others feel more at ease with me. I had many styles in purple, red, blonde, brown, and rainbow. It made getting dressed a game.

Fast forward four years, and I had a relapse in April 2020, right when COVID started. Again, I knew my treatment options were slim. My doctor arranged with Vanderbilt University Medical Center to have a stem cell transplant. Unfortunately, my body did not respond appropriately to qualify for treatment. I was devastated, but the next day, my doctor called - I was eligible for a CAR-T transplant, which turned out to be even better. God opened up so many doors for me, and everything fell into place. I qualified for the treatment. We found a place to live in Nashville for the required six-week duration, and the hospital had just reopened its program after closing it down for COVID. The kindness of people overwhelmed me with food, finances, friendships, and especially their prayers. They were all the hands and feet of Jesus.

The hands and feet of Jesus allowed me to flourish. I have so much gratitude in my heart that I daily ask God to use me as his hands and feet wherever I go. It can just be a kind word, a smile, or a listening ear to comfort. I pray for God to use me and to put me where I need to be to help others. I share the light of Jesus wherever I can, and I am blessed that I can be joyful and share with others in their need.

Prayer

God, use me as your hands and feet and take me out of my comfort zone as needed.

Day 4

By Joel Malone

*"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops."
– Proverbs 3:9*

There's a quiet tension many of us feel when it comes to giving: not from unwillingness, but from uncertainty. You want to support the church, to be generous, to respond to God's goodness—but the question lingers: How much is right?

This isn't just a financial decision—it's a spiritual one. Giving is less about the amount and more about alignment. It's about tuning your heart to God's voice and letting that guide your hand. Sometimes that means giving sacrificially. Other times, it means giving steadily, even if the amount feels small.

God doesn't ask for perfection in our giving—He asks for presence. He invites us to pause, reflect, and offer what we can with sincerity. And in that offering, no matter the size, He sees faith. He sees partnership. He sees worship.

Prayer

God, I want to give in a way that honors You, but I'm unsure of what that looks like right now. Help me listen—not to pressure or comparison, but to Your Spirit. Teach me to give with peace, with purpose, and with joy. Use what I offer to build Your kingdom and shape my heart. Amen.

Day 5

By Michelle Garcia

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." – 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

"For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people." – 1 Peter 2:15

Have you ever wondered, "What is God's will for my life?" If you're like me, your answer is yes. The cool thing is there are a handful of times in Scripture where His will is laid out plainly: it is God's will that we do good, it is God's will that we are sanctified, that we avoid sexual immorality, and, as our passage above states, it is God's will for us to rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances.

When I have wondered about God's will for my life—what college to go to, what degree to major in, who to marry, where to live, etc.—it has helped me to realize that there is freedom in those choices. Yes, we need to be thoughtful and prayerful about big life decisions, but if we are pursuing God's will as mentioned in Scripture, we can know that God will guide us down a good path. So take a breath, relax and trust the One who is in control.

Notice how the things God desires for us impact our character and will mold us more into the image of His Son. So let's make gratitude a habit and keep open lines of communication between us and the Lord, so then we will find it easier to rejoice always.

Prayer

Loving Father, because you are good, I trust you in all things and seek to honor you with my life. Give me wisdom when making major life decisions. Help me to do good, to be sanctified, to rejoice always, to pray continually and to give thanks in all circumstances. I ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Day 6

By Steve Rodier

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" – James 1:17

God blesses us in many ways – through His continued presence and power in our lives, the salvation of Jesus Christ, the people He has placed in our lives, and the material blessings that He gives us.

In my own life, God has provided me with material blessings beyond what I could ask or think. I have been laid off from a job three times, and each time the Lord has provided for me. The first time, I had a young family with a wife and two small children. I ended up getting a large severance package, and I found a new job right away. The second time, I got an opportunity to move to Connecticut, close to family, where my children could grow up near their cousins.

The third time I was laid off was shortly before my daughter was due to start college. That summer, I went on our planned youth mission trip, instead of staying home and focusing on my job search. These trips always bring many blessings, but the most memorable was my daughter's "God moment" in front of the whole group of 70 or 80 people on a Friday evening. She told how the family she was serving had heard that her father had just lost his job. The mother of the family immediately wanted to pray for my daughter and her family. It brought tears to my eyes to think about how these folks in West Virginia, who had so little, could be so caring and loving toward strangers. Isn't it just like our God to give us experiences like these?! *(By the way, this third layoff led to a tremendously rewarding job that I retired from last year after more than 10 years with the company.)*

These experiences (and many others) have shown me that one of the best ways to go about our daily lives is with an attitude of thankfulness. Coming from a place of gratitude gives us that "glass half full" perspective. It allows us to see the best in people and in situations, even when they may not appear that good on the surface. It helps us stay open to the possibilities that may be hidden by the current problems. It encourages us to show gratitude for our own blessings by being a blessing to others.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for blessing us in so many ways. From the human perspective, so much of what we do, say, or think would seem to make us unworthy of your love. But thankfully, that's not how you work. You show us grace and mercy that we do not deserve. You give us endless opportunities to get it right, to try to live better lives, and try to make the world you created a better place. You are an amazing God, whose love for us is beyond comprehension. Amen

Day 7

By Bernie & Lennette Horton

"Every good and perfect gift is from above." – James 1:17

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion." – 2 Corinthians 9:7

When we hear the call to give, most of us instinctively ask ourselves three questions: Could I? Should I? Will I? These aren't just financial questions—they're spiritual ones. Could I? asks if it's possible—do I have the resources? And yet, Scripture reminds us that everything we have comes from God's hand. The truth is, many of us could give more than we think—not out of abundance, but out of trust. Should I? This question speaks to duty, to conviction. The answer is not found in guilt, but in gratitude.

We should give because God has already given us everything—grace, love, salvation, and a purpose. Tithing is not about meeting a budget; it's about expressing trust, obedience, and joyful partnership with God's work. Will I? This is where decision becomes action. This is the step of faith. It's one thing to acknowledge we could and even believe we should, but it's the will that moves our hearts—and our hands. As you prayerfully consider your tithing commitment, ask yourself not just what is possible or advisable, but what you are willing to trust God with this year. He doesn't need our money, but He invites our hearts. What we give is less about the amount and more about the attitude.

Prayer

God, may this season of commitment be one of joyful surrender, bold faith, and a renewed sense of partnership in the Kingdom of God. Thank you, Lord, for all that we have, and guide us in being the church through the gifts we offer. Amen

Day 8

By Robin James

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." – Philippians 4:13

"Finally, my brother, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of his age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefor take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand the evil day, and having done all, to stand." – Ephesians 6:10

At times, my life has felt very out of control. Recently it was the loss of my mom, who I loved with all my heart. Then watching those I love suffer this loss with no ability to take their pain away. How could I help, what could I do, where do I start? My mind tends to spin around and around, over and over, trying to come up with solutions or ways to take control and help those close to my heart. The Bible tells us we are not in control, so how do we manage pain, anxiety, worry and fear? I had to step out of my overwhelming feelings and ask God every day to show me a path, His path, not mine. Two verses kept coming to mind, verses I had used before when faced with overwhelming fear.

The Philippians verse focuses on the God-given power to endure any circumstance. You have to wonder, would we talk to God if we never faced difficult circumstances? It's the difficulties that bring me closer to God and make me so much more grateful for the everyday blessings in my life. It gives a reason for suffering, if nothing more than to force us to pour out our hearts to the only One that can help. Suffering is a double-edged sword, which brings us to the second verse.

Life has many battles, some small and some overwhelming; many of these battles have no tangible weapons. God is our weapon, our armor to face these challenges.

Think of yourself as a soldier preparing for battle every day, allow God to be your full armor. When facing the hardships and anxieties of this world, we are told to take up the full armor of God with the belt of truth around the waist (Satan is the opposite of truth). A breastplate of righteousness to protect our heart. Our feet are to be fitted with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (we are to advance with faith, with peace, knowing that Satan puts traps in our path). Hold the shield of faith so we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Put on the helmet of salvation, protecting our thoughts (spiritual truth). And lastly, my favorite armor, we take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, our only offensive weapon.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus who will give us the strength to weather any storm. Let us dress ourselves every day with your armor, so we can be your weapons against evil and a constant testament to your truth. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day 9

By Danny Lantz

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." – 1 Samuel 12:24

"God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them." – Hebrews 6:10

A few months back, I was listening to K-LOVE and one of the hosts mentioned a point from a sermon some time ago. There is a difference between being full of faith and being faithful.

That really spoke to me and moved me. Of course we are called to be full of faith. To believe and have trust in the Lord is vital, but just as important is that we are called to be faithful followers. To love and to live our life in a way that reflects God's light in us. I feel this is what can take us from being Christians and make us disciples. Full of faith can save us, but being faithful followers can save this world. Looking inward versus looking outward. So let us look for ways to serve God, let us seek out opportunities to help and to serve others. God has blessed all of us with our own special gifts, let's use them for his glory. Let the way we live our lives in service to others be our witness for how God is working in our lives!

Prayer

Holy Father, we pray that you stir in us, a fire that burns for others. Lead us and guide us as we seek to live our lives in service to you. Help us to be the salt and light of this world, and may we share your love and grace into all of your creation. We pray these things in the holy name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 10

By Rita Smith

"Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—The best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies." – Philippians 4:8-9 (The Message)

I grew up in a stable middle class home with two caring, hard-working parents. We had what we needed, but not a lot extra. Sadly, one thing we did have was a level of uneasiness—my father was consumed with the bad news of the day, and back then, he got that from the morning and evening papers which were delivered daily, and of course, the nightly news when everyone had to be silent in the living room. We didn't suffer, but I really can't recall many smiles on his face as we grew up. My father died when my children were young. I thought then about how little joy I witnessed in his life and it affected me. We were a good family living in a safe place, and it seemed he was never able to enjoy how lucky we were.

Looking at the words of Philippians above—how many times a day do we scroll through things that are completely not noble, not reputable, not beautiful? They catch our attention, we click, and the algorithm fills our news feed with just the opposite of what God wants us to absorb. Or, do we decide to fill our evenings with every kind of ugly offering on cable or streaming services, again filling our minds with the worst thoughts. Christ promises us lives of abundance and joy, but he doesn't force his joy upon us. We have to choose it.

A big step toward joy is gratefulness. I heard on a podcast that Doris Day said this: "Gratitude is riches, complaint is poverty." Without appreciation, no amount of success can make us happy. If we stop and think about it, we all have things to be grateful for. I get in my car and thank God for my reliable vehicle. I remember that my blue 1975 Volkswagen Rabbit used to strand me on the side of the road sometimes. I leave the grocery store with a full cart, and thank God that what I need is so easily available to me. I read of so many people in the world who don't have that luxury. We need to continually dwell on and thank God for the things we DO have, and not be consumed by the desire for more. Of course, it is human to get used to our everyday luxuries and begin to take them for granted, but stopping to give a quick prayer of thanks throughout the day truly helps to adjust my perspective. As I've gotten older, I really have learned to stop, notice, and appreciate. We all need to take the time to do that.

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to remember that as believers who have been saved by a risen Christ, we have no excuse to be joyless, filling our days with negativity. Lead us to have grateful hearts and to seek to fill our minds with the beautiful, the noble, the true things in this world, so that You can, as Paul wrote, "work us into Your most excellent harmonies." In the name of Christ Jesus, Amen.

Day 11

By Kris Rice

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." – 2 Corinthians 9:7

Giving to the church must come from the heart. It should be given genuinely and with love. We all have certain missions or favorites in the church. I love giving extra to the children and youth as they are the future of our church and community. Support what speaks to you.

Prayer

Dear Lord, give us guidance as we gather. Help us to know the importance of giving of our time, talents and financially..

Day 12

By Anonymous

"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act." – Psalm 37:5

There comes a point when the questions quiet down, the weighing of options settles, and you stand at the edge of a decision. You've prayed. You've considered. You've waited. And now—it's time to say, "I will."

This isn't a reckless leap. It's a faithful step. Saying "I will give" doesn't mean you've figured everything out—it means you've chosen to trust. You're not giving because you have excess, or because the math makes perfect sense. You're giving because you believe God is worth it. His mission is worth it. His promises are trustworthy.

The "I will" moment is powerful. It's where faith becomes action. It's where obedience meets courage. And it's where God begins to multiply what you offer—not just in the lives of others, but in your own heart.

Prayer

Lord, I've wrestled with this decision, and now I choose to act. I will give—not because I have all the answers, but because I trust You. Take what I offer and use it for Your glory. Grow my faith through this step, and remind me that You are always faithful. Amen.

Day 13

By Rebecca Smith

"God is within her, she will not fail; God will help her at break of day." – Psalm 46:5

The past few years, "I Am the Church" became more than just a phrase – it became an affirmation rooted in faith, community and perseverance. My husband and I battled infertility and it felt like an endless wilderness – hope deferred, dreams delayed and prayers whispered through tears. Yet, even in that space of longing and heartache, I learned the Church is not just a building. The Church is a place where the Body of Christ is moving to surround, uplift and carry others when their strength is gone.

This church and its people have encouraged me, prayed for me and my husband, and offered a listening ear. I think of those who understood my struggle because they went through their own battle, and those who saw my pain and reminded me that God sees me and is listening, even when it felt unbearable.

This journey became an example of God's spirit moving in my life and preparing me for motherhood. Through words of comfort from my church family, I realized struggles do not define us or our faith – God's love does. Relying on God's perfect timing is hard because we want to be in control, but His promises are so much better than we could have imagined and I can say with confidence His timing is absolutely perfect because after three and a half years, our dream finally came true and her name is Sophia.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for being present in every season of waiting. Help me to be the Church – to reflect Your love, extend Your comfort and stand firm in the hope of Your promises. May my life be a testament to Your faithfulness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 14

By Lisa Thompson

"Taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him." – Psalms 34:8 (NIV)

Not everyone I love attends church, but I can bring the church to them.

One of my greatest desires is for my family and friends to experience the same peace, hope, and joy that I've found in my relationship with Jesus. I know what it feels like to feel lost, broken, or unsure, and I know what a difference it makes when I lean on Christ instead of my own strength. There is a calm that comes from knowing that He is in control and a hope that carries me through the hard days.

Sometimes it's hard when I want others around me to experience that same feeling, but they do not attend church, and they are still fighting battles on their own. I remind myself that I can't change their hearts, only God can do that. My role is to continue reflecting my faith and be the church that is brought to them. If my life reflects His love, through my patience, love, happiness, and gratitude – then maybe they will seek what makes the difference.

So, I'll keep praying, loving, and trusting that God is using me and working in ways I can't see. I'll keep being an example of His grace, not through perfection but through persistence and faith. When others see His light shining through me, they may see that He is my joy and hope. The presence of Christ is in me, and that means the church goes wherever I go.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the joy and hope I have found in you. I pray for my family, friends, and community to know that same joy and to experience the comfort of your love. Help me to live in a way that reflects your goodness and draws others toward you. Give me patience as I wait for you to work in the hearts of the ones I love, and help me trust that you will make all things beautiful in your time.
Amen.

Day 15

By Cristiana Wright

"My days fly faster than a weaver's shuttle. They end without hope. O God, remember that my life is but a breath, and I will never again feel happiness. You see me now, but not for long. You will look for me, but I will be gone." – Job 7:6-10

Have you ever felt like you have no more to give and you have done everything you can to make it better, and still feel hopeless and empty?

When my father passed, it was devastating for our whole family. He was diagnosed with a deadly cancer that gave him six months to live. Being in and out of the hospital caring for him, I could see him being hopeful that something miraculous would happen and he would get better, but unfortunately that did not happen. His health declined, but seeing him so full of hope gave us all hope that he would get better. My father passed January of 2017.

While we were all still mourning my dad's passing, something hopeful happened. My husband and I had tried to get pregnant for some time and had a miscarriage before, and this time I was pregnant. It seemed like there was finally a ray of light shining through those dark clouds. We made it through the whole pregnancy and had our precious baby boy Cassius. He was perfect and everything we ever wanted. Cassius was so loved. He made it seem less sad that my father was gone and kept my mind busy. Six months after having Cassius, I was pregnant again with our second baby, Callie Jo. She was a perfect little angel and her brother absolutely loved her. This was until December 23, 2018 – the worst day of our lives. He was taken from us when he was 15 months old. We were so shocked because we never thought in a million years this could happen to us.

I asked God: why us? Why him? No answer. I was so hopeless and broken. I didn't know what to do. I felt nothing could help us now. My cry for help was there. but nothing was happening.

This was until a great friend from church continued to check up on us. Jerry Ma has helped me become the person I needed to become to make it out alive. Her support and faithfulness really helped me become a better version of myself with God in my life. I continued to go to church to try and hear God talk to me and give me a reason as to why this happened to us.

At the time I was hopeless and empty, God was still there. Where I could have turned from my faith and blame God for what had happened, I refocused myself to find God and try to heal and stop focusing on the what-ifs. God has His way of doing things and it's His timing, not ours. We as Christians need to trust in Him and believe there is a deeper reasoning as to why things happen. We won't always have the answers, but it's all part of His plan. Now five years later, our family is stronger in our faith than we have ever been. We are living proof that God heals and makes us stronger in faith.

Today take time to reflect on what's making you feel hopeless or weighing you down and release that negative energy.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for this day and the many blessings you give to us. We also pray for all the things that may be making us feel heavy in our hearts. May we release that to you so that you may give us that peace over us. Thank you for all you do for us may we continue to do your work in this earth. AMEN.

Day 16

By Mike Stockham

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest." – Proverbs 6:6-8

*"Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp."
– Psalm 149:3*

In the last several months, I have become obsessed with bees and beekeeping. I have spent a ton of time reading and watching YouTube videos on bees, becoming more knowledgeable about beehive life, and certainly more aware of how important bees are to our planet—pollinating 75% of flowering plants. Thanks to bee pollination, plants can reproduce and provide food for the planet. A vibrant and healthy hive can have as many as 40,000 bees, all working together to produce hundreds of pounds of honey a year.

Just as the hive of bees work together in unity to build their honeycombs and honey from the fields, so too is CUMC called to work in harmony for the glory of God. We have all heard the apostle Paul compare the church to a body with many members, each with a unique and vital purpose (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Bees, each small and seemingly insignificant by themselves, create something amazing when working together. In similar fashion, we as believers and members of CUMC, empowered by God, contribute our gifts and talents to nurture a vibrant and fruitful fellowship. We are working together to produce spiritual "honey" that feeds our members.

Bees are hard workers, completing their tasks diligently and faithfully returning to their hive. Their lives – on average 62 days – are just like the ants in Proverbs 6:6-8. The church, like the hive, flourishes when each member serves with humility and devotion. In beekeeping and in the church, "honey" flows when the members work together.

One more fun fact about bees: Did you know that bees communicate with each other through a "waggle dance"? This dance helps them share information about the direction and distance to sources of food. It's like their own little GPS system! As in Psalm 149:3, the bees seem to know that we are all to "praise his name with dancing" as this is how they share news of the bounty they discover.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for all CUMC members who work diligently, quietly, and with humility to serve! May we continue to be a body with many members working for you and may we share your good news with praise and dancing. God bless us! Amen

Day 17

By Lori Hall

"And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." – Micah 6:8

The world is full of people that are suffering, and many of them need help to just meet their daily needs. If I take my faith seriously, I must do what I can to help the disadvantaged. I can do that with monetary donations and—even more importantly—with the donation of my time.

It doesn't take much to check in with people, see how their day is going, and ask about problems they have previously shared. Kindness is contagious and is readily reciprocated. I can make communities that I'm a part of be more loving by simply being kind. Prayer and scripture reading is the backbone of my personal relationship with God. I must humble myself when I pray. I know that I can't do all that God requires of me without his help. When I fail to do what I should, I ask for forgiveness and God graciously gives me another chance – over and over and over again.

Day 18

By Anonymous

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." – 2 Corinthians 9:7

Financial giving can stir up a lot of internal tension. We ask: "Is this the right amount?" "Will I have enough left?" "Does it even make a difference?" These questions are real—and God welcomes them.

Giving isn't about guilt or obligation. It's about trust. When we give to the church, we're not just funding programs or paying bills—we're investing in eternity. We're saying, "God, I believe in what You're doing here, and I want to be part of it."

But here's the grace: God doesn't measure our worth by the size of our gift. He looks at the heart behind it. Whether it's a tithe, a spontaneous offering, or a quiet donation no one sees, He honors the faith it takes to release what we hold.

Prayer

Lord, You know my heart and my circumstances. Help me give not out of pressure, but out of love. Teach me to trust You with my finances, and to see giving as a joyful partnership in Your work. Use what I offer to bless others and deepen my faith. Amen.

Day 19

By Sharon Lantz

*"So in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."
– Romans 12:5*

I grew up in a small coastal fishing town in Virginia. My brothers and I lived with my paternal grandparents until I was eleven. I was raised in the Methodist Church. As a child, I remember how everyone in town looked out for one another. There were no questions asked, nor judgment passed. If a neighbor needed help, you helped.

As an adult, and now senior citizen, I believe we need this now more than ever. People are hurting, and people are watching. Are our actions consistent with what we say we believe? The church is not a building; we are "called out" by Jesus to love one another and to lift each other up. Are we doing that?

Prayer

Father God, may my prayers have feet, and may others see Jesus in what I do. I am the church. In your holy name, Amen.

Day 20

By Steve Gillman

*"I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me."
- Philipians 4:13*

My favorite Bible verse is the one you just read. I have had different thoughts about its meaning as I have grown older. As a young man, I thought it just meant one thing---that I can do anything through Christ---that I can do what I pray to do because of Christ who leads and uplifts all at the same time. However, I have found as I have grown older that I do not always know what it is I should be doing or praying to do. Am I making the right decision at work with the people I try to help? Am I on the right side of an issue? Do I know the right way to go in life as a husband or father or son when a decision has to be made? It can be difficult to know what to pray for.

I have taken solace as I age in the above verse revealing another meaning to me----Christ also gives me strength in uncertainty, not just the accomplishment of what I believe should be done. In reality, Christ's will in our lives and others is what is important and meaningful----not just an outcome we believe we should have.

My prayer now as I have aged is less about asking Christ to strengthen me only as to an outcome, but rather "Your will be done Lord." And I have strength as well in knowing whatever happens, it is His perfect will that it be. As such, I feel strengthened BECAUSE of Christ and his will being done rather than feeling like I have to know the outcome or decision I need to ask for. I have learned that through Christ, we can be perfected with strength even in our weakness of not knowing what to do. And our hearts are lifted knowing no matter the outcome, Christ has the wheel in our lives if we invite him into our hearts.

Prayer

Lord, let your will be done this day and let me be strong enough to be a means by which you use to accomplish it ---whatever it may be. Amen.

Day 21

By Katie Bellnier Thomas

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." – Psalm 34:18

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." – 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

I have seen the church in action. If the church is supposed to be the hands and feet of Christ, I have been embraced and held up by those hands and I have been pursued by those feet.

There is no easy way to put to words the loss I have experienced alongside my family in recent years. This list will convey plot events, but not the meaning of it: My sister died in 2021 at 39 years old. Five months later, my mother suddenly collapsed and never recovered. By 2023, my family and I were just picking up the pieces of our lives when my dad was diagnosed with cancer, and after a few months of chemo, he died in his sleep. One year and two months later, my nephew succumbed to grief and mental illness and took his own life.

I share the gravity of these deaths to share this now: I would not have survived this period of grief if not for the church. Our pastors were among my very first phone calls each time I learned that my world changed forever again. I knew I was dialing a lifeline. I knew they would pray with me in that moment and continue to pray for me and my family. They moved into action by helping plan memorials, lifting the burden of executive function off of my freshly frazzled brain as much as they could. At the services, people I barely knew came together to run sound, perform powerful songs of hope, and serve food, making what could be the worst days of my life into moments that I can look back on proudly, knowing they honored my loved ones.

In the dark days that followed, members of my small group brought food for me, my children and visiting family members. It meant so much to let go of worry for just one thing each time someone would make those dinners. Intense grief and trauma wears on you, changing you into someone who survives each day instead of proactively taking it in. Our Sunday school friends did things like fix our porch and mow the lawn, to cover us when we just couldn't take as good of care of ourselves as we had before the impact of loss.

This past year, I was asked to help facilitate a Grief Share group here at church. I was able to find some amount of purpose in my pain and hopefully help others in their own. This church—God working through it—brought me from brokenhearted to comforting others as I have been comforted. Playing whatever role we can in helping those that need it most is what I think it means to be the church.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for being one that draws near to the brokenhearted and the one to sit with us in our pain. Let me comfort others as I can through your words and guidance from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A Closing Thought

These 21 days has shown us that together, *WE* are the Church!
Each devotion, prayer and story serves as a reminder that God's
love and faithfulness reaches every part of our lives.

Even though the devotional ends here, the journey doesn't.
"I Am the Church" means encouraging one another and living out
the love God has for us each and every day.

All glory to God for what He's done – and for what's still to come.



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