



May 2020

## Paula's Pondering

Last month I wrote about the first rule of Methodism – Do no harm. This month I'd like to write about the second rule – Do all the good you can. Actually, John Wesley is reported as saying, "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." Like the first rule, this seems really simple. Just be nice to people. But it's not that simple.

For one thing, you could always be nicer. No matter how nice you are, no matter how much you give away, no matter how much good you do, you can always do more, give more, be more. How much is enough? Or is it ever enough? Remember, the rule is do ALL the good you can.

Just how far should we take this rule? Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, says, "And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." And yet, if we do that, we don't have a tunic or a cloak and we'll have to rely on someone else to meet our needs. Where is the line if you do this much, you're doing good; but if you give any more, you're being foolish? (By the way, most scholars believe Jesus is using hyperbole here – an exaggeration not meant to be taken literally. The idea he is trying to get across is to not sink to another's level by fighting the lawsuit. Just give it to him. People are more important than things.)

And there comes a point where, if we take this rule too far, we're violating rule number 1 which is do no harm. Because sometimes we actually help more by not helping at all. My friend is a prime example of this. Her adult daughter (in her mid-30's) still lives with her mother, has no job and no plan for one, and has few relationships. Her mother buys her clothing, a vehicle, and food, and requires little of her daughter in return. She would like to retire, but can't because she is still paying her daughter's debts. Some would

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say she is the epitome of a good person – giving even when she gets nothing back. But clearly she is harming her daughter by enabling her and not letting her suffer the consequences of her actions (and inactions). Probably the best thing my friend could do for her daughter is to stop taking responsibility for her and let her take responsibility for herself.

So what are we to do? Well, I think it's better to err on the side of goodness and generosity. Follow your instincts. When in doubt, do the good thing. I believe God sees and blesses our good intent rather than the unexpected outcome. So, if you're led to give money to a panhandler and he or she spends that money foolishly, your good deed is not negated by the actions of the recipient. Moreover, I believe the recipient will have to answer to God for their poor decision.

So don't be afraid to do all the good you can. Just listen to God's promptings, and you can't go wrong.

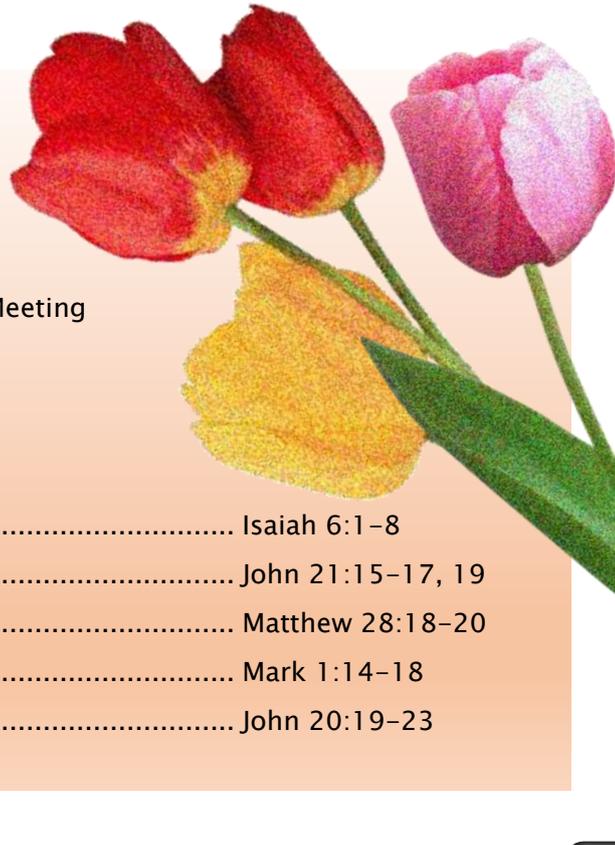
Blessings,  
*Pastor Paula*

### Upcoming Events

- 5/3 .....Communion
- 5/10 .....Mother's Day
- 5/21 .....Leadership Council Meeting
- 5/25 .....Memorial Day

### Sunday Sermons

- 5/3 .....Lip Service..... Isaiah 6:1-8
- 5/10 .....Feed My Sheep ..... John 21:15-17, 19
- 5/17 .....Why Are You Here? ..... Matthew 28:18-20
- 5/24 .....Repent and Believe ..... Mark 1:14-18
- 5/31 .....Sent by the Spirit..... John 20:19-23



### Birthdays

#### May

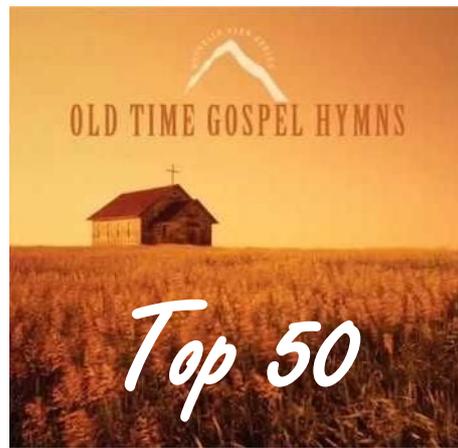
- 5/2 Marilyn Berry
- 5/6 Lucille Bolen
- 5/17 Joanne Ring
- 5/23 John Cahill

### Phone Prayer Chain

If you know of a member going to the hospital, have a need, a concern, or a joy, please call someone on the following list, starting at the top, if possible. Call any time, day or night. If the person you call is not at home, leave a message or call the next person on the list.

- Pat Townsend ..... 373-3915 or 225-9459
- Rosemary Garten ..... 427-5725 or 519-8500
- Carol Marcks ..... 427-5725 or 560-5627
- Marilyn Berry ..... 796-5789
- Lucille Bolen..... 560-5131
- Mary Branstad ..... 796-9659 or 868-3752
- Ann Fiene..... 257-5214
- Linda Roberts..... 650-5131 or 853-3398
- Carol Buhrle ..... 796-3630 or 225-8174

- Shirley Weaver .....461-9224 or 716-1184
- Chris Pauley..... 571-3922
- Gayle Elliott ..... 257-9655
- Arletta Cahill ..... 600-6203
- Flora Costanza..... 914-8034
- Sandy Bower ..... 373-5603
- Anna Inman .....(660) 232-1221
- Jackie McMenemy ..... 461-7577

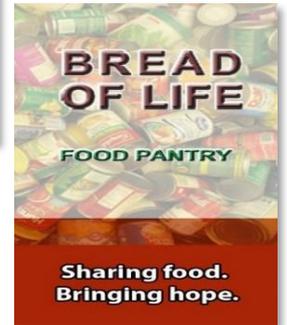
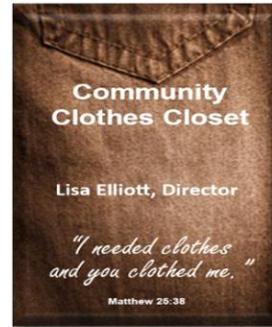


**For the month of May, submit your favorite worship song you want to hear!**

## Outreach Ministries

The Food Pantry and Clothes Closet have been temporarily closed due to the virus pandemic.

	MONTH	FAMILIES SERVED	PEOPLE SERVED	ITEMS OUT	ITEMS IN
Food Pantry	MAR	<b>MINISTRIES TEMPORARILY CLOSED. NO REPORTING</b>			
Clothes Closet	MAR				



Visit our website for updates!

Website: <http://stmumc.net/outreach-ministries/food-pantry-clothes-closet/>



## Storms of Our Own Making

Jonah 1, Jonah 2:1-10

We all experience what could be called storms of life. They come in various forms, such as relational, financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual. Sometimes they are even the result of our own foolish choices. The trouble that comes to us may be the harvest of what we have sown in the past. And that was certainly the case with Jonah.

When Jonah tried to run away from God's assignment, the Lord brought a corrective storm into his life. And because He loves us, He will similarly disrupt our plans when we insist on going our own way instead of submitting to His will. God's storms ...

Get our attention. Storms disrupt our normal routine in such a way that we stop to consider what God is doing in our lives.

Humble us. The Lord challenges our pride and self-reliance so we realize that we are not in charge and can do nothing apart from Him.

Lead us to repentance. Sometimes the consequences of our sin and rebellion are so painful and troublesome that we come to our senses and turn back to God in humble obedience.

Align our life with His plans. Storms cause us to let go of our stubbornly held plans and yield to His will no matter what it costs us.

Crying out to the Lord is the best response in a storm. Like Jonah, we should humble ourselves in the midst of our circumstances, submit to God's dealings with us, turn from our rebellion to obedience, and yield to His will. Only then will we become a useful servant in His mighty hand.

## Relying on the Spirit in Our Work

### Ezra 4:1–5

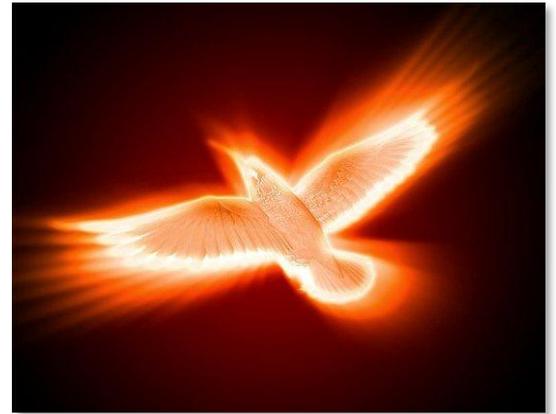
Israel's enemies were clever in their efforts to block the temple's reconstruction. First, they offered to help. What better way to cause things to go wrong than to get involved in the work? When their aid was rejected, they set out to discourage the workers and make them afraid. The opponents even hired counselors to thwart the Israelites and were successful in hindering the project.

God, however, wanted His people to reject self-reliance and instead carry out His work in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

He offered them encouragement and protected their building project despite the mountain of opposition facing them. Sometimes this means He will remove the problem; at other times He walks us through it. In either case, we are to rely steadily on God's Holy Spirit. Doing so will allow us to:

- Patiently love our spouse when there is turmoil in the home.
- Wisely guide our children toward godliness in our self-centered culture.
- Follow scriptural principles about giving, saving, and spending in a society that urges us to get what we want now.
- Experience contentment and God's peace in our current circumstances—single or married, employed or out of a job, healthy or sick.
- Do God's work His way.

Being led by the Spirit characterizes how we work. While that mindset is countercultural and not pleasing to the flesh (Gal. 5:16), it's the only way to live as a child of God. Seek out believers who are trying to practice dependence on the Spirit, and encourage one another not to give up.



## What Hardens a Heart?

### Hebrews 3:7–19

The warning in Hebrews 3 is a serious one. Anytime we ignore what God has said, it may be evidence of a hardened heart. Although we usually think this condition applies only to those who reject Christ, the reality is that believers can “be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).

When the Lord begins to convict us, we could rationalize our disobedience, thinking it's not that big a deal. Or we might be tempted to preoccupy ourselves with other things to avoid facing the issue at all. Perhaps we're unwilling to deal with that sin because we're afraid of the changes God is challenging us to make. Therefore, we distract ourselves with other thoughts and activities, pushing Him further and further from our mind in hopes of silencing His conviction.

We may think ignoring the Spirit in this way is not a serious issue, but it is rebellion against God, which is the very core of sin. And rebellion often begins with a refusal to relinquish control and trust the Lord. When we start catering to our own preferences, it's not long before we redefine what God has said in an attempt to make ourselves feel better and quash the nagging sense of guilt.

The danger in such behavior is that we lose sight of our “first love”—our actions testify that we love our sin more than Christ (Revelation 2:4). The result is a heart that is desensitized to the sin. By ignoring the Spirit's warnings, we can become acclimated to unrighteousness and adopt a sinful lifestyle. This is why we must carefully guard and examine our hearts.

