

Pivotal experiences in  
our faith journey

Job 42:5      “My ears  
had heard of you but now  
my eyes have seen you.”

# WESTERN SPIRE

## AUGUST 2024

We may have a pivotal experience in our faith journey. Some people have a dramatic moment to accept God in their lives as God answered their urgent and desperate prayers. Some others encounter God in an unexpected way in which their prayer is answered differently from what they asked for, but they undeniably know it is the work of God. Recently, I officiated the funeral of someone who one day felt overwhelmed by the presence of the Spirit inside of her, so she had to drive her car into a nearby field where she had an overwhelming experience to be surrounded by a mysterious power. All of these experiences are linked to significantly positive outcomes to make them accept God in their lives.

Some people talk about their negative pivotal experiences that led them to doubts or uncertainties about God's presence or God's love. An onslaught of tragedy against them makes them conclude that God is non-existent, unloving or uncaring. How to deal with such a negative experience in our lives or what to say to someone who has been through it would be another topic to cover. But what I'd point out here is that there are people who attain profound understandings about God through their catastrophic experiences. They understand suffering as pointing to something else beyond themselves.

What is common between the two very different kinds of experience to work as a defining moment of faith? What makes one choose or discover faith in the midst of such experiences rather than going in the opposite direction? No one can choose it for someone else or force him/her to interpret such an experience in a certain manner, which I find myself doing numerous times. What is a secret ingredient to make our experience a spiritual one in a deeper level?

There is a hint from Philippians 2:5~10. This passage is called “The Hymn of Christ” because biblical scholars assume that this was an actual hymn that was sung in worship by the early church. This passage explains how Jesus was obedient to the Father God to accomplish the mission of saving humanity. According to the hymn, the first step he took was to empty himself (verses 6&7).

Self-emptying is the very first step to enable us to accept God and find our goal in God's purpose for our life. We humbly put ourselves before God and align our hearts to God, pleasantly subordinating our will to God's will. God uses our positive experiences to help us know that a good result doesn't come on its own but through God's goodness that makes everything work together. However, it is also true that many people view their success or accomplishment as a process toward self-centered and egotistical pride, which inevitably incurs a fear of rejection, as they get sucked into a constant state of needing to achieve more and more to prove themselves. Our positive experiences bring a positive outcome when we discover God who works in and through us, such as Peter in Luke 5 when he caught a lot of fish after heeding Jesus' instructions. He said to Jesus, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man.” This is a good example of turning a positive experience to self-emptying.

It is not always the case, but our negative experiences make us empty ourselves more easily and naturally, as we admit that we are failing at life. We humbly acknowledge we need God's forgiveness and direction for our lives. Eventually, we have less desire to seek our own achievements but try to take delight in God. When we are truly hurt to the core by a catastrophic experience, we don't ask ourselves if we will get through it, but instead we ask ourselves how we will get through it. This is a time we find God's gentle whisper that speaks in a still and small voice to us every moment. Thus, self-emptying becomes a source of self-loving.

It is such a blessing to have a pivotal moment in our faith journey. How dramatic it is does not matter. If it is a positive or negative one, it does not matter either. When we find God at the end of this experience, it brings genuine or lasting acceptance of God with true joy and peace. When we get to this point, we confess to God like Job, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." (Job 42:5)

Peace of Christ,  
Rev. Hodong Hwang



## Food Cupboard News

Phil was at the church for 3 hours clipping bushes on Saturday and 13 people came to get food out of the cupboard. Some of those 13 people who stopped probably didn't find much left in the cupboard.

The cupboard is meeting a need, and it needs to be replenished during the week. Please put any food you purchase or take food from the shelves in the church to add to the food cupboard. When Kathy is in the office, she would gladly open the door for you.

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**Palmyra's Canaltown Days has been cancelled for the foreseeable future.**

Click on the link below for more details:

<https://www.palmyracanaltowndays.org/>



THANK YOU

I want to express my thanks to everyone at Western Presbyterian Church for everything you have done for me. I don't have the words to let you know how much your thoughtfulness has meant.

Quite simply, you are a wonderful congregation!!

Your words of encouragement and support mean so much, but above all, your prayers have given me hope and peace!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.....

Love,

*Sandy Campbell*  
😊

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## **SEMI-URGENT!!**

The Fellowship Team is looking for someone to be chairperson starting next year.

If you or someone you know is interested in an awarding, fun, yet challenging position with a great team, please contact a member of the Fellowship Team:

Norm Underwood, Sue Pringle, Ray Marr, Roxanne Dobson, Val or Terry Gendron or Jan Taylor.

Thank you.

Did you hear the laughter?

Did you hear the songs and games?

Did you hear the creativity and stories?

Especially, did you hear messages of God and Jesus?

The joyful sounds of children's voices were heard in our faith-filled church this past month. It wasn't just the small children 3 years to 6<sup>th</sup> graders, but also the amazing youth that also support the Vacation Bible School week. The coming together of adults, youth and children to make God's words be words of power and unity was the focus of VBS this summer. This program is a joint effort of our church and the Reformed Church of Palmyra. For years now, a small handful of adults lead by the Christian Education programs of both churches have created a week-long event that reflects the energy and interest that our children embrace. They embrace it so much that once they are too old to attend, they volunteer to assist in running the program.

We sometimes think the internalization of the Bible and faith come from weekly Sunday School. Certainly, that is part of it, but these added events like VBS really radiate the joy, energy and faithful intention that is our future. I commend our CE team. For their undying efforts. I thank the church for their support of the CE of both WPC and the Reformed Church. They truly are God's blessing.

**\*\* Come together through Christ \*\***

## Day 1

~ **Jesus gives us HOPE** ~

**Key Verse:** "O Lord, you alone are my hope." *Psalm 71:5*

Waiting in the darkness for Jesus...

## Day 2

~ **Jesus gives us COURAGE**~

**Key Verse:** "Take courage, I am here." *Matthew 14:27*

Keep an eye on Jesus and you can weather stormy times.

## Day 3

~ **Jesus gives us DIRECTION** ~

**Key Verse:** "He will show you which path to take" *Proverbs 3:6*

Hear the truth from Jesus' sermons.

## Day 4

~ **Jesus gives us LOVE** ~

**Key Verse:** "We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us." *1 John 3:16*

The shadow of the crucifixion emerges to the light.

## Day 5

~ **Jesus gives us POWER** ~

**Key Verse:** "Our great power is from God, not from ourselves."  
*2 Corinthians 4:7*

Passing of power through the Holy Spirit



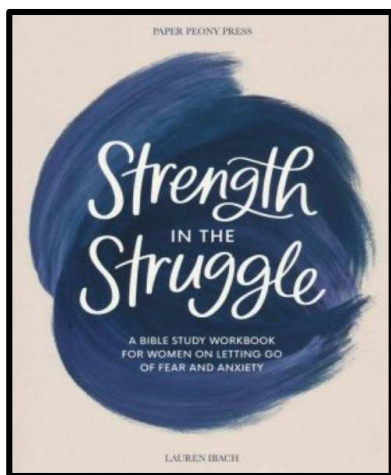
*Look at these good looking Ladies  
from this summer's picnic.*



**Women's Circle is starting up Wednesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>  
Mark your Calendars each third Wednesday at 1PM for great  
faith-filled discussions and wonderful fellowship.**

**Jan Taylor and I, Randy Kennard, feel closer to those that attend due  
to the way we all get to know each other more.**

**Books will be handed out in the September Circle meeting.**  
**We are collecting \$10/ book**



**Study Description:**

As our confidence in Christ and His Word grows, we are strengthened to face life's ongoing battles against anxiety and fear.

*Strength in the Struggle* is an encouraging 10-lesson Bible study workbook for women about letting go of fear and anxiety. The world offers many solutions to manage and cope with these struggles, but what Jesus offers us is far greater. God's Word has the power and authority to transform lives and give us strength in every battle.

*Strength in the Struggle* was created to help readers cultivate a biblical understanding of anxiety and fear, trust in the power of the gospel as our ultimate hope and learn to apply God's Word in both thought and action. Each lesson focuses on a single memory verse within its historical and biblical context and features:

- Inspiring hand-lettered illustrations of key passages
- Memory verses printed in the book
- High-quality paper stock with an artistic and modern design
- Thoughtful questions to delve deeper into each passage
- Prayer prompts to invite the Holy Spirit to work in and through each lesson

**Intended Schedule for This 2024-2025 year:**

Some dates may get changed due to the rhythm of our lives.

September 18 <sup>th</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 1, Page 18	<i>Deliverance from fear</i> ~ Psalm 34:4
October 16 <sup>th</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 2, Page 24	<i>Identity in Christ</i> ~ Colossians 3:1-4
November 20 <sup>th</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 3, Page 30 Lesson 4, Page 36	<i>Our Weakness, His Power</i> ~ 2 Corinthians 12:9 <i>The Spirit of Fear vs The Spirit of God</i> ~ 2 Timothy 1:7
December 18 <sup>th</sup> @ <b>12noon</b> Carpool – meet 11:30AM		<b>Holiday Luncheon at Warfields in Clifton Springs</b>
January 15 <sup>th</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 5, Page 42	<i>Trusting God</i> ~ Proverbs 3:5-6
February 19 <sup>th</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 6, Page 48	<i>Our Sovereign Provider</i> ~ Matther 6:26
March 19 <sup>th</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 7, Page 54	<i>Casting Our Anxieties on Him</i> ~ 1 Peter 5:6-7
April 16 <sup>th</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 8, Page 60	<i>Jesus is our Peace</i> ~ Philippians 4:6-7
May 21 <sup>st</sup> @ 1PM	Lesson 9, Page 66 Lesson 10, Page 72	<i>Satisfied in Christ</i> ~ Lamentations 3:22-24 <i>Study Reflection</i>
June 18 <sup>th</sup> @ <b>12noon</b>		<b>Summer Picnic at Aqueduct Park – dish to pass</b>





## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

August 2	Dona Kadlecik
August 4	Samantha Teeter
August 6	Beverly Mouton
August 7	Janet Barager
August 14	Alexander Budziszewski
August 21	John Kadlecik
August 21	Anita Adams
August 21	Sharon Marr
August 23	Rena Haigh
August 23	Beverly Koeberle
August 25	Patti Squier



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

August 1	Morris & Tricia Owen
August 4	Michael & Jan Semans
August 16	Dale & Molly Budziszewski
August 26	Ray & Sharon Marr
August 28	Bill & Sara Bush

**If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the office at 597-9171 so we can add it to our list next time!**

**The team minutes received for July include:**

**Deacons Team Meeting Minutes**

June 11, 2024

Present: Sandy McMenamain, Randy Kennard, Nancy Talma, Sandy Betts, Patti Dlugosh & Hodong Hwang  
In Support: Sara Bush, Linda Pulcini

Meeting opening with lighting of the Christ Candle and prayer

Old Business:

1. Approval of last month's minutes & corrections Motion: Sandy M. and Second: Nancy T.
2. Treasurer's Report: Current balance & expense/donation Status— Sandy M. —

Jun-24	Deacons Checking Account
Initial balance	\$1,287.29
Additions	\$91.25
Deductions	\$388.77
Ending balance	\$989.77

Description of Additions: offertory deposits

Description of Subtractions: communion trays

- a. Balances
3. Sharing Correspondence: letters/emails/cards - none received for May – *change of bulletin board is needed*
4. Communion – on June 16<sup>th</sup> ~ Usually 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month - *This month is an exception*
  - a. Prepared 72 and served 53 in May
  - b. More pita is needed, Juice?? – none needs to be ordered
  - c. Who can assist in set-up on the 16<sup>th</sup> ? (Prep for 70 folks – the new standard) NT, SB, SM, PD & RK
  - d. Evaluation of tray bags: three white bags were made to accommodate a stack of 2 trays and a lid ea.
  - e. Discussion regarding the cups being stuck in the trays
    - i. Option 1, is to only use room temperature juice so that plastic cups do not expand over time
    - ii. Option 2, use a spacer under the plastic cups to raise them so not to stick in holes
    - iii. Option 3, use a ring spacer under the upper tray to raise top tray from pushing cups down
    - iv. Option 4, use the glass cups and see how they handle no spacers and cold juice
      1. Glass cups need to be washed prior to use – PD to determine best way to boil them with Clorox to sterilize and disinfect them.
      2. Defined process will be implemented following communion to sterilize cups for next use
5. Update of Prayer concerns: Define where extra outreach is needed / adds, removals etc.
  - a. *Actively removing names where prayer requester has not updated or asked for name to remain on list.*
6. Group Prayer – Lord, hear our prayers
7. Visits/ Calls/ cards counts - visits with special meaningful moments of faith

2024					
Month	Visits	Phone Calls	Cards sent and Email outreach	Communion Served	Communion Date
January	7	13	63	41	1/14/24
February	17	16	60	43	2/18/24
March	22	16	76	79	3/31/24
April	14	16	55	53	4/21/24
May	9	19	56	51	5/12/24
Year to Date	69	80	310	267	

S.S. created cards  
28 S.S. created cards  
21 Easter Lily Deliveries  
3 bouquets from TD funeral

8. Special Needs cards – *transferred card preparation to Sandy B.*
  - a. Special Care Mailings: Current list maintained by Deacons for those that we feel need to be reminded of our continued care and love.
  - b. Responsibility of addressing envelopes for the deacons to share the writing responsibly has shifted to SB from RK
  - c. Monthly Notes: Bible *Psalm 27:1 " The Lord is the light that shines in our path."*

Meeting closed with prayer

Next meeting Tuesday 7/2/2024 @ 10:30am Respectfully - Randy Kennard, Chairperson

## Our Prayer Concerns (updated July 17, 2024)

### Grieving:

Family & Friends of Walter Lester (requested by the Deacons)

### Serving in the Armed Forces:

AJ Bliss, Adam Hill, Joe Krebbeks, Quintyn McLeod, Josh Polle

### Please pray for those of our congregation with immediate concerns:

Ellen Avery, Irene Fadden, Pam Gnagy, Tricia Owen, Bob Pringle, Linda Pulcini, Jan Semans, Scott Semans

### Congregation members needing continued prayers:

Wes Barager, Joan Durfey, Frank Lawrence, Cim McFarlane, Wilma Redman, David Squier, and Fran Strom

### Congregation members in nursing homes or shut-in:

Gene Bassage, Beverly Koeberle, Rochelle Morse, Bev Mouton

### Others for whom prayers have been requested:

Dan Binkley, Dave Burley, Sarah Carone, Dennis Caves, Charlotte, Joyce Clark, Ann Davis, Ron & Sandy Desassure, Michael Dunham, Ted & Nancy Elsenheimer, Jay Fadden, Jameson Gardner, Barbara Gillespie, Russell Harris, Bobby & Eileen Haurand, Nancy Hovermale, Deb Merla, Russ Millspaw, Karley Mott, Jon Santmyer, Lisa Storm, Melissa Dantz Zerbel

### May your prayers go out to:

All caregivers; All those affected by natural disasters; All those who have no one to pray for them; All victims of violence, hatred and hunger; Please pray for those that wish to remain anonymous

*Names will remain on the prayer list for 30 days unless renewal has been requested.*

Prayers of Intercession are offered each day by our Deacons. To request prayer for yourself or another, please contact Randy Kennard, chair of Deacons, Sandy McMenamin, or Kathy in the Church office.



# AUGUST 2024

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
				1 9-11:30 am VBS 1 pm Mission/ Social Concerns	2 9-11:30 am VBS	3
4 11 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost 10 am worship service	5	6 10:30 am Deacons 7 pm Boy Scouts Muscle Room 7 pm Session	7	8	9	10
11 Communion & Cereal Sunday 10 am worship service	12	13 3:15 pm Worship 7 pm Boy Scouts Muscle Room	14 7 pm Boy Scouts FH	15	16	17
18 13 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost 10 am worship service	19	20 SPIRE DEADLINE 7 pm Boy Scouts Muscle Room	21 6:30 pm Property	22	23	24
25 14 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost 10 am worship service	26	27 7 pm Boy Scouts Muscle Room	28	29	30	31



## SEPTEMBER 2024

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
1 <b>15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> 10 am worship service	2 <b>Labor Day</b> <b>Office Closed</b>	3 <b>9 am Men's Group</b> <b>10:30 am Deacons</b> <b>7 pm Boy Scouts</b> <b>7 pm Session</b>	4	5 <b>10 am Mission/ Social Concerns</b>	6	7
8 <b>Communion &amp; Cereal Sunday</b> 10 am worship service	9 <b>2 pm Fellowship</b>	10 <b>3:15 pm Worship</b> <b>7 pm Boy Scouts</b> <b>Muscle Room</b> <b>7 pm Christian Ed.</b>	11 <b>7 pm Boy Scouts FH</b>	12	13	14
15 <b>17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> 10 am worship service	16	17 <b>SPIRE DEADLINE</b> <b>7 pm Boy Scouts</b> <b>Muscle Room</b>	18 <b>1 pm FH Women's Circle Bible Study</b> <b>6:30 pm Property</b>	19	20	21
22 <b>18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> 10 am worship service <b>"Welcome back" picnic</b>	23	24 <b>7 pm Boy Scouts</b> <b>Muscle Room</b>	25	26	27	28
29 <b>19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> First day of Sunday School <b>Back to Sunday School Breakfast</b> 10 am worship service	30					