

Pentecost 6 Leadership Letter

Dear Friends, the Psalms are a rich source of comfort and prayer, and I hope you will continue to use them in your devotions. For the next few weeks, we will turn to another section of scripture...Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. -Janet Hoover

Day 1 Read Matthew 5:1-2 Jesus has a lot of work to do, and the time is short. So many needs to be met. So much longing and hurt to be comforted. No sooner does he gather a few followers, but then he plunges into a world of pain and suffering. One might expect him to spend time organizing and coordinating their time and resources—setting up a base of operations with satellite offices. At the very least he should begin forming committees and task forces to study the issues, lay out the options, and recommend appropriate action. Instead, Jesus calls those closest to him to take the time to really think about what it is they are preparing to do. Jesus lays out in no uncertain terms what his new world will look like—and what his followers will experience. With the crowd listening in, Jesus tries to prepare his newly called disciples for the ways they will be re-formed. This is serious business—we see that when we notice that he “sat down,” for when a rabbi sat it meant: Pay attention. This is important. Then he speaks words that turn the world's values upside down and requires of those who follow Jesus a way of life that seems impossibly difficult. I suspect at least a couple of them must have wondered if they could break their contract. These words from Matthew's gospel are for the disciples and for us. Kingdom-living happens as we listen to them, think about them, and then weave them into the fabric of our lives. The daily readings from scripture are short but full of meaning—read them again and again. Use the reflections to guide your thinking. Open yourself to the adventure of faith that lies before you as you prayerfully consider how God is calling you to serve Christ in our broken, wounded, hurting world.

Day 2 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:3) One might expect a disciple of Christ to be filled with assurance—never confused, never frustrated, never troubled by regret or at a loss for the right words at the right time. Surely a person of deep faith is so tuned in to God that they can dance through life with never a stumble, never a fall. Surely one of Christ's chosen people is so filled with the Spirit of hope and joy that none of life's problems slows him or her down. Jesus turns these expectations upside down. “When you are poor in spirit,” he says, “then you will be at home with God.” If you think you have all the answers, if you think you have God figured out—then you better rethink. The poor in spirit admit their weakness and acknowledge that, without God, they can do nothing. A person of faith knows that life is full of uncertainties and ambiguities. A person of faith may doubt or question. We set out to follow Christ knowing only that we know very little. And it is through that admission of weakness that God's grace enters in to work wonders of mercy. When life becomes a maze of dead ends and broken dreams—God is there. When human resources shrivel away and lives unravel—God is there. To be poor in spirit is to throw ourselves on God's mercy, trusting that out of our dryness, God will cause life to bloom and love to flourish. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Day 3 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matt 5:4) When was the last time you cried over God's broken world? Images of death and suffering bombard us each day. Stories of pain and loss fill the airwaves. The agony of the world is served up with our cereal and coffee. It's easy to become desensitized to the horror and heartache—to change the channel or flip quickly to the crossword puzzle. Yet Jesus calls us to mourn—to live with hearts wide open to the world in all its beauty and struggle. Disciples, he says, see the world as it is, hold a vision of the world as it should be, and weep. Our tears are, however, not just a prelude to a hand-wringing helplessness. They serve as a cleansing river of love that melts away hardhearted cynicism and opens us up to new ways of looking at the world, new avenues of service, and new expressions of support to all who wander and cry out in fear. Disciples aren't afraid of sorrow, but enter right into its heart to love and heal. Blessed are those who mourn.

Day 4 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (Matt 5:5) If you overheard people talking about you, what words would you like to hear? Intelligent? Clever? Competent? Creative? How would you feel if someone described you as meek? Meekness sounds so...so dull. A meek person surely could never amount to much—always sitting quietly in the shadows, never offering an opinion, never accomplishing much of anything. Who wants to be meek? A closer look at the Greek language, however, opens up a new world of meaning. Originally, the word meant harnessed. In other words, Jesus is saying that a disciple is one whose strength is harnessed or controlled. As we turn our lives over to God's guiding power, we will experience the joy of running with the wind into a new world of love and peace and beauty. Disciples don't worry about grabbing their piece of the pie. Disciples don't spend time worrying about establishing and holding their place in the pecking order. Instead, trusting that God is acting through them, they spend their time and energy loving others, working so that each person will know dignity and respect. Disciples share responsibility and credit, acknowledging that they don't have all the answers. At the same time, they willingly share their gifts and talents, offering themselves to the community without worrying about how they will be received and relaxing in the knowledge that God works through each person. Rich and famous, poor and nameless—all of us matter to God. Blessed are the meek.

Day 5 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Matt 5:6) Righteousness permeates all of Scripture. To be right with God is to live in ways that honor and respect God as well as our neighbor. The theme song for righteousness is found in Micah 6: What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. Righteousness is an important word, but not the most important word in this verse. Disciples, Jesus says, are to hunger and thirst for righteousness. What is important is not a checklist of righteous behaviors with a gold star in every column. Disciples are not marked by perfection, but by a longing to be—fully and completely—near to the heart of God. Imagine the sort of thirst that hits on a hot summer day. When my mouth is dry and parched, I have trouble thinking about anything else. My hunt for water preoccupies my mind. Until I feel the refreshing wetness I am obsessed with the search. Disciples look around at the dryness of despair. Dusty remains of missed opportunities and ashes of regret choke our spirits. We try to fill the empty places with “stuff” in an attempt to quench our dryness. To do that, however, is like trying to satisfy a thirst with soft drinks instead of water. It is a longing for God and God’s ways—turning to God in prayer and study, serving in God’s name—that hydrates our spirit with peace and joy. As we seek God more than anything else, we will be drawn closer and closer into God’s embrace. We will know ourselves to be right with God. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Day 6 Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. (Matt 5:7) I’m all for mercy. You should forgive those who have hurt you. You should be kind to those who speak unkindly about you. You should show compassion to the grouch at work. You should do all those things. Mercy is more of a struggle when it is something I am called to give. It’s easy to talk about mercy—much harder to live it. Actually, it might be impossible if it weren’t for one thing. We live and walk in the merciful love of God. Our God is a God of second chances, of open arms, of acceptance. Disciples are called to be a part of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, not because they are somehow better than those around them, but because God is merciful and looks beyond weakness and failures. When we fall, God reaches out with arms of grace to pick us up, stand us on our feet, and hug us with mercy before sending us on our way again. God forgives and wipes away our sin, so that we can continue to grow and become the people God intends for us to be. Blessed are the merciful.

Information and Updates for the Week Ahead:

-Our worship together, as well as the work of our church, continues despite the physical separation and restrictions. Please join us for worship this Sunday at 10:00 AM. This Sunday’s worship service on the Zoom platform continues for those with internet access via computer, tablet, or smart phone, or who choose to call in to listen from their phone.

-To join this Sunday’s service, same log-in info as last week:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09> Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, One tap mobile, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US (New York)

-You can continue participating in Zion’s virtual Sunday 10:00 AM worship service by utilizing the Service of the Word template provided later in this newsletter. Feel free to use the Service of the Word at any time if you aren’t able to join us in spirit at 10:00 AM on Sunday.

-Work on the Ministry Site Profile that will begin the pastoral call process continues. If you have not done so already, you can still submit your responses to Zion’s mission and values statements here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1wWGPqO6oGpaTBVfhVHDyCqKZ_LnQc98bopELA8waqg/viewform?ts=5ef560ec&edit_requested=true

-This Call’s For You is the theme of our summer Bible study (via Zoom). Janet Hoover will lead the study on Thursdays, beginning July 9th from 7:30-8:30. Here is the link to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83302013288?pwd=cGpwTnYwMjduMk96OE0rQXVNTTREQT09>. Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288. Password: 834215. Hope to "see" you there!

-“God’s work. Our hands” continues at Zion. We continue to care for each other in community through our calls, zoom meetings, and cards. We even continue to glorify God with the use of our building as the sanctuary and prayer garden are updated and the YMCA provides a safe option for local area children this summer. The YMCA just finished its first week of Child Care and is entering its second. We also continue to worship together and to do the work of calling a new pastor. Although we cannot meet in person at this time, your monetary offerings to support this ministry can still be sent to Zion by check, tithe.ly (found on our webpage under the Donate tab), or by direct payment via your financial institution.

-As we enter the height of summer, I have been enjoying watching my tomatoes grow and scoping out the birds flitting through the tree outside my window. These nature observations are gentle reminders of this verse from Matthew: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?" So, do not worry, it says, for we have a God who loves us deeply, who is greater than our present challenges, and through whom we have a living hope.

The peace and blessings of our loving God be with each of us.
Kristen Burson and Mark Thompson
Church Council co-presidents

Pentecost 6



SERVICE OF THE WORD
GATHERING

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, ✠ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God,

We confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through ✠ Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are raised with him to new life. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism. We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning you created us in your image and planted us in a well-watered garden. In the desert you promised pools of water for the parched, and you gave us water from the rock. When we did not know the way, you sent the Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters. At the cross, you watered us from Jesus' wounded side, and on this day, you shower us again with the water of life. We praise you for your salvation through water, for the water in this font, and for all water everywhere. Bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love. Satisfy the thirsty and give us the life only you can give. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: *Sing to the Lord of Harvest* #694, Verses 1 & 3 -Mary Senn

Vs. 1 Sing to the Lord of harvest your songs of love and praise; with joyful hearts and voices your alleluias raise; by him the rolling seasons in fruitful order move; sing to the Lord of harvest a joyous song of love.

Vs. 3 Bring to this sacred altar the gifts his goodness gave, the golden sheaves of harvest, the souls Christ died to save. Your hearts lay down before him when at his feet you fall, and with your lives adore him who gave his life for all.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

THE WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Sermon: *The Sower* -Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

In our Gospel lesson we have the beginning of a major series of parables, where Jesus is throwing out stories to get his hearers to understand about God and God's reign, or kingdom. He is on a boat in the water, with the crowds gathered all along the shore. And he begins with this one: 'Listen, a sower went out to sow.'

You probably know this story. It is a good one for learning as a child, because it is about seeds, and children can understand about seeds and what makes them grow. You need some good soil. Not the path where they sit on the ground and the birds can eat them. And if they sprout on rocky ground where there is not enough soil, then they can't grow roots, and they won't be able to pull up water from the earth, and they'll wither in the sun. And if they sprout up among too many weeds, the weeds will overtake the little seedling. No grain will grow. The soil is really important, as where the seed lands can mitigate any number of variables with too much or too little rain or sun.

Is this parable about how we receive the good news of God's reign? That's how Matthew seems to see it as he has Jesus explain the parable in great detail, even tedious detail, after he has told it. Among us all we've probably heard and read countless meditations and scripture studies and sermons about the seeds and the different soils where they land. These discussions are intended to lead us to reflect on our lives of faith, or on how our efforts to share the good news may be received.

Which people are like the path, where the seeds lie on the surface, vulnerable to having the Word snatched away? Which people are like rocky soil, growing plants with shallow roots, and don't last in their faith? Which are distracted and overtaken by the cares of the world, wealth, fame and glory, so that the word is choked out? What kind of soil are we? And what are the signs that we ourselves may not be tending to the conditions of the planting so that we can yield fruit?

The first thing I want to say about this, is that the focus on reading the parable is about the different kinds of soil and how that relates to people receiving the good news, we make a mistake by thinking the point is to categorize people. Let's just admit right off the bat, that these soils are not different people. They are the conditions of life in the world, in bodies, in cultures, in society, conditions we all live in. We each have times and aspects of our lives that are not conducive to sprouting and growth, for many reasons. The parable is not about separating groups. All these soils describe the state of my heart and faith in different ways...and that was just yesterday!

Next, let's just look at the stats. All in all, the odds in this parable are not good. **Three-quarters** of the scenarios lead to failed plantings, no yield, no harvest! For many interpreters, this opens a whole realm of possibilities for church growth consulting, or hand wringing about what churches are doing wrong that we aren't planting more churches or maintaining our numbers in the pew. So, you can imagine the questions here: Who are the birds, where are the rocks, and what are the thorns that we encounter when we try to share the good news? What are the lessons to learn to ensure a better yield, to ensure that we plant God's word in good soil so it can grow and yield good fruit?

These are all good questions, but I am not interested in any of the preceding discussions this morning. I want to look at it differently, since I usually think Jesus' goal with his parables was to get people to see things in a different way. To do this, we need to clear our minds for a moment, and just look at how Jesus begins, and how he characterizes the parable in vs 18, "Hear then the parable of the **sower**." *He doesn't say the parable is about seeds. Or that it is about the very different kinds of soils, or the fates of the seeds or the variable yields. He says, it is a parable of a **sower**.*

"Listen, a sower went out to sow." What do we know about this sower? We know a lot about the seeds and the soil, as Matthew's telling of this Jesus parable goes into great detail, but about the sower we know only **one** thing: He throws the seeds everywhere. Just everywhere. On the path, on the rocks, amongst the thorns, and even on some good soil. There is no strategic placement of the seeds. There is no calibration and maximization of fertilizer, no complex irrigation system. There is no mapping or planning for the best conditions, the best locations or best weather. A sower went out to sow, and apparently, just kept sowing, flinging seeds all over the place willy nilly, with no rationing or holding back. It was as if there was endless supply of seeds to waste!

What if this story really is, as Jesus says, really about the sower? If so, then the sower is God, who loves everyone and showers grace and care and forgiveness and all that is good, upon the whole earth, as Jesus says a bit earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, "God

makes the sun rise on the good and the evil, and sends the rain to both the righteous and the unrighteous.” God simply has no standards of requirements that restrict or limit the extravagant divine love. God is profligate, wasteful with grace, showering it upon all. It’s good news to everyone everywhere.

Sometimes the good news is not well received, and sometimes we don’t appreciate it. We listen and don’t hear. Our hearts are closed sometimes, and sometimes they are mostly closed. I have no real explanation for why some people don’t grasp the good news and become transformed by it, and why sometimes we ourselves are caught up in the thorny patches of our lives and the world and lose all sight of what God is planting within us. Who knows? Sometimes the seeds just don’t yield.

But I do know this: the sower is not deterred even a little bit by the seeds that went by the wayside, the seeds that were enjoyed by the birds, or the seedlings that were short lived. The sower is just joyful about the harvest, the good grain that comes forth from the good patches of soil, wherever they were.

Isaiah captures this joy. There’s always a cypress coming up instead of the thorn, a myrtle instead of the briar. That’s God’s promise, and to keep that everlasting sign, there are always more seeds, there’s good soil somewhere. Streams, and mountains, and hills. Joy, and a harvest.

The kingdom of God is like a sower who went out to sow. He threw the seeds everywhere, where conditions were good and where they weren’t, because he was simply that kind of sower, extravagant, with seeds to spare. And where they fell on good soil, they yielded an astounding, inexplicable harvest.

Grace upon grace upon grace. God simply does not measure or count or ration the divine goodness and love. Whether any of us is good soil or not for God’s grace today, not one of us can say for sure. How and why any of us actually **receives** God’s constantly overflowing grace is a mystery. But that it is **given**, endlessly and boundlessly, that God’s love is inexhaustible and indefatigable, this we know for sure. Listen. Hear. This is a parable of a sower who goes out to sow. The seeds fall freely from the sower’s fingers. They fall everywhere, upon all the soil that covers this earth. Amen.

Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

ANTHEM: The Garden Hymn -Wagner

Prayers of Intercession

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

Reigning God, we pray for our nation’s leaders. Increase their desire for justice and equality. We pray for our enemies. Bridge the chasms that divide us and guide authorities to a deep and lasting peace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Abiding God, care for all who are in need. For those who are doubting, renew faith. For those who are worrying, provide release. For those who are struggling, ease burdens. For those in fear, give hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Renewing God, revive your church in this place. Nourish and nurture the seeds you have planted, that we might grow as disciples. Replace what has been depleted. Sustain our ministries and deepen relationships with the wider community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Listen to the cries of your people waiting patiently for your healing hand and comforting Spirit especially: those who suffer with chronic pain and all cancer patients, Pr. Mary Etta, peace and comfort for Mary Ellen and the friends and family of Paul Van Allen, Gail, peace and comfort for Lorraine and family, Fran and Claudia, Joe and family, Edie Marie, Suzee, Michael Gilleece and family, healing and peace for Jack and Jim, the Nelson family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, the friends and family of Vivian, and residents of the Presbyterian Home, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving at the Table

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken unto the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. **Amen.**

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 and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn: *Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing #545, Verses 1 & 2 -Mary Senn*

Vs. 1 Lord, dismiss us with your blessing, fill our hearts with joy and peace; let us each, your love possessing, triumph in redeeming grace. Oh, refresh us; oh, refresh us, trav'ling through this wilderness.

Vs. 2 Thanks we give and adoration for your gospel's joyful sound. May the fruits of your salvation in our hearts and lives abound. Ever faithful, ever faithful to your truth may we be found.

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, ✠ Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you. **Thanks be to God.**



Women of Zion are invited to a Zoom meeting to share how each of us are responding to living with the COVID-19 pandemic, being quarantined or having to go to work, missing children and other family members, and how we can help each other. This social, support, and education time will be Monday, July 22nd at 7PM. We are fortunate to have Linnea Ritchie, daughter of Kim and Jeff and a 4th year Biology PHD student with a concentration in antibiotics and virology at Syracuse University, join us as a resource. At the beginning of the pandemic, she was hired by Precision Clinical Laboratories, LLC to set up and run a COVID-19 diagnostic testing facility in Clinton, NY. Linnea will be available to answer your questions about COVID-19, transmission, good safety practices, or any other pandemic related questions that we have. Email Sara, office@zionluth.com, if interested in participating, and she'll share the zoom info. Watch your emails and the weekly newsletter for more information.

Enjoy our 12th recipe exchange provided to us by Chef, Jon Daly

Beef Braciolo – Yields 6



I tried this at home recently. It was great! This provides you the option to do it on the stove top, oven, or slow cooker. Beef Braciolo (Braciola) is a company-worthy, classic, hearty, homestyle southern Italian dish that's perfect for a winter night or Sunday dinner. Thin slices of beef with a savory filling slowly braise in a wine-infused sauce for a dish you will fall in love with!

PREP TIME: 30 minutes. COOK TIME: 2 hours. TOTAL TIME: 2 hours 30 minutes.

Ingredients

- 6 thin slices boneless top round (about 2 pounds) or go to Chanatry's, they have it already pounded out in the meat section.
- 12 cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup finely chopped Italian (flat leaf) parsley, plus more for garnish
- 1 cup shredded Parmesan or Romano cheese, plus more for serving if desired
- 2 tablespoons seasoned dry breadcrumbs
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 12 thin slices prosciutto
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups dry red wine
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 can (28-ounce) crushed tomatoes
- 2 teaspoons dried Italian seasoning
- 2 heaping tablespoons all-purpose flour

Instructions

1. Cut top-round slices in half widthwise so that you have 12 equal pieces. Place beef between two pieces of plastic wrap. Gently pound to 1/4 to 1/8-inch thickness.
2. Mince 4 cloves of garlic; slice the remaining 8 cloves.
3. Combine minced garlic, parsley, cheese, breadcrumbs, salt, and black pepper in a small bowl. Place a prosciutto slice over the beef then sprinkle filling evenly over all beef slices.
4. Roll the beef into a cylinder, tucking in the sides to hold in the filling as you roll. Secure with toothpicks.
5. Heat olive oil in a Dutch oven or large pot over medium-high heat. Place the beef rolls, seam side down in the pot and brown seam side first to seal it. Cook, turning the meat occasionally until each roll is nicely browned on all sides. Transfer to a plate.
6. Add the wine and the sliced garlic. Bring to a boil, scraping up any browned bits. Add beef broth, tomatoes, and Italian seasoning. Place beef rolls back in the pot and bring back to a simmer.
7. Cover and cook on low heat, turning occasionally until beef is tender and easily pierced with a fork, about 1 1/2 hours. Alternately, cook covered in a 325-degree oven for 1 1/2-2 hours or in a slow cooker for 3-4 hours on high, 5-6 hours on medium or 7-8 hours on low.
8. To thicken, place pot back on the stove, if cooked in the oven. Remove some of the hot cooking liquid to a bowl. Add the flour and stir until smooth to create a slurry. Slowly add it to the hot cooking liquid, bring to a slow simmer, and cook until thickened.
9. Season with salt and black pepper to taste. Remove toothpicks and serve over pasta with additional grated cheese if desired.

Notes

MAKE AHEAD: You can make ahead two ways:

- Fill, brown, and place in pot with sauce and refrigerate. Proceed with cooking as directed.
- Cook, cool, and refrigerate. Reheat when needed in the oven, on the stovetop, or in a slow cooker

Summer Bible Study on Zoom, with Janet Hoover!

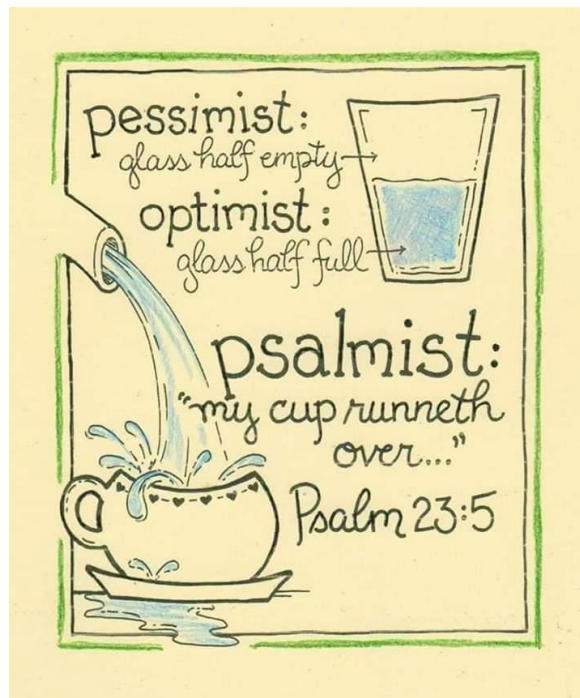
We hope you joined us last Thursday for our first Bible Study lesson! If not, that is quite all right because each lesson stands alone. Bible Study is held on Thursdays from 7:30-8:30 PM. Part of what was discussed at our first lesson was how God chose unlikely people to spread love and forgiveness.

July 16th Joseph: Beautiful Dreamer/Genesis 45:1-28

To join on Zoom: Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288. Password: 834215.

To join by phone: Dial 646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288, Password 834215.

Thank you so much for all the phone calls, emails, texts, and birthday cards!! I loved reading all of them. I am so happy to be a part of such an amazing church family. You are such a great example of love, kindness, and generosity. I turned 29, again, and thank you for helping it to be a special day. With gratitude, Sara



Thanks again to our AMAZING editors, Laurel McCurdy & Wendy Stevens, for taking the time out of their day to proofread and edit our weekly mailing. Without them, we would be as confused as Isaac was.