



November 2022

FAIRVIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Loving God & Loving Others = worship + missions

CHRISTIANITY PRODUCES GENEROSITY

By: Daniel Darling, wng.org, November 2021

The Apostle Paul told the church at Corinth that God loves a cheerful giver. But studies show that the best formula for cheerful giving turns out to be love for God. The American Bible Society recently released findings from their annual State of the Bible survey that interviewed participants in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The study showed that practicing Christians are far more generous than the rest of the American population:

- Americans who identify with a Christian tradition and attend church at least once a month are 40 percent more likely to give than those who do not identify with a Christian tradition.
- Americans who attend church regularly are 75 percent more likely to donate than those who do not attend church.
- Americans who read their Bibles regularly outside of a church service are 55 percent more likely to donate than those who don't.

What's interesting about the American Bible Society's data is that the way local church involvement directly correlates to higher frequency of giving to charity. A full 87 percent of church attenders made donations to some church or charity while only 50 percent of non-church attenders gave. And the frequency of giving is not related to income. In fact, American Christians with lower incomes, who attend church regularly and read their Bibles frequently give a higher percentage of their income away.

This might come as a surprise to the critics of Christianity, who often accuse the church of hypocrisy and indifference toward the vulnerable, but the data shows that the more a person embraces Christianity, the more generous that person becomes. This tracks with the work of historians like Tom Holland, whose book *Dominion* chronicles the origins of major social movements in world history and points them back to the Christian church. It is Christianity that gave the world the moral vocabulary to see dignity in the poor and the change of heart that allows one to hold possessions lightly. As pastor Tim Keller articulated in a speech to the British Parliament, even the values by which some (often unfairly) criticize the church—universal human rights, poverty alleviation, etc—are values that came to society from the church.

This data set comes with a word for public officials, who might not recognize the power of local churches in meeting real human need in their communities.

Some have called for removing the tax-exempt status of churches. Others have called for shutting down faith-based ministries like foster care and adoption services, simply because churches and Christians refuse to yield to the demands of the sexual revolution. But animus toward Christians only leaves the vulnerable more vulnerable, robbing society of its most effective bulwark against human suffering. In the name of "progress," what gets tossed to the wayside are the very people whom progressivism desires to serve.

And yet there is also a word for the church here. While data shows Christians are the most charitable Americans, that doesn't necessarily mean that Christians have no room to grow in our generosity. The most recent giving studies show that American Christians only give 2.5 percent of their income and only five percent tithe. While we are far more generous than the rest of the population, we are still far from living out the command of Jesus, who urged us to resist storing up treasures on earth, but to invest in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:19-20). Imagine how much more work could be done, both to share the good news of the gospel and to love our neighbors, if Christians further resisted the materialistic appeals of the age.

We might also find ourselves fulfilling the promise of Paul's words. The State of the Bible survey also shows higher levels of happiness correspond to higher percentages of giving. It turns out the Apostle had a word for our hedonistic age. It really is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). More blessed for the Christian. More blessed for the nation.

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

On All Saints Sunday, November 6, 2022, we will once again recognize all those of the church or related to our church family, who have passed away since last All Saints Sunday. We will have this special service during worship.

We invite all family and friends to attend this special worship service. If we have missed someone, please call the office immediately.

Morris Bell
Hannah Blair
Nancy Hoesman



World Community Day began in 1943 as a day for church women across denominations to study peace. After World War II, leaders of denominations felt that they should set aside a day for prayer and ecumenical study. The leaders thought that while many denominations were performing peace and justice work by themselves, having a day when they could study together would be beneficial to all. The goal of this worship is to unite the faith community in a time of praise and worship that demonstrates Christ's reconciling love to the community, the country, and the world.

OFFICE CLOSED

The Office will be closing at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 23rd through Friday, November 25th. The church office will be open on Monday, November 28th.



NOVEMBER
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BE KIND
TO ALL
KIND

World Kindness Day was first introduced as a day of observation by the World Kindness Movement. In 2019, the organization was registered as an official NGO under Swiss law, but the history of the group stretches back to a Tokyo-based convention in 1997. An array of institutions and associations based in countries including Australia, Thailand, the United States, and the United Kingdom had been assembled at this conference because of their dedication to championing kindness in society. The initial configuration of the World Kindness Movement would form as a result of this event, with the written declaration of their inception stating their "pledge to join together to build a kinder and more compassionate world." In 1998, in pursuit of this aim, they would facilitate the launch of the inaugural World Kindness Day.

The purpose of World Kindness Day as outlined by the World Kindness Movement is "to highlight good deeds in the community focusing on the positive power and the common thread of kindness which binds us."

#BeUMC

ResourcesUMC.org/BeUmc

FAITHFUL:

Charles Wesley, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" (United Methodist Hymnal 384)

Finish then thy new creation, Pure and spotless* let us be, Let us see thy great salvation, Perfectly restor'd in thee; Chang'd from glory into glory, Till in heaven we take our place, Till we cast our crowns before thee, Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

*Charles Wesley's original reads sinless.

United Methodists view faith as a life-long journey. The Bible teaches that God does not leave us, but continues to shape us throughout our lives. We grow in faith and discipleship every day. In the book of Hebrews, the author offers a beautiful image of that journey as a foot race. He/She is drawing from a then-contemporary (but ancient to us) sports analogy. Racers follow a course with a crowd cheering them on toward the finish line.

Hebrews 12:1-2 So then, with endurance, let's also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let's throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God's throne.

The author of Hebrews invites us to run "with endurance," implying the life of faith is a marathon and not a sprint. If you are in a group, have one of the participants who has been a Christian the longest share how their faith has shaped them and brought them to where they are today. • How have you grown as a follower of Jesus? • Who are some of the members of your "great cloud of witnesses?" In what ways are you part of another person's cheering section in the faith? • Do you think everyone follows the same course? In what ways are our "courses" the same? In what ways might they differ? • The author encourages us to drop any extra baggage and focus on Jesus. What do you think the author means by "baggage" and "the sin that trips us up?" How can we better focus on Jesus? • The author refers to Jesus as "faith's pioneer and perfecter." What do you think that means?

John and Charles Wesley, the founders of the Methodist movement in 1700s England, wrote about our journey of faith after our justification—what some today would call our moment of salvation. Their word for this process was sanctification, or sometimes perfection. They taught that spiritual growth was not something that we achieved, but that it was a gift of the sanctifying grace of God.

Today, we can get hung up on words like "perfection" and "holy," but the Wesleys' major point was that the life of faith is a growing process. God is not done with us at the moment of justification. Instead, we continue to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ throughout our lives.

How are you a faithful person of God? • What spiritual practices have been most foundational and formational in your life? • What new faith practices might you explore in order to continue growing?

Spirit of the living God, thank you for all of the ways you have blessed us with spiritual growth. Thank you for the cloud of witnesses who have loved, taught, inspired, pastored, encouraged and challenged us. Strengthen us, O God, that we might be a source of loving encouragement to others along life's spiritual path. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen



Better Together

**Wednesday,
November 16, 2022
2:00-4:00 p.m.**

The Virginia Community Senior Center would like to welcome all seniors, 55 years and older, to participate every third Wednesday. Please join us at the **Virginia United Methodist Church's Fellowship Hall** with guest speaker **Steve Cochran**.



OUR STAFF AND SERVICES AT A GLANCE

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10:50 AM Fairview Worship Service

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