

Eastminster Eagle

Volume 41, Issue 8

August 2024

My dear friends,

In July my family toured Yellowstone National Park. My cousin, who was there a couple weeks before we went, commented that “God was showing off.” Indeed! Yellowstone is a wonderland of God’s creation. One of the sites that struck me the most was the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River, which carves out the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone. You can hike down to the precipice of the waterfall and watch as the river flows out over the cliff. It falls over 300 feet into the canyon (twice the height of Niagara Falls). It’s awe-inspiring and dizzying at the same time.



The thought that occurred to me as I watched the massive amount of water plunge down into the valley was that it was like God’s blessing flowing from Heaven down into the world that he created. The doxology came to mind, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Praise Him all creatures here below!”

When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was, he replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Loving God is a challenge for most people because God is invisible and feels distant. He’s up there and we’re down here. In my personal experience, the key to loving God is recognizing the millions of gallons of blessing that God is pouring out into our lives every day.

Praise God from whom ALL blessings flow.

Every blessing we have every received and will ever receive comes directly from God. Our response is praise—another word people struggle with. But consider praise as an expression of gratitude, love, and devotion. I know a man who told me that on the worst day of his life he cried out to God to give him a sign that he existed. It was a stifling hot day with no breeze at all. As soon as he said “Amen” a cool breeze blew upon his sweaty brow. Now every time he feels a cool breeze he praises God.

God’s love is not shut up in heaven awaiting us when we die. It is gushing into our world constantly. It is not for the privileged few. It flows through the every household, every corner, and even in the pits of the world. Recognizing God’s blessing in your life will make all the difference in how you live. Learning to love God is the key to life. It is what will shape you into a person who loves like God—even on the worst days of your life.

With a heart full of love and a mouth full of praise,
Pastor Paul



MY FAVORITE HYMN

Thank you for your terrific response to this new column. I will try to do two favorites for each issue. If you still haven't given me your favorite hymn, praise, gospel, or camp song and why it is your favorite, you can email me at fred.eastminster@yahoo.com, or better, you can fill out the form in the foyer and hand it to me or put it in the offering plate or my box in the office.

From Chandra Anderson and Darlene West we have *Holy, Holy, Holy* and *In The Garden (I Come To the Garden Alone)*.



Holy, Holy, Holy, GTG #1, by Reginald Heber (1783-1826), is unique as it spans many Christian

traditions and centuries, unifying them in four timeless stanzas. Moreover, Heber, an Anglican bishop, ministered across continents and races, and in the latter part of his life as Bishop over all of India (1823-1826), he was one of the heroes of the Christian faith.

Heber intended for *Holy, Holy, Holy*, written for Trinity Sunday, to be sung between the sermon and the creed by his parish in Hodnet, England. This was unusual at the time since hymn singing was prohibited in Church of England liturgies. In contrast, the Methodist societies in the eighteenth century were known for their hymn singing, along with the dissenting churches that had been using Isaac Watts's hymns for nearly one hundred years. Heber was unable to persuade the leaders of the Church at the time to allow hymn singing. He wrote many poems that were not published as hymns until after his death.

The text presents a very intriguing characteristic of the hymn in that the text does not initiate praise but asks the singer to join in an endless song. Both Isaiah 6:1-5 and Revelation 4:2-11 inspire this hymn, spanning the Testaments, reminding us that the Trisagion (thrice holy) has been uttered in worship for

centuries. Isaiah received his vision in the eighth century B.C.; John the Apostle recorded his revelation late in the first century C.E.; while Reginald Heber composed his hymn in 1826, in the nineteenth century.

Another reason why *Holy, Holy, Holy* is such a timeless hymn is its pairing with the well-known tune NICAEA. Written by John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876), NICAEA has a unique elegance and magnificence, which in turn complements Heber's stately language. There's no cheap emotionalism and subjectivity apparent in the music or the words. Named after the Council of Nicaea, where the nature of the Trinity was shaped theologically, NICAEA is also a classic example of Victorian hymn tune writing, notably with its solid harmonies and subtle chromaticism.

Stanton Nelson in one of his Doctor of Music classes at Perkins, sums up the hymns current usage. "Congregations continue to be inspired by Heber's text in the twenty-first century. It is safe to say that songs of praise, begun by the seraphim and cherubim, have been echoing throughout millennia through the voice of the people."

Chandra states this is one of her favorites because "I used to sit next to my grandfather in church and hear him sing this (he sang baritone). When we sing it, I can still hear his voice in my ear."

In The Garden (I Come to the Garden Alone) is not in our GTG hymnal. Some hymns have the distinction

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

of being adored by many and simultaneously scorned by an equal and opposing group. Carlton Young editor of the *Methodist Hymnal* (1966) and member of the committee, left it out but stated later as editor of the *Methodist Hymnal 1989*: “This was one of the most requested of hymns to be included in [The United Methodist] hymnal [1989], and it is also one of the least liked, often denounced as erotic and egocentric.”



The poem was written by C. Austin Miles (1868-1946), a Pennsylvania-educated pharmacist turned gospel song publisher and writer, as he reflected on Christ's resurrection after reading John 20. Here is his account of how this hymn came to him in a quasi-mystical vision.

“One day in March 1912, I drew my Bible toward me; it opened at my favorite chapter, John 20 [1-18]. That meeting of Jesus and Mary Magdalene had lost none of its power to charm. As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary's life when she knelt before her Lord and cried, “Rabbani!” My hands rested in the Bible while I stared at the light blue wall. As the light faded, I seemed to be standing at the garden entrance, looking down a gently winding path shaded by olive branches. [The author then describes the arrival of Mary, Peter, and John as they gathered at the tomb, followed by the appearance of Jesus.] I awakened in full light, gripping the Bible, with muscles tense and nerves vibrating. Under the inspiration of this vision, I wrote the poem as quickly as the words could be formed, exactly as they appeared.”

The following is an explanation of the controversy by Dr. Howard Hawn, Professor

Emeritus of Church Music at Perkins. “How does this hymn fit in the greater understanding of Christian hymnody and congregational singing? Everything we sing in worship has a point of view. The psalms comprise a body of literature that incorporates a wide variety of points of view. By point of view I mean, what is the perspective? Is the hymn written in the third person – about God, for example, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*? Is it in the second person, addressing God directly as “You” – *Breathe on Me, Breath of God*? Is the hymn in the first-person plural, “we” – *Shall We Gather at the River*? These points of view are the easiest to incorporate into public Christian worship. The use of “I,” “my,” or “me” – the first-person singular – requires more discernment. Some want to dismiss, out of hand, songs from this perspective from corporate worship. Yet, would not our worship be diminished if we did not sing Isaac Watts' *I Sing the Almighty Power of God*,” Charles Wesley's *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing My Great Redeemer's Praise*, or the African American spiritual *Where You There When They Crucified My Lord*? Many hymn writers incorporate more than one perspective in their hymns. See for example, John Thornburg's *God, the Sculptor of the Mountains* (GTG #5). This hymn covers three points of view in a single stanza. Ultimately, when choosing a congregational song for worship, the answer revolves around a balance of perspectives.” C. Austin Miles noted in his narrative that after reading John 20, “I seemed to be part of the scene.” He felt he was walking with the risen Christ in the garden that

Hymn, Continued on Page 4

Hymn, Continued from Page 3

morning. For some, this may almost seem a sacrilege – too personal. The opposite perspective of the Resurrected One would be the cosmic Christ found in *Crown Him With Many Crowns* (GTG 268).”

We could continue discussing the whys and why-nots of singing this gospel song in reformed worship, but that would take up the whole newsletter. If you would like to dive deeper, you can find Dr. Hawn’s article at <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-i-come-to-the-garden-alone>. There are several pro and con articles available on the internet as well.

Darlene writes that She “has good memories” of the song and sang it at her “Granny’s funeral many decades ago.

Note from Fred: I understand the arguments of both sides, and I straddle them. That means when the gospel song *In the Garden* might support the Scriptures for the day, we would probably sing it.



Notes From Fred

There is a hymn, *When Long Before the Time*, written in 1936 by Peter W.A. Davison. It's not in our *Glory To God* but is in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Hymnal* #861. I sometimes use this poem/hymn as a meditation. The following is a verse from the hymn.

*To you, God the Singer, our voices we raise,
to you, Song Incarnate, we give all our praise,
to you, Holy Spirit, our life and our breath,
be glory forever, through life and through death.*

When the choir sings together, it is united in breath, rhythm, and melody or harmony. The choir’s primary function is to lead the

congregation in the hymns, songs, and sung prayers. The choir’s unity claims a spiritual dimension, an understanding of breath as the Holy Spirit is at work among us.

The true meaning of God's Spirit working is often present in the hymns, psalms, praise songs, and anthems that we sing as a congregation and choir. I wish we had more time each service to explore the meaning behind each song and anthem as they are rooted in biblical stories, scriptures, and prayers. Unfortunately, time doesn't always allow for that. So, I encourage you to take the time to examine the texts of the hymns, praise songs, and anthems and uncover their background and meanings.

Many hymns in *Glory to God* contain additional information in small print at the bottom of the hymn. So when you can, take time to read about the hymn. It is important to sing as best you can, listen to the anthems, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in you. Even when we don't fully understand the text or feel emotionally moved by the music, our intention is for the praise and glory of God, and to remember that the Spirit is at work in our corporate and private worship.

Fred



We had a good group at our summer dining at Razzoo's. There was good food and wonderful conversations with friends.

Don't miss out! Everyone is invited to come and join us at 6:30 p.m. on August 13 at Liberty Burger for our last summer dining for 2024.

MAKE A SPLASH

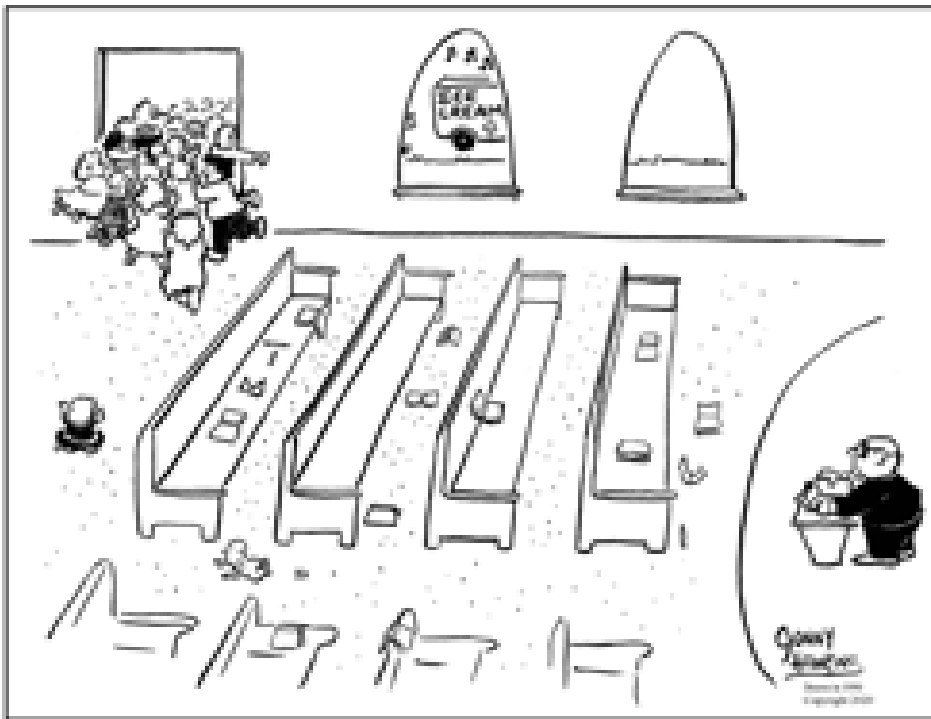
Come join us for a back-to-School swim party for the youth and K4J on Saturday, August 10th from 9:30-12:00 p.m. at Christine Blair's house. We will meet at the church at 9:30 and then drive over to Christine's and be there for 10:00 a.m. We will feed you lunch at Christine's. See you there!



What kind of birds does God use to supply Elijah with food at the Kerith Ravine?

- A. quails
- B. ravens
- C. eagles
- D. doves

Answer: B (See 1 Kings 17:2-6.)



**Lord,
I want to be
like Mary
today, but can
you please
invite Martha
over to clean
my house?**

Scripture Readings for August

1	Judg. 4:4–23	11	Judg. 11:1–11, 29–40	22	Job 1:1–22
2	Judg. 5:1–18	12	Judg. 12:1–7	23	Job 2:1–13
3	Judg. 5:19–31	13	Judg. 13:1–15	24	Job 3:1–26
4	Judg. 6:1–24	14	Judg. 13:15–24	25	Job 4:1–6, 12–21
5	Judg. 6:25–40	15	Judg. 14:1–19	26	Job 5:1–11, 17–21, 26–27
6	Judg. 7:1–18	16	Judg. 14:20–15:20	27	Job 6:1–4, 8–15, 21
7	Judg. 7:19–8:12	17	Judg. 16:1–14	28	Job 6:1; 7:1–21
8	Judg. 8:22–35	18	Judg. 16:15–31	29	Job 8:1–10, 20–22
9	Judg. 9:1–16, 19–21	19	Judg. 17:1–13	30	Job 9:1–15, 32–35
10	Judg. 9:22–25, 50–57	20	Judg. 18:1–15	31	Job 9:1; 10:1–9, 16–22
		21	Judg. 18:16–31		

Puzzle!

Match each word in Column 1 to its synonym in Column 2. Then use the words from Column 2 to complete the boxes below.

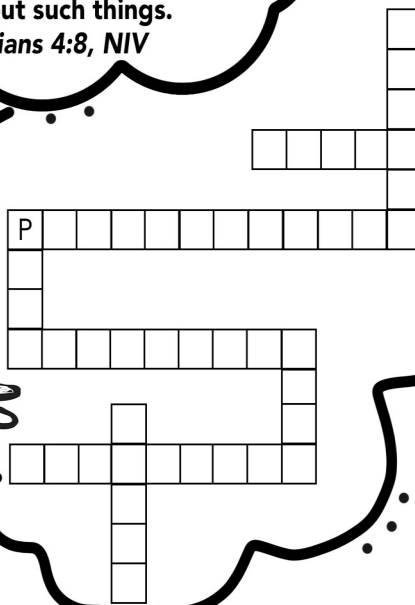
COLUMN 1

- correct
- commendable
- extremely good
- having high moral principles
- deserving respect
- pleasant
- real
- wholesome

COLUMN 2

- excellent
- lovely
- noble
- admirable
- pure
- praiseworthy
- true
- right

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.
Philippians 4:8, NIV



Match Answers: correct - right, commendable - praiseworthy, extremely good - excellent, having high moral principles - noble, deserving respect - admirable, pleasant - lovely, real - true, wholesome - pure; Horizontal Answers (top to bottom): noble, praiseworthy, excellent, admirable; Vertical Answers (left to right): pure, right, true, lovely

“The greatest thing that we can do is to help somebody know that they’re loved and capable of loving.” —Fred Rogers

“Children learn more from what you are than what you teach.” —W.E.B. Du Bois

“If you can’t pay it back, pay it forward.” —Catherine Ryan Hyde

“One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.” —Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Where we live

Christians do not live in themselves but in Christ and their neighbor, or else they are not Christian. They live in Christ through faith and in the neighbor through love. Through faith they are caught up beyond themselves into God; likewise, through love they fall down beneath themselves into the neighbor — remaining nevertheless always in God and God’s love. —Martin Luther,

The Freedom of a Christian

An emotional life preserver

Author Nicole Whitacre, writing at DesiringGod.com, acknowledges that even Christ-followers are prone to “emotional rip currents.” Although emotions are good because God created them, sin has corrupted our feelings.

“Though sin would drown us in a sea of wretched feelings, we have been rescued,” Whitacre shares. Christ can redeem our sin-plagued emotions when we think on God’s truths and make godly decisions, she says. Then those transformed emotions help us honor Jesus and serve other people.

“Love for Christ motivates us (John 14:15), joy in God strengthens us (Nehemiah 8:10) and zeal for God’s word consumes us (Psalm 119:139),” concludes Whitacre. “Our emotional life — once rife with dangerous rip currents — can come alive with godly feelings that propel us forward in Christlike character.”

What’s your oasis?



As the gospels make clear, even the Son of God needed an occasional break. For Jesus, a solitary place reached by boat served as an oasis.

Although an oasis might make us think of a beach-like vacation spot in the middle of a desert, it’s simply “something that provides refuge, relief or pleasant contrast” (Merriam-Webster).

So, what’s your oasis? For someone who recently lost a spouse, it could be a break from the newfound silence. For a young parent, it could be a block of solitude and silence to complete a thought.

I haven’t found any definition of oasis that includes a timeframe. Such an experience could

last 30 seconds or a full week. Work within your circumstances so you can get away for a time with Jesus.

As you identify and pursue an oasis, consider your answers to these questions:

What circumstances in life cause you to desire an oasis, or break?

What will it look like to create a personal oasis or sanctuary at home?

When you spend time with Jesus, what do you want to do? —Janna Firestone

The meaning of membership

Oklahoma pastor Ricky Jones tackles the meaning of church membership, or being part of Christ’s body. “Leaving the church is not simply leaving a club,” he writes at the Gospel Coalition website. “When you walk away, you dismember yourself from the body. Jesus and the rest of the body sorely miss you, and bleed after your departure. You cut yourself off from your only source of life and nourishment. Like an amputated hand, you will slowly bleed out, wither, and die.”

Jones contends that “being a part of the universal church without submitting to a local church is not possible, biblical or healthy.” It’s impossible because you need to be part of a smaller community before you can be considered part of a greater community. It’s unbiblical because the New Testament epistles are addressed to specific local churches. And it’s unhealthy because wanting to independently make your own choices is “at the heart of sin,” the pastor writes.

“You need to know we’re all in this life together, and we won’t walk away from you just because you let us down or we disagree,” says Jones. “Together we build each other up into the image of Christ; no one can make it alone.”

God's gift of music

What helps you sort out what you're feeling, or experience an emotion more deeply? What allows you to let loose and cry, or fully celebrate when you're joyful? Nature helps some of us get in touch with our feelings, perhaps because it removes us from screens and other distractions.



But when getting out isn't possible — no mountain lake is nearby, or the weather isn't tranquil — consider the gift of music. Often instrumental or vocal music helps us access the depths of our soul like nothing else can. God may even

speak to us through music — whether in song lyrics, our own inner thoughts or wordless stirrings of the heart.

Albert Schweitzer, a pastor, musicologist, physician and more, said, "Joy, sorrow, tears, lamentation, laughter — to all these music gives voice, but in such a way that we are transported from the world of unrest to a world of peace, and see reality in a new way, as if we were sitting by a mountain lake and contemplating hills and woods and clouds in the tranquil and fathomless water."

Make some playlists for various emotions: joy, grief, anxiety, hope. Then imagine yourself relaxing in nature, and experience God's love.

Co-laborers with Christ

Rusty Stevens, a ministry leader in Virginia, described trying to finish mowing the lawn before dinnertime. His 6-year-old son darted in front of him and grabbed the mower handle. But when Stevens stopped pushing, the mower soon stopped.

The busy dad fought the urge to tell his son to get out of his way and instead offered to help. Stevens began pushing again, leaning over and walking awkwardly to accommodate his eager assistant. Although the mowing commenced, it was slow-going and not as efficient as the solo effort.

That's when Stevens realized a ministry parallel: "This is the way my heavenly Father allows me to 'help' him build his kingdom!" The church leader pictured God busy "seeking, saving and transforming the lost, and there I was, with my weak hands 'helping.'"

Although God surely can tackle all the work of ministry and evangelism alone, he "chooses to stoop gracefully to allow me to co-labor with him," said Stevens. What a blessing and privilege that God lets us work alongside him!



Sabbath sight

Miners used to use mules underground to pull the loaded carts. Spending so much time in the darkness, some mules eventually went blind. But one old miner found a solution: He simply let the mules spend one day a week outside the mines.

In a very real sense, God gave us the Sabbath to keep us from going spiritually blind. The Sabbath, as Jesus said, was made for humankind, but to use in sacred ways. It's our responsibility as followers of Jesus to decide how to best keep the intent of this commandment.

How might observing Sabbath improve your ability to “see” clearly?

—from *The Wired Word*

A spirit of gladness

Samuel Upham, a 19th-century theology professor, was known for his preaching and humor. On his deathbed in 1904, Upham was surrounded by friends and seemed to pass away. “No, he’s not dead,” said one. “His feet are warm, and no one ever died with warm feet.”

Hearing that, Upham opened his eyes and replied, “Jan Hus did!” — referring to the Christian martyr burned at the stake in 1415.

“We are sad by nature, and Satan is the spirit of sadness,” said Martin Luther. “But God is the spirit of gladness and preserves us.” As Upham’s final words reveal, he was preserved by God’s spirit of gladness, even in his final moments.





AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Shirlene Watkins	8/1
Margret Pearce	8/6
Toni Bacon	8/18
Janet Muller	8/25
Jim Lee	8/28



AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Denise & Tony Bennett	8/4/1984
Kathy & Tim Kreger	8/13/1988
Denise & Oscar Veloz	8/24/2000



**Eastminster
Session**

- Chandra Anderson
- Melody Davis
- Philis Knox
- Dick Knox
- Tom Pappas
- Sean Turner
- Fred Watkins
- Patience Uche
- Darlene West



Pastor	Rev. Dr. Paul Burns
Director of Music	Fred P. Watkins
Organist	Melody S. Davis
Administrative Assistant	Chandra Anderson
Hostess/Housekeeper	Minerva Hernandez
Child Care Provider	Betty Crabtree



GOODBYE

July

HELLO

August