

GRACE AVENUE | ATLAS

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

August 2023 - May 2024

**LAUNCH
PARTY**

DEFYING GRAVITY

**So...
Sow...
Sew...**

Heart Matters

**WHEN THE
BUBBLE BURSTS**

**INSIGHT
OUT**

A Crowded Table

**RESURRECTION
DEBRIEF**

This Christmas

BLOOM



GRACE AVENUE VISION AND MISSION

Our vision is to make disciples and make a difference through Jesus Christ.

Our mission is to eradicate homelessness in whatever form it presents itself. We believe that everyone needs a spiritual home, an emotional home, and a physical home.

LAUNCH PARTY

August 6-27

New things are being started all the time, but if you really want to get something going, you launch it. We launch businesses. We launch products. We launch initiatives. We launch rockets. We also have learned to celebrate when things are set in motion. We hold launch parties. Such celebrations may last a few hours or entire seasons, but they capture our imaginations about what is possible.

In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we observe the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. After his baptism, time of temptation and first sermon in his hometown, Jesus launches out into surrounding territories to call disciples, teach, and heal the sick. His presence was something that people had never seen before. He taught with authority and served with compassion. He launched true hope in the Kingdom of God as a present reality. Everywhere he went a celebration of grace ensued.

As we begin a new school year, so many things are set in motion with this new season. We will be busy, but will we be too busy to align ourselves with the true hope that Jesus brings? In the celebration of our faith, we can align our activities with God's purposes. It's time for a Launch Party.

RESOURCES

Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts and Outlaws

by Adam Hamilton

Jesus: The Life, Teachings and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary

by Marcus Borg

What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman

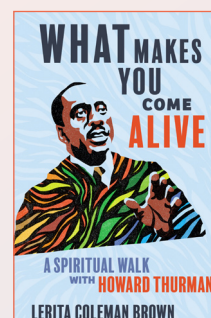
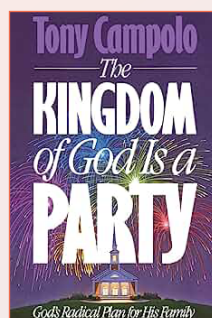
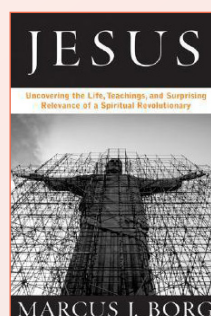
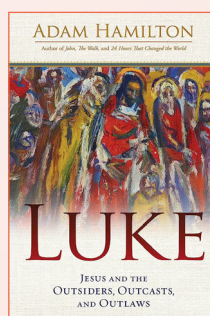
by Lerita Coleman Brown

God is Like a Rocket Launch

by Chris Stanley

The Kingdom of God is a Party

by Tony Campolo



August 6	The Invitation Luke 5:1-11
August 13	RSVP Luke 5:12-16
August 20	Party Crashers Luke 5:17-26
August 27	Party Favors Luke 5:27-39

In the celebration of our faith, we can align our activities with God's purposes. It's time for a Launch Party.

So... Sow... Sew...



September 10-24

As fall kicks off this month, many of us find ourselves **SO** busy. School is back in full swing, extracurriculars are filling our spare hours, and the slow days of summer feel like a season that time forgot. We are taking care to **SOW** the seeds of hard work now, to ensure that year-end work deadlines are met, and 2023 targets are realized. Additionally, we attempt to **SEW** the complexities of our schedules together and make everything run smoothly in what can feel like a non-stop circus ride. However, as we go about our routines, what are we prioritizing? Which connections are we invested in growing? And how does God fit into this picture?

In this series, we invite you to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, **SO** that you may discern the will of God in your life. How can you **SOW** joy, light, and hope in our world when it often feels tumultuous and overwhelming? What would it look like for our community and broader society if we stopped trying to prove our worth by ripping each other apart, but instead worked to **SEW** all the different fabrics of human existence into one show-stopping tapestry?

At Grace Avenue, we believe all people reflect the face of God. As Christians, it is our great joy to respond with grace to every person we meet **SO** that Christ's love can transform as we **SOW** peace in our schools and workplaces in a way that will **SEW** us all together in God's family. **SO. SOW. SEW.**

RESOURCES

How to Be Here
by Rob Bell

Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others
by Barbara Brown Taylor

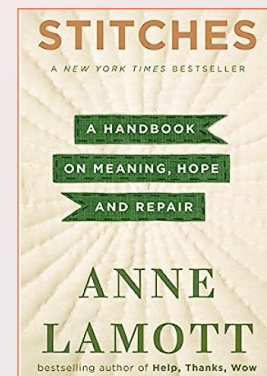
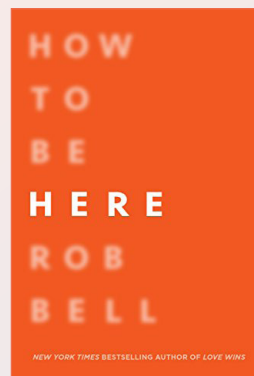
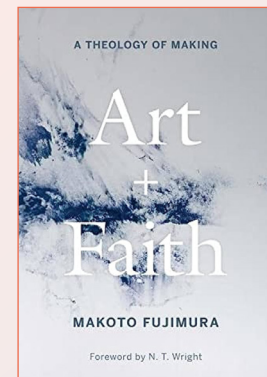
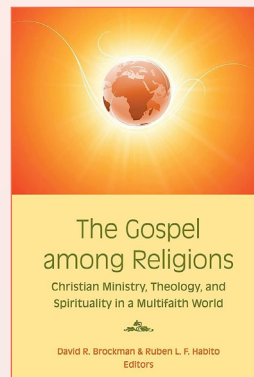
The Gospel Among Religions: Christian Ministry, Theology, and Spirituality in a Multi-faith World
by David Brockman and Ruben Habito

Stitches: A Handbook on Meaning, Hope and Repair
by Anne Lamott

Art & Faith: A Theology of Making
by Makoto Fujimura

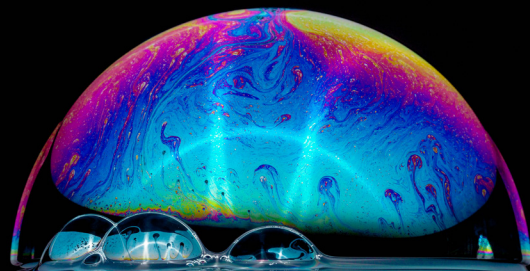
Outlaw Justice: The Messianic Politics of Paul
by T. Jennings

Podcast: Love to Sew
www.lovetosewpodcast.com



September 10	So Romans 12:1-2
September 17	Sow Galatians 6:6-10
September 24	Sew Colossians 3:1-12

WHEN THE BUBBLE BURSTS



October 8-29

We spend endless amounts of time, energy and resources on protection: protecting our homes, protecting our communities, protecting our country, etc. This can often lead to a dangerous illusion that we live in a protective bubble that cannot be affected by a tragic occurrence. We witness a mass shooting or a catastrophic natural disaster and think: "This could never happen to us." Then one day, the bubble bursts. We come to the realization that we are not as protected and self-sufficient as we thought we were.

The Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible is brutally honest. The writers (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Psalms) do not speculate "if" the bubble will burst. They describe what occurs "when" the bubble bursts. Through it all they proclaim a message of ultimate hope where our dependency on God far outweighs our ability to ensure (and insure) that we will never face tragedy.

In this series, we will examine some of the most common illusions in our culture. They are illusions that lead us to false assumptions about what we believe and how we behave as God's representatives in the world. They are illusions that lead to a lack of resiliency. They are illusions that cause us to be fragile or rigid. Instead, God calls us, like Jesus, to share and abide in the brokenness of the world. It is here that God's work of redemption and reconciliation most readily occurs.

RESOURCES

A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster

by Rebecca Solnit

The Lives We Actually Have: 100 Blessings for Imperfect Days

by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie

Jesus and John Wayne

by Kristin Kobes Du Mez

The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires our Trust More than our "Correct" Beliefs

by Peter Enns

How to Love a Country

Poems by Richard Blanco

Another Way: Living and Leading Change

by Stephen Lewis, Matthew Wesley Williams & Dori Baker

A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation

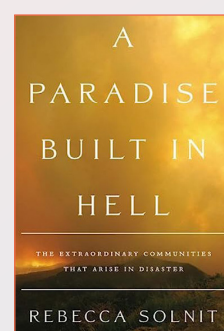
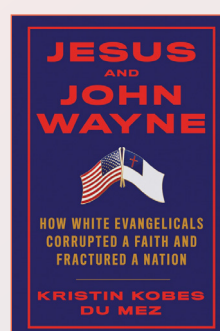
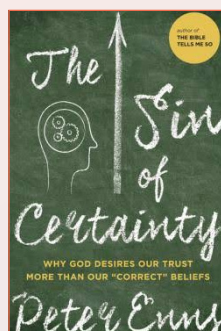
by Diana Eck

Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life

By Richard Rohr

Between Two Kingdoms: A Memoir of a Life Interrupted

By Suleika Jaouad



October 8	The Illusion of Certainty Proverbs 3:5-8
October 15	The Illusion of Self-Sufficiency Job 38:1-11
October 22	The Illusion of Perfection Ecclesiastes 1:1-11
October 29	The Illusion of Neutrality Psalm 1

A Crowded Table

November 12-19

Gather around the table! You are invited to a feast this November. Are you ready to join in the celebration or at times does it feel like the table is crowded with too many people, too much food and too many opinions? The Gospel of Luke offers us two parables that encourage us to consider our place at the table along with the guest list for the party. Thanksgiving is the perfect season to share a meal with a neighbor and find the abundance God offers us all.

November 12	<i>A Place at the Table</i> Luke 14:7-14
November 19	<i>Full House</i> Luke 14:15-25

He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Luke 14:12-14

RESOURCES

This is God's Table: Finding Church Beyond the Walls
by Anna Worrenden

God's Big Table: Nurturing Children in a Diverse World
by Elizabeth F. Caldwell

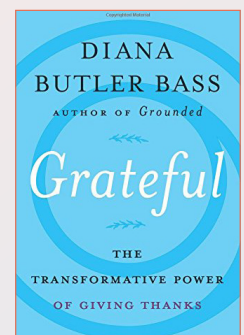
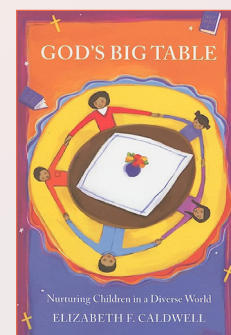
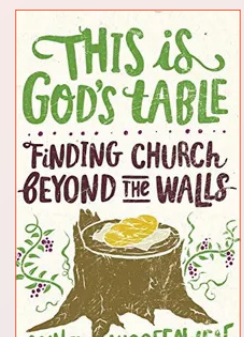
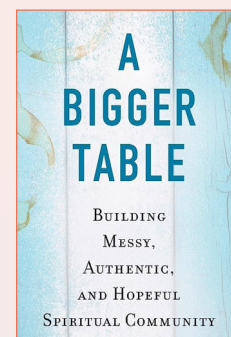
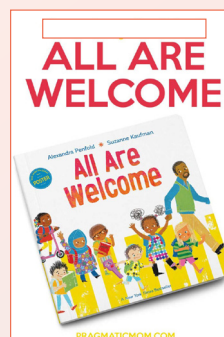
A Bigger Table: Building Messy, Authentic, and Hopeful Spiritual Community
by John Pavlovitz

Grateful
by Diana Butler Bass

All are Welcome (Children's Resource)
by Alexandra Penfold

Crowded Table
Song by the Highwomen (found on Streaming platforms)

The Sacred Meal
by Nora Gallagher



This Christmas

December 3-31

The Christmas season is often filled with nostalgia for days gone by. We want to hear the same songs, eat the same foods, and join in the same activities as we always have. There is comfort in routine and memories. There is something centering about looking back and knowing our history. But what if the Advent season calls us to the realization that "God with us" means here and now? What if all our memories could be used not as a call to the past, but as a way of sharing who we are today as people who embrace God incarnate in our everyday lives? What if this year we truly focused on THIS Christmas more than the past and saw that moments of hope, peace, joy, and love are all around us? In 2023, let's share our stories of God among us...right here, right now.

RESOURCES

The Liberation of Christmas

By Richard Horsley

A Surprising God: Advent Devotions for an Uncertain Time

by Thomas Long and Donyelle McCray

Tell It Like It Is: Reclaiming the Practice of Testimony

by Lillian Daniel

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens (or any favorite movie adaptation)

It's a Wonderful Life

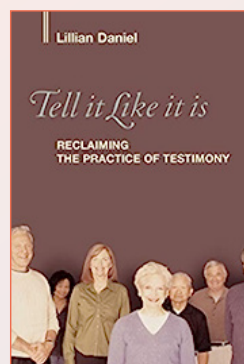
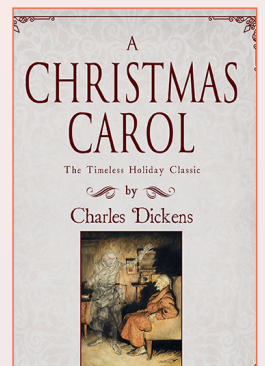
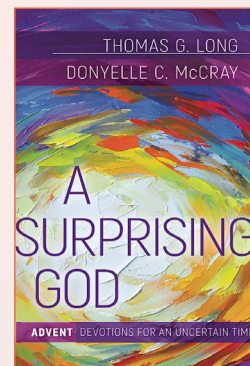
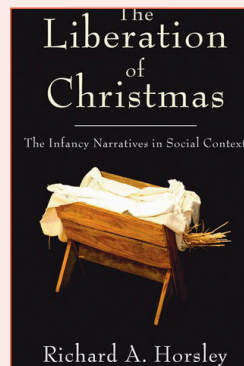
1946 Film directed by Frank Capra

Spirited

2022 Movie available on Apple TV

December 3	<i>This Christmas: Share Hope</i> Mark 13:24-37
December 10	<i>This Christmas: Share Peace</i> Issiah 40:1-8
December 17	<i>This Christmas: Share Joy</i> Music Sunday
December 24 (4th Sunday of Advent)	<i>This Christmas: Share Love</i> Watch for Video Testimonies about sharing Love!
December 24 (Christmas Eve)	<i>This Christmas: Share Christ</i> Luke 2:1-20
December 31	<i>This Christmas: Share Freedom</i> Luke 2:22-30

What if all our memories could be used not as a call to the past, but as a way of sharing who we are today as people who embrace God incarnate in our everyday lives?



DEFYING GRAVITY

January 7-28

A new year begins, and it is time to make another journey around the Sun. Will this year be any different than the last? Will we start with bold resolutions only to be pulled back by the ongoing cares and concerns that seem to control our lives? How can 2024 be a year to break free to live the life God intends for us?

In this series we will consider how we can break free from the **culture of more**. We often believe that the answer for our lives is simply to acquire and accumulate more. We end up in an orbit of obligation where we are stressed by all the things that we feel we have to maintain and protect. Jesus invites us to a different pattern of living where we are tethered to God rather than our possessions. In doing so, we find the freedom that we so desperately desire.

RESOURCES

Defying Gravity: Break Free from the Culture of More

by Tom Berlin

Defying Gravity Family Card Pack

Available at www.cokesbury.com or www.amazon.com

28 cards with daily activities to help you focus on the life you want one day at a time. Activities include cleaning out drawers, arranging closets, donating clothes and other life-changing exercises that puts you on the path to a vibrant and fulfilling life.

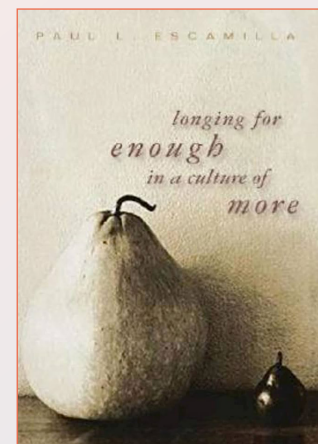
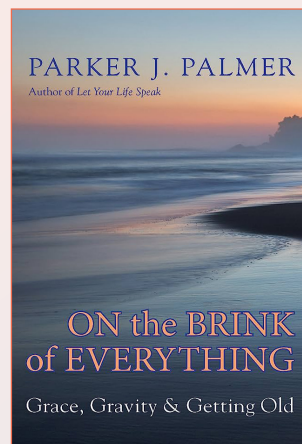
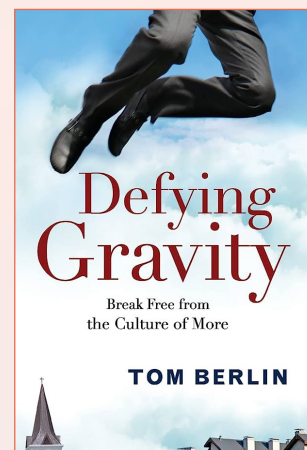
Longing for Enough in a Culture of More

by Paul Escamilla

On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity & Getting Old

by Parker J. Palmer

January 7	Discovering Gravity Mark 1:4-11
January 14	Breaking Free 1 Timothy 6:17-19
January 21	Tethered to God 1 Peter 4:8-11
January 28	When We Get it Right Matthew 6:19-21



Jesus invites us to a different pattern of living where we are tethered to God rather than our possessions. In doing so we find the freedom that we so desperately desire.



Heart Matters

February 4-11

Matters of the heart hold profound significance in our faith journey, intertwining the condition of our hearts with the expression of our beliefs. In Luke 6:43-45, Jesus draws a parallel between the condition of our hearts and the fruit produced by trees. Just as a good tree bears good fruit, a heart filled with love, kindness, and faithfulness yields acts of compassion and goodness. Our hearts serve as the core of our being, influencing our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Similarly, in Luke 8:22-25, Jesus calms a raging storm, showcasing the power of a steadfast and trusting heart. As we nurture and guard our hearts, aligning them with God's love, our faith strengthens, enabling us to face life's trials with unwavering trust. Moreover, the metaphor of heart rate reminds us to be aware of the rhythm of our hearts, not merely in a physical sense but also in terms of our emotional and spiritual well-being. It underscores the importance of living our lives with caring hearts, extending love and compassion to those around us, and reflecting the transformative power of God's grace within us.

RESOURCES

Heartbreak: A Personal and Scientific Journey
by Florence Williams

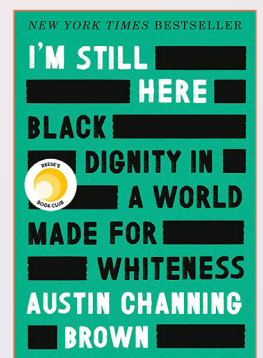
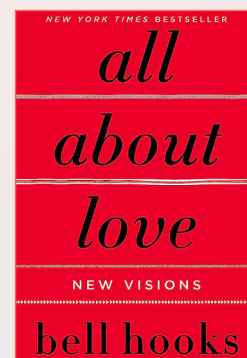
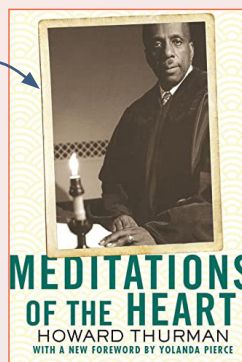
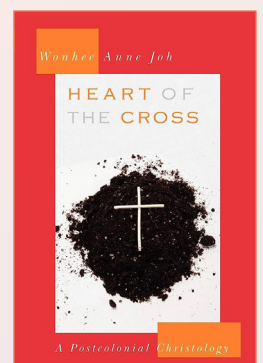
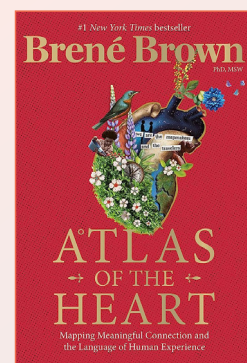
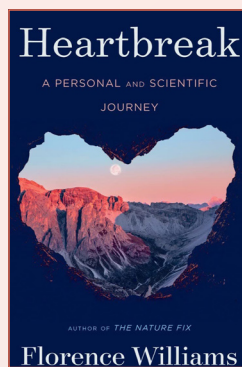
I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness
by Austin Channing Brown

Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience
by Brené Brown

Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology
by Wonhee Anne Joh

All About Love: New Visions
by bell hooks

Meditations of the Heart
by Howard Thurman (Best found at www.audible.com)



February 4	Heart Condition Luke 6:43-45
February 11	Heart Rate Luke 8:22-25



This resource is found most easily on Audible

INSIGHT OUT

February 18-March 24

The season of Lent is a journey. It is designed to take us spiritually to a different place. Often we begin this season looking at all the external circumstances and pressures in our lives. It is as if we are attempting to navigate a confusing maze. Lent calls us to pause and then begin a different kind of journey. It is a labyrinth journey whereby we intentionally journey inward to the depths of our being. We walk a path of contemplation, considering who we are and what our lives have become. When we reach the center we pause again, take deep breaths, and begin the journey outward. The outward journey takes us, not back to old chaos, but to a new path of peace, compassion and justice.

This year, during the season of Lent our scriptures align with this pilgrimage. We will be invited to meditate on one word that characterizes the heart of God and describes the way of Jesus. Each week is a centering journey that moves us to insight and then follows Jesus out to a new way of living. From Ash Wednesday to Good Friday we are reminded of the great truth which states: "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

RESOURCES

Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Practice

by Lauren Artess

We Make the Road by Walking

by Brian McLaren

Embracing the Uncertain: A Lenten Study for Unsteady Times

By Magrey DeVega

Portals, Pathways & Labyrinths: A Collection of Photographic Images for Use in Personal Art

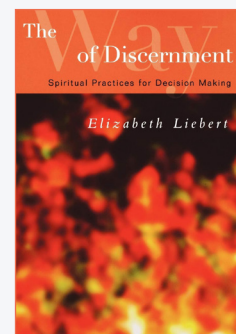
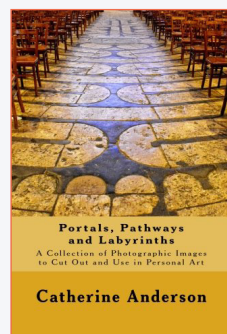
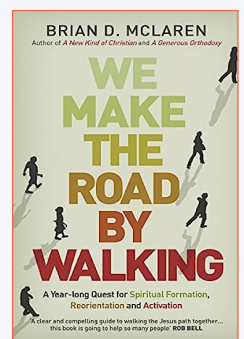
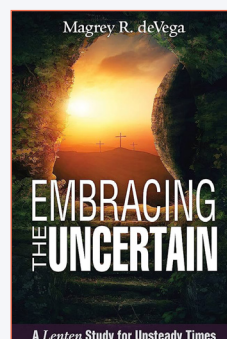
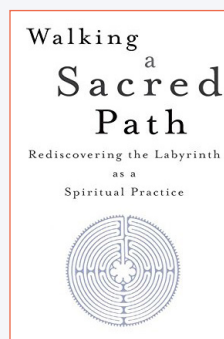
by Catherine Anderson

The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making

by Elizabeth Liebert

Where Jesus Prayed: Illuminating the Lord's Prayer in the Holy Land

by Danielle Shroyer



February 18	With Genesis 9:8-17
February 25	Walk Mark 8:31-38
March 3	Warn John 2:13-22
March 10	Watch John 3:14-21
March 17	Whether Jeremiah 31:31-34
March 24	Why Mark 11:1-11

RESURRECTION DEBRIEF

April 7-April 21

In the aftermath of the resurrection, Jesus engaged in what we could call a "Resurrection Debrief" with his disciples and various individuals. These encounters were not only moments of reassurance and joy but also opportunities for Jesus to provide further teachings and clarifications about the Kingdom of God. These post-resurrection interactions remind us of the importance of ongoing growth and learning in our faith journey. Just as Jesus continued to teach and provide insight to his followers, we too should cultivate a mindset of continuous learning and reflection about Christ and our faith. Moreover, these encounters highlight the significance of dialogue and conversation in our spiritual lives. Just as Jesus engaged in debriefing conversations, we are called to engage with one another, sharing our insights, asking questions, and seeking deeper understanding. Through open and honest conversations, we can glean wisdom from one another, deepen our relationship with Christ, and collectively grow in our faith.

April 7	Doubting Thomas John 20:19-29
April 14	Road to Emmaus Luke 24:13-35
April 21	Breakfast on the Beach John 21:1-19

Just as Jesus continued to teach and provide insight to his followers, we too should cultivate a mindset of continuous learning and reflection about Christ and our faith.

RESOURCES

By Bread Alone: A Baker's Reflections on Hunger, Longing, and the Goodness of God
by Kendall Vanderslice

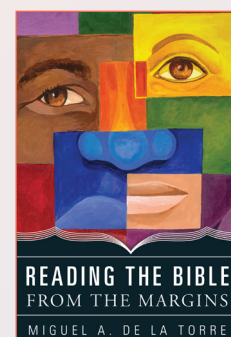
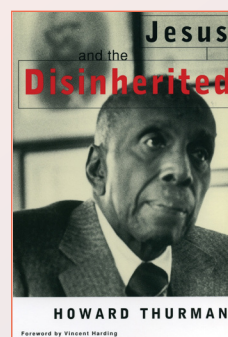
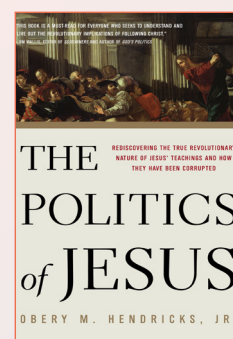
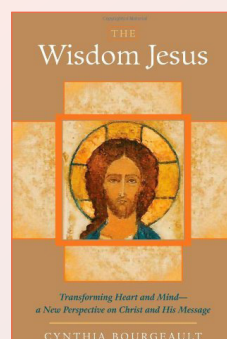
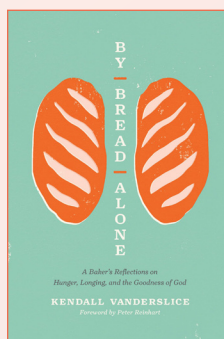
The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind-A New Perspective on Christ and His Message
by Cynthia Bourgeault

The Politics of Jesus
by Obery Hendricks

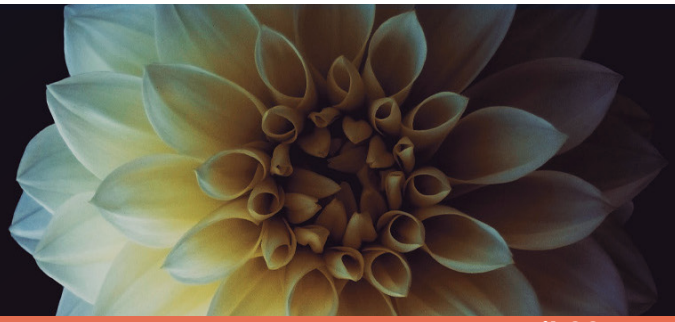
Jesus and the Disinherited
by Howard Thurman and Vincent Harding

Reading the Bible from the Margins
by Miguel De La Torre

Jesus is the Question: 307 Questions Jesus Asked and 3 He Answered
by Martin B. Copenhagen



BLOOM



April 28-May 12

The work of the Holy Spirit may best be thought of as God's divine action in our world. It's a lot to wrap our heads around when we consider that each day, the Spirit is working in and through us. As members of the body of Christ, we have the opportunity to personify the Fruits of the Spirit through this sacred connection. The Spirit inspires, pushes, directs, and guides us in our faith walk. It is through our close relationship with God that we are able to display love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

In this season of spring, we see beauty popping up all around us. Brightly colored flowers are blossoming in pinks, yellows, and purples. Bright green leaves and grass are covering the landscape and we are reminded of what God grows in our world. Similarly, when we are open to God's divine action, there is something that grows inside of us too. Join us for this series as we discover how the Fruits of the Spirit can bloom in our lives and blanket our world with the vivid colors of God's love.

RESOURCES

Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices

by Brian McLaren

The Naked Now: Learning To See As the Mystics See

by Richard Rohr

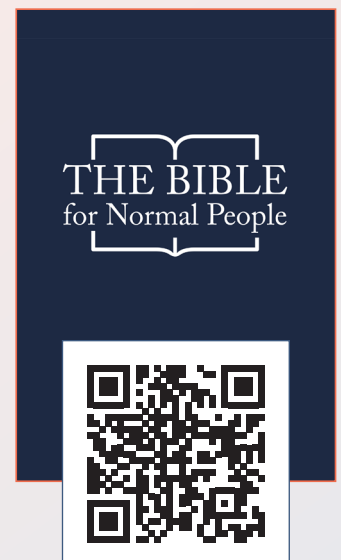
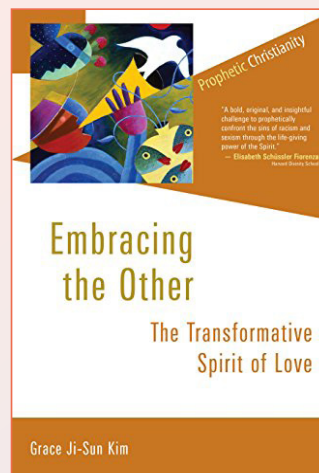
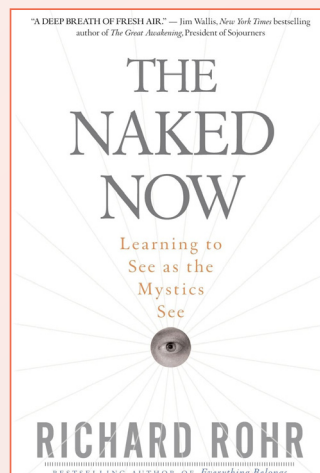
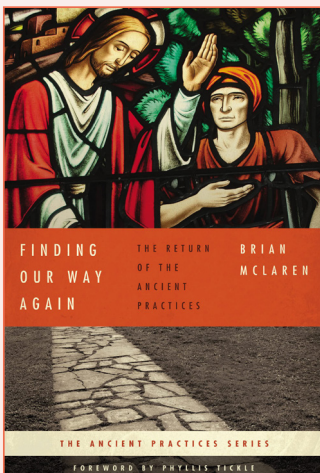
Embracing the Other: The Transformative Spirit of Love

by Grace Ji-Sun Kim

Podcast: The Bible for Normal People

www.thebiblefornormalpeople.com

April 28	Love, Joy, Peace Galatians 5:22-25
May 5	Patience, Kindness, Generosity Galatians 5:22-25
May 12	Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control John 21:1-19



Weekly Sunday WORSHIP TIMES

SANCTUARY

9:15 & 10:30 am

Services have traditional worship elements with an inspiring and challenging message focused on engagement with the world. Led by the Sanctuary worship team with the Adult choir featured at the 10:30am service.

MODERN:

A Different Door: 9:15 am

A Different Door is a unique worship opportunity led by the Modern Team. It includes music, prayer, and other elements of worship as well as a conversation/podcast style sermon featuring different voices and perspectives. Recordings of the conversation are available on most podcast platforms the Wednesday following recording.

Modern Worship: 10:30 am

This is an engaging worship experience featuring our Modern Worship Band.

LIVE STREAMING

Both Sanctuary & Modern Worship

9:15 & 10:30 am

www.graceavenue.org/worship/streaming



On Demand Recorded Worship Services

Recorded Sanctuary and Modern Worship Services available to view online after Sunday.

Holy Communion will be celebrated in ALL services on the **first** Sunday of the month & **weekly** at 9:00 am in the Sanctuary on the 2nd - 5th Sundays before the 9:15 services.

For more information about programs, mission
and ministries at Grace Avenue

www.GraceAvenue.org



Find us on Social Media!



GRACE AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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