

needed is a right and proper relationship with God which we all have to work towards and then from that relationship deal with our relationships with each other. When we have a deep faith in God's grace and compassion for us, then we are more likely to have compassion for each other. What do you think? Contemplate these thoughts and write your prayerful reflections here.

Thursday, January 11

Pastor Jack mentioned three difficulties facing disciples of Jesus in dealing with community life within the church. First is we must not be a hindrance to the discipleship of others. The issue arises when we disagree what discipleship should look like. Pastor Jack mentioned in his December 31 message that our church has received criticism about what we have on our electronic sign on Highland Road. How should we present our beliefs and concerns not only to our church membership but with the community in which we live? At the risk of begin divisive, should we be so bold in our witness concerning inclusion and our work toward common sense gun legislature? How should we present our concern for the Middle East? Consider these questions and write your ideas on how we should not be a hindrance to the discipleship of others.

Friday, January 12

Read Matthew 28:16-20. The other two difficulties facing the church in terms of how we express our discipleship include how we gently rebuke people within our church. The final difficulty is living with the fact that the process of helping people be disciples of Jesus Christ is never over. In fact, that is the very purpose of the church: To make disciples of Jesus Christ. In the United Methodist Church we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. How can a local congregation best perform this task? Write your ideas here.

Message Notes – January 7, 2024

*First Communion – Then Community**

- I. A 5-year-old girl _____ everything about the First Church of God in Moultonboro, New Hampshire.
 - A. But then everything goes _____.
 1. Her father becomes so sick her mother must support the family by waitressing, which includes serving _____.
 2. To the First Church of God, serving alcohol means “breaking the _____.”
 3. Hands of _____ and _____ are raised to vote the family out of the church.
 - B. As Kate Young Caley writes in *The House Where the Hardest Things Happened: A Memoir About Belonging*: “And so I, who loved the church ... I, too, was _____.”
 1. Her family _____ from church and never returns.
 2. Kate enters young adulthood concluding, “As much as I wanted _____, I was sick to death of his _____.”
- II. Most would agree that there must exist some _____ upon which we perform the priestly tasks of the church.
 - A. We must be clear about whose standards they are and who has agreed to _____ those standards.
 1. There are two sides of the “_____” as I see it.
 2. First, there is the communion aspect of our faith through which we have come together with common _____ and _____.
 3. Then there is the wider community we share in with those who are not members or even _____ or _____ of our church.

*Luke 17:1-10

- III. Those of us in the church are not always ready and willing to hear the _____ of our faith – but Jesus laid them out none-the-less.
- To these demanding words of Jesus, the disciples responded, “_____ our faith!”
 - The fact is friends, is that God owes us _____ for living good, Christian lives.
 - Only through faith can we be _____ of Jesus Christ and in a proper relationship with God.
- IV. As I see it our passage for today addresses three _____ for disciples.
- First, we are called not to be a _____ to the discipleship of others.
 - Second, we are to gently _____ and guide those who sin, and _____ all who ask for forgiveness.
 - Finally, we must not assume that we have done _____ than our duty.
 - In the church there is the communion in which we _____ to uphold the very standards that define us as followers of Christ and there is the _____ community that looks for community and care.
 - It’s a _____ for any faith community.
 - Perhaps we should ask for an _____ in our _____.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, January 8

The Message began with the tragic story of Kate Young Caley, who loved the church as a child. Along with her family, Caley was voted out of the church because her mother became a waitress whose duties included serving alcoholic beverages. Caley wrote in her memoir, “As much as I wanted God, I was sick to death of his people.” What emotions did you feel and are now feeling as you read about Kate Young Caley’s experience? How should a

church uphold the standards it creates for its community? Under what conditions should a church “vote out” members of its community? Contemplate these questions, pray for God’s wisdom and compassion and write your reflections here.

Tuesday, January 9

Read Luke 17:1-10. Pastor Jack mentioned the two sides of the “community coin” that represents the church. There is the communion aspect of our faith through which we have come together with common goals and purposes. The Church agrees to live together and work together according to the gifts and graces God gives to each of us. Then there is the wider community we share in with those who are not members or even friends or supporters of our church. The challenge for the church is when the expectations of the church are different depending on which side of the “community coin” a person is on. These differences occur because those on either side of the “community coin” have different levels of commitments. A Church has no right to expect people outside of its membership to live according to the agreed standards of the church. At the same time, it is a challenge for the church to uphold its standards with compassion and grace. What are your thoughts? How does the church uphold its standards in a society that has not agreed to those standards? How do we sensitively address issues of observing the standards of the church? Think about these questions and write your thoughts here.

Wednesday, January 10

Read Luke 17:1-10. Read carefully verses 3 and 4. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are not always ready to hear the demands of our faith. According to Jesus’ words in verses 3 and 4, we are to rebuke offenders and offer correction for their wandering from a faithful path of following Jesus. It is interesting that when Jesus shares these words with his disciples, they do not ask for more love and tolerance; the disciples ask for more faith. What is