

It may seem strange to ask, “How secure are those who visit our church for worship or other programs?” Do they feel welcomed? Do they feel safe? Do they feel cared for? Do they feel safe to express themselves? Is it clear where our worship takes place and where the nursery is and where our Sunday morning classes are taking place? It may be a strange question but a good one: “How secure are those who visit our church for worship or other programs?” Write your thoughts here and pray for those who come to our church seeking security.

Thursday, August 22

Read Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17 and Mark 12:38-44. It is important for Waterford Central UMC to be a welcoming church. However, we need to be more than welcoming; we need to be an inviting church. Are we inviting people to come to our church and then we need to challenge ourselves to continually be invitational. Continue to invite those who come for worship or other events to a study or to sing in the choir or be a part of a fellowship ministry. Meditate upon the difference between being welcoming and inviting. Ask God to clarify the call upon our lives to always be inviting as well as welcoming.

Friday, August 23

Review the readings from Ruth and read Matthew 25:32-46. The reading from Matthew should shock any follower of Christ. Not only are we to invite, welcome the care for the stranger in our midst; our very salvation depends on how we care for those we do not even know! The message ended with these words: Ruth truly is a portrait of devotion and demonstrates for us the importance of welcoming all into the family of God. Please pray about how a person moves from being a guest at our church – a stranger in our midst to being part of our church family. Pray for God’s wisdom and guidance as we seek to be a church that not only welcomes but invites new family members!

Message Notes – August 18, 2024

Women of the Bible – Ruth, A Portrait of Devotion^{*}

- I. When God, in our scriptures, wants to teach us something about _____, scriptures often mentions the relationships between Christ and his church.
 - A. Conversely, when God, in our scriptures wants us to know something about Christ and the church, scriptures often speak about _____.
 1. Paul wrote that we are _____ of God.
 2. Christ is often referred to as the groom and the _____ as his bride.
 3. Good morning! We refer to God as _____! (As well as _____.)
 - B. All this is to say that we, as a church – as followers of Christ, are given some _____ of how we should relate to each other.
- II. The book of Ruth provides some wonderful _____ on how family operates and I believe for how the church might best function as a family.
 - A. It’s a great story, with two major _____.
 1. First beware of the stranger in our midst – the _____ - for his or her importance may be more than meets the eye.
 2. The second theme we should be aware of is the full _____ that is possible through God’s great mercy.
 - B. I see several _____ to the church today in this little story of Ruth tucked away in our Hebrew Scriptures.
 1. First and foremost is the _____ of the outsider
 2. In our story of Ruth, the outsider teaches us a

^{*}Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17 and Mark 12:38-44

- second lesson - _____ is _____.
3. A third lesson we can learn from the Book of Ruth is the concept of seeking the _____ of one another.
 4. Fourth, we should consider the _____ Naomi provided for Ruth.
 5. Finally there is the issue of _____.

- III. The family was important during _____ day and is important to us now.
- A. During Jesus day, the family functioned as a religious _____ preserving past _____ passing them on through instruction and worship.
 - B. It only fitting that the religious institution of the church of Jesus Christ functions as a _____ in the best possible sense – in the ways we find in our scripture for today.
 - C. Ruth truly is a portrait of devotion and demonstrates for us the importance of _____ all into the family of God.

Daily Meditations and Study Guide

The following is a daily meditation 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, August 19

Read Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17. You may want to read the entire Book of Ruth; it is only four chapters long and will only take 20-30 minutes to read. You may find it beneficial to have read the entire story as you move through these daily meditations. This story is about family and you are encouraged to meditate upon your feelings about family.

How do you view your family – both the family in which you grew up and perhaps the family into which you married and created your own family? Perhaps you want to think about the family of friends you've created – or our church family? Are your

thoughts and feelings positive or negative when you read or hear the word “family?” Take a few moments to meditate about this one word – family. Write your thoughts here and ponder their meaning as you pray for God to reveal any truths about them.

Tuesday, August 20

Read Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17. There is a definite movement from outsider to family that Ruth experiences in the Biblical book that bears her name. At first, it is her mother-in-law, Naomi, who is an outsider in Ruth homeland of Moab. Then Naomi returns to Judah (the southern portion of Israel) with Ruth and Ruth is the outsider. However, through Naomi's guidance, Ruth ultimately creates a family with Boaz and becomes the great grandmother of King David. Ruth is included in the lineage of Jesus according to Matthew's gospel.

Think about that movement from outsider to family. Have you experienced that movement? Perhaps it would be beneficial to think of that movement as from outsider to insider? Meditate on what it feels like to be an outsider? How did you know when you became an insider or family member? Meditate upon these feelings, write your thoughts here and praise God for the blessing of relationships that deepen and become a source of joy.

Wednesday, August 21

Read Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17. Verse 3:1 tells of Naomi's intent to care for Ruth: “Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you.” The specific word “security” is used by Naomi. Some scholars would say that Naomi sought her own security in providing security for Ruth. It's the same for the church! The church will only last for as long as we welcome others into it – we stop welcoming the outsider and seeking his or her security, then we stop existing.