



A Commitment Well Kept

At the beginning of every year I always face the same problem – I am usually unsure as to what my New Year’s resolution should be. I know, kind of a silly problem to have – but, in all seriousness, I get tired of making resolutions that I don’t keep. Do you ever make New Year’s resolutions? And if you do, being one month into this New Year, how are they going?

Let me tell you a few of mine. We will start on a high note. Usually, every year I make a resolution to run a certain number of miles. Thankfully, that is one resolution I have always kept. This past year, my goal was to run over 2,000 miles. I finished it off running almost 2,100. As impressive as that may sound to some people, the sadness lies in the fact that this is the **only resolution I ever keep**; all the rest get broken within weeks of making them.

For a number of years now I have vowed to give up soda

pop. And, every year, within weeks of making the resolution, I am gulping down a Diet Coke. Not good. At times, I have resolved to be more intentional about journaling. I usually last no more than a few days. Truthfully, I just don’t like to journal. I have vowed to give up eating candy and other sweets, but at best have lasted a month.

What is the point of making New Year’s Resolutions – especially if you are like me and go into them half-heartedly and honestly setting yourself up for failure? What is the point of it all?

Well, the point is because we usually spend a moment reflecting on the state of our lives and realize that we could improve a few things. We resolve to live better lives in the New Year.

Would you agree that usually we make these resolutions in response to dissatisfaction in our lives? Maybe it’s the belly you can’t stand

looking at in the mirror, or a doctor telling you that your blood pressure or cholesterol is too high. A resolution may even come after a serious reflection on our need to be more intentional about a relationship with another person. **There is always hope, we believe, that when we resolve to do something we will become committed to seeing “whatever” through.**

The problem is that it’s not easy, is it? That treadmill we committed to get on every day to lose the holiday pounds is not as enticing as sitting down and watching an hour of television. The fruits and veggies we are adamant about eating to lower our cholesterol just don’t taste as good as the cakes and pies. And who wants to give up soda pop? Oh, the way that calcium-sucking phosphoric acid tick-

les the back of the throat when you swallow! Friends, there is just nothing like it.

As silly as New Year’s resolutions have become to some people (me included) the idea behind them is not silly. **And this is the idea of commitment or covenant.**

Friends, do we enter into our commitments as haphazardly as we do our New Year resolutions? I hope not, but I fear the opposite is true. You know, I think many times we enter into commitments with **false expectations**. And when the going gets tough, or it is not what we thought it was going to be, we quit.

Oftentimes, our willingness to stay committed to something only stays intact if we continue to feel happy. This is true even in our relationships, whether they be with other people or with God. In regards to relationships with other people, one area we see this happening more times than it probably should is in marriage.

While I don’t generally think it’s true that most people go into marriage today casually, **I do think we have lost the notion of real commitment.**

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Statistically speaking, over half of marriages today end in divorce, and this is also true among Christians. While some of these divorces stem from circumstances that are beyond a person's control, I do not believe this is the case for most marriages.

Most divorces happen when a couple is no longer "in love" and the happy feeling they experienced on their wedding day has fizzled out.

James Emery White, a pastor from North Carolina, states, "If relationships become too uncomfortable, we disengage. We change jobs, move out of a neighborhood, find a new church or leave our marriage. We minimize relational life as portable and disposable."

Basically, we walk away from relationships we have formed with others when we become offended or they become disagreeable, or they no

longer make us happy. **Instead of working harder and sacrificing more to forge a deeper and more meaningful relationship with someone, we give up when it begins to get too tough.**

And while this is certainly true for many people experiencing strained relationships with one another, **we see this same struggle in our relationship with God.**

We may start out thinking that following Christ will make our lives easier, or it will make us feel better. But we soon find just the opposite happening – life isn't necessarily better, nor does being a Christian always make us feel better.

The idea of making covenants is a prevalent theme in the Old Testament. In Genesis, God made a covenant with Noah to never again destroy the world by flood waters. He also made a covenant with Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. God promised Moses that His children, the Israelites, would eventually enter the Promised Land and God made a covenant with King David that his kingdom would reign forever.

Friends, God kept and continues to keep His promises. This is important for us to not only remember, but also to respond accordingly. When we decide to follow Christ, we need to understand that **God deserves our unswerving allegiance!**

This is important! I have mentioned over the past months that our life's purpose is to glorify, love and serve God, and by entering into covenant with God we are allowed the opportunity to begin fulfilling that life's purpose. But this is not something that should be done only on an individual level. God's purpose in making a covenant is to form a people for himself – it's something that he wants us to do together.

The church was never meant to be an accidental gathering of whoever happens to show up on Sunday. **We are to be a community of people, radically committed together to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

God made human beings to live in community, not isolation. God calls us to be the light of the world together. God calls us to show how it is possible to live in committed

love together in a society where break-ups, lack of forgiveness, prejudice and other social diseases ravage people all the time.

As a church community, let's be intentional about what we are doing. Committing ourselves to God is not something we should enter into lightly. Let us remember that we make a commitment to God together as the people of God for the sake of the world that He loves.

Blessings,
Pastor Jared



It's time to begin our planning for this summer's **Vacation Bible School!!!** If you will consider helping out this year, please come to an informational meeting on Monday, February 6th, 7:30pm at the parsonage (230 North Bissell Rd). We are planning to have VBS June 25th – 29th and will be looking at possible themes during our initial meeting. We look forward to seeing you there!

Anne Marie Hartman, one of the founding members of Aurora United Methodist Church, passed away Tuesday, December 27, 2011 at her residence with her devoted husband, Harold, by her side. Memorial services were Friday, December 30th.



Linda Barr, daughter of long-time member Betty Nichols, passed away on December 21, 2011. A memorial service was conducted Tuesday, January 3rd.

Small Group Ministry

If you are looking to find a way to build relationships with other people and learn more about the Christian faith in a fun and effective way, then small group ministry is for you. **Small group ministries aim at cultivating relationships and building community while also growing into a deeper understanding of the things of God.** We have a number of different opportunities for you. Some of our groups are strictly fellowship based, another focuses on prayer, while still others take a real good look at the Holy Scriptures and Wesleyan Theology. Check out what we have to offer and get involved!

Introductory

Bible Study Group

Over the past 16 weeks we have been using a source entitled *The Story* to help assist us as we navigate through the Bible. We have been learning about how the Bible is basically one continuous story from the beginning of time until the end. We offer two different times during the week for those who would like to be involved: Sunday afternoons (2pm) at the parsonage (230 North Bissell Rd)

and Wednesday evenings (7pm) at the church. Our next 8-week schedule is as follows:

Sundays: Feb 19, 26, Mar 4, 11, 18, 25, Apr 15, 22

Wednesday Group:

Monday, Feb 20th,

Wednesdays: Feb 29, Mar 7, 14, 21, 28, Apr 18, 25

Methodism 101

Who is John Wesley? How did the Methodist church begin? What is prevenient grace anyway? These are some of the questions we will

address throughout the month of February during the Adult Sunday school hour (9:15-10:15). **This class is open to everyone:** lifelong Methodists who want a refresher and those who are interested in becoming new members. We will be using videos, discussion and lectures as we journey toward perfection.

New! Men's Small Group

If you are a man who is interested in being part of a fellowship group, we meet the first and third Tuesday of each month at Bob Evans Restaurant, 7105 North Aurora Rd, Aurora, Ohio. This month we are meeting at 7:30pm on February 7th and 21st.

Drivers to pick up at Independence Village:

- 2/5 Steve Ivars
- 2/12 Pastor Jared
- 2/19
- 2/26

February Birthdays

- 2/7 Lynn Krebs
- 2/16 Rob Sicker
- 2/17 Angie Rose

Get Involved in Hunger Ministry

Each month we support the **Aurora Food Pantry** which supplies non-perishable food, toiletry and cosmetic products to those in need in our local community. Each month there are certain items that are needed to keep the shelves stocked at the food pantry. **This month's needs are dish and laundry soap, soup, pinto, kidney, and black beans, and macaroni and cheese.** If you have any interest in donating this month please drop off your donation on Sunday mornings or at the church office during the week.

Volunteers Needed. If you would like to lend a helping hand at the Aurora Food Pantry they can always use help. Pastor Jared assists in this ministry and would love to have others join him. Helping out consists of sorting and dating food and filling orders.





This Lenten season I am inviting you to go on a *Journey to Hope* with me as we travel with Jesus to the cross, discovering along the way that Hope can be found even as we encounter some of life's most difficult circumstances. We will take an in depth look at some of those circumstances that we all face along the journey. By addressing real life circumstances along the way (i.e., relationships, self-esteem, work, temptation, money problems, suffering, and death) we will learn how faith in Christ is relevant to everyday life and how having a faith community can make all the difference.

Our journey will begin on Ash Wednesday, (February 19th). As we turn our faces toward Jerusalem with Christ, we know the path leads to the cross and this will be a difficult journey. **Yet we join**

Him to find hope even amid challenge. How might our life's journey be different if we truly let Jesus be "in the driver's seat?" What would we have to adjust in our carefully laid plans? As we rediscover Jesus along the way, perhaps we also will uncover our "real" selves. *A Journey to Hope* will lead us to the other side of suffering – to find we can stand again in this life and the next.

The ashes that we will wear on our foreheads mark the beginning of a journey where our hands will "get dirty" and we will find that with Christ at our side, hope can be found even amidst life's struggles.

We will be teaming up with Faith (Twinsburg) and Solon UMC for our Ash Wednesday service. Faith UMC will be hosting the service, and Pastor Jared will be preaching. **The service will be held on Ash Wednesday, February 19, at 7:00 pm at Faith UMC, 2560 Post Road, Twinsburg, Ohio.**

* If you are unable to make it to the evening service at Faith UMC but still would like to have ashes placed on your forehead, the church will be

open and Pastor Jared will be available from 10 am – 2 pm.

Don't forget to pick up your free Lenten Devotional. The church is providing two different ones: one for adults entitled: *Journey to the Cross Prayer Journal* and one for children entitled: *All Around Jerusalem*.

We are hoping each of you will take and use these resources in order to make this Lenten/Easter season a time of transformation in your life. It is vital that each of us invest the time necessary to make our faith in Christ as real and as dynamic as it can be. May God bless your journey this Lenten season.

Music Notes

Please think about singing with the choir and praise team!



Sundays, in the sanctuary:

9:30 am Praise Team

instruments warm-up

9:45 am CHOIR and PT

Singers practice / warm-up

10:20 am Praise and Worship Songs and/or review of day's service music

Let's prepare music in Lent for Easter

Contact Music Director Stan Krawson, 330-904-6231 or noswarkstan@att.net.

Handbell Choir—December 2011



Prayer Ministry

Immersing life in prayer seems to be a difficult spiritual discipline for people to follow. It is no different for me. In fact, I find myself very inconsistent with my prayer life. There are times when I find myself having a good prayer rhythm and my fervency is high; whereas there are other times when my prayer life is dry and my motivation to kneel before the throne of God is low. To be honest, this really bothers me. Prayer is how we truly get intimate with Jesus Christ and honestly there is nothing I want more than to get intimate with my Lord and Savior.

Each year I am very thankful for the Lenten season. Lent allows us the time to be self-reflective and truly meditate on Christ's sacrifice for us and on the sacrifice we are called to make for him. Lent is also a time when I truly sense and realize the power of prayer. Prayer truly makes a difference in our lives. The apostle James tells us "that the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). This is one reason we offer a prayer gathering **every Wednesday at 10am** at the church. Our Prayer Team meets in order to saturate our church, families, friends, country, and world with prayer.

If you feel drawn to be part of this dynamic and very im-

portant ministry would you prayerfully consider joining us? If you can't make it on Wednesdays, I still want to encourage you to soak each day in prayer and know that your Savior, Jesus Christ, is listening.

"Gracious God, as we take our first steps in this journey through the season of Lent, renew our vision of who we are and what you are calling us to do, through the power of the Spirit of Christ. Amen."

(The Song Forever New, ©2009,

Prayers and Concerns

Church Family

Bob Bartlett
Ada Davidson
Harold Hartman
Debbie & Lynn Krebs
Joe Landals
Alvira Neverman
Kay Walker

Friends and Relatives

Jeanne (Reulbach)
Rae Ellen Campbell (Reulbach)
Patti Daugherty-Hoback
(Lambertson)
Rachele Freshman (Krebs)
Bill Horney (Ineman)
Denis Ivars (Ivars)
Al Kravetz (Ivars)
Walter Krebs
Larry Palcko (Shartle)
Nick Perry (Ivars)
Lois Ramsey
Matt Ritwage (Ivars)
Ken Shartle, Jr.
Julia Shurman (Ross)

Weekly Activities

Sundays	9:15 am	Sunday school: Methodism 101
	9:30 am	Praise Team instruments warm-up
	9:45 am	Choir/Praise Team singers warm-up
	10:30 am	Worship/Junior Church
	12:00 pm	Handbell Rehearsal
Wednesdays	9:00 am	Bulletin Deadline
	10:00 am	Prayer Gathering
	6:30 pm	Praise Team Instrumentalists TOPS
	7:00 pm	Praise Team Vocalists/Choir

Events - February

Wednesday, 2/1		No small group Bible study
Monday, 2/6	6:30 pm	NOW team meeting at parsonage
	7:30 pm	VBS team meeting at parsonage
Tuesday, 2/7	7:30 pm	Men's fellowship at Bob Evans, Aurora
Sunday, 2/12	8:00 am	UMM breakfast
	4:00 pm	Girl Scouts
Monday, 2/13	6:00 pm	Girl Scouts leaders' meeting
Tuesday, 2/14	7:00 pm	SPR Meeting
Sunday, 2/19	2:00 pm	Small group Bible study at parsonage
Monday, 2/20	7:00 pm	Small group Bible study at church
Tuesday, 2/21	7:30 pm	Men's fellowship at Bob Evans, Aurora
Wednesday, 2/22		Ash Wednesday
	10:00 am-2:00 pm	Church open, pastor available *(p. 7)
	7:00 pm	Service at Faith UMC, Twinsburg Pastor Jared Priset speaking
Sunday, 2/26	2:00 pm	Small group Bible study at parsonage
	4:00 pm	Girl Scouts
Wednesday, 2/29	7:00 pm	Small group Bible study at church

Prayer Focus for February:
Children's Ministry

The Winning Side

I need to admit something. I might be a pretty good mother, and intentional about many important things, but there is one area that I just cannot seem to conquer. **I worry.**

I claim to trust God with my children. I know that God loves my children even more than I do, and I know that even my parenting is not something I do alone, but something I do with guidance and grace.

However, I can't seem to rid myself of that awful, nagging certainty that **I'm fighting a losing battle.**

I have seen it with my own eyes. I have heard the stories. Good kids from good homes who end up pregnant in high school – in middle school, no less. Kids who grow up in the church only to end up leaving it once they get out on their own. Sweet and inquisitive kids who end up becoming apathetic adults at best.

I hate myself for this feeling. I want to be more positive and I want to have more faith that God can and will do a good work through my children, yet I find myself feeling like their future hangs on eve-

ry decision – homeschool or public school? Are we reading the Bible enough? Spanking or time-outs? Then there are the constant comments about “pastor’s kids” and somewhere along the way I start to feel like my kids are doomed.

Well, the other night, God decided he had had enough.

Don't ask me what time it was. All I remember is that it was dark. I was rocking my son, hoping he would go to sleep, and somewhere in between the grogginess and the creaking of the rocking chair, I started to worry.

What if it's not enough? What if despite all my efforts, my children still end up walking away from faith, from God? And that most nagging question of all: How do I raise my children to live in the world, but not of it? After all, the world just seems too big, too tempting, and everywhere I look it appears to be winning.

Then, suddenly, it hit me. **“In this world you will find trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world!”**

And all that worry, all that wringing of hands, suddenly

left me. Suddenly it was just me and my infant son in that room, in that rocking chair, with only truth for company.

The truth that God is bigger. That yes, the world appears to be winning, but God already won.

I know my children will still have to make their own choices, but I have a reason to hope. Because even though the world is scary, I believe in a God that is bigger. And even though the enemy is real, my God is stronger. And even though the culture we live in is full of lies, the God I serve is nothing but truth.

The world might be big, but my God overcame it. And I'm on the winning side.

* If you would like to follow Meredith's blog please visit:
www.loverisesup.wordpress.com



Those Serving God and His Church

Liturgists

- 2/5 Julia Fabich
- 2/12
- 2/19 Cora Marie R.
- 2/26 Sharon B.

Coffee Hosts

- 2/5 Lambertsons
- 2/12 Sandy Petti
- 2/19
- 2/26

Nursery Ministry

- 2/5 Meredith Priset
- 2/12 Marcia Bossart
- 2/19 Traci Piero
- 2/26 Lisa Brogan

Junior Church

- 2/5
- 2/12
- 2/19
- 2/26

Altar Flowers

- 2/5
- 2/12
- 2/19
- 2/26