

Suffering and Dancing

by Molly Baskette

From the UCC Daily Devotional

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.” — Genesis 45:4-5 (NRSV)

Mali Watkins dances in the street in my hometown every day. It’s part of his spiritual practice: with his dance he gives peace to the world. He is not mentally ill, though he has struggled, like many of us at one time or another. He is a dark-skinned Black man with a diagnosis of autism, high-functioning — in fact, functioning on a higher plane than most.

In May, two days before George Floyd was killed, someone saw him dancing and called the cops on him, concern-trolling that he would get hit by a car because he was in the street. Four cop cars showed up. They cuffed him, put him on the ground, kneeled on him, and broke his tooth in the struggle. Neighbors called from the sidelines for the police to stop, but they said, “We can only evaluate his mental health once he is under control.”

That arrest spawned huge multiracial dance parties in the street. One Mali became many.

I met Mali at one of those dance parties, and we ended up talking for half an hour. His words were sermonic, brilliant, moving, and fluid. I knew I was in the presence of someone anointed by God. His deep, liquid eyes poured love on me. I felt baptized by his being.

I told him how gravely sorry I was that he had suffered. And he answered: “No — no — it all happened just like it was supposed to. It needed to happen for everything else to happen.”

I believe it is dangerous to say that God brings good out of our suffering. Some of us have spent years unbelieving in a God who demands suffering, particularly the suffering of already vulnerable people. But Mali reminded me that we each get to decide for ourselves if our personal suffering has had a holy purpose.

Joseph was ill-used by his brothers, and yet so much good came of it. He got to decide that his suffering was for a great-hearted and godly purpose, for his own good and the good of others. And his forgiveness was beautiful.

Just like what happened to Mali. He went on to tell me about a piece of the larger purpose that his suffering brought about: Every day for months before his arrest, a man had driven by him as he danced. This man was a city employee, and yet even in his role and uniform he called Mali the N word. After Mali’s arrest, the news and the video going viral, the man sought him out at a party — and begged his forgiveness. They fell onto each other’s necks, weeping.

Prayer: God, may we follow Mali’s example and keep dancing. Make us unafraid to suffer, if by suffering, you can save lives. Amen.



On September 20, 2020, our church observed *Reaffirmation of Faith Sunday*. This service took place on what would have been *Kick-off Sunday*. Members and friends of WRCC UCC were invited to submit their affirmations of faith. The responses were beautiful, thoughtful, and inspiring. I have sorted the statements by reflections on God, the Church, Belief, and Faith. I hope you find as much encouragement and hope in these statements as I have! ò *Pastor Claudia*.

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH: GOD

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. ò Hebrews 3:4

- I believe that God *is* Love. That Love is shown to us in many ways, through the beauty of Nature, the beauty of Art and Music, the Love from Family and Friends, the life-giving food that is provided for us, and the Love we can feel through centering ourselves to receive the *Beloved*, who is with us always. ò Nancy Conner ☯
- I know that God always loves me and is with me. ò Karen Burron
- God has helped me through the tough times and especially now through this virus. God is always there and looking over everything. ò Marilyn Olson
- I daily feel grateful to God for my many blessings: good health for me and my family, a safe home, food security, and peace in my land. I pray that all of God's children will attain these same blessings. I experience God when I see beauty in the trees, flowers and hills. I was thankful when God sent a snowstorm and rain which helped extinguish some forest fires. When I adopted a tiny four pound, 8-week old Boston terrier puppy, I commented to my partner that I saw the face of God. Thankful for all God's creations, great and small ò Sue Schafer
- God is the totality of everything. Good, bad, ugly, indifferent. That means that I, too, am God. Kind of raises the bar in terms of how I conduct myself. ò Floy Jeffares-Whitehead
- I believe God's arms are around me always and never let go of me. ò Anne Cain
- God to me is the interconnectedness of all things. That can be imagined on a tiny scale as in how movements of atoms and electricity in our bodies can somehow translate into thoughts and memories. Or, on a giant scale, how the mass of some galaxy can exert force on other galaxies millions of light years away. ò Erika Kenney
- I know the Lord is with me every step of the way through my daily life. He will always be with me. He gives me peace of mind. ò Jeanne Gallagher
- God is Nature because Nature is Life and so is God. ò Bella Anderson
- How I believe in God is that how could we be here without God? We don't have special powers, we humans, only God does, so we can believe in God. ò Conner Anderson

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH: CHURCH

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds. ò Hebrews 10:24-25

- I didn't grow up in church but I had some experiences in life that made me realize I needed something more. The teachings of Jesus gave me something to live by. ò Pam Cokins
- In my personal life I direct my actions toward my ultimate concern of justice, which I see as equality and dignity for all persons. I see my family as the center of my life but my concern extends out to include all peoples and all species, even Mother Earth. I see the Church as potentially one human institution that can promote justice. ò Constance Wise
- **Church** is a hopeful place where everyone and anyone can be there. ò Bella Anderson
- **Church** means peace and quiet, love and hope. ò Conner Anderson
- The fact that we are with other people and we experience their ups and downs in life, we can understand what they are going through. It strengthens my faith in people and God when you go through good times and bad times with other people. **I get this from church more than any place.** ò Joanne Gustafson
- I've gone to **church** somewhere all my life. It has been part of my life and I get a lot out of it by going, so I just keep going. ò Rod Gustafson
- I feel challenged every day to keep my spiritual center. **Worshipping at church** allows me to refocus my mind and spirit for the week ahead. Church fills me with hope and love. ò Deana Carter

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH: FAITH

So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. ò Romans 10:17

- **Faith** gives me strength as it functions as a constant reminder that doing what I know is right will always be one of the most important choices I can make. This applies to my work life, family, and how I treat people in every interaction. We all know that doing the right thing, living ethically and treating all people in a respectful and just manner often require more effort. Being reminded of the principles and values that make up my faith motivates me to continue to put forth this effort (especially when things are more challenging). ò Kevin Meyer
- **Faith** comes in handy during these challenging times. It reminds me to say a prayer, stay positive, and be grateful for all the blessings in my life. ò Donilyn Thomson
- My **faith** teaches me that there is something bigger than myself. ò Charlotte Rubenking
- My **faith** helps me to believe that there is a master plan out there for everything, including me. Even though I am such a small part of the overall plan, I know that I'm an important part of it. My **faith** grounds me, strengthens me, and helps me to lead a more meaningful life. ò Shirleen Joha
- When the going gets rough ò as now, with political chaos, the pandemic, and the West Coast on fire ò my **faith** reminds me that God is always with me. ò Kathie Curtis
- I have **Faith** that everyone that can pull through this painful and horrific time. I have Faith that people will keep themselves safe and healthy, and trusting others to do the same. ò Tyce Brozovich

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH: BELIEF

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. — John 14:1

- I believe in the binding, tying, benevolent force inherent within all things. — Cathy Conner Smith
- I believe that with God's help we can get through this pandemic and hate in our country by staying positive and being nice. — Zoe Brozovich
- I believe in God and Jesus and feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life each day which fills my heart with love. My prayer is that I can be a vessel that projects that love and kindness to those around me. I am so thankful to have found our church which gives each of us the freedom to believe and worship the way we choose, and still be accepted and loved. — Rosalie Dorland
- I believe in the empathy and caring nature of strangers that I encounter when I am out. — Joanne Dyer
- I believe that any belief is okay. My faith is to believe. — Bella Anderson
- I believe that God is real. I believe in God that there is a Spirit inside God, too, not just people. —Conner Anderson
- I believe God is love —Jesus lived to show us love — Many paths lead to God —Music, nature, beauty, writings can have healing qualities — Black lives do matter — Prayer is best when we pray “For the good of all concerned” — Everything happens to us for a reason; our experiences are opportunities for us to become more aware, to live richer and deeper, to grow spiritually, to find acceptance, to receive God’s peace, and to listen with response when called to action. — Ro Rains
- I believe that God is always with us. I believe that we experience God daily in transcendent moments, healing, and through the people around us. God is in nature, God is in love, God is beyond us and within us all. I believe in the power of Grace and Forgiveness. I believe that Life is Perfect in its Imperfections. I believe that each of our lives is on a trajectory and these trajectories interweave, connect and disperse all around us continually and constantly. I believe in our own free will, and that God is a part of that. I believe that each moment in our lives and each decision is like being in a room with three doors. The Doors Theory. Before you choose a door, the 'decision moment'... each door is equally likely as a possibility for the next pathway in your life. But after you choose your door, into the pathway of the next moment of your life, that door is the only 'perfect' door that could have been or the only door and path that belonged in your Life... or the only one that could have made sense in your life. I believe at the end of your life... the doors and pathways connect as one big life story that is uniquely yours and makes perfect sense in hindsight for You, and that is God. God is in all that. God is the great mystery, but in the end, God and your life all comes together into one true meaning for yourself. I believe we are all so blessed with our families, our church family, our jobs, our friends, and with each of our own unique lives. I believe that there is an overall good force with all of us all of the time, and that even in the darkest and worst moments, grace, healing, and truth will come. There are tragedies and accidents, heartbreak and pain, but God helps us through all that, too. I am grateful for each day and for every moment and person and experience that I've ever had, because it was a part of my life and it made me who I am today. I believe that every person's beliefs and values are sacred and that no one person is more right than another as far as their own experiences, beliefs, ideas and values for themselves.

—Rebecca Carol Conner Anderson

Offerings

July

July 5	\$2436.55
July 12	\$3210.00
July 19	\$1710.00
July 26	\$ 500.00

Total from pledges and other offerings - **\$7856.55**

Shortfall — \$2143.45

August

August 2	\$2143.90
August 9	\$1437.00
August 16	\$1011.87
August 23	\$1850.00
August 30	\$1985.00

Total from pledges and other offerings - **\$8426.87**

Shortfall — \$1573.13

The church needs about \$10,000 per month to cover our operating expenses.

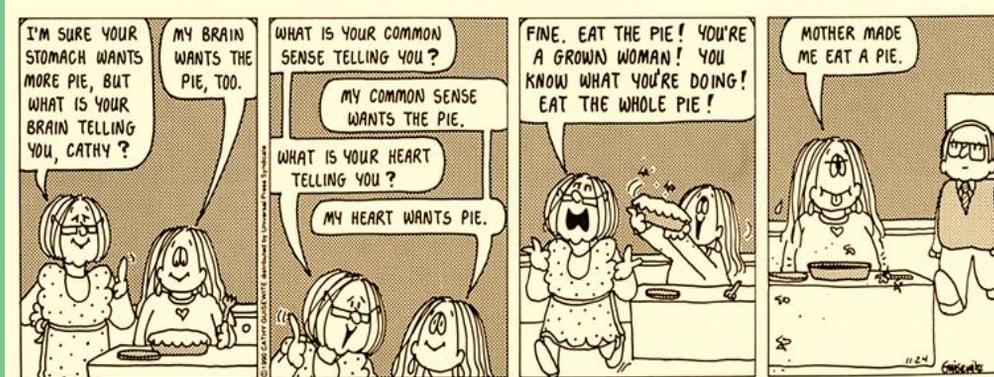
Thank you, everyone, for helping us make the budget during these difficult times! Although we received loans and we are meeting our budget, our giving has decreased.

Per Capita Dues Are Payable Now

We are now collecting per capita dues. They are **\$13.50 per member**. If you can't remember whether or not you have paid, please check with Deana Carter, Financial Secretary.

Birthdays/Anniversaries

Lee Meyer	1-Sep	Birthday
Bonnie and Curt Daly	1-Sep	Anniversary
Claudia Schmitt and David Conner	2-Sep	Anniversary
Kevin Meyer	9-Sep	Birthday
Matt Brozovich	9-Sep	Birthday
Lee Rains Thomas	13-Sep	Birthday
Joanne Dyer	15-Sep	Birthday
Marilyn Olson	15-Sep	Birthday
Chuck Parson	15-Sep	Birthday
Rod Gustafson	18-Sep	Birthday
Levi Meyer	18-Sep	Birthday
Christine Bland	29-Sep	Birthday
Owen Stocking	4-Oct	Birthday
Pam Cokins	17-Oct	Birthday
Fred Correll	19-Oct	Birthday
Antares Jeffares-Whitehead	20-Oct	Birthday



CALENDAR



- September 30: Anti-racism class at 7:00 p.m.
- October 1: **Nominations Meeting** at 9:00 a.m.
- October 4: **World Communion Sunday**.
This will be a Zoom worship and you will need to supply your own Communion elements.
- October 5: **Budget Meeting** at 6:30 p.m. Members of the budget committee will receive a Zoom link prior to the meeting.
- October 7: Anti-racism class. This will be our final class.
- October 10: **Deacons meeting** at 9:30 a.m. and **Trustees meeting** at 10:30 a.m. Members of these committees will receive a Zoom link on October 9.
- October 11: **Outdoor** and Zoom Worship.
- November 15: We will hold our **annual meeting** via Zoom. We will elect new committee personnel and approve the church budget for 2021. Committee heads, please send your report to the church no later than November 6. Please do not go to any trouble to format your report, since they will all be edited in a uniform style to be included in our meeting packet. Thank you!
- November 22: Service of Thanksgiving. This will be a Zoom service provided by the Rocky Mountain Conference. Pastor Claudia will be taking a vacation Sunday.
- November 29: **First Sunday in Advent**.



Our **online worship Zoom platform now requires a password.**

If you log onto the worship service with your computer, the link will take you directly into the Zoom room. But if you are calling in on a phone you will need the meeting ID and the password. We present gathering music beginning at 9:45. The following link will work for every worship Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/202624752?pwd=NUZSZVBByk43VSsrVzMrTnVTcXNWQT09>

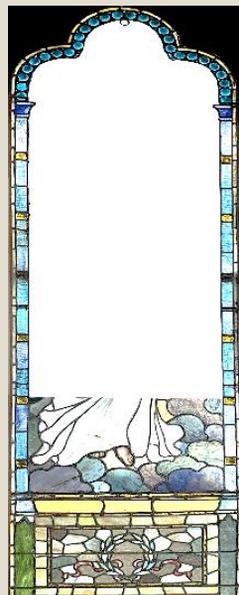
Meeting ID: 202 624 752. Passcode: 843308

You can use any of these numbers to call in: 1-215-8782, 1-346-248-7799, 1-669-900-6833.

DONATIONS TO THE ANGEL WINDOW FUND

You can now help restore our stained glass window by purchasing what our Trustees are calling “angel wing feathers”! Each feather can be purchased for \$50.00. So far, 136 angel wing feathers have been donated! (Yay!) You can make partial payments if that fits better in your budget. We will update you regularly on our stained glass window as our angel gets more of her wing feathers! You can donate to the window in the same way you are currently donating to the church. Just make sure to note on your check or envelope that it is for the stained glass window. Tithe.ly now has a tab for this donation. Thank you!

Our picture (at right) will grow upward as more donations are received!



“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

Abraham Lincoln

Mouse Morsels



Hello, all! Despite the warm weather, fall has in fact arrived! Here are some tidbits of news. [Kathie Curtis](#) had to leave her home in Silverton Oregon due to a wildfire evacuation. She wrote, "I headed to Seattle, where I was able to spend the next eleven days with my daughters there. Eleven days because the air quality in Silverton and Salem -- much of the Western part of Oregon -- stayed off the charts!!" Kathie is back home and she says she sure misses all of us! We miss you too! We are happy to report that [Spencer Rains](#) has a new job working as a janitor at the School of Mines! Way to go, Spencer. Speaking of new jobs, [Ro Rains](#) will transfer to a new position at Red Rocks Surgery Center in October. It's a raise, and closer to her house. We are happy for you, Ro! Due to the pandemic, [Skyler Sherry](#) was not able to travel to Cambodia to teach at a missionary school, but the good news is that she is now teaching autistic children for Denver Public Schools at Moore Elementary. We have no doubt that Skyler is a wonderful teacher. [Bella and Conner Anderson](#) returned to school at Parr Elementary, 5th and 1st grades, on Sept. 10. They are wearing masks and following all the COVID-19 rules. [The Anderson family](#) is going on a fall-break trip in October to a remote log cabin in Jasper, Colorado. Congratulations to [Joanne Dyer](#), who celebrated her 89th birthday and to [Marilyn Olson](#) who celebrated her 80th birthday! A small but high-quality group of friends gathered to celebrate with her on the walkway at the church. Wonderful! [Amanda Earle](#), is coping with some sleep and health issues and requests our prayers. We love you, Amanda. [Karen Parkinson](#) traveled with a good friend to Pagosa Springs earlier this month. It must've been great to find a change of scenery in a beautiful part of our state. [Fred Rollenhagen](#) drove his mom to Idaho so she could rendezvous with Fred's sister and then travel on to the Pacific Northwest. We hope that trip went well! [Chuck Parson](#) is painting murals [see photo] in his grandkids' bedrooms in their new home. What lucky grandkids! (Their parents will live there, too, but they aren't getting murals! ☺) Our [stained glass angel window](#) was safely removed and is now being restored by Scottish Glass Company. The glass is out of the soaking tank, it has been cleaned up and completely taken apart. A glass specialist is working on the face and the large drapery piece with the old bullet hole. They will start rebuilding the window in a week or so. We thank [Jim and Kathy Bartsch](#) for leading an excellent class on the history and legacy of racism and the ways we can be advocates for justice today. It has been heartbreaking to look at the legacy of racism but hopeful to see that many people are beginning to seek justice and seek changes in our institutions. We also thank the [Trustees](#), who continue to work hard dealing with various property issues. Though we are not gathering regularly in the building, the building is still requiring a lot of attention! Our [Christian Education Committee](#) met frequently this summer to create the "Be The Church" program for our entire congregation. Thank you, CE! Another big thanks to [Deana Carter](#) who continues to run the technology for our Zoom worship services. She is also producing the wonderful choir gallery musical presentations. It takes a lot of time and effort. [Susan Hèbert](#) traveled to Pensacola to visit her mom. Susan says the devastation from Hurricane Sally is dreadful. Susan's flight back to Denver was delayed for three days as an after-effect of the storm. Glad you made it home, Susan! Please continue to pray for [Renate and Vic Westfall](#) as Vic continues in hospice care. He has been moved to a new facility that offers a higher level of care. [Christine Bland's](#) sister, [Roxanne Taylor](#), continues to receive palliative care for cancer. Someday we will worship together again. In the meantime, please let us know what is happening in your life so we can all stay in touch. Love to you all!

