



Stefanie Riley

*The Story of Zacchaeus offers us a glimpse of what the grace of belonging looks like as it is offered and as it is received.*

**Week 3: "Belonging: All in All"** (Acts 2:43-47; 5:1-11) Mary Jane Wilson-Parsons

*Belonging is a word we sometimes apply to possessions. How are we to understand possessions in a community where all belong and are included?*

**Week 4: "Belonging: Building Trust"** (I Thessalonians 5:12-28) Mary Jane

*Belonging requires vulnerability and vulnerability requires trust. In a world that is often harsh and unforgiving, how do we open ourselves to each other?*

**Week 5: "Belonging: You Are Enough"** (Gen. 3:1-13, II Cor. 5:17-21) Stefanie

*Before we can authentically welcome another, we must first understand our own identity in Christ. Who does God say that we are?*

**Week 6: "Belonging: Getting to 'Us'"** (I Corinthians 12:12-27) Scott

*How do we transition from being a gathering of individuals to a body of believers, bound by the love of God and shaped by the nature of God through belonging to each other?*

*Come and join us as together we explore what it means to belong to God...and to each other.*

Scott

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# What Is “Proper Matter” for the Bread in United Methodist Celebrations of Holy Communion?

July 12, 2017

By [Taylor Burton-Edwards](#)

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click below to read more...

Source: [What Is "Proper Matter" for the Bread in United Methodist Celebrations of Holy Communion?](#)

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## **(De-)Humanizing God**

In the months between Advent and Easter, one of the most common themes is that in Christ, God became one of us—human. That is the essential story of Christ's birth in Bethlehem to a young woman named Mary. As we make our way through Epiphany, we are reminded that this human child, dependent and vulnerable, had to be protected during his young life as his parents became refugees in Egypt, seeking to escape the

jealous (and mad) king Herod. At a certain level we get that I suppose. And we get it again during Holy Week as Jesus is arrested, given a cursory trial and is executed. Indeed, sometimes I think that the efforts of some to dwell on the dehumanizing torture and death of Jesus is a way of trying to reclaim his humanity—to remind us that God isn't just "watching us from a distance" (ala Bette Midler's famous song), but rather that God really did become one of us.

But then we move into the rest of our year—the rest of our lives, and easily find ourselves stuck in the old habits of thinking of God in largely transactional and propositional ways. We do this when crux of our engagement with God comes in asking God for things (transactional) or making statements "about" God as if God "weren't in the room" (propositional).

The transactional view treats "God as Vending Machine" where I merely need to insert my coin (good works, prayer, etc.) and press the right buttons to get what I want. The Propositional view of God is like standing in an art gallery pondering a masterpiece, discussing the aspects of the piece with admiration and appreciation, but still engaging the piece as an object—an "it" to be discussed and understood. In either case, the God "who became flesh and dwelt among us" is dehumanized. J.B. Phillips would remind us that this sort of a God is too small. This is bad theology.

I know a lot of employer-employee relationships that are largely transactional. I show up, do my work and get paid. But can you imagine such a relationship with a friend? A spouse? I've been in hospital rooms where a physician (or a family



member) operated on a propositional basis and keeping a sort of professional distance from the one in the bed talking about the patient as if they weren't there. Would you do that with your beloved?

☒ The God who became one of us is fundamentally about being in relationship. And vulnerability characterizes that relationship. This means the relationship necessarily changes us. William Paul Young (author of "The Shack") says, "Relationships are entwined, entrenched, elusive, messy, enabling, enrapturing, maddening, exhilarating, frustrating, exposing, and too beautiful for words. There are moments when we think we might finally have a whisper of control over our world, and then—whoosh! in comes someone who knocks it completely sideways."

Have you been "knocked sideways" by God recently? Do you allow God to get that close or do you hold God at a safe distance? Are you capable of telling someone all about God, yet you don't really know God? How comfortable are you just sitting and being quietly in God's presence? At Seaside, let us invite one another into transformative relationship with the one who longs to be WITH us.

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**Have You Considered Rebooting?**



That's a common question that I ask when someone comes to me with a computer problem. It seems silly, but anyone who has had much experience with computers has discovered the "miracle" of rebooting to fix a frustrating computer issue. The fact of the matter is that computers, like people, are incredibly complex. As complexity increases, so, too, does the opportunity for things to go wrong. A transistor doesn't switch properly, one algorithm conflicts with another, or a tiny, obscure bit of code has a syntax error that the engineers missed. One error introduces a small drip (or even a cascade) of additional glitches, the computer slows to a crawl, and you contemplate which window through which you will hurl the frustrating device. Have you tried rebooting? Often as not, rebooting a computer can reset all the broken or disrupted processes.

I have never been one to make much over the turning of the calendar from December to January, but I have been thinking lately about rebooting. The year just past has been...well...complicated. I'm ordinarily active and healthy and have always been able to do pretty much what I wanted. But I write this sitting in a recliner just a bit more than 3 weeks after knee replacement surgery—and remembering that this wasn't even my only surgery of the year! In 2016 Mary Jane's father received a serious cancer diagnosis and is still undergoing treatments. And, as most of you know, we spent a month at the ICU bedside of our oldest son as he clung to life after a catastrophic work accident (He's still recovering, but I'm glad to say that the long-term signs are positive). And we're just one family. Many of you have faced as much or more than we. As the calendar changes to January from December, I roll that question over in my mind... "Have You tried rebooting?"

This is not to say that 2016 was an altogether bad year. I'm too optimistic to believe that any "year" is all bad. You—that is to say, our Seaside church family—have been amazing. As we, have faced personal and family challenges, you have stepped up. The year just past has been one of the most successful in the 27-year life of our church as we have seen increases in membership, attendance, mission and stewardship. The rain-delayed Country Fair ended up being a surprising success—though, all things considered, was it really a surprise? In spite of everything we face in life, God is Good. All the time.

So the calendar turns. For good or ill, the ball will drop in Times Square on New Year's Eve. We do not know what 2017 will bring any more than we knew what would come in 2016. So it's a good time to pause. Rest. Reflect. Repent. Embrace gratitude. Claim hope. To reboot calls us to each of these to one degree or another. The writer of Hebrews suggests that we "lay aside every weight and the sin which clings closely and run with perseverance the race that is set before us." But most importantly, he reminds us to look to Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

Scott

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## **Hurricane Matthew and Recovery Efforts**

During the early days of the recovery from the great South Georgia Floods, a Red Cross representative reminded us of a sobering fact. He said, "It's not a matter of whether you will be hit by a natural disaster, it's a matter of when." We have been fortunate to have lived here on the Southeast Coast of NC now for 7 ½ years without a hurricane. In contrast, during the

same time span in our last assignment, we had experienced no fewer than 5 named storms! We have now been reminded that there is no place that is or can be entirely safe from natural disasters.

Hurricane Matthew was easily the closest brush with a full blown hurricane that we have seen in this area in many years. Thankfully, local damage from the storm was, for the most part, less severe. However further West and North, Matthew dumped enormous amounts of rain on already saturated lands and rivers. As I write this, we wait for crests on the Tar, Neuse and other major rivers in Eastern North Carolina. Projections are that the flooding from Matthew may meet or exceed that of Floyd. The death toll in North Carolina has now reached 20. Major roads, including US 74 and I-95 have sections that are closed to traffic.

Beyond the state and region, Hurricane Matthew made a sustained and powerful direct hit on the Caribbean Islands of Haiti, Jamaica, Eastern Cuba and parts of the Bahamas. Haiti alone has reported over 800 fatalities. And the infrastructure damages to this poor island nation compounded the still unrepaired damage from a major earthquake seven years ago.

Having experienced disasters ourselves, and having led response and recovery efforts along the way, we have seen that these events can bring out both the best and the worst in us. Rumors easily circulate in an environment where accurate information is slow to arrive. Our inclination to fear and self-preservation can create a cocoon of selfishness and mistrust. But more commonly, we have seen inspiring scenes of neighbor helping neighbor—from sharing generator power to picking up debris to workteams from less affected areas traveling to areas with greater devastation. The book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is nothing more tragic than a solitary person going it alone—that together we are stronger, more capable, and even happier.



Therefore, as we move into the recovery phase from Hurricane Matthew, let me encourage you to bring out your best by participating in some way to the relief and recovery. Before the storm, we began collecting items for “Flood Buckets” (link below). A trip planned for the MERCI warehouse in Goldsboro to organize materials for recovery is slated for October 20. And there are always opportunities to contribute financially to the recovery efforts. You should know that **100% of gifts to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) go directly to the designated project.**

Below are a series of links offering ways you can help assist with recovery efforts in North Carolina and beyond. Please help.

## Links

- [Items for Flood Buckets](#)
- [Donate through Seaside United Methodist Church](#)

Use this link to send a gift to United Methodist Relief Efforts through the United Methodist Committee on Relief. This link will open a donation page. Enter your Disaster Relief donation in the box labeled “UMCOR–Haiti” and/or “UMCOR–North Carolina” to donate to the Caribbean response efforts or the NC Response efforts (you may enter donations in either or both). These donations will be forwarded by the church to the appropriate agencies and you will be acknowledged on your giving statement from the church.
- [Donate Directly through the North Carolina Conference](#)

Use this link to send a gift to United Methodist Relief Efforts through the North Carolina Conference, specifically for UMCOR relief efforts in North Carolina. These funds will be used directly by the NC Conference in North Carolina. You will be acknowledged for tax purposes by the NC Conference by email.

- [Donate Directly to the United Methodist Committee on Relief for International Matthew recovery efforts \(Caribbean islands including Haiti, etc.\)](#)

UMCOR provides relief services around the world. This link allows you to donate directly to the efforts in the Caribbean, such as Haiti. You will be acknowledged by email directly from UMCOR.

- [Donate Directly to the United Methodist Committee on Relief for US Matthew Recovery efforts](#)

This link will take you directly to the donation site for UMCOR to donate to Matthew relief efforts in the US—Florida, GA, SC, NC. You will be acknowledged by email directly from UMCOR.

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## [Louisiana Flood Assistance](#)



Photo from the Louisiana Conference webpage – courtesy of WBRZ-TV Reminder

Find out more about how you can assist our brothers and

sisters in Louisiana after the recent floods. We will receive a special offering during services on Sunday August 28. You may give online through our website's [Online Giving Portal](#) (select UMCOR as your donation designation) or follow the link below which will allow you to contribute directly through the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

[North Carolina Conference Disaster Recovery Page.](#)

or give directly through the [United Methodist Committee on Relief](#).

Blessings and thanks for your assistance.

Scott & MJ

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## [Country Fair 2016](#)



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someone new to our area recently and when she learned I was connected to Seaside, she brightened up and said, "Oh, I have heard about your fair and I can't wait!" For many, September means the ending of the summer season, the beginning of school, football season and (mercifully) cooler weather. But for us at Seaside—and for many in this community—September means Country Fair! Yes, it's that time again friends.

Many of you have signed up already to help out. Others are making arrangements to be at one or more of the events associated with the fair. For everyone, please check your calendar for the following dates:

- **September 9 (Friday 5:30–7:00 pm): “A Taste of Italy,”** Country Fair Kick-off Dinner in the Fellowship Hall. Join us for your choice of Meat or Vegetable Lasagna, salad, bread, drink and dessert. Pre-sale tickets are \$15 and are available now in the church office. ***Tickets will not be available at the door.***
- **September 11 (Sunday 4:00 pm): “Red White and Blue”** Our 2016 RWB Concert features “Letters from Home” a dramatic and musical tribute to World War II era Veterans. The appearance of this remarkable duet is courtesy of a grant from BEMC. Doors open at 3:15. There is no charge for the event, but a love offering will be received in support of the fair effort.
- **September 13 (Tuesday, 8:30 am): Country Fair Setup begins.** Tents start going up and tables moved into place.
- **September 14 (Wednesday, 8:30 am): Country Fair Setup Continues** as we begin moving merchandise into place. Trucks and hands needed.
- **September 15 (Thursday, 8:00 am): “All Hands on Deck”** Kick-off service will run from 8:00 to 8:30 am, then final setup for the fair begins. This involves moving many of our larger items, so extra pickup trucks and many hands are needed. Lunch for workers will be in the fellowship hall at noon.
- **September 16 (Friday, 7:00 am to 6:00 pm): COUNTRY FAIR!**
- **September 17 (Saturday, 8:00 am):** Live Auction begins at 10:00 am, Silent Auction closes at noon. Clean-up begins at 1:00 pm (***Hang around and help clean up if you can...PLEASE!***)
- **September 18, (Sunday, 10:00 am): “A Celebration of Unity,”** Join us for a single Sunday morning worship

service where we celebrate the unity that the fair represents for our congregation. Take the rest of the day off...you've earned it!

Remember the last day for Country Fair drop-offs is August 29, Last day for Pickups (scheduled in advance) is August 30.

We look forward to a great 2016 Country Fair.

Scott

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## **Bishop Palmer pulls no punches in the Episcopal address**

*After somewhat lackluster morning worship filled with multiple languages and liturgies of confession, Bishop Gregory V. Palmer rose to offer the episcopal address this morning at the Oregon Convent...*

Source: [Bishop Palmer pulls no punches in the Episcopal address](#)

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## **Gluten Free at Communion**

How does one fully practice their faith when the central act of their faith can cause serious health issues? This is an important question for many practicing Christians who are burdened



with a condition known as [Celiac disease](#). Celiac is an autoimmune disorder where exposure to a protein called Gluten can cause an extreme and painful reaction in the lining of the small intestine, preventing it from absorbing important nutrients. Though some may never have heard of Gluten, bread bakers have known for centuries about the properties of this substance (found in wheat) which gives bread its structure. Without gluten, bread wouldn't rise and hold its shape when baked. Gluten is a protein found in all wheat and most common grains.

This creates a dilemma for the church. Communion bread—whether we mean wafers, unleavened loaves or yeast loaves—is traditionally made from wheat flour (indeed, by canon law in the Roman Catholic Church, it MUST be made from wheat), meaning Celiac sufferers must either refrain from participating in communion or risk a potentially days-long attack of the disease. How do we seek to include these individuals fully in the sacrament?

In response and as a gesture of hospitality, many churches began offering gluten free alternatives at communion, as we did a number of years ago at our church. I will include a [link](#) to an [excellent article](#) from the magazine [Gluten Free & More](#)

that provides sources for Gluten Free communion bread (wafers) as well as a recipe for gluten free wafers that churches can use to make their own.

For churches who wish to provide a gluten free alternative to their communion services, it is important to take note of certain things.

- Remember that even the tiniest bit of gluten can cause a reaction in a Celiac patient, so:
  - Don't put the wafers on or in the same container as wheat based bread or wafers
  - Don't handle BOTH gluten free and wheat based bread or wafers to avoid cross-contamination (exposing gluten free wafers to wheat dust renders them no longer safely gluten free)
  - Do have an additional server to handle and serve the gluten free wafers.
- Remember the gift of hospitality
  - If your practice is to have more than one serving station, have a gluten free server at each station (we generally have 2-4 stations with 3 servers at each station, Gluten Free, Traditional, and the Cup). This way the person who requires the gluten alternative may move to the serving stations with those she/he is sitting with rather than having to "swim upstream" to find the gluten free station. It also prevents the person from feeling isolated or conspicuous because of their disease. I have been in services with four stations where the gluten free alternative was merely left on the table in the front with the instructions being little more than "if you need it, here it is."
  - Consider the possibility of having one or more (or all) your communion services be gluten free each year. Logistically or in a large church this can be a challenge, but can also be a supreme act of



generosity and hospitality.

- Make note of the availability of the gluten free alternative at every service where it is offered (but without calling attention to a person or persons who may have the disease). Guests who are gluten free will appreciate knowing that it is available. This note may be made in the bulletin, but should also be announced as the body is invited to receive.
- Educate yourself and your congregation. Be an advocate.
- You likely will discover that there are more folks who will appreciate this than you realized. Some will be Celiac patients, others may be vegan (Gluten Free wafers are generally also vegan, meaning no meat, dairy or by-products, whereas traditional bread often contains egg or possibly milk), some simply prefer wafers to bread.

For more information, visit the website of [Celiac.org](http://Celiac.org).

For Gluten free communion bread sources and recipes, visit [http://www.glutenfreeandmore.com/issues/4\\_43/Gluten-Free-Bread-of-Life-4674-1.html](http://www.glutenfreeandmore.com/issues/4_43/Gluten-Free-Bread-of-Life-4674-1.html)

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## **The Value of Teamwork**

*A Devotion for Seaside's United Methodist Men, February 1, 2016*

Paul says in I Corinthians 12:

***"Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it."***





I mentioned in worship a week ago our son Thomas, who is a software engineer in Raleigh. Like his dad, he is a true computer geek, though I suspect I'm more hardware and he's more software.

One of the big differences between he and I though, is seen in our approach to computer games. He has always been into computer games. I'm not. I prefer pinball, frankly, to any computer game I've ever played. Look at my phone and you'll see two games, solitaire and mahjong. But he was always into computer games. And I was always like—why are you wasting your time! But he was going to be a programmer, he had talent and I knew he could do it, so I didn't get too bent out of shape most of the time.

Then I read an article that said that some companies—especially software companies love to hire these gamers. Do you know why? Not because they are computer geeks...no that wasn't it. It was because they understood working in teams.

So I started paying attention to his gaming. And his character had certain skills and strengths but lacked others. And before going on a quest or engaging in some challenge, he would go online and recruit others—being sure to recruit people with

characters who had the skills that were needed for the quest. And I watched a couple of these quests, and they exhibited really intricate forms of teamwork—I never imagined a game could be so socially complex. So now he's graduated from NC State with a degree in Computer Science and Engineering and he goes to work for this company that parlays his teamwork skills as much as his programming skills in a development process called "Agile." And I've watched him work. He hadn't been there long enough to get a lot of paid time off, so he took his computer and worked remotely over Christmas. And I really have been amazed. Even more so as I continue to think of our church—this church as the body of Christ.

Teamwork...everybody pulling together. We saw it when we took down the risers the other day. We've seen it in the interplay between contractors this week. We see it whenever we have a death in the family—in the church—some of us are directly involved in meeting with the family, planning the service, putting it together. Some of us do the music, others go by the house and visit and offer support, others prepare the reception, others following up with visits or calls, or maybe as a Stephen minister.

Team work. It's another way of saying that we are the body of Christ, and individually members of it. None of us can go it alone. We need each other. We are better because of each other. May you and we never forget it.