



# Spirit Connection

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | DEWEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | FEBRUARY 2019

## How To Identify A Genuine Miracle

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The term miracle describes something that causes wonder. It is usually used in reference to an event that defies logical explanation and appears to be the work of a higher force, suggesting a reality beyond the five senses.

1. **Disregard most minor situations.** The fact should indicate a situation that involves life threatening, suffering, or an immediate threat.
2. **Look for a lack of predictability.** A positive outcome should be needed and wanted, but not expected. Miracles tend to occur "out of the blue".
3. **Evaluate the outcome.** Miracles achieve a life-giving purpose; they never occur outside the will of God. Suffering is relieved, God is glorified, Jesus' presence is made manifest, the lowly are lifted up, evil is thwarted, creation is revealed, or life is saved.
4. **Look for a divine agency.** The ability to make a miracle happen, to guarantee the results, or to take credit for it is beyond human.
5. **Adopt a wait-and-see perspective.** While waiting to make the call—pondering the event in your heart will enhance your faith journey.

## Be Aware

The most overlooked miracle is that God shows up in everyday life events and in such ordinary forms as bread, juice, water, words, and people. The miracle of life in Jesus Christ is a daily event and should be regarded as a free gift.

## Church Events

### COMING UP...

- Feb. 2**  
10 am Leadership Training in Claremore, OK.
- Feb. 3**  
10 am Children
- Feb. 10**  
10 am Workers Winter Jam
- Feb. 12**  
5 pm Food Pantry Meeting
- Feb. 17**  
10 am Tempted Prayer Service for the Way Forward
- Feb. 23**  
8 am Emergency Response Training in Claremore, OK.
- Feb. 24**  
10 am Overlooked  
2 pm Movie Night

### WEEKLY EVENTS

#### Sundays

- 9 am Sunday School  
10 am Worship  
6:30 pm Chick-Lits

#### Wednesdays

- 5 pm One:10 Youth  
6 pm Choir Practice



# Soul Searching

## *A Message from Bishop Jimmy Nunn*

During the holiday break, I spent more time reflecting on my personal goals, looking inside myself to see where I am in relationship to where God wants me to be.

I realized some things that I had thought important were merely passing interests. And I resolved to realign my living with what God desires that I do.

I recommend you, too, practice sincere self-evaluation about your Christian journey. Where are you spiritually in your life? It was easy to deceive myself into thinking that I had everything together — or at least had valid reason to complain about my life. The mindset I was carrying was like that of Job, whose story requires a whole book in the Old Testament.

Job spent the better part of 37 chapters complaining, defending himself, and seeking to justify his thoughts and behaviors.

But in the midst of challenging God, he had to do some self-reflecting, too. So I have chosen Job 38:1-3 as the theme of this article. “Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind: ‘Who is this darkening counsel with words lacking knowledge? Prepare yourself like a man; I will interrogate you, and you will respond to me.’” The concept is so important that it is repeated in Job 40:7.

The words of the desert fathers also informed my self-searching. They were early Christian hermits who chose

to live as ascetics in the desert lands of the Middle East. Some organized in communities, with an abba (father) as their leader.

Self-reflection takes time, because it is so easy instead to self-justify. One of my favorite sayings is from Abba John the Little: “We have abandoned a light burden, namely self-criticism, and taken up a heavy burden, namely self-justification.”

I ask myself: Where am I showing signs of carrying a heavy burden? How am I seeking to justify myself in that?

Self-justification reveals itself in strained relationships. When I was younger, I would mentally replay arguments, imagining how I would respond differently with an insight that proved my point or belittled the other person in order to emerge the winner in the word battle. Yet I doubt most people in the actual conversations even knew I was upset, because I didn’t express my thoughts or feelings. Thankfully, I have grown since those days and have learned to spot that downward spiral.

Another desert father, Evagrius Pontikos, wrote, “And do not abandon yourself to anger in such a way that you dispute in your thoughts with the one who has vexed you.”

His statement made me aware that self-evaluation far too often followed a

destructive loop pattern for me. Once I comprehended the meaning of that insight, I learned to recognize when it intruded on my personal reflections.

Now I ask myself: Am I having an internal argument with anyone? If so, how can I bring that to resolution? Two other proverbs by desert fathers help me seek better alignment for my life. Abba Poemen said, “Teach your mouth to speak what is in your heart.”

In a similar vein, Abba Elias said, “Unless the mind sings with the body, the labor is in vain.”

These sayings help me reflect on how well I am living in relationship with God.


I regularly examine myself, seeking to recall specific examples of alignment and misalignment and then adjust my thinking and move forward as a Christian. I suggest this practice to you, noting the approach of the Christian season of Lent, a formal period for self-reflection and fasting.

In Job 42:4, Job repeats the question that God asked of him. But then he responds as one who has had a fresh encounter with God, not as one making a complaint.

Job responds, “My ears had heard about you, but now my eyes have seen you.”

Setting aside time for self-reflection has helped me. I hope that sharing these insights may be helpful to you.

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**HEAR THEIR VOICES**

A sermon series on listening to the voices of people we wouldn't normally hear.

February 3 — Listening to Children  
February 10—Listening to Workers  
February 17—Listening to the Tempted  
February 24—Listening to the Overlooked



# Perfect?

*You don't have to be perfect to strive for Christian Perfection.*

This summer, if I get approved for ordination, I will be asked two questions that on the surface are impossible to know or answer; "Are you going on to perfection?", and "Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?"

The reality is that we may need to define what perfection is in this context. The word perfection conjures up many different images, so this can be a difficult topic to breach and understand. When John Wesley talked about Christian perfection, he was not talking about human perfection. He wasn't talking about having a perfectly clean house, or always making the right decision. In fact to talk about Christian perfection in general, we must begin by saying what it isn't, before we can explain what it is.

Christian perfection is not freedom from ignorance. If someone reaches a point of Christian perfection, they are not given all the answers to all of the world's woes. It is not freedom from mistakes. This is especially true, since they were not given all of the answers and are operating from their own limited scope of knowledge. Sometimes when faced with a very difficult scenario, there is no fully right decision or action; realistically, some decisions are based on the lesser of two evils. Christian perfection is not freedom from temptation. Temptation will always be around, just like a recovering alcoholic will continue to be tempted by alcohol if it is present. Finally, Christian perfection is not something one attains and keeps for the remainder of their natural life. "As United Methodists we believe in and practice backsliding," therefore even if and when a person does reach a state of Christian perfection, it is not a fair assumption that they will stay in that state, but that makes them no less Christian.

Christian perfection is a moment, however fleeting, when someone operates purely from the motive of love and is an accurate reflection of God's love in the world, to the world around them. Christian perfection in this sense is difficult to attain, but it is attainable; and as Christians we are all striving for that lofty goal. Let us strive together.

Rev. Jinx M. Barber  
Pastor  
Dewey United Methodist Church



## Dream Big!

*God calls us to do BIG things.*

*- A message from Pastor Jinx*

How cool would it be if we ended hunger in Dewey?

That is not some far off pipe dream, we could really pull it off. Think about it; out of the 3,500 people in Dewey, many do not face food insecurity, so we aren't feeding everyone, but the ones that do, desperately need the assistance.

If just the churches in the Dewey Ministerial Alliance were to help do a canned food drive one month out of the year, and we teamed with a couple of local businesses and groups, we would have quite a bit of food. That doesn't even count what we would be bringing to the food pantry.

I get to brag on this congregation all the time, but I'm pretty sure that ending hunger in our town would open the eyes of more churches to the possibility that even big problems can be met head on, with a little bit of teamwork and dedication.

We will begin collecting canned and non-perishable food during Lent. Until then, I ask that you pray for this new ministry. Pray that it may reach those in need, pray that it meets the needs of the hungry, pray that it helps people to know that Jesus loves them and so do we.

There is nothing more life-changing than grace, and you can be the vessel that delivers grace, and the hope and love to it brings people that may not have ever experienced it.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

- We always love to see new faces trying new things. If you would like to **volunteer** for the Children's Ministry, Liturgist, Communion Steward or any other position, please speak with Jinx or contact the office and we will get you trained up and ready to go.

- Lost arts: **Quilting** will continue at **2 pm Saturdays**. If you missed the first meeting, contact the office for a list of items needed. Clois Bengé will lend her expertise on how to put together comfy covers.

- The **Church Leadership Training Event** will be Saturday, **Feb. 2** from **10 am– 3 pm** at Claremore First UMC. Training will be offered to those on the SPRC, Trustee, Finance, Ad Council, Lay Leaders, Lay Members and Lay Servants. Please contact the office if you wish to attend. The registration is \$10 (which covers lunch and childcare) and the **deadline** is **Jan. 31**.

- The Bartlesville area UMC's will be **joining** together at **First Church Bartlesville** at **5 pm** on **Feb. 17, 2019** for a prayer service to pray for the delegates as they discern a way forward for our denomination. We would love to see as many people from each church attend this service of unity.

- **All this month** we will have a place for you to take fun pictures in the foyer. We will play these pictures prior to worship each Sunday.

- An **Emergency Response Team Training** will be Saturday, **Feb. 23** from **8 am – 4 pm** at FUMC Claremore Fellowship Hall. This is a mandatory training in order to serve on an OKVIM disaster mission. Registration is \$25 and includes lunch and a T-shirt. The **deadline** is set for **Feb. 18**. For additional information contact the office.

- We will host a **Movie Night** at **2 pm Feb. 24**. We will show "What If" and "How to Train Your Dragon". We will have popcorn during the movie and we will make ice cream sundaes afterwards. All ages are welcome.

- We have some exciting news! We have updated our church management software. Please take time to fully fill out the Connection Card so we can update your records.

- Mark your calendar now, Our **Ash Wednesday Service** will be on March 6th at 6pm. The youth will be using a modern interpretation of the stations of the cross. Please join us as we prayerfully enter the Lenten season.

## CARDS & LETTERS

Do you know someone who is stuck at home, in a nursing home, in a hospital, college or in jail? Would that person benefit from personal notes from caring church members? If so, please let the church office know so we can be sure and add them to this list:

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