



Restore
Unto Me
the *Joy*...



Doylestown
Presbyterian Church

Lenten Devotional for 2025

Introduction

Friends and Members of DPC, we welcome you to the Season of Lent. Our Book of Common Worship reminds us that it “is a time of growth in faith - through prayer, spiritual discipline, and self-examination in preparation for the commemoration of the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This booklet of collected devotions are written by your peers at DPC. Specifically those who have been called to serve as Deacons in the church. I asked the Deacons to reflect on a time in their life when they credited God with restoring joy within them. I want to express my appreciation to them for sharing their stories of life and faith with us.

Benjamin Fischer & Cedric Kanana in their book *Joy Renewed* say “*Joy is inseparable from the human story. But if we forget our story, we also lose the knowledge of how joy is meant to fit. In order for any people to know itself truly, remembering its story is essential.*”

It is my prayer that reading these stories of God’s restorative joy will prompt your own memories and awareness of God’s restorative work in your life.

May this little booklet help us to push back on isolation and find joy in our human connectedness through Christ’s church.

Lord, restore unto us the joy of our salvation. Amen.

—Rev. Dr. Mac Schafer



Saturday, March 8



Read the **Psalm** below with the following questions in mind:

- What is a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to me?
- Does the passage prompt a memory from my life?
- What is Christ calling me to do through this passage?

Psalm 51

Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon

- 1** Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy,
blot out my transgressions.
- 2** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

- 3** For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4** Against you, you alone, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- 5** Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 6** You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- 7** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8** Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- 9** Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10** Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- 11** Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- 12** Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
- 13** Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
- 14** Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
- 15** O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16** For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
- 17** The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- 18** Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem;
- 19** then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Monday, March 10



Karen Cameron
The Sparrows

In third grade at Doylestown Presbyterian, I received my Good News Bible. I loved looking through it and reading scriptures associated with the illustrations. This is how I found my favorite verse in the Bible: Luke 12:6: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.” This has become my “go to” verse whenever I feel lost and need to remember that I am important in

the eyes of God and am never alone. This brings a sense of comfort, peace, and joy. I matter to God! We all matter to God!

Heading off to college can be a time of anticipation, excitement, nervousness, and loneliness. I felt all those things going to Dickinson College. A place not too far from home, but far enough away that home was not easily accessible, especially as a freshman without a car. This was in the days before email, cell phones, and instant communications. I was on my own, away from all that was familiar. I had my Good News Bible along with me so I could refer to it when I needed comfort. I found myself frequently referencing my now bookmarked page in Luke, and felt much better about my new college life. No matter where you are, you are not alone.

There are times when one can feel lost or alone in the path of life. Always remember the sparrows to find comfort and joy again.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may we always feel your presence, even when we feel alone. Amen.

Tuesday, March 11



Carol Tetteimer
A Time When God Restored Joy

When Pastor Mac asked us to reflect on a time when God restored joy, I first had to give meaning to the word “joy.” To me, it is more than a synonym for happiness. It goes much deeper and suggests a prayerful response.

Any time I am in nature, God’s creation, especially when alone, I find a peacefulness that comes from the joy of knowing that God is here. One of my favorite places to meditate is next to the creek that flows in front of our little cabin in the Poconos. When my husband was stationed in Vietnam, during the war, I came to this spot and found my fears replaced with joy in the knowledge that God was with him in that far land.

As we move to a deeper spiritual relationship through sharing with others in our community, taking part in bible study and mission, increasing our prayer life and reflecting on the goodness of God, I feel our joy will be increased.

Prayer: Dear Father, may we know in our hearts the joy that you have intended for us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Wednesday, March 12



David Martin

Though similar, I do believe that there is a difference between joy and happiness. To me, happiness is a temporary feeling. Something happens in our life that gives us a positive sensation; however, the feeling begins to fade rather quickly after a few days. On the other hand, I believe joy is a long-lasting, maybe even permanent, bliss that is felt deep within the body and mind.

The Philadelphia Eagles winning the Super Bowl brought me happiness. Meeting my wife is what brought me joy.

There was a time in my life when I felt that joy had been lost from me. Watching my father battle stage 4 colon cancer for over 8 years was a very difficult time in my life. Though he inspired me in so many ways throughout his heroic battle against the disease, it also led me to some pretty dark days. I knew that I was losing my father and best friend.

I can't really explain why or how but one day, I decided that it was time to start praying to God. My attitude became more positive and I was able to start offering the support to my family that they needed so desperately.

This is also about the time when God brought my wife Maureen into my life. This is really where I credit God for restoring the joy within me. Maureen was a blessing to me. Not only did we grow to love each other, but she also made me want to become a better person each day. We started a new life together by getting married, making a home, and creating a family with the births of our two beautiful daughters, Adeline and Finley. It is a joy that only God could have brought to me. Though life has certainly brought us trying days as well, including the day we eventually lost my father, each day has been brighter by having her by my side.

Even at the darkest moments where I had felt lost, God shined a light on me and restored joy within me. For this, I am eternally grateful.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for finding me in my time need and restoring joy within my life and heart. May all people be blessed by you in creating a clean heart and renewing a right spirit within. Amen.

Thursday, March 13



Jane Kube
God Gives Us Joy

I credit God with joy because it is He who gives it to me. Whenever I feel joy, I thank God for all He has done to create it. I know that He is always looking out for my best interests and wants what's best for me. God gives me joy whenever He is proud of me and wants me to know He knows that I am doing the best that I can and that He appreciates me.

God gives me joy in happy and sad situations. He makes sure I feel joy when it is needed and when I am sad, He shows me the beauty in life and makes me feel better. Joy reminds me that God is here and that He loves me.

Prayer: I pray for everyone who is experiencing a lack of joy and I hope they know that they will have joy in their life again soon. Amen.



Friday, March 14



Read **John 15:1-13** below then answer the following questions:

- What's a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to you?
- Does the passage prompt a memory from your life?
- What is Christ calling you to do from the passage?

Jesus the True Vine

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. **2** He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. **3** You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. **6** Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7** If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. **10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **11** I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Monday, March 17



Michele Hoffman
More Than I Imagined: A Story of God's Faithfulness

There was a season in my life when I felt deeply fulfilled and yet was quietly (or sometimes not so quietly!) longing. My twenties were filled with adventure—friendships that felt like family, a church that gave me an incredible community, mission work in Africa that stretched my faith, and even the thrill of Ironman triathlon training. God had blessed me with a rich and vibrant life, and yet... I had always envisioned settling down, meeting a husband, and starting a family. As the years passed, that dream remained just out of reach. I tried to trust God's timing, but I also wrestled with moments of discouragement, wondering if my desire for marriage would ever be fulfilled.

Then, in His perfect way and time, God brought my husband Henry into my life – I was 29, and it was exactly a year to the day after my beloved Grandmother (and strong woman of faith) passed away. Looking back, I can see how He was preparing both of us—shaping our hearts and growing us into who we needed to be for one another. The companionship, love, and beautiful chaos of life with three little boys that we now enjoy are reminders of God's goodness and His ability to give abundantly more than we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

This sometimes winding path to what I dreamt of for my life has deepened my trust in God's faithfulness. While waiting is never easy, I have more confidence than ever that His timing is always best. Whether we are longing for community, healing, or direction, we can rest in the truth that God sees the desires of our hearts and cares for us deeply. Psalm 37:4 reminds us to "delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." As we place our trust in Him, He not only provides for our needs but restores our joy in ways that reflect His perfect love.

Prayer: Lord of All, I commit to You all the hopes and dreams and plans I have, that You would fulfil them according to Your perfect will and in Your perfect timing. Amen.

Tuesday, March 18



Kevin M. O'Hare

My mom passed away from a cancer in 2001. She was living here in Doylestown near us while she dealt with the challenge of her illness. During this period, she spent a great deal of time with my three kids. My oldest son took her grocery shopping. My middle son helped her clean her apartment. My youngest daughter went for drives in search of the most beautiful Azaleas with her grandmother.

It may sound strange, but I am truly grateful for the time I got to spend with mom while she was in intensive care nearing the end of her battle. All the lifelong pretense that can build up between family members was gone. We spoke openly and honestly for the first time in a very long time. She showed a kind of strength and pragmatism that I admire while still being emotionally available.

Mom's brother, my Uncle Dan and I cleaned out mom's apartment together after she passed. I gave my Uncle Dan mom's Ford Taurus because he admired her car. A little Romanian lady who had just emigrated was pulling items we were discarding out of the dumpster and taking them to her apartment, so we just moved those items straight to her new empty home. It was a joy to see that happen.

Mom was a teacher and kept her papers well organized. It gave me great joy to find her daily grateful list (thank you God). Each day she found seven things to be grateful for and kept track. What a wonderful gift to receive at such a difficult time.

Prayer: God please help me each day to be grateful for the days you have given us, the successes we enjoy, the relationships that we cultivate and the challenges that we overcome in as honest and sincere a way as my mom was able to. Amen.

Wednesday, March 19



Margaret Thoresen, Interim Parish Visitor
Going Back Home

I grew up in a small town in Western New York, on the Canadian border. I attended the Presbyterian Church there. I was baptized, confirmed and married in that Church. When I went away to college I continued attending church. At some time in my 20's I started drifting away and stopped going to Church on a regular basis.

When my daughter was young, I decided to start going to church again. Well, I thought that I decided but I am now confident that it was God who brought me back.

The first Sunday that I attended Doylestown Presbyterian Church was in the fall. I climbed the stairs and stood at the back of the Sanctuary. Sunlight was streaming through the stained glass windows. As I stood looking, a wonderful feeling of complete joy came over me. I was home!

Prayer: Thank you God for not giving up on me – for leading me home. Amen.



Thursday, March 20



Kyle Citro

God has given me joy throughout numerous moments in my life, but the most important example for me was when I found the church and truly became a follower of Christ. My faith up to that point was not strong so to speak as I was only in 3rd-4th grade, but in the years that followed I solidified a

relationship with God and the church as well that only grew as time went on. When I grew older and realized how much this devotion truly meant to me and the principles I live by, it was a joy that will always be present. It solidified my faith as a Christian and made me see how present God can be if you just look for him. I will always cherish the moments with the church, and I am forever grateful for finding Christ at such a young age as it has molded me into who I am today.

Pertaining to the scripture, I thought it was very powerful and moving. It shows that God is always present and willing to fill your life with joy, you just have to look. I liked how connective the scripture can be to everyone, as many if not all people can relate to this scripture and apply it to their own life. Its meaning is deep and broad, and its words are important for any follower of Christ, as a reminder that God is there for you is always crucial.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I thank you for your everlasting presence in my life and your overwhelming joy that you bring to me and all followers of Christ. Amen.

Friday, March 21



Read **Philippians 1:1-11** below then answer the following questions:

- What's a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to you?
- Does the passage prompt a memory from your life?
- What is Christ calling you to do from the passage?

Salutation

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

3 I thank my God for every remembrance of you, **4** always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy **5** for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. **7** It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, for all of you are my partners in God's grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the tender affection of Christ Jesus. **9** And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight **10** to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, **11** having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Monday, March 24



Bob Miller

Finding joy... finding the presence of God ... moments can be subtle and almost missed, moments that sweep over you when you least expect them and then come with a great wave of awe.

There are moments I look back on and see the hand of God. There are the medical moments, reading a verse as I waited for a ride to see a doctor who, after poking around, sent me off to the ER and had an appendix removed. The words I read, *"I made you and I will take care of you."*

Forty-five years later, another doctor, another trip to the ER, a time of being in serious condition with all kinds of wires and things beeping. There was a sense of calm. I knew what was going on from the doctors. I was not aware until afterwards how serious things really were. Yet, there was calm surrounding me. The hand of God was there in the care of pastors and a great cloud of prayer rising.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit. —Psalm 51:10-12

Singing is a big part of my life. The Psalm we are taking inspiration from is filled with words that have been set so many times to music. I do not "read" the words—they sing in my head as I see them on the page. There are so many moments of joy in the singing I am part of. There is the singing family here at DPC which was my first connection way back in college. There is the other singing family of the Philadelphia Gay Men's Chorus where I make the trip every Wednesday evening to sing with a special family. The songs I sing can be words from scripture, words of empowerment and even words about a million dreams. (bonus points if you know what musical that is from...)

Prayer: Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. Amen.

Tuesday, March 25



Kristin Shields

I felt God given joy in my life when my first grandchild was born a year ago. My daughter lives in CA and I had the privilege and honor of being in the delivery room to support her. Given the fact that she went into labor on Christmas morning, our faith and Christ's birth were already consuming our thoughts! We attended their neighborhood church the night before and I prayed for a safe delivery. It was a very small Presbyterian church and a magical candlelight ceremony. I proudly told the pastor that we were to become grandparents "any day" and to keep us in his prayers!

Her initial labor went smoothly, but eventually she needed a C-Section after complications and MANY hours of labor, which was a great disappointment to everyone. At times, the baby's heartbeat was dropping and we continued to pray. I was sure we were having a Christmas baby, but due to the surgery, she was born at 2 am on the 26th. It was a long and difficult day, but the pure God given joy when you first meet your grandchild is beyond words. It truly is a gift from heaven and a miracle from God.

I felt God's presence in that delivery room and believe with all my heart in the power of prayer! We are so grateful for competent medical staff and our strong faith that she was in good hands!

Wednesday, March 26



Quin Tetterer

Even if I go through some dark and depressing times in life, I have the joy that Jesus died for me and in him my sins are washed away. I think one time God and Jesus gave me joy was when I started doing Unified Track in Spring, 2022. This made me happy and brought joy back to me after my Grandpop died in Summer of 2021.

I find joy in the friendships I have made in Element at DPC. One of my favorite bible verses is John 3:16.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish and have eternal life.”

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for showing me the joyful things in life during tough times. Amen.



Thursday, March 27



Barbara Skapura

I've been doing months of physical therapy for pain, which made it very difficult to get outside for a walk. There was some improvement, but not enough to allow me to get back to my usual routine. About a week ago, after a particularly painful couple of days, things seemed much better so I decided to give it a go. To my surprise, I was able to enjoy a pain free walk and to return to the joy of being outside, breathing the cold air, hearing the rushing water of the stream and watching the birds again. It was an incredibly peaceful and freeing feeling and it gave me hope.

Here's what I thought of that reminded me of this experience - the second verse of the *Hymn to Joy* by Beethoven: "All Thy works with joy surround Thee, Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays, Stars and angels sing around Thee, Center of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, Flowery meadow, flashing sea, Chanting bird and flowing fountain, Call us to rejoice in Thee."

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who help others to heal and for the joy of nature. Amen.



Friday, March 28



Read **Romans 15:7-13** below then answer the following questions:

- What's a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to you?
- Does the passage prompt a memory from your life?
- What is Christ calling you to do from the passage?

The Gospel for Jews and Gentiles Alike

7 Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. **8** For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the ancestors **9** and that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will confess you among the gentiles and sing praises to your name"; **10** and again he says, "Rejoice, O gentiles, with his people"; **11** and again, "Praise the Lord, all you gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him"; **12** and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the gentiles; in him the gentiles shall hope." **13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Monday, March 31



Amy Pujols

How Compassion and Kindness Restored My Joy in Life after Loss

It's not easy to find joy in daily life when I often feel like I'm swimming against a strong current. For the record, I'm not the strongest of swimmers. It's in those challenging times that I try to put my trust in God and in his plan. I look for ways to find joy in the smallest of things, a beautiful day, a great meal, a nice conversation with a friend. During my group training to become a Deacon each of us talked about the churches we had attended in the past. It was such a pleasure to reflect on all the churches I had been a part of over the years and more importantly; to remember all the people I had met in these different congregations. Each one of them had enriched my life in their own unique way.

Unfortunately, like too many parents, I've had to face the devastating loss of a child. My oldest son Alex passed away last year at 23 after a battling cancer for six years. Alex was a true gift from God to our family. Alex was baptized, confirmed, and was part of Troop 24 at DPC. When he was first diagnosed, I prayed that he would live a long and meaningful life, but God had a different plan. At times like these, it's quite easy to lose hope, abandon joy, and question why. I experienced lots of joy in all the things Alex and I did together during his short life and accumulated a lifetime of wonderful memories. He always had joy, laughter, and a smile each day. He dealt with his diagnosis fearlessly and valiantly. I'm so grateful for the support of my DPC church family. Their love and kindness helped me get through this tough time. With each act of kindness during his illness and after he passed, I felt God's presence restoring hope within me. All the cards, hugs, visits, and prayers lifted me up. In December of last year, the DPC Board of Deacons setup a fund in Alex's honor to help local families in need. Over the holidays a family was assisted by the fund. It brings me great joy to know that my son Alex will be remembered through this fund and that people in need will be helped in his honor.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the joy and blessing of being part of Your church. I am so grateful for the community of believers You've placed around me, for the love, encouragement, and support we share as we walk together in faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, April 1



Jennifer Drollette
The Joys of My Life

Is Joy different than Happiness? For me, the definition of Joy is the ability to seek meaning and purpose in the gift of my precious life. Joy brings more satisfaction than happiness as it endures hardship and trials and connects with meaning and the purpose of life. There have been times in my life that I have credited God with restoring joy within me and my life.

I am blessed that God restores joy within me being a mother/parent to my sons, Evan, and Liam. Being a parent has brought me a profound sense of purpose, connection, and fulfillment that outshines momentary experiences of happiness. It is the enduring feeling that I have received from the witnessing of the boys' growth as infants into becoming men, the experience of nurturing another life, and to the building of an unbreakable bond over time.

God has and continues to provide happiness to me being a parent, but I experience more than that happiness God has credited me with joy! Joy persists even in the challenging moments. While many sleepless nights and worries still continue today, I love being a parent because of the joy that I receive; joy that is rooted in love, in meaning, and in the deep emotional investment that comes with raising a child. For me that joy occurs daily because of my two amazing sons. In short, happiness with children comes in bursts of time and experiences but joy is woven into the fabric of my everyday life with them.

Prayer: Dear Lord, restore the light of happiness in my heart as I interact with my children, may our family bond be strengthened with genuine joy and may we experience the peace and presence of your spirit in our everyday lives. Amen.

Wednesday, April 2

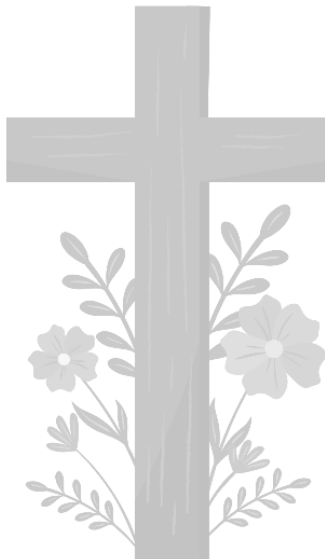


Dot Fabian

Joy for me is definitely different than happy. Happy is a good cup of coffee or a delicious scoop of your favorite ice cream - kind of in the moment. But Joy is soul felt, it reaches deep into your body, your heart, bringing you to an awe inspiring peace. This is the joy I feel when I witness a baptism. Seeing parents presenting their child or an adult, reaching that point in their lives when they say "a relationship with God matters." They want that mercy, joy and grace either for their child or themselves.

A good pastor once said "we are just one generation away from losing our religion." We need to pass on that faith, that joy, that salvation that we can only receive from having a relationship with a God who continually restores us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are humbled and grateful for the many joyful opportunities we can experience when our hearts are opened to you. Amen.



Thursday, April 3



Mark Chaikin
Not My Plan

When I was asked to be a Deacon in 2021, I had only been a member of DPC for 3 years. I had only been a Christian for 3 years. I thought, "Why me? What do I know? What do I have to offer?" There were countless others here who knew more, could offer more. But something told me to say yes.

Was it recalling what Dr. Willingham told us in Stepping Stones back in 2018? "Get involved." I walked into Cancel Choir practice that September. I was involved. It makes me happy. But was it enough?

We were the "Covid Class" of 2024. We went through our training on Zoom. We had meetings on Zoom. Then the world started to open up again. They needed Deacons to deliver worship services to nursing home residents. No way. I still recalled as a young teen visiting my grandmother in the nursing home every Saturday. She suffered a massive stroke and just sat in her chair with a feeding tube. That was not for me. I wasn't interested in churning up those painful memories.

But again, something told me to say yes. I went, kicking and screaming (in my head). I was full of anxiety. But it brought me joy! It still does. The first time the music for the hymns started to play I saw the residents' faces change. There were smiles! Those that were able to sing along!

None of this was my plan. Joining a church, becoming a Christian, being a Deacon, doing things for others. It was God's plan for me. God worked through others here at DPC to put his plan into action for me. God continues to bring me joy in return for my contributions to His Church. Peter 4:10 "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for bringing me to joy by faith in the Word made flesh. Please continue to guide me in my spiritual journey and remind me always that grace though faith has been freely given to me by your only son, Jesus Christ, my rock and my salvation. For it is in his name we pray. Amen.

Friday, April 4



Read **Philippians 2:1-11** below then answer the following questions:

- What's a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to you?
- Does the passage prompt a memory from your life?
- What is Christ calling you to do from the passage?

Imitating Christ's Humility

If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, **2** make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. **5** Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, **8** he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, **10** so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Monday, April 7



Nancy Nelson
His Eye Is On the Sparrow

Sometimes we wonder and say to God; "Why have you sent me here?"

I feel God is always watching and directs us on our given paths. I have credited God for the Joy in my life, since I can remember.

Sure there are ups and downs in our lives, God is all seeing and He will get us through any situation. (this is what I was taught by my parents and continue to believe.)

Because we are so busy with our lives, going here and there; we sometimes don't realize that the warm, peaceful feeling we receive is coming from God's love. He slows us down so we can continue to credit Him with the Joy in our lives through Him. God sees all things.

Since being a DPC Deacon, I credit God for more Joy in my life. God has given the Deacons many special assignments to perform.

For me, I find joy in our Nursing Home Services. As I walk to my car after leading or assisting in a service I feel a peace and Joy which I credit to God. Through Deacon Connections we connect with members of our congregation who are homebound either by a visit, phone call, or a note sent.

Deacons also send cards to members of our congregation who are experiencing different situations. All of these and so much more I credit God for the Joy He restores in me.

Slow down, take a deep breath and think of all the times you have felt God's love and give credit to God for restoring the Joy in your life.

Prayer: Lord, I continue to give you credit for restoring Joy in my life, now and always through your love. Amen.

Tuesday, April 8



Kathy Maclin

Joy is more than happiness. Happiness is the laughter that bubbles up in a moment, but joy is something deeper—it's a steady undercurrent, a feeling of fullness that lingers even when life is hard.

I find joy in simple things: working in my yard, walking under open skies, making music, being with family, worship, volunteering, and even in my work. These are the moments that ground me, that remind me of what's good.

But joy doesn't always come easy. Right now, I'm struggling to feel it—health concerns, relationship challenges, the weight of things outside my control. I know joy is still there, beneath it all, but it feels distant. I know it is not lost because God is with me.

Prayer: Dear Lord, fill my heart with Your peace, a joy that is not shaken by circumstance but rooted in Your unchanging love. Help me to trust in Your plan, even when I cannot see the way forward. Restore my joy, Lord, and let it shine as a reflection of Your goodness. Amen.

Wednesday, April 9



Steve Quist

God Brings Joy in Times of Despair

My father died in 2016. My wife, Jeannie, and I were on our way to New Hampshire for a family vacation on the lake when my phone rang. It was my brother calling me from Atlanta with the news that my father was in hospice care. How could this be happening? He had just left the hospital a few days before and was recovering in rehab. Apparently he had a stroke while waiting to be discharged from the facility.

When we got to the lake I quickly made airline reservations to travel to Atlanta to spend time with my mom, brothers and several cousins at my dad's bedside. After a few days, my mom convinced me to travel back to my family. On the way back my mind turned to prayers pleading with God to take him in peace. The next day we got the call that my dad had passed away peacefully in his sleep. I was devastated but glad to be in the company of my family and friends. That evening the most beautiful sunset I had ever seen appeared and we raced out to the dock to see it on the lake. Jeannie was beside me and whispered that it was Ken letting us know everything was alright. At that moment I experienced the greatest amount of joy in my life. God had answered my prayers and my dad was in his arms.

How could I have so much joy after experiencing the death of my father? I believe it was my faith in God and knowing he will deliver us from pain even in our times of greatest despair. Proverbs 18:10 states "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe." God never says we won't experience pain or trouble in our lives but if we turn to him in times of despair he will give us comfort.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you never said we would live our lives without pain and suffering, please be with us and help guide us through our most difficult times and bring joy back into our lives. Amen.

Thursday, April 10



Kathy Brown
Bumpy Road Leads to Joy

All of us have bumps in our road of life. Some bumps are bigger than others, but with God's grace we get over them and keep moving forward. With our eyes and heart open we can gain much from the lumps and bumps of life.

I had a pretty major bump in my road two years ago. As an active, pretty healthy person I never thought I'd end up in the hospital. Looking back God gave me signs something was up but I ignored them. I got to stay in the hospital for well over a week. With God's grace and good doctors I found myself home but so weak I had trouble even walking.

We all know it takes time to heal and that time doesn't pass fast enough. It's not fun. When life slows way down you can choose to give in or listen and learn from God's direction and move forward. I was never happy being sick. However, in the process of getting strong again in my mind, body and heart, I learned how see the small steps, the little things, that truly make a difference. Those little positive things add up to a happier day.

Was my journey to health joyful? No. Was the outcome? Absolutely! I am blessed with four wonderful grandchildren. For months I could not have them run to me with expectations of a lift and a big hug. They were handed to me while I sat in a chair. I will always remember the first time in my recovery my little grandson ran to me shouting "Grandma" and I swept him up and covered him with kisses. That was pure joy! I was filled with love and joy from my toes up. My heart was overflowing with love. It was God's grace that brought me along to that point. It's God's love that helps me realize and share my joy, love and his spirit with my family and others in my bumpy road of life.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help me see the little things in life that can bring us joy and help us share that joy and your love with others. Amen.

Friday, April 11



Read **John 16:16-24** below then answer the following questions:

- What's a word or phrase from the passage that stands out to you?
- Does the passage prompt a memory from your life?
- What is Christ calling you to do from the passage?

Sorrow Will Turn into Joy

16 "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me." **17** Then some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying to us, 'A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me,' and 'because I am going to the Father'?" **18** They said, "What does he mean by this 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." **19** Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, 'A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'?" **20** Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. **21** When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. **22** So you have pain now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. **23** On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. **24** Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

Monday, April 14



Sally Deibert

As we focus on this verse from Psalm 51, I am reminded of a recent health issue that I faced. The challenges of navigating the decisions and treatments were quite overwhelming. I prayed that God would give me the strength and courage to face these decisions with clarity and understanding. I felt his presence by my side in the months to follow through surgery and follow up radiation. His love surrounded and sustained me in my hour of need.

While many of us face life's "ups and downs", the focus of this verse allow us to remember that a willing spirit will sustain you and restore the joy of his salvation in your own walk with God.

Prayer: Thank you God for granting me a willing spirit to sustain me and always allow me to rely on your strength. Amen.



Tuesday, April 15



Cheryl Osgood
Abide in Me

As I delved into the topic of joy, I discovered that the word “joy” is mentioned 165 times in the King James Version of the Bible. Clearly a topic God wanted us to understand! One description of joy that I found was “being content, comforted, and full of peace”. Another biblical scholar elaborated that joy can also be a quiet joy, gained from knowing that you belong to God through Jesus Christ, and the reassurance that God is always with you.

In my reading of various Bible verses on the topic of joy, this passage from John 15: 9-11, has resonated with me. It says “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full”. What a precious promise for those who have faith in Jesus, and seek to obey his commandments and do his will!

It can be hard (at least for me) to be still, calm, and reflect on times of joy in my life. We are busy, and the news headlines can be frightening and depressing. But I was reminded of a few recent times that have contributed to a feeling of joy: When I compliment a friend, or a friend compliments me; when reconnecting with old friends after a long separation; the support of family and friends when I was recovering from surgery; connecting with friends and making new friends in our congregation and community; the beauty of nature (at this moment, the sun sparkling through the ice on the trees); providing help and support for someone in need. I plan to be more intentional in realizing and being thankful for the joy that faith in Jesus Christ gives us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, may we begin each day with Psalm 118:24, “This is the day that the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it,” and recognize the instances of joy in our daily lives. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Wednesday, April 16



Barbara Glore
Joy Cometh in the Morning

That bluebird morning when Dana Farber called, saying that the months and months of medical treatment had essentially put my beautiful nephew's slow-growing Non-Hodgkins lymphoma into remission was one that made us weep with relief, gratitude, and yes, pure unadulterated joy! Up until that moment, we had endured days of darkness, where fear and dread walked beside us, so when we heard the doctor's pronouncement, it was nothing short of a miracle that God had answered our prayers, and lit up the path before us, renewed, restored, and bathed in God's goodness.

In reflection, during those months of great fear and sadness, my personal way of coping was to delve into prayer, begging to be heard, while reading psalms, poetry, or favorite pieces of scripture, because sometimes writing speaks to me more than anything else. My nephew, who's a bright shining star in my life, is now a husband and father of two, is a Renaissance man who bikes and sails, and is a foodie like me. His favorite poet is Robert Frost, who wrote of searching for God after losing four of his children, and finding Him in the joy and beauty of nature. And like Frost, Mary Oliver also finds God in the beauty of nature, because, as Psalm 96:11-12 states in joyful celebration, "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it," for, there is enormous joy in being restored to God's gifts around us after periods of anguish, from hearing good medical results in the morning to stopping by woods on a snowy evening. From the joy of my nephew's remission, I learned that turning inward and waiting for God to restore my balance is a prayer of its own that brings renewed joy and a love for everything around me in His world.

Prayer: Dear God, It is you who restores joy after periods of gloomy days and dark, dark nights, and it is you who gifts us with the sweetness of relief after our souls have warred with our hearts - - help us to be ever grateful for mornings that dawn with brilliance and that are infused with joy in your name. Amen.

Maundy Thursday



Dick Cornelius

As the Father has loved me, so have I have loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: love each other as I have loved you.

- John 15:9-12 (NIV)

For a long time, I wrongly mixed up ideas of *happiness* and *joy*. But later as a Christian, I think I understand the difference between the two. Many things can bring me a feeling of happiness—e.g., a warm sunny day at the beach would make me very happy right now. On the other hand, going to the same beach now in February would NOT make me happy. Why? The *circumstances* in these two scenarios are not the same. Happiness depends on *circumstances* that favor us. So, we may be happy one day and unhappy the next.

Real JOY, on the other hand, is permanent and lives in our heart and soul, in ALL circumstances! In our text from John 15, right after his sharing the metaphor of the Vine and the Branches, Jesus goes on to say that just as his Father loved him, so he (Jesus) loved them (and us). He says that he told them this so that his joy may remain with them and that their joy may be complete. These promises are directed *to us* as well. Hallelujah.

Prayer: Holy Jesus, in your love our JOY is complete. Help us to love each other as you have loved us. Amen.

Good Friday



Anne Hutchinson

A few months before my 48th birthday I experienced three life threatening events within a ten-day period, all related to a cerebral aneurysm bleed. Statistically speaking, I should not be here writing this, certainly not without any disabling consequences.

When I rapidly recovered, I was aware of feelings of relief and, of course, happiness. There was also a much deeper feeling; the realization that it was not my time to die. At the time I definitely credited God with my survival and total recovery and have thanked Him hundreds of times over the years. I don't know if I would have labeled my feelings as joy then but I would now. I understand that happiness is a fleeting emotion and joy is more lasting, a state of mind fostered by a trust in God and the knowledge that He is with me always in the form of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Gracious God, help me to embrace your presence in my daily life and to feel the hope that comes from trusting in you. Amen.



Saturday, April 19



Rev. Becca Bateman

The memorable text message that popped up read, “Welcome to the East Coast.”

These words came after many weeks of interviews, conversations, and coast to coast plane rides prior to your and my commitment to one another.

But before that, there was a long in-between space. It was not quite comparable to 40 days on the ark with a bunch of smelly animals and immediate family members. Nor was it 40 years in the wilderness like the Israelites, or even Jesus fasting in the desert for 40 days. Still, it was my unknown and my longing to find balance. There is no need to compare my struggle to others if it was harder or easier, it is my own. There was an inner wrestling about direction that was matched with tossing and turning at night. I am grateful that God is awake and listens even in the stillness of the early hours. Perhaps it is in that stillness when I can hear God most clearly.

During this time, each communication and lead pulled me between what was and what might be. Then there was a “Yes” from both of us. The bittersweet weight of leaving the familiar pressed upon me, and the unknown stretched wide before me, both thrilling and terrifying. And yet, even in the waiting, even in the hush between endings and beginnings, God was at work—silent but sure, weaving a path I could not yet see.

You can imagine the joy restored with the way the phrase sounded so loudly of, “Welcome.”

I hope you know what a complete joy it has been to be your pastor here at DPC and to see us each growing.

Prayer: Welcoming God, may we all feel strength in knowing you are with us in the journey. Amen.

Easter Sunday



Rev. Dr. Mac Schafer

In 2022, while on sabbatical, I walked half of an ancient pilgrims path called the Via Francigena. The Via Francigena goes from Canterbury, England to Rome, Italy. I did a section from Lausanne, Switzerland to Rome, Italy over a 52 day period. For me, there is something about hiking for long periods of time that is the height of restoration: It incorporates the mind, body and spirit. It slows me down and gives me space to breathe, look around and think. To be present and thankful to God. To have unrushed conversations with fellow travelers.

There was one particular day when I was hiking along a ridge in Tuscany that I felt particularly alive. I had intentionally fallen back from the group I was walking with. It was an especially clear day. I could see farmland for miles on either side of me. I felt utterly connected with my body and the creation that surrounded me. I was filled with gratitude that my body felt good. I think I was listening to a favorite Coldplay song (Army of One) and felt free and full. After miles of walking that day I even had a bounce in my step!

It was one of those magical moments of complete connectedness. That moment was the pinnacle of God restoring the joy within me. A deep sense of being given life and breath and space. Not taking for granted that for that particular day I had the energy to do what I was doing. God used that moment to fill my cup in a wholistic way.

God's restorative work is multi sensory. It happens through sight, touch, sound, smells and taste. There are moments God brings together mind, body, and spirit to remember who we are at our core.

Jesus Christ is risen today!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for restorative moments where our body, mind and spirit feel connected and alive. Help us not take for granted moments where we are utterly present to your gift of life and breath. For there is no guarantee we will have tomorrow. Thank you for today. We pray this in the strong name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Joy is inseparable
From the
human story...”

-Benjamin Fischer
and Cedric Kanana,
Joy Renewed



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