

From Pastor Marissa Becklin

Walking With Christ

Summer in Lancaster County is a beautiful time. As I write this article I'm sitting on my back porch listening to birdsong, enjoying cool morning air, and getting ready to harvest vegetables from our garden. This is a time of year when God's abundance is so clearly on display for us—it seems that all of creation from the crickets to the flowers are praising God's goodness.

One of my favorite practices during this beautiful time of year is getting outside for a walk—even better if I can get that walk in the midst of more abundant nature, in a place like Middle Creek. These walks are a spiritual practice for me, and serve as moments when I am able to connect clearly with God. When I am outside walking I feel my heartbeat slow to a rhythm that fits with the slow, sustaining pace of the earth around me and am suddenly able to experience my own body and the call of God in much different ways than I am in my day-to-day life. My husband and I share this deep spirituality of nature, and our relationship has reflected this—from getting engaged in the middle of a national park, to honeymooning in the remote hiking trails of the driftless region of the Midwest, to spending time off hiking in Utah, Colorado, Virginia, and more, our time spent together as a couple has been marked by sacred moments spent together in the midst of wilderness.

The theme of walking is a prominent one in the Bible—from the very beginning, God has been present with people who are walking or on the move. From Adam and Eve, who have to walk out of the Garden of Eden but go knowing that God goes with them, to Abraham and Sarah, who walk their whole lives as nomads and never own land, to Moses walking out of Egypt, all the way to the disciples and Paul who journey throughout the ancient world to share the news of God's love, our God is a God who walks with us as we move.

In the Luke 24 story of the road to Emmaus after the resurrection of Christ, two disciples are on the road walking when Christ appears in their midst. They do not recognize him right away, but as they walk Jesus tells them about God's project of life, love, resurrection, and grace, and gives them new hope. It is only when they arrive at their destination that they realize that Jesus had been with them all along, and that their hearts had been burning during the walk.

I love this imagery for how we might encounter and be encountered by Christ during this summer season. We can all use a freshening up of our prayer life from time to time, and in these months of August and September I invite you into the practice of walking with Christ. Wherever you might go for a walk (in nature, in your neighborhood, on your apartment floor, in the park, or somewhere totally new to you), take time as you go to set your mind free from all of the day's demands and expectations. As much as possible, become present to your own body—how do you feel? What do you smell? What do you hear? As you take each step, focus on your breathing, and invite God to fill you and send you. This is an exercise that takes time and practice, especially in a world that is so fast-paced and exhausting, but it is worth it (and it doesn't have to be more than 10 minutes a day). God's blessings on your walking, and I pray that as you go you will be surprised by how Christ meets you along the way.

In Christ, Pastor Marissa