

THE COMPASS NEWS

OCT. 14, 2009

VOLUME II, ISSUE 3

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

- **Byway of Blessing:** time for rest and reflection
- **Service Roads:** new ways into working for your local community
- **Paths into Prayer:** offering our words for uplifting our lives
- **Around the Corner:** what's new and what's coming for the Compass community

PLACES OF INTEREST:

Operation Inasmuch	2
Study, study	2
What, me pray?	3
Inviting Submissions	3
Local theology	4
Local listings	4

A bi-weekly travel guide for holy wanderers and wonderers on the journey of faith.

Produced by The Compass Press
at Highland United Methodist Church



Byway of Blessing...

I arise today

Blessed by all things,
Wings of breath,
Delight of eyes,
Wonder of whisper,
Intimacy of touch,
Eternity of soul,
Urgency of thought,
Miracle of health,
Embrace of God.

~ from *Matins* by John O'Donohue

Grace and peace to you all in the name of Christ, who blesses Creation with the promise of wholeness, reconciliation, and rebirth.

This issue of the Compass News features T.S. Eliot, final words from Jonah, and our first glance into the season of Advent. As always, you'll find an introduction to prayer on page 3, and you're invited to take some intentional down time to use these words and explore communion with the Divine.

We celebrate our wonderful World Communion service by Westover Ave. this past Sunday (see pictures throughout), and we anticipate our next venture into service beyond the walls of the church: Operation Inasmuch on Oct. 24.

Until then, and always:
Welcome to the Compass.

Streetside Reflections: A World of Praise

"We praise you, O God, for your glory displayed in all the creatures of the earth. They affirm you in living; all things affirm you in living; the bird of the air, both the hawk and the finch; the beast on the earth, both the wolf and the lamb; the worm in the soil and the worm in the belly.

Therefore we, whom you have made to be conscious of you, must consciously praise you, in thought and in word and in deed.

Even with the hand to the broom, the back bent in laying the fire, the knee bent in cleaning the hearth, we, the scrubbers and sweepers of Canterbury, the back bent under toil, the knee bent under sin, the hands to the face under fear, the head bent under grief, Even in us the voices of the seasons, the snuffle of winter, the song of spring, the drone of summer, the voices of beasts and of birds, praise you."

~T.S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*



Service Roads: Operation Inasmuch, October 24



The Colonial Heights Food Pantry,
530 Southpark Boulevard.

We know about the Compass trip to the Colonial Heights Food Pantry for local family food bag filling – 10am on Oct. 24.

We know that Highland is hosting a Bloodmobile that same day, and we know that we’re collecting canned goods for community food pantries.

We know that all of this is part of a city-wide mission blitz that area churches are coordinating together: Operation Inasmuch.

What’s new, however, is that there’s another great service opportunity on that afternoon.

Cindy Lorentz works with Petersburg Head Start, a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for low-income children and families.

The Head Start budget in Petersburg is presently at a minimum, but Cindy is still coordinating a pumpkin patch festival for 340 children. All she needs is 340 goody bags to hand out to the children, with pencils, stickers, fruit snacks, and candies in each one.

Perhaps you could pick up paper bags and goodies. Perhaps you could even help fill bags with us. If you are willing, please sign up this Sunday to volunteer!

Sorry to leave you, Jonah... but Jesus is coming

On Monday the 12th, we concluded our latest bible study, “Jonah: Man Overboard into a Fine Kettle of Fish.”

Our study was an eye-opening journey into a time of great conflict—in the socio-politics of the Ancient Near East, and in the faith of our Israelite ancestors.

What began as an insight into humor in the Bible (the book of Jonah) became a troubling view of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the exile of the Judean elite, and the scattering of the people of God (see 2 Kings 24-25). The book of Jonah was written in this context as a means of re-interpreting faith traditions that had been deeply shaken by these events. Our ancestors had to ask the questions: Are we still God’s people? Is God still faithful to us? Is there a God at all?

Not exactly the most hopeful conclusion to a Bible study! But these are the questions that still define major elements of faith experience in the hard, broken world of today. The Bible may be most troubling when it is most relevant.

It’s into this kind of broken world, however, that we say God was born in a manger in Bethlehem. So we turn our eyes to the next season in the church... no, not Christmas, but Advent.

Advent.

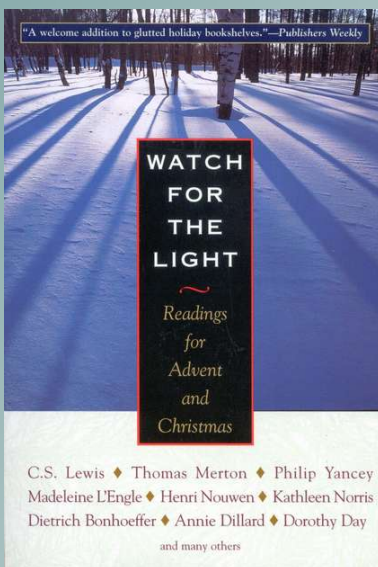
Watching.

Hoping.

Waiting.

The next Compass Study is called *Watch for the Light*. We will share in reading a book of the same name (see image on left, order online). We will also spend a good deal of time in silence and guided meditation, using light, shadows, sound, and stillness as a means of preparing room for God to be born in our lives.

Beware: we’re serious. If silence and stillness aren’t your thing, feel free to sit this one out. But if you long for quiet, space, and breathing deeply the hope we have in God, join us next month. *Watch for the Light* will begin November 16th and will culminate with a contemplative candlelight service on the evening of December 20th."



“How do we wait?
Luke... suggests
that we wait
together....”

~Henri Nouwen

Paths into Prayer

You are invited to use the following words as a guide into prayer. Take a few moments to settle into the rhythms of our native language: remembrance, thanksgiving, petition, lament, silence, and renewal.

Take, O Lord, and receive
all my liberty
my memory
my understanding
and my entire will,
all that I have and possess.
You have given all to me.
To you, O Lord, I return it.
All is Yours, dispose of it
wholly according to Your will.
Give me Your love and Your grace,
for this is sufficient for me.

~St. Ignatius Loyola



James, Grayson, Lu, Neil, and Angelica place candles on a map to pray during World Communion Sunday worship.



Randy soulfully leads the “rhythms of our native language” in worship.

Call for Submissions

Our new Compass News gives us new opportunities to feature YOU, our reader.

We invite your original submissions of all kinds: informative articles, theological reflections, cartoons, personal musings, recipes, poems, photographs, and more!

You don't have to be a Highland member to submit. You don't even have to be a Compass regular. We welcome words and images from those who are part of this digital community as well as from those who worship with us every Sunday.

We'll also try to suggest a topic for submissions, related to an upcoming theme.

Upcoming topic: What would heaven look like to you?

Please send your contributions to drew@highlandumchurch.net.



William offers Tiffany a candle to place on the “What's Up, South?” prayer map.

WHAT IS THE COMPASS?

In the spring of 2008, a group of visionary leaders at Highland United Methodist Church developed a new, alternative expression of public worship.

Their mission was to create a place for non-churched, long-churched, and in-between-church folks to find new directions and companions in the journey of Christian faith.

Orienting its members toward service, faith development, and worship participation, this community is known as the Compass.

All are welcome.

Come find a new direction!

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All are welcome...
Come find a new
direction!

Local Theology: Grace, grace...

"In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us."

~ Ephesians 1:7-8a

Whoa, whoa, whoa! Too many "church words" here! Does the combination of words like "Christ", "redemption", and "blood" make anyone else think of Bible-thumping fundamentalist zealots whose "good news" can sound awfully bad to everyone else around them? Anyone? Bueller? Bueller?

God's grace...

Is this the God you know?

Not a God of rigid moralistic condemnation—God is too creative for that—*nor* a God of lukewarm nicety and congeniality—God is too passionate and involved for that (see "redemption through blood" above).

Grace that is greater than all our sin

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, believed that God's grace worked in very unique ways:

- *prevenient* - in other words, God's grace comes to us before we're even aware of it. We don't earn it.
- *justifying* - setting us right with

Yet the word "grace" calls my attention. Grace is cool water, not fire and brimstone. Grace is a ballet dancer, not a bull in a china shop. Grace is the gift that God extends to us in the deep hope of being in right relationship with us, and grace is the means by which we turn and take God's hand.

Perhaps most of all, grace is *extravagant*. God "lavishes" grace on us, calling us beloved, welcoming us home. God is no spendthrift; God is prodigal—practically *wasteful* with loving grace for us and Creation.

But a God of heartbreaking love, transforming goodness, and reconciling compassion. In other words, a God of *grace*... have you heard of this God?

A God who loves Creation so much that God actually *takes on created-ness* by being born among us—just to show us what true love looks like?

God, like justification on a computer. We're in line with God, no longer in disarray.

- *sanctifying* - perfecting us. Making us whole. Restoring life abundantly... lavishly.

Relationship with this God is a journey toward perfection in love. Come join us!

LOCAL LISTINGS: CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(ALL EVENTS AT HIGHLAND UMC UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

OCTOBER

24th 10am Operation Inasmuch, 5-hour local church-supported "mission blitz". Highland hosts bloodmobile. Compass service opportunity at CH Food Pantry; Head Start goody bag filling afterwards.

NOVEMBER

1st 11am Compass Worship. All Saints Sunday. More information to come regarding this very special day celebrating the communion of saints.

14th James Patterson's marathon, Richmond.

16th 6:30pm *Watch for the Light* begins. Compass Advent study series, gathering every Monday night before Christmas.

DECEMBER

5th Ryan Nugent and Aaron Menear's Jujitsu Match, Ashland.

13th 6pm Church-wide Neighborhood Christmas Caroling

20th Advent Candlelight Service, evening.

JANUARY 2010

"Beginnings: An Introduction to the Christian Faith" - 9-12 week guided study of the basics of Christian faith. Each session includes a meal, video presentation, and a small-group discussion. This is an *excellent* introduction or reintroduction to Christian belief, history, gathering, and relevance. You have three months not only to get ready, but to invite non-church folks to come with you for this wonderful program!