



FOREVER BEGINNING

WORDS TO THE WISE



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Story Time



“Tell me a story.” That is a direct quote from my grandchildren, children, you, me, and any other human being who has walked this earth since language was invented. Maybe it came earlier, when a little arm-waving, grunting, and smearing outlines of bison on cave walls could get the point across. My early memories include asking (nay, begging) my father for a story. He would whip up some half-baked tale where: 1.) he/someone/the planet would be in peril, 2.) all hope appeared lost, and, 3.) some heroic figure (i.e. – Superman, Popeye, Mighty Mouse, Audie Murphy) would come to the rescue and save the day. Take your pick of heroes, they were interchangeable. The storyline was fairly basic, but I didn’t care. It was still a story. That practice evolved into listening to my mother read to me. Then, once I could read on my own, the old library card was well worn. You can add to that the flood of TV shows and movies available to fill any story void.

Much has been written to the effect that the need for story is inherent in our very being. Be it fiction or non-fiction, biography or myth. We binge-watch TV dramas and sitcoms. How many movies can we watch in a year? Our thirst for story, in any form, is insatiable and undeniably human.

This summer, your School of Essential Wisdom is pleased to present you with three opportunities to hear from distinguished members of the UPUMC congregation who are willing to share their personal stories with you. This space will not be used to spill any beans, but our speaker schedule looks like this:

June 26th – Constance Harp

July 17th – Ezri Gomez

August 14th – Mickey and Larry George

This courageous crew has agreed to share a bit of their lives and experiences with us in a public forum. They will unpeel a slice of their personal stories so we can walk with them in their moccasins for a little while. Constance, Ezri, Mickey and Larry are being more than gracious by offering their stories to us. Come with the expectation of being enlightened and inspired. We hope you will join us.

Until next time, Blessings!

Mark S. Parker

“We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories.” - Jonathan Gottschall, The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human

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Mary Jo McCurley: Walking with Paul

Ed. Note: Mary Jo and Mike McCurley recently returned from a long-awaited trip to Greece. Mary Jo graciously offered to share some of her observations and experiences while treading in the Apostle Paul's footsteps. Her report is featured below. Enjoy!



It is estimated that the Apostle Paul traveled over 10,000 miles during his journeys, primarily on foot and by sea, spreading the message of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

Here is a rough breakdown:

1st Journey-(Acts 13-14)-1400 miles

2nd Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22) -2800 miles

3rd Journey (Acts 18:23 -21:17)-2200 miles

4th Journey to Rome (Acts-27-28)-2200 miles



Mike and I had the privilege of traveling only a small portion of Paul's second and third journeys. In Paul's second journey, he went to Antioch (Syria), Cilicia, Tarsus (his hometown), Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Ephesus to Antioch, Caesarea, Jerusalem and Corinth. We started our journey in Athens.

The rock where Paul preached is Areopagus or the Rock of Ares. After the sermon, he was taken to the high court of Athens to explain himself. He spoke of Jesus rising from the dead. Plato had taught the Greeks that after you die, your soul is set free. Rising from the dead seemed like it would be a prison, because your soul would never be set free. After preaching in Athens, (Acts 17), Paul then traveled to



Corinth, as recorded in Acts 18:1. This move marked a significant transition in his mission, as Corinth was a major cultural hub in Greece.

After touring Athens, we traveled to Corinth. Unlike Paul, our journey took about 2.5 hours. The journey for Paul likely took 2-3 days, as walking was his common travel method. By sea, it would have taken one day. It was in Corinth that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, worked as a tentmaker and preached in the synagogues before shifting focus to the Gentiles.



The picture to the left is where the Apostle Paul was judged by Gallio, the Governor of Corinth (Paul was always getting into trouble). Gallio was the brother of the Roman philosopher, Seneca.

Sosthenes was the leader of the local synagogue, and he got everyone all riled up that Paul was teaching against Jewish law and wanted Gallio to condemn Paul to death. Unfortunately, for Sosthenes, and good for Paul, Gallio wanted nothing to do with religious disputes, and mockingly sent them away. Sosthenes was quickly turned on by his own people and was beaten. Paul stayed in Corinth for about one and a half years and established a church. It appears that Sosthenes later became a Christian, as Paul addresses him in Corinthians 1:1 as "our

brother".

We next went to Crete. While there is no evidence that Paul went to Crete, Paul writes about Crete in his letter to Titus. Paul in his letter to Titus, quotes Epimendes, a Cretan poet, when he said in Titus 1:12, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons..."

We do not know what letter Titus must have sent to Paul that made Paul write to him. You can only imagine that he was asking Paul to let him leave Crete because of the people. But Paul wanted him to stay to complete his mission. I think I may have a small understanding of what Titus may have been feeling. I have been in "Crete" and asked God to removed me from Crete and yet God has left me there. What is your "Crete"?

Traveling even a few miles of Paul's mission was a profound privilege-a chance to step into the path of one of history's most courageous and transformative figures. Paul's journeys shaped the early Christian church and changed the course of human history. To trace his footsteps, even briefly, makes his ministry come alive. It was a reminder that faith is not only spoken, but lived-often through a struggle, perseverance and deep trust in God.

I left our trip wondering if I could have done what Paul did? Not just all his travel, but would I have the strength, the faith and the resilience to endure the trials that he faced. Would I have kept preaching love and grace in the face of rejection, OR extended forgiveness to those who sought to harm me? What type of letter would Paul write to me? I would hope it would not be too scolding, and he would encourage me to stand firm, be bold and love ALL deeply.

As you may know, your Forever Beginning program typically presents our SEW speakers with a token honorarium in appreciation of their time and effort. This past March and April, our UPUMC clergy and staff presented a series of talks based on Adam Hamilton's book *The Message of Jesus: Words That Changed the World*. In appreciation, we donated their honorarium to the UPUMC General Budget. This gesture was greatly appreciated. We remain mindful of the challenges faced by our budget and ask that you keep the church finances in your thoughts and prayers.

SCHOOL OF ESSENTIAL WISDOM

SUMMER TERM (June - August) *Thursdays at 11 am

TELLING THEIR STORY



Constance Harp
June 26th



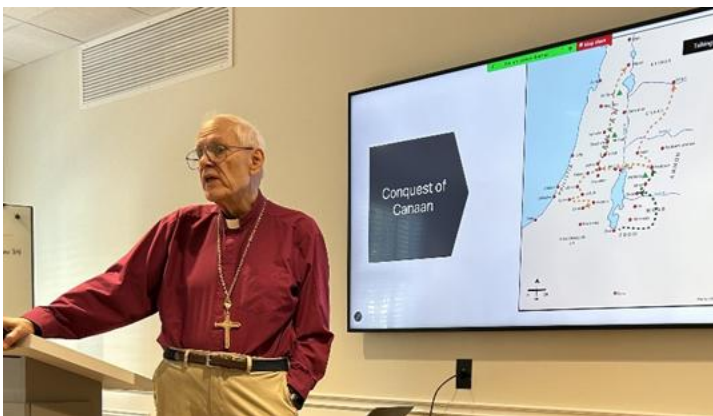
Ezri Gomez
July 17th



Mickey & Larry George
August 14th

Lunch available with registration or contact Janet Hodge at jhodge@upumc.org

"Recent Archeological Digs that Support Biblical History"



Hopefully, you were able to join us during the month of May to hear Bishop James Stanton present us with "Recent Archeological Digs that Support Biblical History." Bishop Stanton's expertise in this area was evident as he led us through sites from Jericho to other Biblical locales. His grandson (a trained archaeologist) even joined his granddad for a session. It was a treat.!