

THE PLOWSHARES

January 2018

John 8:36: So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Free People

When I was younger and struggling with my identity, I was blessed to have people in my life who pointed out the good things in me that I didn't see. We tend to see the negative in ourselves. We magnify our failures and it can be really hard for us to see ourselves as beloved children of God. Even in the scriptures we might struggle with seemingly mixed messages. In one place it says we're God's masterpieces (Ephesians 2:10) and in another place it says no one is good (Mark 10:8). In another place the Bible says we are created a little less than angels (Hebrews 2:7), but it also says none of us are worthy (Romans 3:10). The truth is that we are both; we are God's masterpieces and are also broken people in need of salvation.

We too are called to see peoples' God-given potential, and to speak hope into their lives. We tend to struggle with this as we judge people for their past mistakes. We imprison them with our expectations. We categorize people and label them. In our minds we link certain negative attributes with groups of people which tends to create a self-fulfilling prophecy as they then have to live with how they're treated, like how we treat the poor. If you tell someone they're worthless long enough they'll certainly start to believe it. This is why Jesus said things like, "The poor will inherit the Kingdom of God." He knew that his words mattered and could heal.

So in this new year make a commit to free people. Instead of imprisoning someone because of who they are today, forgive them. Free them so they know they are beautiful, gifted, have a purpose, are forgiven, and have not been forgotten. Free them to experience hope instead of believing that they are forever beholden to their past. I don't know who I'd be today without parents, teachers, youth pastors, and so many others who freed me with their words and their love. Who is someone in your life who you can free today? -Pastor Eric

**Historic Dudley's Christmas Candlelight Service
Pastor Eric Warner**



Calvary-Asbury Children's Christmas Program



Human Relations Day

*There will be a special offering on January 14, 2018
to support Human Relations Day.*

Turn on the news or drive around the outskirts of your town and you will find what Jesus called “the least of these.” Those living in the margins of society, struggling to survive.

People like:

- An immigrant teenager in Texas’ poorest county, being recruited by a local gang
- A father struggling for sobriety in Little Rock, Arkansas

An Oklahoma woman recently released from incarceration looking for work

Over and over Jesus served people like this, embracing them. And that’s what we want to model as the people of The United Methodist Church. To continue the ministry of Jesus we established Human Relations Day as a Special Sunday that calls all of our churches to participate in helping all God’s children to realize their potential.

Will You Support the Ministry of Christ Among Those on the Margins?

Will you continue to support Human Relations Day? Will you continue nurturing at-risk youth, strengthening communities’ self-improvement efforts and advocating for the oppressed?

Rev. I Maliik Safir, whose church works with those gripped by addiction in Little Rock, sums up the work of Human Relations Day by recalling Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan: “to meet the poor, the disadvantaged and the underserved at the places where others have robbed them and help them to recover from the wounds of social inequality.”

~The United Methodist Church

SUMYF Attend Annual Youth Rally



Local Sudlersville youth will be a part of the 3,500 plus young people and their leaders that will converge on Ocean City this weekend!

The 31st Annual Youth Rally lasts for three *worship-filled* days, starting Friday, January 5th and concluding on Sunday, January 7th.

Massive celebration is on the schedule for this year's rally as we rejoice in the freedom we have in Christ!

SPLASH News

On January 8, 2018, the SPLASH group will meet at Carletto’s for dinner at 6:00 pm.

An Update from SUMC Supported The Methodist Children's Home of Costa Rica

December 26, 2017 Merry Christmas (a wee bit late),

We pray that each of you are enjoying time with family and friends celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! This year, was filled with precious times of ministry as we witnessed God move in marvelous ways in the life of the Methodist Church in Costa Rica. We want you all to know how grateful we are to you for your daily prayers, your faithful financial support, and your presence with us in ministry. This year we celebrated five adoptions at the Methodist Children's Home: two international adoptions (our first to the United States) and three domestic. Plus, one group of siblings were reunited with extended family. Today, 23 children are living with us.

With the help of many mission teams, we were able to make incredible progress on the multipurpose building at the Children's Home. The roof is currently going up and we are scheduling mission teams for 2018. We are most grateful for the many churches and individuals who have come to Costa Rica on mission teams and worked with us. Mission teams also made an incredible impact on our ministry with the churches and medical clinic in the Puerto Viejo region. The Wesley Clinic hosted several medical clinics this year and we are so grateful for the doctors and dentists who partnered with us. In addition, teams helped lay the foundations on two new ministry projects in the cities of El Tigre and Guapiles. Additional mission teams will be coming throughout 2018 to begin construction on the new sanctuary and Sunday school rooms.

The Christian Education department at the Methodist school is also expanding. In August, we received a new missionary family, Kyle and Tessa Frohock and their four daughters. Kyle will be teaching at the high school this coming school year.

2017 was a full and exciting year at the Methodist Seminary. Ray maintained a full load of courses and helped with translation for two "open seminary" weeks as guests professors from Asbury Seminary and SMU (Southern Methodist University) came to share with our students. Earlier this month, we were blessed to celebrate the graduation of eight of our students and appreciate your prayers for each of them as they begin a new chapter of ministry with the Methodist Church.

We arrived in the United States on December 9 to begin speaking to churches and raising our financial support and will be returning to Costa Rica the first of February to begin our 24th year of ministry with the church. Recently, we received word of additional "changes" as several long term supporters notified us that they would be unable to continue their financial gifts to our ministry beyond January 1. We completely understand their particular situations and give thanks and celebrate their faithful support over many years. Yet, we would also ask you to please join us in prayer as we ask the Lord to provide new partners to support our ministry financially. We know that He is more than able to do even far more than we can ask or imagine and are excited to see His hand move in the coming days!! We pray that your new year is filled with all that is ours through Christ Jesus!

Ray, Lidia, Sarah and Emma Zirkel

For additional information **WEB:** ZIRKELMINISTRYCOSTARICA.COM