

HUMC Lay Leadership Class 9/13/2017 – United Methodist Theology and Mission

Intro – This “class” tonight will not just seek to address theology and mission. I plan to shotgun out a number of ideas for you to ponder about how active Christians might effectively seek to live a fuller life. Any of these can be discussed further if that is what the group might desire as a path forward. Maybe in a pastor’s forum. Maybe in an adult Sunday School class. There are no “SHOULD’s” in here. Please be clear on this. These are much better described as, “Have you considered...?” conversation starters. I have a major anniversary tonight and this has led me to ponder many facets of my own life and to share with you some of the perspective that the events of the last few years have given me.

1. Why do we do good deeds? Heaven points are not the way United Methodists think and they are not what came out of Christ’s mouth in his teachings.
2. Faith and not deeds. The parable of the rich man.
3. Prevenient grace and freedom to live our fullest lives. We are free of guilt and expectations. Now, with that freedom, how much good can we go out and do?
4. God loves us and knows us by name and forgives us before we even ask for it. I believe one of the hardest things we can do as humans is to forgive others. And in many cases, it might be even harder to forgive ourselves. When we can get our arms around this, true spiritual growth occurs.
5. I think that many of these items on this list can be grouped together in a category we can call, “Taking good care of the spiritual side of your life”. I also think that as Americans, we often don’t treat this with the kind of priority it might deserve. Food for thought...
6. Leaving it better than we found it. A mantra of mine. And BALANCE is required. Choose carefully where you will invest your time and effort and money. Kiva is a great example.
7. Fellowship within this congregation (today is the 5-year anniversary of my diagnosis)
8. Taking time to evaluate your own faith journey; no guilt, just a clear eyed look at where you have been and where you might wish to go from here. Giving people the benefit of the doubt.
9. Choosing our behaviors in difficult times. Tribalism and exclusion appear to be default behaviors for humans. Compassion and service and love of neighbor are learned behaviors that this world needs a lot more of, I think.
10. Resentments and the ABSI reading. Resentments are toxic and need to be consciously addressed. One way to look at this is summed up by “Keeping your side of the street clean”.
11. Moving forward toward perfection; with confidence. This is not hubris; this is intention knowing that God is in our corner and loves and forgives us all.
12. Living simply – this was a significant class that Pam and I participated in years ago. I now approach this as a game of how I can maintain what I consider to be a desired standard of living while at the same time living with the lightest possible impact. That “desired standard of living” changes as I challenge myself with these questions on a regular basis.
13. The 4-Way Test of the things we think, say, and do. A simple way to proceed. The people I know who take this seriously are some of the people I admire the most. It is not an easy test but it is a simple one and is often best used when comparing options on how to proceed.
14. God asks us, expects us to use our brains. Always feel comfortable in questioning specifics of theology. Do this in a respectful manner and use it as a vehicle for improving your listening and your discernment skills. Seek to understand these concepts and how they fit into your life.
15. Pay attention – God tweaks our noses regularly. Note that cool eclipse recently...