

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

October 2019

Let Me Make One Thing Perfectly Clear

How many of you know that October 1st is “Less Than Perfect Day?”

At first, I thought to myself, “What a dumb day of recognition!” Then, a lightbulb went off in my head that it is actually a brilliant idea (no pun intended). A reminder that we are less than perfect. Now, that makes for a great sermon.

I would venture to say that every single day reminds us of the fact that we are not perfect.

James 3:2 says: *“For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man [person], able to also bridle his whole body.”*

Well, thanks James—living in my seventh decade, I still have not found such a person.

Why? We are all less than perfect. So, is perfection something that we strive for? Sounds like it would make a great goal on our “To Do” list? Don’t you think?

Seeing that I am a Methodist minister serving a Methodist Church—it might be a good idea to see what the founder of the Methodist movement had to say about this. What did John Wesley have to say about “Moving on to perfection?”

In a few weeks I will be one of the instructors at the Emmaus Walk. My topic of discussion is Prevenient Grace. In fact, Wesley and the doctrine of The United Methodist Church speaks of three kinds of grace: Prevenient Grace, Justifying Grace, and Sanctifying Grace.

Now there’s a mouthful. Prevenient is a word we derive from the

Latin that literally means, “To Come Before” or “To Go Before”. In other words, God’s grace is operating even when we don’t know it working to woo or direct or draw us into a saving relationship through Christ, His Son. Then, once we surrender our lives to Christ, we are justified or reconciled with God; thus, Justifying Grace.

But, for the purpose of this article dealing with “Less Than Perfect Day”—let me stick with the latter of the three, Sanctifying Grace.

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN OCTOBER

Oct. 6—The Rev. Dr.

Charles Ferrara,
Luke 17:5-10

Oct. 13—The Rev. Dr.

Charles Ferrara,
Luke 17:11-19

Oct. 20—Barbara Becker,
Luke 18:1-8

Oct. 27—Kathy Halliwell
Luke 18:9-14



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Make a prayer request at
PatchogueUMC.com



October Birthdays

- Oct. 7** Sophia Capobianco
- Oct. 8** Ed Klingel
- Oct. 25** Wendy Hollowell
- Oct. 25** Jim Graham

Perfectly Clear (From Page 1)

Sanctifying Grace draws us toward Christian Perfection, which Wesley describe as *“a heart habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor”* and as *“having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.”* Now, right there I can tell you I blew it at least three times today.

The whole meaning of Sanctifying Grace is to be “set apart” and “made holy” for a special use by God. John Wesley took it extremely seriously when Jesus invited his followers *“to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48)

Both Wesley and Jesus did not mean that one would be flawless or even sinless for that matter. I believe, and I think I am on pretty solid theological ground, that both were encouraging us to steadily mature in our faith so as to make all of our decisions based on a heart filled with a love for God and others—and to have the mind of Christ when making those decisions. Now, that is something to strive for. And, by the way, this can only happen through the grace of God.

So, I am going to usurp whoever decided to make October 1st “Less Than Perfect Day” with a slight edited version. I declare October 1st and all of the remaining 364 days, “Less Than Perfect—But We Will Keep Trying Day”.

—Pastor Chuck

Under 35 Pastors Getting Rarer

At age 32, the Rev. Jarrod Caltrider is living life in full as a United Methodist elder.

He’s pastor of three small churches in rural West Virginia, and resides in a parsonage with his wife, Breana, and their 2-year-old, Ella. He leads three or four worship services each Sunday and occasionally wades into the Right Fork of Sandy Creek to do baptisms.

The work is gratifying, and what excites Caltrider most is the growth he’s seen in young families with children attending Sandyville United Methodist Church, his largest congregation.

“We average 72 to 74 in worship, and that’s increased a little, but two Sundays ago we had 93 in worship and 33 of those were elementary school age and younger,” he said. “That’s exhilarating.”

Young elders like Caltrider — enthusiastic, committed and perhaps better able than many older colleagues to connect with young families — are getting harder to find in The United Methodist Church.

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership, part of Wesley Theological Seminary, does an annual analysis of clergy age trends in The United Methodist Church, and its just-released 2019 report shows that the number of U.S. elders under age 35 has declined for three straight years.

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United Methodist Church of Patchogue

October 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	2	3	4 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	5 8 a.m.—Noon Recycling 9:00 a.m.—UMW District Meeting
6 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10:00 a.m.— Communion Worship 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 2:00 p.m.—UMW Wine & Cheese, Joan Curtis house	7 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	8 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	9	10	11 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	12
13 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10:00 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	14 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	15 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	16	17	18 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	19 9:30 a.m.—UMW
20 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	21 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	22 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	23	24 5:00 p.m.—Wesley Dinner	25 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	26
27 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 11:00 a.m.— Trustees 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	28 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	29 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	30	31		

Under 35 (From Page 2)

As of May, there were 875, down from 1,003 in 2016, and from 3,219 in 1985, when the denomination was much larger in the U.S.

This year is not the low point. That was 2005, when the number was 850, and the Lewis Center began to track clergy age trends as part of a general alarm about the scarcity of young elders.

But the resumption of a downward trajectory to a near historic low is concerning for the denomination's future, according to the Rev. Lovett H. Weems Jr., senior consultant for the Lewis Center.

"The clergy in some ways match the membership of the church in being disproportionately older, but it doesn't match the people God's given us (to reach), the people in the population," he said.

Elders in The United Methodist Church are seminary-educated clergy ordained to a ministry of word, sacrament, order and service, with an understanding that they will go where sent by their bishop.

Many serve in extension ministries, but typically elders are preaching in and leading churches, including the denomination's largest. Elders are eligible to be bishops and district superintendents.

As the denomination has shrunk in the U.S., the number of elders has declined steadily. But while young elders represented 15 percent of the total in 1985, they now represent under 7 percent.

Meanwhile, The United Methodist Church last year saw a record number

of young deacons (clergy ordained to a ministry of word, service, compassion and justice), with a decline of just one in 2019. The number of young licensed local pastors increased slightly this year, and the percentage of deacons and local pastors under 35 exceeds that of elders.

The majority of U.S. elders are age 55 or older, the Lewis Center report shows.

The Rev. Ben Gosden is 36 now, so he's recently aged out of the young elder category. But he's seen young elders and elders generally become scarcer in the South Georgia Conference, where he serves. Licensed local pastors have become more common there, as they have been in many U.S. conferences.

Gosden believes economics are a factor, given that licensed local pastors typically have a somewhat smaller financial package than elders and often are bi-vocational.

"We do have more and more local pastors," said Gosden, who leads historic Trinity United Methodist Church in Savannah, Georgia. "South Georgia's a small conference, and more of our churches are transitioning downward in salaries."

The United Methodist Church made a big effort to address the issue of an aging clergy corps in the U.S. when the 2012 Conference created the \$7 million Young Clergy Initiative, which provides grants to a range of groups that work with young people in discerning a call to ministry. The 2016 General Conference renewed the program.

The Rev. Trip Lowery oversees the Young Clergy Initiative for the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, and he says that while anecdotally he's aware of the program's positive impact, it's not possible to quantify how many young people it has helped move onto the clergy track.

"If I had a number, I wouldn't really trust it, because there are so many things that influence someone's decision to go into ministry," he said.

Lowery noted that the initiative has created a body of knowledge about supporting young people in discerning a call, including the importance of relationships with mentors, especially close to their own age.

He counseled patience, saying it takes time to create a culture of call in the church and added that Higher Education and Ministry will be requesting an extension of the program from the 2020 General Conference.

"It's not going to happen in one quadrennium or two," he said.

Lowery noted a range of factors help explain the decline of young elders, including seminarians who want to serve, but not necessarily in a typical church setting.

"Most are just not feeling called into that traditional robe, stole and a pulpit appointment," he said. "Students are feeling called to places that worship at different kinds of times, different locales ... Maybe it's a homeless ministry or a congregation that focuses on AIDS

patient care.”

The prospect of carrying seminary debt into a modest-paying position as a young elder is often cited as a disincentive. Though streamlined some, the ordination process is long and can be confusing if conferences don't work hard to communicate the necessary steps.

Then, too, The United Methodist Church faces the possibility — some say likelihood — of schism due to internal conflict over how accepting to be of homosexuality.

The current young elders were aware of the divisions when they answered their call to United Methodist ministry and began seminary, but the situation has become even more fraught.

“Obviously we were not at the position we're in now,” Caltrider said.

Before the last three years, the denomination had seen modest growth in the number and percentage of young elders since the low in 2005. Lowery and Weeks both noted that some conferences have had clear, ongoing success with targeted efforts.

The Texas Conference has for years had a multifaceted approach, encompassing everything from youth camps with a discernment focus to church staff internships to financial help for seminary students.

This year, the Texas Conference was at the top in percentage of young elders, and it has been the leader four other times since 2012.

The Rev. Michelle Manuel, 33, transferred into the Texas Conference, encouraged by the

diversity of its appointment settings and the role women have had in church and conference leadership there.

She pointed to one particularly helpful conference initiative, the residency covenant groups, where young clergy meet to vent and occasionally push back on venting.

“I need my peers to say, ‘Hey, me too,’ or to one up me and say, ‘It could be worse, girlfriend,’” said Manuel, who is on staff at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Houston, and on track to be ordained an elder next summer.

The Dakotas and Arkansas conferences have ranked high in the percentage of young elders in recent years, and the North Texas Conference has lately joined them.

The Rev. Ricky Harrison, 27, credited North Texas Conference Bishop Michael McKee with fostering a culture of call, including staying in touch with him and other young clergy candidates as they made their way through college and seminary.

“He's been really intentional,” said Harrison, who was ordained as an elder this summer and now is associate pastor at First United Methodist Church in Decatur, Texas.

For Gosden, the solution to the problem underscored by the Lewis Center study will be best addressed by clergy themselves.

“If people have an issue with the decline in the number of younger elders, we need to look in the mirror,” he said. “We need to train leaders to cultivate leaders.”

Gosden's church has been on Telfair Square in downtown Savannah

since 1848, and its roots go back much farther. But he wants Trinity to be trailblazing in its approach to encouraging young people to answer the ministry call.

“That's the name of the game, long term,” he said. “I want to send people into the ministry out of this church. We want to be a factory.”

—Sam Hodges, UMNS

Creation Care Is Here

Armed with information from a school report by her daughter, Elan Brown addressed the Florida Annual Conference in June in Lakeland, Florida.

“Our earth was founded upon the seas and waters and we have been commanded to care for it,” Brown said. “Let our churches adopt creation care practices that minimize the use of single-use plastics, plastic straws, plastic bags and polystyrene foam for all events, fellowship gatherings and classes in order to reduce our harm against God's creation.”

Brown, a member of Cornerstone United Methodist Church in Naples, Florida, wrote the resolution in a four-day rush to make the filing deadline. “Thank God my daughter had done a research paper on it,” she said. “It's a wonderful blessing that we are able to do a model for other conferences.”

The resolution passed in a landslide, garnering 82% of the vote. Though there is no penalty for ignoring it, United Methodist environmentalists in

Continued on Page 7

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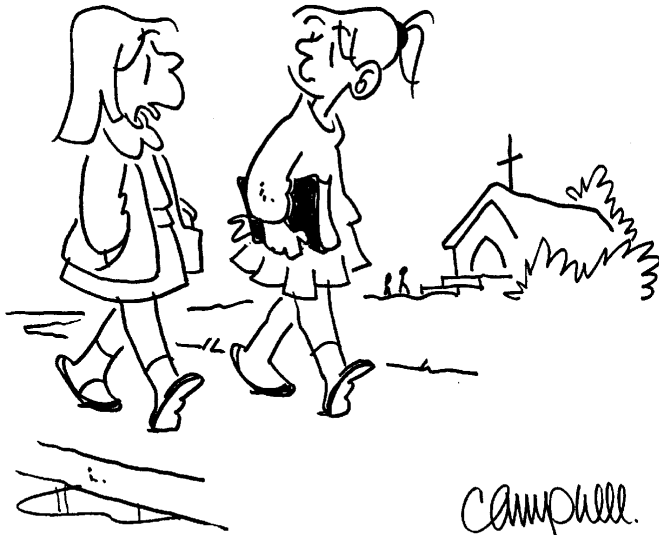
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God knows when you commit a sin."



The deadline for the November issue
of **The Link** is October 25.
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For security purposes, the Church St. entrance is now
locked as soon as Sunday services begin. If you are run-
ning late, be sure to use the Sanctuary entrances.

Creation Care (From Page 5)

Florida report that the idea is taking hold, and a round of regional meetings is planned this winter to promote the resolution.

The victory was significant in an environment where some people, including United Methodists, don't believe climate change is happening. The **United Methodist Social Principles** recognize climate change and state that it disproportionately affects poorer communities.

"I think that we are in a moment of collective denial about the impact of climate change and environmental degradation," said the Rev. Jenny Phillips, creation care program manager for the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

"Particularly because my work is situated within UMCOR, it's very clear that extreme weather events are happening more frequently and with greater intensity than ever before and that the ministries of our church are bearing the brunt. They are the frontlines of suffering and the frontlines of recovery."

Efforts to address climate change are being made across the denomination. Church and Society, United Methodist Women, Wespath, Higher Education and Ministry and Discipleship Ministries are among the United Methodist entities doing significant work on the issue, Phillips said. UMCOR also has solar power initiatives outside the U.S. that are making progress.

"It really permeates throughout the ministry of the church," she said. A growing amount of grassroots climate change work is being done by

graduates of Global Ministries EarthKeepers training. There are about 157 EarthKeepers at work, and [training sessions](#) for more are set for Sept. 26-29 in Austin, Texas, and Oct. 24-27 in Chicago.

"The first (EarthKeepers) training happened in 2016," Phillips said. "The idea was to really help people put their environmental passion into action — to make that connection between the great problems of the world and what they can do about it in their local communities."

Brown is a graduate of the EarthKeepers program, as is the Rev. Deidra Wright, who has founded and operates a community garden at Columbia Drive United Methodist Church in Decatur, Georgia. She also oversees small gardens at several local schools.

Church gardens attract people who are resistant to regular church, she said.

"They get community," Wright said. "And I think secretly, that's what everybody's searching for ... there's something about nature and caring and food that brings people closer together. I think that's important." The garden provides food to a community that lacks nutritional options, and working the land is healing for the land and the people doing the work, she explained. And the closer food is grown to its ultimate consumer, the less fossil fuel is required to transport it.

"It's just good to know where your food is coming from," Wright said. "We're just trying to get everybody on the page for healthy living ... and get out of this slump of bad health

that we're in as African Americans in under-resourced communities."

Mary Beth Downey's environmental statement also evolved out of EarthKeepers training. A member of Mountain View United Methodist Church in Boulder, Colorado, she has organized a monthly bell ringing designed to protest harm to the environment and promote reforms.

A retired school psychologist, committed member of United Methodist Women and longtime activist, Downey was one of 284 people arrested in 1979, at age 21, at the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant near Denver for attempting to blockade railroad tracks leading to the site.

Downey's current protest started small with just her ringing a cowbell at the state capitol in Colorado on Dec. 11, 2018.

"It felt right. It felt empowering," Downey said.

Today, about 25 people gather at First United Methodist Church of Boulder at 11 a.m. on the 11th day of each month for a responsive bell ringing to bring attention to environmental issues. Gongs, drums and other instruments also are used.

"We have flyers that we pass out about what you can do this month," she said. The Boulder Shambhala (Buddhist) Center across the street from the downtown church participates, as do people of other faith communities including Jews, Unitarians, Presbyterians and Episcopalians.

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Creation Care (From Page 7)

“We’re not telling people what to do,” Downey said. “We’re saying wake up and do something.”

Leigh Williams, a member of First United Methodist Church Cary in North Carolina, started a silverware lending library as her EarthKeepers project. She is working to expand to include reusable cups to replace products like the ubiquitous red Solo cup, which few municipalities recycle.

“I actually got a grant from Wake County (North Carolina) Solid Waste,” Williams said. “It’s a solid waste landfill diversion grant to buy more used silverware. I get some containers and tablecloths and we now have composting through an industrial composting company. They allow us to buy some buckets and

then we lend them out and people fill them with compostable food or items ... and it gets picked up.”

The church can lend out up to 125 spoons, forks and knives at a time. Borrowers do not need to leave a deposit, and are encouraged to return the silverware dirty so they can be washed in a sterilizing dishwasher at the church.

“People don’t want to wash them.” Williams said. “That’s why people buy plastic throwaway utensils.” More efforts along these lines by United Methodists are necessary, Phillips said.

“We don’t know the impact our actions will have in the larger picture of addressing the environmental crisis,” she said. “But scientists are

giving us a clear picture of what will happen if we do nothing.

“I pray that the actions of Global Ministries EarthKeepers and United Methodist creation care advocates throughout the church will ultimately contribute to the full healing of God’s creation.”

—Jim Patterson, UMNS

