INTERFAITH VOICES

Miracles in the ashes

As wildfire season rages in Oregon, the forests disappear behind smoke and hillsides are blackened by flames. It is easy to focus on what is lost.

Yet even amid the danger and destruction, I know God is quietly working miracles.

SATINA TOLMAN

Some of Oregon's native plants cannot begin new life until they have first endured fire. Snowbrush, manzanita and lodgepole pine rely on intense heat to awaken seeds that may have lain dormant for decades. What looks like devastation is often preparing the way for renewal.

I believe God often works much the same way in our own lives. Where we see trials and destruction, God sees opportunities to bring new life, greater strength and steadfast perseverance.

Some trials come through no fault of our own, like lightning igniting a forest. Others result from people's careless choices, much like an abandoned campfire or fireworks sparking a blaze. Still others grow from our own mistakes. Whatever their source, I have learned that God does not waste our suffering when we place it in his hands.

Looking back, I can see how my own trials have made me more resilient, more compassionate and better able to love and serve others because of the empathy and charity they produced. While I would never choose those difficult experiences, I would not trade the person they helped me become.

I also learned that one of life's greatest challenges is watching those you love walk through their own fires. Years ago, I prayed over my growing family, pleading for God's protection. Today, I pray for my four adult children as they face trials of their own. Again and again, I have found myself praying, "They were your children before they were mine. Please help me trust your plan and know my part."

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). I have seen that promise fulfilled. Hardship has deepened faith, refined character and cultivated hope that couldn't have grown any other way.

ABOUT INTERFAITH VOICES

The weekly "Interfaith Voices" column includes a regular rotation of writers representing the broad spectrum of spiritual voices throughout the mid-valley. The column is coordinated by the Reverend Barbara Nixon, who can be emailed at revbabs2000@gmail.com.

A favorite reminder comes from Camille N. Johnson of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: "I know that life is hard. You can do hard with Jesus or you can do hard alone. That is your choice. But when you do hard with Jesus Christ, the hard becomes holy."

As I look back over my life, I do not only see the fires I endured. I see holy ground. The places where God met me, strengthened me and quietly transformed me.

I often think of the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire, when the flames came within a few miles of our home. The smoke was so thick it blotted out the sun for weeks. Then I looked up and saw the faintest outline of the sun breaking through the haze and it gave me hope.

As I look back over my life, I do not only see the fires I endured. I see holy ground.

I have found the same to be true in my spiritual life. During fires of grief, uncertainty and fear, the smoke of worry, doubt and despair can make it difficult to see the Son. Yet he has never left. Even when I couldn't see him clearly, he was still there, patiently piercing the darkness with hope until the smoke began to clear.

When smoke fills Oregon's skies this summer, I pray for the firefighters and all affected. I will also remember that beyond the flames, God is preparing something beautiful. Just as fire awakens seeds hidden beneath the forest floor, He can bring new life from the ashes of our hardest seasons. Sometimes the miracle isn't that God removes the fire; it's that he uses it to help something beautiful grow.

Satina Tolman, a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has been married to her husband for 29 years. They have four children and one grandchild. Satina loves her Savior, family, humanitarian service, travel, the outdoors, watercolor painting and writing. She is working on her second novel.

RELIGION CALENDAR

Sunday service: Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, 2650 NW Highland Drive in Corvallis, will share God's word and Holy Communion at 9 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 9, both in the sanctuary and via livestream worship at www.svlccorvallis.org and facebook.com/shepherdcorvallis.

The Rev. Eric Bohlmann's sermon will be "Put it on My Tab."

Shepherd of the Valley is a place of personal and group well-being, inviting you to find rest and renewal in Jesus Christ.

Multi-Gen Bible study and Sunday School for younger children both begin at 10:30 a.m. and offer opportunities to further study Jesus' teachings and discover ways to apply them in everyday life.

Multi-Gen Bible Study will have group discussions about Jesus — King David's Lord.

Shepherd of the Valley is fully accessible.

Sunday worship: First United Methodist Church, 1165 NW Monroe Ave. in Corvallis, will hold a worship service at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 9, in person and at facebook.com/ CorvallisFUMC/live.

Camp is about learning and growing, and so is life. When we are willing to listen to God and let ourselves be changed, our impact on those around us can create so much light and love in the world.

Join us this Sunday when Pastor Heather continues the series "Another Way: Know and Grow. Know and Grow: when we know better, we do better."

Baha'i devotions and discussion: "Ordering Human Affairs" is set for 10:30 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 9, via Zoom. The Zoom room will open at 10:15 a.m.

We watch in wonder as humanity's awareness grows of the need to order human affairs so as to create a unified world. Sunday's readings and discussion will focus on achieving a dynamic coherence of the spiritual and practical requirements of a peaceful society.

"Two calls to success and prosperity are being raised," the Baha'i Writings explain, "one is the call of civilization ... and the other is the soul-stirring call of God."

All are welcome to enjoy fellowship, readings and discussion.

Please visit https:// tinyurl.com/2ejv7cth, where you will find a copy of the readings for Sunday and a Zoom link to join the meeting.

Dinner and program: After 5 Connection will present "Don't Fall For It" from 6 to 7:45 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 11, at Ma's Restaurant, 2416 S. Santiam Highway in Lebanon.

Dala Johnson, community policing officer in Lebanon, will share valuable tips for electronic device safety. Scammers use the internet or phone to trick millions of people every year into sending money or giving personal information.

Guest speaker Wanda Lehmkuhl, from Payette, Idaho, will talk about "When the Master Takes the Brush," which caused unexpected changes in her artwork and created her results to be acceptable and useful to others.

Lebanon's Michelle Peterson, an accomplished singer and musician, will share her talents.

For reservations, contact Sherri at 541-258-6414 or Nancy at 541-259-1396 or NancyPinzino@comcast.net. Cost is $23 inclusive. The group is not credit card-ready.

Alabama public schools must display Ten Commandments

USA TODAY NETWORK

Alabama public schools will soon be required to display the Ten Commandments in certain classrooms and common areas under a new state law.

The law that takes effect on Oct. 1, 2026, says schools must post state-approved displays in fifth through 12th grade U.S. history classrooms alongside founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Mayflower Compact.

The requirement applies only if donated funds or donated displays are available, and schools have until Jan. 1, 2027 to comply.

Under SB 99, schools must:

- Display the Ten Commandments in classrooms serving grades 5-12.
- Post the text in common areas such as cafeterias and libraries.
- Include the Ten Commandments alongside founding-era documents.

Supporters say pairing the religious text with historical documents underscores its influence on American legal and cultural traditions, which they argue strengthens the law's educational value.

Generally, displaying the Ten Commandments in classrooms is considered unconstitutional.

The law revives debate over the First Amendment and the limits of expression in public schools, bringing longstanding legal conflicts back to the forefront.

In Stone v. Graham, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a similar Kentucky law. It ruled that mandatory classroom displays of the Ten Commandments violated the Constitution because they lacked a clear secular purpose.

In more recent decisions, including Kennedy v. Bremerton School District, the court has taken a broader view of religious expression in public settings.

Alabama's approach of requiring the Ten Commandments to be displayed alongside historical documents could become a key point in any court challenge, as the state may argue the law serves an educational or historical purpose rather than a purely religious one.

Backers of the law argue it highlights the historical role of religious principles in the development of American law and values.

Some Republican leaders have framed similar efforts as part of a broader push to emphasize Christianity's role in American history and culture.

MID-VALLEY

WORSHIP DIRECTORY

CORVALLIS

ANGLICAN

Light of Christ Anglican
2650 NW Highland Drive, Corvallis
(inside Shepherd of the Valley Bldg.)
Fr. Scott Browning
Sunday Service: 10:30am in person and on Zoom
Our website https://corvallis-anglican.org has the zoom link and other information.

BAHA'I

Baha'is of the Mid-Willamette Valley
Devotional gatherings at various times.
Visit https://linnbenton.local.bahai.us/activities/meetings-pray-and-meditate for contact information, or phone 541-753-5752 in Corvallis or 541-929-9448 in Philomath. For information on the Baha'i Faith in the U.S. see https://www.bahai.us/.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

First Church of Christ, Scientist
17th & Van Buren, Corvallis
Sunday Service: 10 am
Sunday School: 10 am
Wednesday Eve. Meeting: 7:30 pm
www.christiansciencecorvallis.org

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Circle Church of Christ
2020 NW Circle Blvd. • Corvallis
541-758-4456
Wes Hanson, Minister
Josh Stutzman, Campus Minister
Sunday Bible Class: 9:30 am
a cappella Worship: 10:30 am • Singing & Scripture 5 pm • Wed Evening: 7 pm

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

First Christian Church, Corvallis
602 SW Madison Ave, 541-753-2671
Matt Gordon, Pastor
Sunday Worship: 10 AM live and streaming
heartofcorvallis.org/livestream

EPISCOPAL

Church of the Good Samaritan
333 NW 35th St. Corvallis
541-757-6647
goodsamcorvallis.org/
8 am Rite I Service, and 10:30 am Rite II Service with live-stream viewing available through our website.
7 pm Sung Compline service
All are welcome.

LUTHERAN

Beautiful Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church
2605 NW 13th St. • Corvallis
541-757-8953 • Luke Tembreull, Pastor
Worship - 10:15am • Bible Study - 9am
pastor@corvallislutherans.org
www.corvallislutherans.org

Grace Lutheran Church ELCA
435 NW 21st St. • Corvallis
541-757-1600
Pastor, Remy Remmers
Worship services in person at 10:00am.
For Livestream service on Youtube
Go to; www.grace97330.org

Peace Lutheran Church
2540 Applegate • Philomath
541-929-5504 • Jeremy Lucke, Pastor
peaceinphilomath.com
Sunday School, all ages, 9 am
Adult Bible Study 8:30 am; Worship Service, 10 am.
Worship available online at
www.peaceinphilomath.com or on our Facebook site.
Also available on YouTube

Zion Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
2745 NW Harrison Blvd. • Corvallis
541-757-0946 • Ted Schaefer, Pastor
www.proaxis.com/~zion
Sunday Worship: 9 & 11 am
Education Hour: 10am
Wednesday Worship: 6:30 pm

MENNONITE

Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship
Westminster House
101 NW 23rd St., Corvallis
541-286-5388
Sunday Worship - 10:30 am
See the website for schedule exceptions and other information.
www.corvallismennonite.org

METHODIST

First United Methodist Church
1165 NW Monroe Ave. • Corvallis
541-752-2491
www.corvallisfumc.org
Online and in-person service starts at 9:30.
Online at
https://www.facebook.com/CorvallisFUMC/live/
Rev. Heather Seman
All are welcome here!

NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Village Christian Church
Find hope and real connection, even now.
Online and in-person groups for all.
www.avillage.cc
infor@avillage.cc
facebook/l

PRESBYTERIAN

Calvin Presbyterian Church (EPC)
1736 NW Dixon St., Corvallis
541-757-8021 • calvin-church.org
Pastor Zach Washburn
9 am Sunday School for all ages; 10 am Worship

First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
114 SW 8th St., Corvallis
541-753-2228
10 am Sunday Worship, in person and streaming at
www.1stpres.org
11am virtual coffee hour
Follow us: www.Facebook.com/1stCorvallis

Westminster Presbyterian Church (OPC)
5005 NW Highland Dr. • Corvallis
541-753-4504, Minister: Pastor Charles Williams
Williams.1@opc.org
www.wpcorvallis.org
Sunday Worship: 11am & 5pm

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
se habla español
Come worship Jesus Christ each Sunday with us
To find the Church near you, please visit:
https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/ComeUntoChrist/Belong?lang=eng For more info: www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
2945 NW Circle Blvd. Corvallis
541-752- 5218
The Rev. Alex McGee
Sunday Worship Service: 10 am
Visit www.uucorvallis.org for information.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (CONGREGATIONAL)

First Congregational UCC
4515 SW West Hills Road
Corvallis, OR 97333
Sunday worship 10:30 a.m.
www.corvallisucc.org

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541-757-8075