

ODYSSEY

— inspire disciples. empower evangelists. —



Forward
Movement

— SPRING 2018 —



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From the Editor

As a ministry, we love to hear stories about how our resources change the lives of those who receive them. In this issue, you'll read a story of reconciliation between an inmate and the church he robbed, and how Forward Movement plays a role in his closer walk with God. You'll learn about congregations across the country that responded to our call for messages of love for those who struggled through hurricanes and other natural disasters. New Forward Movement author Charles LaFond tells us why a personal rule of life is so important.

You are the common denominator in all of the stories that we tell. Your gifts affirm our ministry, and allow us to share what we have with everyone who asks and with those who don't. Thank you for all that you do to share our work even further into God's kingdom.

Peace, —



Miriam McKenney

Development Director & Odyssey Editor

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A Prayer for Forward Movement

O God, we ask your guidance and blessing for the Forward Movement of your church. Use it, we pray, to open our eyes to your glory and to the opportunities that lie before the church to reach people everywhere with the good news of Christ. Grant that the leaders of Forward Movement may be both wise and daring disciples, and stir up in us the will to share joyfully in this work with our prayers and gifts. Let not our purpose grow slack, that the nations of this world may become one holy people under the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ. This we ask in his name. *Amen.*

Dear friends in Christ,

What is the church? We might think that is beautiful buildings or beloved traditions. In fact, the church is a community of disciples. We are a community of disciples whether we meet under stained glass or in a tent. We are a community whether we are singing favorite hymns or hearing challenging words.

The church can be a frustrating place, all the more so because we aim to be icons of God's reign. But the church is, of course, filled with people. And people are all broken. So the church is both a broken place and a place that is holy beyond measure. How is all this lived out?

The church is at its best when it reconciles. When estranged people are brought together, Christ's love is made manifest. When people without hope learn the Good News that Jesus has redeemed them, Christ's love is manifest. When those at the margins of society are loved, Jesus Christ is manifest.

At Forward Movement, we try to provoke the church to be its best – not for the sake of the church, but for the sake of the Gospel. We encourage individual Christians to be faithful disciples in prayer, study, worship, and service. We work to show Christ's reconciling love to prisoners and other people in need. We seek to provide resources to parents and teachers as they nurture the next generations of Christians.

This issue of *Odyssey* tells some remarkable stories. They are stories of what Forward Movement is doing, but they are all really stories about what God is doing.

Yours faithfully,



The Rev. Canon Scott Gunn, Executive Director
513-721-6659 ext 311
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Scripture Engagement

The Rev. Canon Scott Gunn, Executive Director

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

God takes scripture seriously. After giving the heart of the Law (“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”), God tells the people of Israel to keep the words in their hearts. But that’s not all. God wants the people of Israel not just to know the scriptures, but to teach them to their children. If we understand ourselves as the heirs of Israel, then we too should place ourselves in this story. We are meant to know the scriptures and to talk about them at home and to teach them to our children. We might not literally fix the scriptures on our foreheads, and most of us don’t have gates. But there is no mistaking the intent of the command: we are meant to display and honor the scriptures publicly.

As I've traveled across the Episcopal Church, I've noticed a very welcome trend: more and more congregations are diving into the scriptures, inviting people to encounter the Bible and its glorious story of God's great love for us. The importance of scripture engagement as a catalyst for spiritual growth cannot be overstated. We have data from RenewalWorks which tell us that scripture engagement is a catalyst that works for people at all stages of spiritual growth. Reading God's word forms us as followers of Jesus.

We Episcopalians have a bad habit, I've observed, of keeping our distance from the Bible. We talk about it, rather than finding our place in its narrative. I've heard more sermons than I can count which discount the stories of the Bible or explain them away rather than entering into them with awe and wonder. To be clear: I'm not saying that we shouldn't engage in critical reading or gain historical knowledge. But in the church, our primary encounter with the scriptures should be proclamation and learning. To coin a phrase, we should hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the scriptures.

And though we claim to be the "church where you don't have to check your brain at the door" or the "AP class of Christianity" (don't get me started), we are a church of people who, by and large, have not opened our scriptures to learn what they might teach us. Again, RenewalWorks data bear out the fact that most of us simply haven't read the scriptures.

Here's the good news. In my experience — and from what I've heard, I'm not alone — it's easy to invite people into the scriptures so that we might have a rich encounter together. Lots of folks are eager to read the Bible, but are intimidated by it or feel that they lack the knowledge to read the scriptures. We have, ironically, gone back to a moment before the Reformation(s), when the scriptures were limited to professionals. So let's fix that. Let's give the Bible back to the whole church.

I'm pretty passionate about this, because I know what a difference it made in my life when I read the scriptures with a congregation. I've seen and heard story after story of transformation. As I travel, I'll tell anyone who will listen to be how important it is to get people reading the Bible. It's important, and getting it done is a bit of work, but it's not complicated. And, wow, it brings a joy that passes understanding.

Why should we read the scriptures? Not just because God commands it — though that is a compelling reason in itself — but because the scriptures will open and change our hearts as we encounter the wondrous story of God's great love for us. To get a congregation reading the scriptures will surely lead to transformation of individual lives and of the church itself. To learn the language of scripture is to find new ways to praise and to thank God, and that helps us live out our purpose, to glorify God.

Not long ago, I was visiting a church that has experienced some growth. I asked a few of the members why they thought their church was growing. "Our priest got us reading the Bible, and that gave us the language to talk about our faith, to invite others to join us as followers of Jesus."

Engaging with the scriptures changes us, changes our church, and just might change the world.

This article originally appeared on Scott's blog, sevenwholedays.org.

Stay Connected



Hurricanes of Love

Rachel Jones, Associate Editor

Like so many of you, my family and I watched the successive hurricanes roll in and wreak their devastation across huge swaths of the United States during September and October of 2017. Places I loved were destroyed. People I loved were displaced. I couldn't begin to imagine what I could do to even start to help heal that kind of hurt.

Then I saw a post on my friend Jennifer's Facebook page. A mama had brought Jennifer some artwork done by her children to share with men and women who had lost their homes. And my heart cracked wide open. We wrote a post on our sister blog, GrowChristians.org, about creating a hurricane of love, made out of 3x5 index cards covered with messages of hope and encouragement from families all over the country.

From the original blog post:

Not all of us are in a position to drive to any of the areas that have been torn apart by hurricanes or floods or tornadoes or earthquakes—all of which have happened across the world in the last three weeks. But we know that prayer is powerful, and we can all pray for our brothers and sisters who are hurting.



I want to invite you and your family—your church family, your friend-family, your work family—whoever you spend your love and life with—to help out in a hands-on way. Some time over the next two weeks, grab a stack of 3 x 5 notecards—however many you feel is appropriate. I want you to decorate those cards with messages of love and encouragement for our brothers and sisters who have been touched by the destruction of this hurricane season. Your notes can be as simple or as complex as you like—they just have to fit on a 3 x 5 card.

Gather up your cards and say a prayer over them, and then put the notes you and your family make together in a big envelope and mail them to me, here at Forward Movement. These are small tokens full of big love, prayers, hopes, and comfort that our friends and neighbors who have been displaced, flooded out, frightened, left without the stuff that has made up their lives—something they can hold in their hands, and see a message of love and encouragement from YOUR family directly to them.

This storm of love blew and blew, and the love letters began to rain all over my office. People from all over the country responded—grown-ups, little kids, families, Boy Scout Troops, church staffs, retirement centers, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians. So many people answered our call for love letters. We wanted to share this beautiful outpouring of love and care and hospitality with you, our friends who know so much about the power of sharing. Thank you for your love of Jesus and of his people.

For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. – 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11



Like Forward Day by Day on Facebook

Forward Movement Events and Conferences

Jason Merritt, Marketing Director

Over 130 Episcopalians from around the country gathered in Philadelphia this past October for the Discipleship Matters Conference, offered by Forward Movement and the RenewalWorks ministry. The three-day conference was held at St. Thomas' Church, Whitmarsh, and was co-sponsored by the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

Attendees heard from diverse presenters who lead innovative discipleship programs in their own churches, dioceses, and organizations. Holding the event at a church offered ample opportunity for networking between lay leaders and clergy who share a passion for inspiring and equipping disciples for the work of the church in today's world.

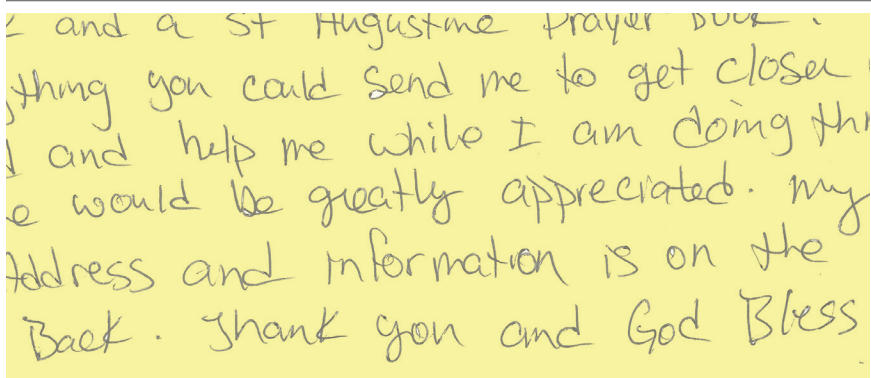
Look for announcements about future conferences on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/fwdmvt

This March, Forward Movement is excited to work with the Presiding Bishop's Office of Evangelism and Reconciliation to present the second national Evangelism Matters Conference.

Building off the success of the first Evangelism Matters Conference, held in Dallas in November 2016, this event will gather leaders from around the church for three days of workshops, presentations, worship, and networking, equipping and empowering evangelists for the journey ahead.

The Evangelism Matters Conference will be held March 15-17, 2018 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights, OH. Learn more and register at www.EvangelismMatters.org



A photograph of a handwritten note on a piece of yellow paper. The text is written in cursive and reads: "and a St Augustine prayer book. anything you could send me to get closer and help me while I am doing this would be greatly appreciated. my address and information is on the back. Thank you and God Bless".

and a St Augustine prayer book. anything you could send me to get closer and help me while I am doing this would be greatly appreciated. my address and information is on the back. Thank you and God Bless

Evangelism in Prison Ministry

Miriam McKenney, Development Director

The inmates who write to us touch our hearts every day. We're thankful that *Forward Day by Day* reaches our incarcerated brothers and sisters, so that they know that God deeply and eternally loves them. Your gifts spread that love throughout the United States and to countries around the world – we are thankful for you.

This story of evangelism started with a request from a woman in a Texas jail.

My name is Sharon and I am currently incarcerated in County Jail. I may be looking at some real time, like 2-10 years in prison. I am writing you today to see if you can send me the Pathways of Faith Coloring Book, and a Day by Day?? I would greatly appreciate it. I do not have any money to pay you. At one time I was very active in my church, seeing how my father was a Pentecostal preacher all my life. However I lost both my parents in 2015 and fell off into depression and here I sit due to my bad choices. I am on my way to recovery and building my relationship back with God. I thank you for anything you are able to send me.

We sent Sharon the materials, but she was moved to another facility, and may not have received them. This is not unusual in the

prison system. Thankfully, Sharon didn't give up. She reached out to us again from her new facility in Texas.

My name is Sharon and I am incarcerated in Texas. I am serving a fifteen-month sentence. While I am here I have entered the recovery program called Turning Points. I am also working on my relationship with God. See, my dad was a minister for the Assembly of God all my life. Well I have lost him and my mother both to a better life with God in 2015. So I am now doing this time alone – well with me and God. I am writing to ask if you could please send me a Pathways of Faith Coloring Book and a Saint Augustine Prayer Book? Anything you could send me to get closer to God and help me while I am doing the time would be greatly appreciated. Thank you and God Bless.

We sent her the materials, and thought that was that. But a couple of weeks later, we received this letter from another woman in the same prison.

My name is Amber. I am incarcerated and I would love to send my child the Pathways of Faith Coloring Book. May you please send me a Pathways of Faith all ages coloring book. Please and God bless.

Her letter included nine additional women's addresses. A day or two later, we received yet another letter:

Hello my name is Robin. Some of my cell mates received the faith based coloring book you have sent them. Me and my bunkie are wanting to receive the same book. Thank you, God Bless.

She listed her address along with those of five other women. We've mailed 38 copies of Pathways of Faith to that Texas prison to date. We feel blessed to share something that will bring joy and light into the lives of these women and their families. Often, a mailing from us is the only touch an inmate has from outside prison. Your generosity allows us to say yes to every request like this we receive. Thank you so much for helping these incarcerated women and their families experience a relationship with God.



Creating Your Rule of Life

An Interview with Charles LaFond

Miriam McKenney, Development Director

Charles LaFond believes that a Rule of Life is so important, everyone should write one. An ancient method for building soul memory, a Rule of Life offers reminders to ourselves of the person we hope to be. “It’s like a series of Post-it Notes stuck by my breakfast each day,” he observes. “Tuesday: Today, remember what you believe about rest. Wednesday: Today, remember what you believe about friendship. Thursday: Today, remember what you believe about money. A Rule of Life really works.”

Charles’s passion to share the powerful results a Rule of Life can bring led him to write *Note to Self: Creating Your Guide to a More Spiritual Life*. “I believe we each have a mini-monk or mini-nun, or some of both, inside us clamoring for this kind of structure and practice.” Read on to learn more about Charles, how he came to create his own Rule of Life, and why he’s so passionate about you living a better life through using your own personal Rule.

Why do people need a Rule of Life? How could writing one help me?

Hiking in the forest is a great love of mine and of my black lab Kai. It is so easy to wander off a path when hiking. Where I hike there are stapled ribbons on trees to mark the path. Let's say I am on the blue trail; passing many other trails – red, yellow, white. My trail, the blue trail, curves ahead but I keep walking straight, neglecting to turn. Only by looking up and noticing the ribbons marking the trail are now red am I able to see that I am on the wrong path.

A Rule of Life is like those ribbons on the hiking trail – reminders of my pathway, the one that leads to where I want to go. Many people use New Year's resolutions to establish a priority. They work for a while, but often they fade like smoke from a burned out fire. It would be like having trail markers on every tree for the first half mile and then forgetting to make the trail beyond that, without the markers along and at the end of the trail, the early ones are not much use in the long picture of the hike. The hiker is sure for a while, and then lost.

A Rule of Life is an ancient practice used by groups of people – Christians, Jews, people of all religions and of none – to codify their longings for their life and then to remind them daily of the markers on the pathway of their life so that they stay on their path and do not wander off onto other paths with other markers for other people.

My Rule of Life helps me by serving as a catalyst for me to think about my life. What thirty or so things, if I get them right most of the time, would set me on a path to a good life? Once I have that list, then what do I think about each one? What is my own vision that states my longing for a good life around that subject? Once these one-page chapters are written, how might I read one a day so as to remind myself every thirty days of these important longings I have for my life?

What made you decide to write a Rule of Life?

A light bulb went off in my head as a teenager touring the great British cathedrals. They were often founded and built as monasteries. I was always given a map of the cathedral complex when the docent took my money for my self-guided tour. And there, so often, on the map, was a “chapter house” or “chapter room.” When I visited that part of the cathedral complex I wondered why this round room existed. Why is it round? Why is it there when it is only used so occasionally? Why is it so rigorously and beautifully decorated? I learned that the monks and nuns wrote a Rule together and then each day they would go into a room, sit in a circle, and read, out loud, one chapter from this Rule as a way to remind them of what their hopes were for their life as a community and their work as a religious.

Over the course of thirty years I wondered: what if every one of us could write a Rule and read a daily chapter, or page, to help us maintain a road map when there are so many mismarked and dangerous roads out there in life? So, I wrote my Rule and then lived by it. I spent three years in a monastery, and decided to write this book to encourage others in imagining, writing and living by a Rule themselves.

When did you begin writing about a Rule of Life?

I began working with Rules and leading retreats on them in my seminary years, fifteen years ago. As I taught more classes and led more retreats on the subject, I began to outline the chapters of a book. Leading a diocesan retreat for clergy on the subject really enthused me and so I began to write in great earnest and finished the book in winter of 2017.

What was your favorite part of writing this book?

I loved the simple process of writing. I imagined one person – her name was Mikalia. I wrote the book as if I was writing her a letter in answer to the question she asked one day at a retreat: “Charles, how would I write a Rule of life?” I loved her question, so I wrote the book for her and for people like her.

Where did you go for inspiration?

As John Philip Newell says so beautifully in the foreword of the book, we get our inspiration from our time with God. We take all the hurts and wounds, questions and answers, ponderings and wonderings to God in our prayer time the way a person wears clothes into an event or the way a child brings a parent a treasure chest full of a frog and a string and a pebble. God then sits with us listening as we sit with God listening. Most days, the result is the indwelling of Spirit and the inner expansion and awareness of God.

What is your writing process like?

I write best in the morning. I rise, after carefully working to get 8 hours of sleep, at 5:00 am. I sit in meditation, then walk, and then write before going to work raising money for people experiencing homelessness. I try to average about 1,000 words per day.

Where do you typically write?

I move between three locations. I write at my desk, an old secretary owned by many members of my family from many years back. It has a case of my favorite books and they provide inspiration to me...Dickens, E. M. Forster, Trollope, Merton and others. I also work at a desk with a larger screen and in my reading chair. I write letters on a 19th century lap-desk that I tremendously enjoy for the ritual of pen, ink and paper.



Good Book Club

Richelle Thompson, Deputy Director and Managing Editor

Reading scripture changes us. Encounters with God and God's word transform us. Every time. Whether we're looking for answers or think we're doing just fine on our own, God's word still speaks.

This fundamental and profound truth lies at the heart of the Good Book Club, Forward Movement's invitation to the church to read the Book of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles together throughout the seasons of Lent and Easter. We believe engaging in scripture brings us into deeper relationship with our Savior—and that reading God's word together will bring us into closer relationship with one another.

Throughout Lent and Easter, *Forward Day by Day* will move through Luke and Acts instead of our regular practice of following the lectionary. I am honored to be one of the four featured writers during this time period, alongside talented, faithful colleagues: the Rev. Lindsay Hardin Freeman (March), the Rev. Marcus Halley (April), and Miguel Escobar (May). Forward Movement offered free downloadable Bible studies for individuals and congregations to explore some of the stories in more depth. We continued the Bible Challenge series with *A Journey with Luke* and the newly released *A Journey through Acts*, daily meditations by noted theologians and faith leaders from around the world.

Reading scripture is both deeply personal and an act of community. We invited Episcopal organizations from across the church to partner in the Good Book Club initiative. The response was overwhelming. More than twenty-five organizations stepped up to partner with Forward Movement, committing time and talent to develop resources for the wider church. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry issued a video invitation for all Episcopalians to join the Good Book Club. In my twenty years of local, diocesan, and church-wide work, I have never seen so many organizations come together for common cause. God is doing a new thing indeed. A full list of the partners is featured below, and links to the resources can be found at www.goodbookclub.org.



THE GOOD BOOK CLUB

As we began making plans for this project, we discussed our goals and what success might look like. We can only dream and imagine how the Good Book Club might shape and transform us as individuals and as a church. God already knows.

Excerpt from Forward Day by Day, February 2018

Luke 2:10-11. *But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.*

You have probably heard these words dozens of times. Perhaps you were a shepherd clad in an ill-fitting sheet or a young Mary holding a burlap-wrapped baby doll. Maybe, propped on elbows on the family room floor, you watched an earnest Linus tell Charlie Brown—and us—what Christmas is all about. Maybe wax burned your fingers as you held a candle at midnight mass, listening to these words said by a priest or sung by a choir.

Luke’s telling of the birth of Christ is the familiar favorite: The emperor sending out a decree; Joseph and Mary setting out for Bethlehem on a donkey; Jesus sleeping (and crying, I suspect) in a manger.

Whether this is your first or fiftieth time hearing this story, may you meet each telling with wonder and awe. The birth of any child is amazing, but the birth of this one is miraculous. Just twenty-one verses change the course of the world. One story in a sea of stories that is the greatest one ever to be told, offering good news of great joy for all people.

Tips on Reading the Bible

Compiled by your friends at Forward Movement

Choose a Bible that you enjoy reading.

Visit a bookstore that sells lots of Bibles, and read different translations until you find your favorite. Choose one that has looks you like, so you'll enjoy seeing it want to read it. If you already have one, great – but if you don't enjoy reading it, it's time to find another one. Try another translation. If you like NRSV, try CEB. The differences can deepen your understanding and spark conversation. Not sure? Go online to a Bible webpage like www.biblegateway.com. Search for your favorite passage and read it in several translations.

Get to know your Bible.

Explore the table of contents, historical information, maps – discover the special features of your Bible.

Locate your favorite parts of the Bible.

Mark your favorite scriptures, prayers, and people with a ribbon, bookmark, or sticky-note. Keep adhesive flags on hand for marking passages you want to revisit.

Remember that the Bible isn't one book.

It's a library, with lots of books in one place. Start with the parts that interest you most. You don't have to read it in order, and if you do, it won't be a linear story. That's okay!

Pick a consistent time of day you'd like to read.

Many find it easy to link reading the Bible to prayer time, either before or after.

Be patient with yourself, and the Bible.

Get help if there are parts you don't understand. Study Bibles offer commentary and explanations of the text. Online resources can

offer in-depth questions and answers. At church, ask questions of your clergy and laypeople who are knowledgeable about the Bible. Find more resources at www.thegoodbookclub.org/resources.

After you read, ask yourself these questions:

- What happened? What does the text say?
- What excited or surprised you? Any other emotions arise?
- What does the text mean?
- How does what you read apply to you?

Read the Bible with others.

As you continue to read, you may have questions or the desire to talk about what you've read. Find or create a Bible study group! Forward Movement can help with resources for group bible studies; visit www.forwardmovement.org to learn more.

Dig into the history of the Bible.

Your Bible may have historical information, or you can find it online. Find a current map of the region and compare it to a map of the time the Bible was written.

Read the Bible out loud.

Reading out loud engages your senses differently, and can lead to new understandings and meanings to what you read silently. Read aloud with a friend, spouse, family member, or pets.





Your Gift Changes Lives

Your monthly gift sustains us year-round and helps us send *Forward Day by Day* to all who want and need it. Visit www.ForwardMovement.org to donate, or mail your gift to Forward Movement, 412 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

All gifts are tax-deductible.

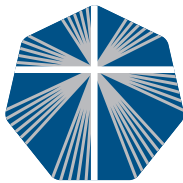
Choose a Frequency

☐ One Time

☒ Monthly

☐ Quarterly

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