I'M FINE

"I'm fine - the biggest lie we tell" was the topic of a recent blog sent to me by a friend. Her purpose in sharing was to communicate with me that after 20 years of answering "How are you?" with "I'm fine" she wanted her friends to know that she was not and had not been "fine" for a long time.

There is something in us that really wants to be "fine" and of course there is the cultural pressure to be "fine." Part of this is that we have been trained to keep our problems to ourselves, never show a weakness, certainly "don't let them see you cry" and, of course, in our generation when we can decide what of us the world will see in our social media posts.

One of the funniest (not funny in a good way) things that pastors hear is "I can't come to church because I just don't have it together." There is a perception beyond the church community (and sadly sometimes within it) that people who attend worship have it all figured out - their lives are as perfect and posed as their social media posts; they are "fine" and those that are not just won't fit in. Some in the church feel the same way, so they step back, feel insufficient and often fade into non-participation and drift from God and the church.

Every Pastor who loves and knows their people, while never exposing them, would love for the one who feels they can't be part of the church because they "don't have it together" to stand beside them on the chancel. There I could communicate with me that after 20 years of answering "How are you?" with "I'm fine" she wanted her friends to know that she was not and had not been "fine" for a long time.

There is a perception that because the Scripture says: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4) that we should love for the one who feels they can't be part of the church because they "don't have it together" to stand beside them on the chancel. There I could - "see that guy - all day long fighting the urge to end his life" "that one is so lonely she just wants one friend" "that kid is so depressed it is a miracle he is here," "that family is 30 days behind on every bill" and so on...

Part of this is that we have been trained to keep our problems to ourselves, never show a weakness, certainly "don't let them see you cry" and, of course, in our generation when we can decide what of us the world will see in our social media posts.

In fact, some of us reading this ten days into 2019 thought "things will get better after the holidays, in the New Year I will be fine" and we are not fine. Our emotional, spiritual and physical trajectory is not increasingly "better", it is a mess (see figure 1.2). We are on an emotional roller coaster that never goes back to the station to drop us off and it is exhausting. PLUS we constantly feel like we need to tell people, "I'm fine." To you I write this article, be encouraged, some of the "greats", the men and women of renown in our biblical story lived on an emotional roller coaster.

We know about Sarah’s advancement into her nineties before she gave birth to Isaac, fighting depression and demonization every year – even doubting God’s word that could make her "fine." Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, accused of sexual assault, imprisoned and, of course, for decades was estranged from his family – pretty far from “fine.” King David wrote: “I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit about what happens to me.” Friends, if the foremothers and fathers of our faith had moments or extended periods of “NOT FINE” in their lives, while very hard, it seems to reason that we will experience the same.

Beginning this Sunday, we launch a preaching series entitled "The Emotional Roller Coaster", during which our hope is to speak into the lives of those of us who consistently, or from time-to-time are not "fine." We won’t be able to touch every issue in this five-week series but, if you or have a dear friend or family member are "not fine", encourage, invite, or drive them to attend with you or send them a link to a sermon if one resonates with your soul.

You are beloved,

Pastor Mike
Providing Spiritual Care

When you or someone you love is receiving medical care, your pastoral staff endeavors to provide the best in Christian love and spiritual care through personal visits and prayer support. The hospitals are endeavoring to protect your personal information, and for that reason, the intake process has changed significantly in the past few years. More times than not, we learn of a hospitalization when someone has already gone home, which diminishes the spiritual care that we truly desire to offer. In order to provide that high level of care we must have your assistance. When you have been admitted or if you are scheduled for surgery please do the following:

Upon registration make it very clear to the person taking your information that you are a member of Marion First United Methodist Church and would like to have your pastoral team notified.

When a hospital chaplain visits you, re-iterate that you are a member of this church and would appreciate a visit from your pastors or ask to speak to one of the hospital chaplains and explain to them that you would like to have your church notified.

Have a family member or trusted friend call the church office at 377-4856, or email the Director of Pastoral Care, Vicki Standley, at vstandley@marionmethodist.org.

Friendship Fund Distributions Christmas 2018

The offering taken last Christmas Eve 2017 for the Friendship Fund has been distributed during this past year on your behalf to help many people in the church and the community. These funds provide for many basic needs in a meaningful and generous way. Your offerings have helped buy groceries, pay utility bills and rent, buy work clothing, provide a night’s lodging, provide transportation, and fill necessary prescriptions.

It is our Marion Methodist tradition to not use the Friendship Fund as a savings account but rather to bless people and ministries we support. This year by Christmas Eve morning the Friendship Fund was spent down to less than one thousand dollars in expectation of the evening offering replenishing the fund to bless those needing a helping hand in our community. Those blessings were:

- $2750 each to:
  - Community Free Health Clinic
  - Churches of Marion Senior Living
- $5500 to:
  - Marion Cares

This December 2018, the Christmas Eve offerings for the Friendship Fund totaled $27,107. Because of your generosity, we will be able to continue assisting the people of this church and community in 2019.

The pastors and church leaders praise God for your generous giving to these people and these ministries!

Thank you again!

Dear Mike,
I had a wonderful experience at Marion Methodist! The new building is gorgeous, everyone was friendly and gracious, and worship was intentional, engaging, and transformative. Thank you for the kind invitation to preach. May God bless you and the congregation as you continue to make disciples and reach out to your community and the world in love.

Blessings,
Bishop Laurie

Bishop Laurie Haller took a moment at our November 18th Consecration weekend to have a picture taken with Myrna Carter, District Superintendent Kiboko Kiboko and Pastor Mike Morgan. Myrna labored at Marion Methodist for over 50 years as our Director of Christian Education and later as our calling pastor. Myrna is one of the first persons consecrated as a Diaconal Minister in the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church.
I must admit, when we first started to hear of the plans to build a new church, I should have been more excited than I was. Had I known then what a great place it would become, I would have been, but I’m a bit old-school. I loved the architecture, the stained-glass windows and just the cozy feel of our existing church. Many generations of the Murray family have been married and baptized there. However, my kids and grandkids were very excited about it and all the new technologies it would allow. You could say they had the “faith” that I was lacking. As things moved along, I was becoming more and more excited about the transition. Then, one day, it was finished. All it took was sitting in the Sanctuary that first Sunday and I was hooked. I still missed our old building, but our new church is wonderful. It was then that the idea to do a mosaic to honor the old church occurred to me. As I was planning out the design, I thought no, it can’t be just the old church. I must include both churches with a path from one to the other to symbolize where we came from and where we are going. Simon Campbell knew I did mosaics and asked me if I’d like to have some broken pieces of stained glass they found during the moving process. At that time, he didn’t know I had been planning to do a mosaic of the churches. The dark swirling clouds in the sky of the mosaic are made from that glass. I was so excited to include a part of the old church in this project! Lesson learned... Have faith and it will open many doors, right? Thank You to all those who had the vision and faith over the years to get us to where we are today. This mosaic pales in comparison to the greatest gift given when accepting Christ as our savior, but I hope all will enjoy it. It is entitled “Pillars of Faith” referencing the first sermon in the new church.

I would like to thank my husband Dave for handling the framing and attaching the hangers on this piece and my previous projects. My son Steven for helping me get the proportions right on the old building, but our new church is wonderful. It was then that the idea to do a mosaic to honor the old church occurred to me. As I was planning out the design, I thought no, it can’t be just the old church. I must include both churches with a path from one to the other to symbolize where we came from and where we are going. Simon Campbell knew I did mosaics and asked me if I’d like to have some broken pieces of stained glass they found during the moving process. At that time, he didn’t know I had been planning to do a mosaic of the churches. The dark swirling clouds in the sky of the mosaic are made from that glass. I was so excited to include a part of the old church in this project! Lesson learned... Have faith and it will open many doors, right? Thank You to all those who had the vision and faith over the years to get us to where we are today. This mosaic pales in comparison to the greatest gift given when accepting Christ as our savior, but I hope all will enjoy it. It is entitled “Pillars of Faith” referencing the first sermon in the new church.

Teresa Murray

Mosaic Pillars of Faith

Marion Methodist Mailing Address

The US Postal Service has an amazing record of delivering all the mail to the address that is on the envelop or package. This is most always a really good thing, unless you are sending mail to the First United Methodist Parish in Marion, Iowa, also known as Marion Methodist. Please send all letters, donations, cards, questions, etc. to the Carnegie Library office.

1298 7th Avenue Marion, Iowa 52302

This will help us keep track of the mail after it leaves the trusted hands of the US Postal Service.

Marion Methodist is Praying for:

Prayer is a powerful way of caring for each other in our Marion Methodist family. There are several avenues open to everyone – the prayer cards on Sunday morning and the prayer wall which is available 24/7, are two that are used most often. You can have a more active part in entering into prayer for each other. Check out the prayer wall frequently as prayers are submitted there often. Each time you visit, and pray for one of the requests found there, click the “I Prayed For This” tab; more prayers are always better.

Praise God in your prayers for a brand new year and the opportunity to serve as his disciples. May we continue as a church to learn and grow and continue in our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Family-to-Family

NAMI Family-to-Family is a free 12-week educational course for family members of adults living with mental illness. Taught by family members who have had special training, its evidence-based curriculum includes the following:

- Up-to-date information on illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, anxiety disorders, and other mental health conditions and how they affect the brain
- Current treatments, including evidence-based therapies, medications, and side effects
- How to manage crises, solve problems, and communicate effectively
- How to develop the confidence and stamina to provide support with compassion

NAMI Linn County will offer two sections of Family-to-Family, as follows:

Mondays, West side, beginning Jan. 7, 2019, 6 – 8:30 pm for 12 weeks, at St. Mark’s United Methodist Church, 4700 Johnson Ave. NW

Tuesdays, East side/Marion, beginning Jan. 22, 2019, 6 – 8:30 pm for 12 weeks, at Marion Christian Church, 1050 McGowan Blvd., Marion

To enroll, please contact nami-lc@hotmail.com or phone 319-221-1184. Provide name, email address, phone number, class choice.

TV Broadcast

Marion Methodist worship services are typically rebroadcasted on Mediacom or ImOn Channel 4 at 7:00 PM on Monday evenings. There is a mult-week delay between when a sermon is preached and when it airs on TV.
The Marion Methodist newsletter deadline schedule

Articles for our Marion Methodist need to be submitted by due date at 12:00 PM. You may email them to: wildman@marionmethodist.org with newsletter in the subject line. Please send any information or images as an attachment. If you do not have access to a computer, you may call or bring to the office items to be published. We ask that you honor the deadlines listed below:

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<th>Date Arrived in Mail</th>
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Pantry Partners for Marion Food Pantry

We help folks in need by supplying items for the Marion Churches Food Pantry. You may bring the following items to church any time during each month. Please put your contributions in the Mission Depot in The Center or the Church Office.

- January: Macaroni & Cheese
- February: Canned Fruit
- March: Peanut Butter
- April: Macaroni & Cheese
- May: Toilet Tissue
- June: Soup

BAPTISMS:

January 6: Lu Yang

Concern & Christian Love...

Our Congregation Shares Its

DEATHS:

December 30: Ruth Jensen, mother of Alan (Virginia) Jensen

BIRTHS:

January 6: Lu Yang

WEDDINGS:

[...]

10 LITTLE CHRISTIANS

10 little Christians standing in line
1 disliked the preacher, then there were 9

9 little Christians stayed up very late
1 overslept Sunday, then there were 8

8 little Christians on their way to Heaven
1 took the low road and then there were 7

7 little Christians chirping like chicks
1 disliked music, then there were 6

6 little Christians seemed very much alive
but one lost his interest then there was 5

5 little Christians pulling for Heaven’s Shore
but one stopped to rest, then there were 4

4 little Christians each busy as a bee
but one got his feelings hurt, then there were 3

3 little Christians knew not what to do
1 joined the spry crowd, then there were 2

2 little Christians, our rhyme is nearly done
differed with each other, then there was 1

1 little Christian can’t do much ‘tis true;
butf brought his friend to Bible study -- then there were 2

2 earnest Christians, each won one more
that doubled the number, then there were 4

4 sincere Christians worked early and late
Each won another then there were 8

8 splendid Christians if they doubled as before
In just so many Sundays, we’d have 1,024

In this little jingle, there is a lesson true,
You belong, either to the building-, or to the wrecking-crew!

-- Author Unknown