How can we work alone when we are together?

This question bubbles to the surface of my consciousness as we stand at the edge of the Holy Season of Lent. During Lent we are to focus our spiritual life on self-denial that we might grow closer to Christ.

If you are unfamiliar with Lent, here is a brief primer. The early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season, converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. Baptism is one of those times that a congregation works together to help a person emerge as an adherent to the faith and yet the commitment can only come from one. This is how a congregation works together (to grow a Christian) and the individual works alone (to ascribe to the faith or not).

Further, Lent historically was a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness and restored to participation in the life of the Church. They repented alone and were embraced by the congregation, i.e. there was a great deal of alone work being done while the congregation was together. Traditions grew and as time passed, the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our individual faith as part of the togetherness of the body.

Therefore, to observe a holy Lent, disciples were encouraged to pick up a discipline of prayer, fasting, self-denial or others and, though the collective congregation was participating, each disciple worked alone on their discipline. By nature, self-denial is accomplished by oneself AND by tradition we work together as a congregation to grow individually closer to Christ.

In all of this I find an oxymoron. We are to work alone together. Which is it, alone or together? The answer is yes. This Lenten Season in our Sunday worship gatherings we will be using a prayer from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German preacher of the last century, to help us see the spiritual work we are to do alone while also being together. We pray that this is useful. I look forward to working alone together with you on our spiritual growth.

I Cannot Do this Alone
O God, early in the morning I cry to you. Help me to pray and concentrate my thoughts on you; I cannot do this alone. In me there is darkness, but with you there is light; I am lonely, but you do not leave me; I am feeble in heart but with you there is help; I cannot do this alone. I am restless, but with you there is peace. In me there is bitterness, But with you there is patience; I do not understand your ways, but you know the way for me. I cannot do this alone. Restore me to liberty and enable me to live now that I may answer before you and all people. I cannot do this alone. Amen.

Pastor Mike
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 request link in the weekly email, are two that are used most often.

Be in prayer for all our members on the various church leadership committees, especially those on their first year of service. We pray specifically for the members of the Trustees who maintain and are entrusted with the care of all our properties:

- Jason Schlamp
- Cara Matteson
- Jaime Steward
- Tom Maring
- Brenda Hollinger
- Dave Marsden
- Randy Danover
- Jenny Colerick
- Chris Donohue

Marion Methodist is Praying for:

Mission Fair

Please join us on Sunday, March 29th from 9:00am to 12:00pm in The Center for the Marion Methodist Mission Fair. Come see and interact with the missions of Marion Methodist like Marion Cares, FLY, RTS, Marion Food Pantry, and many others! There will be information available on all of the different ways to participate and volunteer in the various ministries. We hope to see you then!

Meal Schedule:

- 2/26 - Kettle House
- 3/4 - Firehouse Subs

Pathfinders Worship & Outreach (Preschool - 5th Grade):
Focuses on praise and worship for kids. Children will also learn how they can make a difference for the people in our community.

4:12 Youth Group:
Junior High Worship 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm (Sanctuary). High School Worship 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm (Sanctuary).

Adult Classes:
Come for a midweek boost. Check out classes at www.marionmethodist.org

Nursery:
Offered in the Nursery

Check-In Procedures

March 1st

Keeping the children who attend Pathfinders Children's Ministry safe has been our #1 priority. The Check-In procedures are continually being reviewed to make sure that everyone is accounted for during all our regular programming. A new change is being implemented, so starting on March 1st everyone who needs to walk thru the doors to the Discipleship wing of the church is required to check-in and be issued a sticker. Parents who check-in a child will need to show their parent barcode sticker and everyone else will receive a printed-out nametag sticker when they complete the check in process. These will need to be shown at the East Discipleship Entrance doors each time you go through. If you leave the Discipleship wing out the west doors, just keep the sticker for return entry on the east side on the same day. If you have any questions please stop by the Check-In area and a volunteer will be happy to help.

All our teachers are wonderful, and this week we would like to give a special "Shout Out" to the following Children's Ministry volunteers:

- Morgan Redmond (8:15 Outreach)
- Mario Crisp (9:15 Fellowship)
- Gwyn Erb (Wednesday Night Worship & Outreach)
- Allison Morgan (Kindergarten Sunday School)

Thank You!!!

Mission Fair

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Registration is open

Summer Games University is a Christian Summer Camp for students who have completed 6-12 grades. This one-week camp is an experiential, relationship-focused camp where students will have the opportunity to learn more about who Jesus is and build relationships with other Christian students.

July 13-17, 2020 at Grinnell College
Register at www.sgu.camp

Vacation Bible School

June 22 - 26
9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Registration for participants and volunteers is open at www.MarionMethodist.org/VBS

Camp Breakfast

Sunday, February 23
7:30 - 1:00 AM in The Center

Free will donation will help send our children and youth to Summer Games University and other Methodist camps.

Galatians Bible Study

Wednesdays at 6:30PM
Starting on March 4th
In room W30

Register at www.MarionMethodist.org or call the office at (319) 377-4856

Troupe 19:14 Puppets
Easter Show

Friday, March 6
7:00 PM
Sanctuary

Troupe 19:14 Puppets will be producing the sequel to Back to the Manger called “Back to the Cross”. Make it an evening by attending the Mission Breakfast in The Center before the performance to support local missions.

Abandoned long ago and nearly forgotten, the H/O-2000 is discovered by the kids in our story while attending the annual VBS program at Midway Community Church. A series of time-traveling escapades ensue, taking our intrepid gang of time-jumpers on a wild ride, immersing them in strange times and cultures (including the totally tubular 1980s, the roaring ‘20s, the Wild, Wild West, and even the Garden of Gethsemane!), all leading to a point of discovery about the importance of the Cross and the message of the Gospel.

SOUPER BOWL CHALLENGE VICTORY!

The 8:15 service, while accounting for about 1/3 our weekly attendance, dominated the 10:15 service in the SOUPER BOWL Challenge. Delivering a whopping 1,335 cans of soup, the 8:15ers cruised to victory even though the 10:15ers brought 794 cans of their own to the “table.” So – WOW Marion Methodist, 2,129 cans of soup have been delivered on your behalf to the Marion Food Pantry. Ultimately, the real “winners” are those whom we are able to serve. Praise the Lord and thank you for your generosity!

Marion Methodist dads of kids 0-14 years of age...

You are invited to a 6-week early morning men’s gathering for two reasons:

- To receive some strategic teaching from Pastor Eric Mason about how to be a manly, Godly man.
- To gather with other men in the church to discuss the teaching and grow.

Specifics:
Six Monday mornings beginning February 24th
6:15 Coffee ready
6:30 Program
7:30 Off to work
Depression and anxiety can happen to anyone, anytime. These mental health illnesses are surrounded by a great deal of stigma and misunderstanding. People experiencing either one tend to feel less open about the struggles they face, in turn avoiding or delaying help or treatment. Depression and anxiety are not a “choice”. People with depression or anxiety wish to feel well and better able to cope, but being told to “smile and look on the bright side” is discouraging and disabling. If they could, they would. Depression and anxiety rob people of the joy, peace and happiness we all desire.

The CDC reports that 1 out of 6 Americans will have depression at some time in their life, affecting about 16 million every year. Anxiety disorders often go hand in hand with depression, are the most common mental illness in the U.S., and affect 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older. This is a far-reaching issue for people of all ages.

Medical follow-up should be sought if you are experiencing many of these behaviors or symptoms:

- Feeling sad or anxious often or all the time
- Being irritable, often frustrated, restless
- Feeling tired all the time, even with a good night's sleep
- Feeling guilty, worthless or helpless
- Physical ailments – stomach aches, headaches, etc. that don’t respond to treatment
- Feeling tired all the time, even with a good night’s sleep
- Feeling guilty, worthless or helpless
- Anxiety causing feelings of fear, worry, and anxiety and/or panic.
- Other symptoms or preconditions that may be unique to you
- Feeling sad or anxious often or all the time
- Being irritable, often frustrated, restless
- Feeling tired all the time, even with a good night's sleep
- Feeling guilty, worthless or helpless
- Physical ailments – stomach aches, headaches, etc. that don’t respond to treatment
- Feeling tired all the time, even with a good night’s sleep
- Feeling guilty, worthless or helpless
- Anxiety causing feelings of fear, worry, and anxiety and/or panic.
- Other symptoms or preconditions that may be unique to you

As part of their church family, how can we be sensitive and reach out to those affected by these illnesses? First, be aware. If someone is struggling, their attitude has changed a great deal, or they seem more withdrawn, have a loving, sincere conversation and express your concerns. Don’t preach, offer empty advice or platitudes, and please don’t diagnose. Depression and anxiety are real. They affect children, teens and adults of any age and only a medical professional can diagnose their condition correctly. Remember, just because it’s not visible like a broken leg doesn’t make it any less real.

Once the struggle is identified, come alongside them. Check in on a regular basis to help them feel less alone or disconnected from the church. Ask about their treatment, how it’s going, if they need help getting to appointments, and validate that their issues are real. Be ready to offer practical knowledge and gracious support but please stay away from empty advice or “encouragement” based on your own struggles. Keep these verses as the basis of all you do to reach out to your friend with depression/anxiety:

- Love one another (John 13:34-35 and Ephesians 4:2)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)

For additional information:

**National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)**
www.nami.org

**Anxiety and Depression Alliance of America (ADAA)**
www.adda.org

**National Suicide Prevention Hotline:** Call 1-800-273-TALK 24 hour hotline

**Foundation 2 Crisis Center,**
1540 2nd Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids
319-362-2174 or 1-800-332-4224

**Keys to Living,**
1642 42nd St. NE, Cedar Rapids 52402
319-377-2161

**Guiding Light Christian Counseling Center,**
1221 Park Place NE, Suite G1, Cedar Rapids 52402
319-382-8664

**Mercy Family Counseling,**
1340 Blairs Ferry Rd., Ste A, Hiawatha, IA 52233
319-398-6575

**St. Luke's Family Counseling Center,**
1077 North Center Point Rd, Hiawatha, IA 52232
319-369-7952

**Tanager Place Mental Health Clinic,**
1030 5th Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids 52403
319-286-4545

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**PANTRY PARTNERS FOR MARION CHURCHES 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.

**February:**
- **Canned Fruit**
- **March:**
  - **Butter**
  - **April:**
    - **Macaroni and Cheese**
- **May:**
  - **Toilet Tissue**
- **June:**
  - **Soup**
  - **July:**
    - **Macaroni and Cheese**

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**WEDDINGS:**

- February 11: Michalyn Lea and Oaklyn Rae, daughters of Rachel and Dalton Combs, big sister Rylynn, granddaughters of Beth Combs.

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**DEATHS:**

- Concern & Christian Love... Our Congregation Shares Its