The prayer "I Cannot Do This Alone", written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, is at the center of our spiritual preparation for Easter in this Holy Season of Lent. We will say it each time we worship and have provided it to you on a laminated card (or you can pick one up at the Welcome Center) so that you might pray it every day.

The words are poignant, captivating, true. They are not a new idea to our generation or even Bonhoeffer's, it is an idea that is simply right. Scripture reminds us in many places including "nothing can separate me from the love of Christ" (Romans 8), "though I walk through the valley of death Thou art with me" (Psalm 23) that state, God neither expects or wants us to do life alone.

Christians have long been putting God's truth to music so as we sing a tune (often repetitively) the glory, wonder and truth of God bore themselves into the deep cavities of our heart, mind and soul. One such song, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God", written over 500 years ago, has been a staple of congregational singing because in four brief stanzas the truth of God's presence and protection is proclaimed.

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure; his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.

This first stanza embodies God's presence with us as a fortress that never fails. Over the years, I visited a variety of fortresses, from Fort Ticonderoga to the walled city of Jerusalem and every one has one similarity. They surround that which they are to protect. A fortress is not a single wall that a presence encroaching upon it can go behind or around, it completely surrounds that which is precious. Simply, as we do life, we are protected by a God who surrounds us.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; Did Christ the Man of God's own choosing? Did ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he; Lord Sabaoth, his name, from age to age the same, Lord Sabaoth, his name, from age to age the same.

This may be the hardest theological concept to put our minds around because everything we have ever seen and known is finite. Everything we know has a beginning and an end. God's power, Kingdom and the life chosen for us is without end. The temporary shall be replaced with the permanent and in the permanence of God's eternity we can live forever.

The words of this hymn are wonderful. They remind us of our full and complete dependence on God. They remind us of the important declaration of faith we should make in this season and every day. Lord, I cannot do this alone! They encourage us to live in the truth that it is God's plan to accompany, assist, rescue and defend us in every moment.

My prayer is that you will live a holy and dependent Lent. Let the cry from the very bottom of your spirit be "I cannot do this alone!" Then, rest, knowing that the very core of heaven reaches to you with the simple truth – "You are correct and you do not have to, I AM is here." 

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 Staff Pastor-Parish Relations Committee:

Kent Walton  Mike Richmond
Nick Bray  Erin Musser
Kyle Van Dyke  Jill Ackerman
Eddie Rose  Kim Knapp
Luann Byerly

Marion Methodist worship services are typically rebroadcast on Mediacom or ImOn Channel 4 at 7:00 PM on Monday evenings. There is a multiweek delay between when a sermon is preached and when it airs on TV.

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!

Essentials of Caregiving
Evening at Carnegie
March 15 @ 6:30 PM
Marion Methodist Chapel at Carnegie
1298 7th Avenue
Marion, IA 52302

You will hear valuable information on a wide range of caregiving topics such as:
- How to access and discern appropriate community resources
- How to finance the necessary services for a loved one
- Information on advanced directives such as power of attorney
- How to navigate decisions on residential care
- Self-care for caregivers, and much, much more

There will be plenty of time for questions and answers so plan to attend and bring others you know who are also walking the journey of caregiving.

For more information, call the church office at 377-4856 or email vstandley@marionmethodist.org

Wednesday Night at Marion Methodist is every Wednesday. From 5:45 pm to 6:15 pm we have a Meal (Free Will Offering) and from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm we have activities for all ages.

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
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 319-361-8971 or email the Director of Pastoral Care, Vicki Standley, at vstandley@marionmethodist.org.

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

United Methodism Today and Tomorrow

The pages of the Marion Methodist over the past five years have carried thousands of words regarding the constitutional crisis within United Methodism. So critical was the crisis that the General Conference (the only body that can “speak” for the church) at their meeting in Portland in 2016 discerned that in 2019 a Special session of the General Conference should be held to consider whether to maintain the traditional understanding of biblical interpretation, marriage and ordination or find a new way. This conference, which cost millions of dollars determined in our due process that the answer was “yes” to our traditional understanding.

Some Methodists celebrated, others grieved. Two things became clear. We are in a church moment of “constitutional crisis” and in all likeliness the global church will again narrowly affirm the traditional plan at General Conference 2020 if it comes to a vote. The decline, angst, frustration and pain will continue to grow.

Many wonderfully faithful hearts and bright minds across our denomination have declared “enough is enough” and submitted various legislative documents for the General Conference to consider in May. Each revolves around the multiplication of the witness of Methodism into two or more streams. None destroy the church; all make clear the need to multiply.

Because I have written, blogged and said in many places that it is simple clergy malpractice to not inform the people we serve and love, I announce a congregational meeting entitled: “United Methodism Today and Tomorrow” to be held, Sunday, March 29th at 6:30 PM in the Sanctuary.

The presentation will include:
- A presentation concerning historical context.
- Summaries of the legislation before General Conference and the supporting advocacy groups.
- Questions and Answers.
- Grace filled holy conferencing.
- Resource distribution.

The presentation will not include:
- A vote of any nature.
- An opinion laced debate.

Please pray for this time and pledge your attendance. Marion Methodist is a 179-year-old community of faith. That longevity and the vitality of our ministry has been undergirded by prayer, is sturdy, and we can faithfully and gracefully work through this if we aim to be a congregation of Christian love.

Pastor Mike
Grief and Bereavement
by: Vicki Standley

Grief is hard. Anyone who’s experienced the mind-numbing pain and life changing experiences associated with grief knows how hard it can be. Grief is experienced when we lose someone or something that we love and hold dear. Feelings of loss run deep when we leave a place that has been our home for many years, our best friend moves away, a pet dies, or a career ends. However, for the purpose of this article, we will primarily address the effects of the death of someone we love, whether it be sudden or after a lingering illness; the death of a beloved spouse or a child, a sibling, anyone with whom we have had a strong relationship.

GriefShare contributor Zig Ziglar has been quoted as saying, “Grief is the recognition that you’ve lost someone you love. It’s the price you pay for loving.”

The heart that opens to love someone breaks when that connection is disrupted by death. We are left feeling empty, angry, disoriented, depressed, unable to function as we normally do. There is no roadmap for grief, no manual telling us what to do, what to say, how to feel – each one of us must work through our grief in our own way and in our own time.

That being said, if healing is to take place, there is work to be done. When we heal from grief, it doesn’t mean that we are “well”, that everything goes back to normal, whatever that may be. But you can find peace in the healing, you can once again find joy in the blessings that God has in store for you. The ache of your loss will never completely go away, but it will grow softer and not as painful as you are able to once again smile when you think of the one you love and remember precious memories of your life together.

Within our church family, at this very moment, there are people grieving the loss of someone they hold dear. The loss may have been recent, or it may have been months, even years ago. Some may be grieving the loss of someone who is not yet gone, but has been lost to dementia, or other illnesses that rob us our personalities. This is called anticipatory grief and is just as painful and difficult to manage. So how can we reach out and show our love, and walk alongside those who are grieving as they travel the challenging, heart-breaking path of healing?

If you know someone who is grieving, reach out to them. Write them a caring note, call or text them just to let them know you’re thinking about them. When you visit with them, ask about their loved one, share stories or listen to the things they’d like to share. Even if they cry, it will be tears that come from a deep well of love and caring as they speak of the one dear to them. One of the most important things is to stay in touch, long after the funeral is done and thank you notes have been written. When the rest of the world has gone back to work and regular routines, the one who is grieving is still deep in their loss and struggling to find their way through days that are empty and painful.

During this time, reach out even more, even if they don’t always respond. Offer to bring a meal and stay to eat with them. Offer to do some errands or go with them to an appointment or to get groceries, and maybe grab some coffee or lunch while you’re out and about. The main thing is to stay in touch and let them know that you love and care about them. Finally, and most importantly, be available to listen. Listen when they express their sadness, anger, bewilderment, and pain, and be ready to rejoice on the day that they can smile again and see a ray of sunshine in an otherwise dark day.

There is a wealth of resources related to grief and bereavement in bookstores and on the internet, but here are a few that I would highly recommend.

Anything with an asterisk beside it is a resource that is available that you are welcome to borrow. Call the church office at 377-4856 and ask for Vicki, or email vstandley@marionmethodist.org.

Grief Resources
GriefShare – a 13-week seminar/support group for anyone grieving the death of someone they love. A wonderful resource for information on the common experiences of grief and how to work through your grief to find joy from mourning. GriefShare will start at Marion Methodist in mid-August 2020. You can also find a daily email devotional at www.griefshare.org.

Care Notes, found on the display racks near each Welcome Center at the church. Titles include “Giving Yourself Permission to Grieve”, “What You Should Know About Your First Year of Grief”, “Grieving in Your Own Way”, and many others. Take copies for yourself or to share.

*Experiencing Grief, by H. Norman Wright
*Hope in the Dark by Craig Groeschel
*The Alphabet of Grief by Andrea Raynor
*When the One You Love Is Gone by Rebekah L. Miles
*When Holidays Hurt by Bo Stern
*What Grieving People Wish You Knew by Nancy Guthrie