



WHO  
WE ARE

**FUMC PORTSMOUTH  
A RECONCILING CONGREGATION**

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



**New England Annual Conference Tri-State District**

The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop

The Rev. James McPhee, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801

Office Phone 603-436-6038 [office@fumcportsmouth.net](mailto:office@fumcportsmouth.net)

Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm

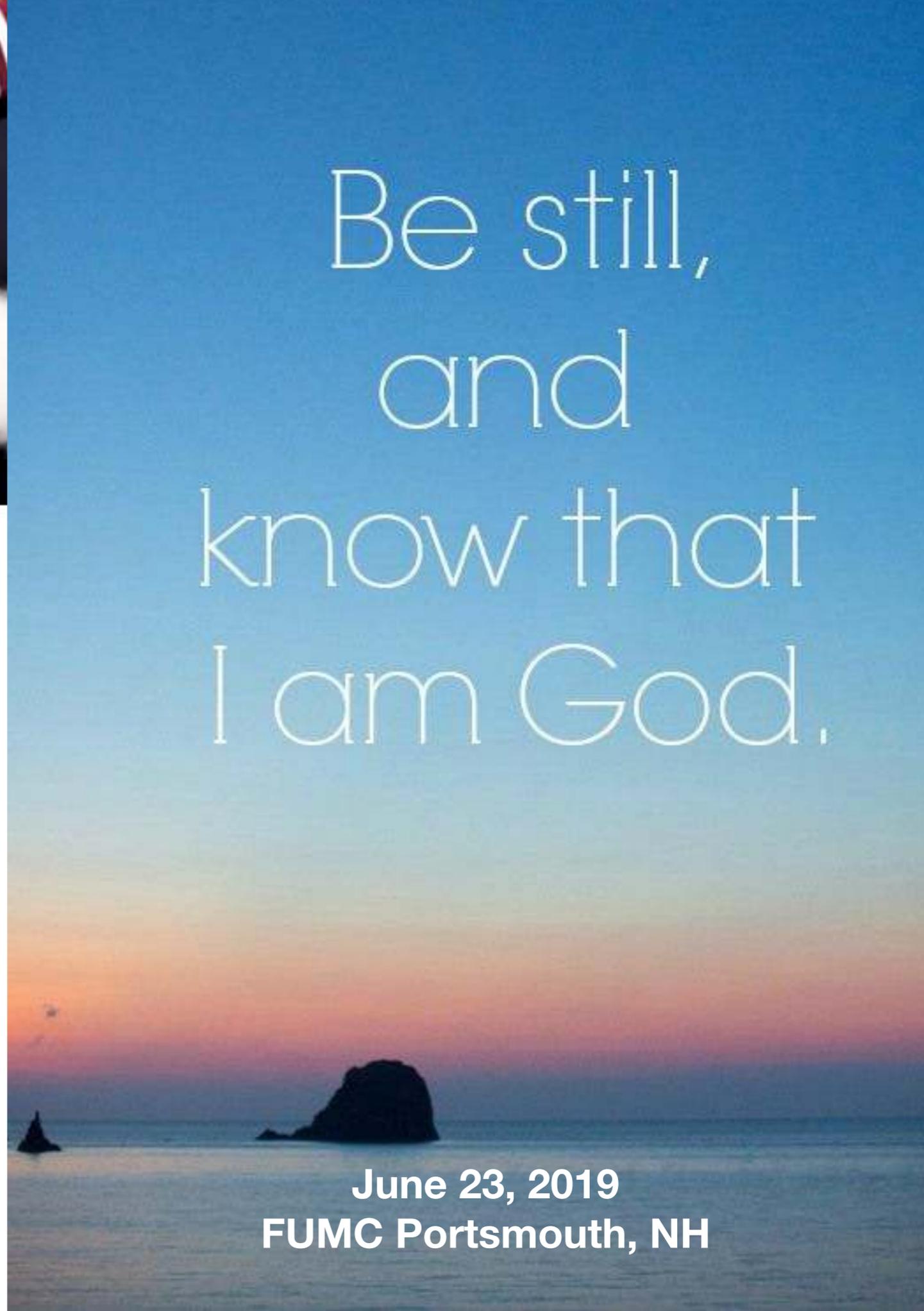
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Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at [www.fumcportsmouth.com](http://www.fumcportsmouth.com)

Like and Follow Us On:   

Be still,  
and  
know that  
I am God.



**June 23, 2019**

**FUMC Portsmouth, NH**

**Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light**

**Celebrations**

**\*Call to Worship**

L: When we long for the special effects we think life should offer:

**P: it is enough, for us, that God comes in a soft, summer shower.**

L: When we our hearts are cracked by the drought of doubt:

**P: it is enough, for us, that God opens up the fountains of faith for us.**

L: When our senses are deadened by the sales pitches of our culture:

**P: it is enough, for us, that God wraps us in the silence of grace.**

**\*Hymn:** "Come and Find the Quiet Center" TFWS #2128

**A Time for the Child in all of Us**

**Prayer** (unison)

**When we feel compelled to push everything to its limits, especially you, it is enough, Holy One, that your grace can slow us down.**

**When we stand, exposed to the buffeting winds of our doubts and questions. it is enough, Healing Servant, that you clothe us in your peace, and put our minds at ease.**

**When we are entangled in that legion of worries and fears which consume our lives, it is enough, Spirit of Silence, that you untie the knots and set us free.**

**It is enough, God in Community, Holy in One, that you are with us.**

**We praise and thank you for your presence. Amen.**

**Sung Response:** "O Lord, Hear My Prayer" TFWS #2200

**Ministry of Music**

We Proclaim the Word

**Reading the Word:** 1 Kings 19:1-15a

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

**Message:** "The Sound of Silence"

**\*Hymn:** "Near to the Heart of God" UMH #472

**Concerns and Joys**

**Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer**

**The Lord's Prayer** (unison)

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings**

**\*Doxology:** (*Please join in singing the following:*) UMH #94

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

**\*Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

**Loving God, you have made us yours and set us free to serve you. Teach us to give of ourselves out of thankfulness for all you have done. Amen.**

We Go Forth to Serve

**\*Hymn:** "Send Me, Lord" UMH #497

**\*Choral Benediction** (*Congregation encircles the Sanctuary*)

**May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.**

**\*Pastor's Charge**

**Postlude**

*\*Please stand as you are comfortable*

## Welcome!

Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshipping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!

Rev. Deb Hanson

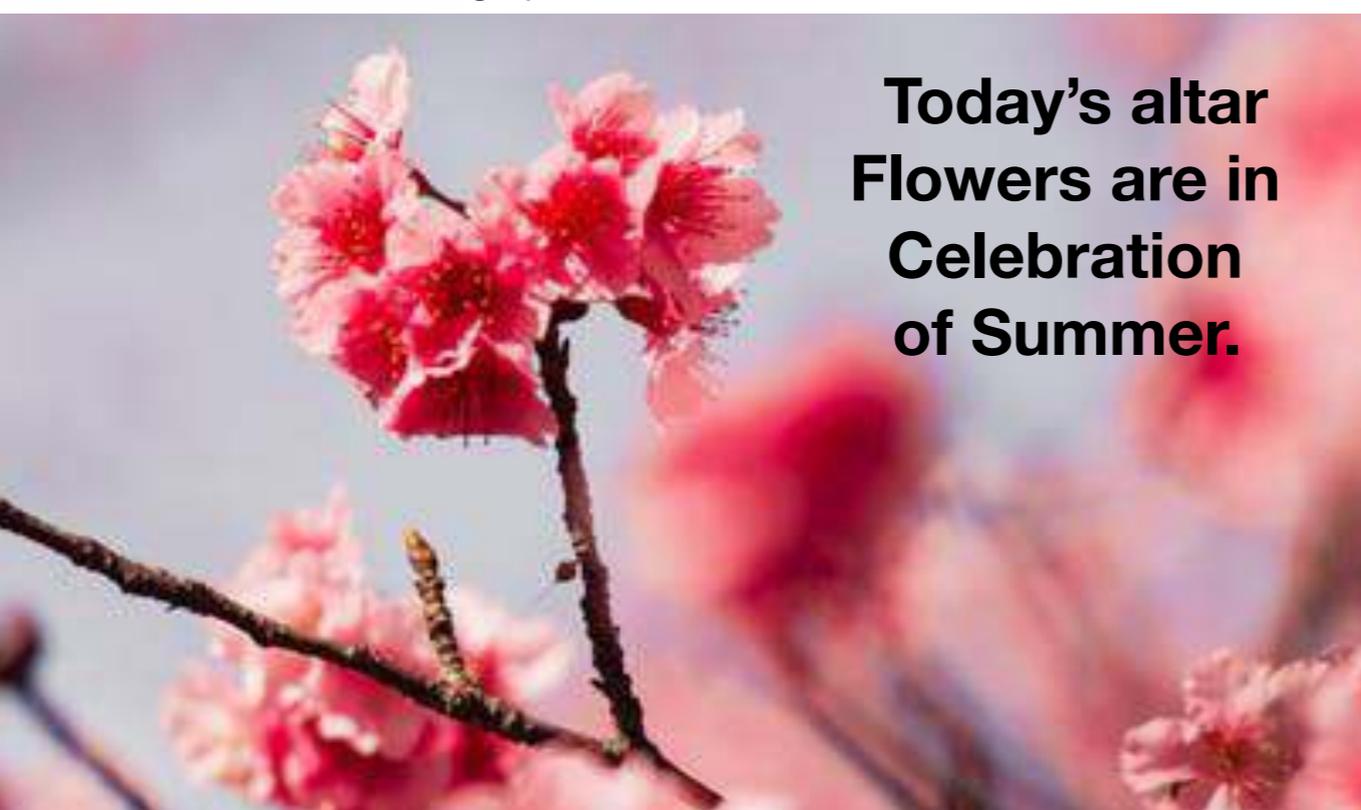


Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson  
Pastor's Assistant - David Richards  
Liturgist- John VanReenen  
Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek  
Acolyte - Kaya Sarosiek  
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal  
Greeters - Yvonne Griffin, Marilyn Stebbins  
Ushers - Ken Young, Ken Westbrook  
Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek  
Worship Service Tech - Sue Richards  
Photographer - Dave Atkinson

## WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...

Gayle Gardei  
Marion Collinshaw  
Sue Goodhue  
Hunter Pinkley  
Sylvia Bartlett  
Brian Thompson  
Malia Broe  
Gil Stebbins  
Rev. Bill Gardei  
Woodie Lange  
Roseanne  
Rev. David Kerr  
Jim New  
Dan Hislop and family  
Bobbie Noble  
Art Munson  
Pastor Sue Ellery  
Judy Doyon  
Charles Gilman  
Diederich Family  
Aunt Karen (PennySue)  
Our Church Family  
Barbara & Jim Slater  
Barbara Sylvester  
Pauline Boynton  
Barbara Millar  
Irene Derosier  
Barbara Clement  
Joette MacKenzie  
Vicky Fernandez  
Alissa Fernandez  
Jessie  
John Richards

**Today's altar  
Flowers are in  
Celebration  
of Summer.**



# Upcoming Events

## **New England Annual Conference Action: Realignment of Districts** (RS-19-209 DESIGNATION OF NUMBER OF DISTRICTS)

In the plenary session that took place after the Service of Ordination and Commissioning, the Annual Conference approved the resolution to reduce the number of districts from nine to seven. This means our district plus one other will be reconfigured, and the churches will be divided between other districts. This coming year, our district superintendent will be Taesung Kang who is the DS for the rest of New Hampshire.

## **Summer Sunday School**

Sunday school will continue for the summer. The children will be watching DVD's on the "Ten Commandments" as well as learning about some of the biblical stories we will be focusing on during our worship time. All are welcome, and if there are those who would be willing to give the regular teachers a break, even if it is for one Sunday, please let Rev. Deb know. Thanks!

**Camperships** are available for children and youth who would like to attend Wanakee! We pay part of the cost. Contact David Richards if you are interested.

Widow/Widower's Support Group Meeting will be held **today** at 1:00 pm, will be held at Temple Israel, 350 Court Street, Portsmouth. Chaplain Elisa Senter-Kaplan is the moderator, and all are welcome.

## **UMC Market Place**

<https://umcmarket.org/>

**Do you shop online?** Have you ever heard of UMC Market Place? This is a place where you can shop on line with places like Staples, Bed, Bath, and Beyond, Travelocity, and many other online stores, and when you go through the UMC Market.org, a percentage will be sent to the church. It's a great way to do fundraising with what you are already doing! To learn more, visit the website above and read about how it works, then sign up using First UMC, Portsmouth as the benefiting church. If you have any questions, please ask Rev. Deb.

## **Fundraising Ideas**

Do you love **Texas Roadhouse Rolls**? Would you be interested in participating in a Fundraiser. This would consist of taking orders and distributing your orders upon delivery. Please let Rev Deb know you'd participate.

Would you participate in a **Flatbread Pizza** fundraiser? Once assigned a date, would you go have a flatbread and spread the word for our fundraiser night? Please Let Rev Deb know your interest. Thank you.

## **Congratulations!**

Linda Reiber received the Lifetime of Discipleship Award at our District Conference. Read the full article on the bulletin board.

## **Congratulations!**

Art Munson received the James S. Cogswell outstanding industrial Security Achievement award. He received 1 of 51 awards from 13,000 facilities read the full press release on the bulletin board.



**Come join us for coffee hour after the church service in Sanborn Hall...we'd love to catch up with you and see how your week has gone.**



SERMON GIVEN 6/23/19 BY  
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“The Sound of Silence, part 2” (part 1 preached 9/30/18) 6/23/19  
First UMC, Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 19:1-15a

THEME: God is still speaking, and we need to listen.

As I was beginning to write today’s sermon, I remembered that I had preached on this passage before, so I started looking to see what I could find, and sure enough, I discovered that I had used it with the same sermon title last September! So today, I have titled this “The Sound of Silence, part 2.” It is always interesting to learn more from scripture, and there is much to learn from Elijah and his experience on the mountaintop when God speaks to him in the sound of “sheer silence.”

What had brought him to this place? Why was he depressed and despondent, ready to just give up, especially after he had just defeated the prophets of the pagan god Ba’al? This was the god that queen Jezebel worshiped, and when she learned about Elijah’s earlier victory over three hundred prophets, she was livid, promising to find him and kill him within twenty-four hours. One would think that following such a magnificent accomplishment – with God’s help, of course – Elijah would have been more confident and unafraid of one nasty queen, but he ran away in fear for his life, becoming despondent and depressed.

Sometimes the letdown following a successful event or even a spiritually inspiring experience can be more of a crash. I remember being on a powerful and inspiring spiritual retreat, and I came home feeling amazingly uplifted and happy. But when the realities of life set in, and I began to wonder what the whole point of a spiritual “high” was when the world hadn’t changed and I ended up feeling blue and down. At that point, a friend who was on the retreat with me recommended a book called, “Coming Down the Mountaintop” in which I learned that this wasn’t an uncommon experience for those who have had a close encounter with God and a “mountaintop” experience. The book pointed out that “coming down the mountain” meant readjusting to the way things were and incorporating what we had learned and experienced into our lives.

Elijah’s elation at accomplishing all the things he did suddenly crashed around him, and he lost his courage, sank into himself, and ended up depressed. Depression is real and can be debilitating, as it was for Elijah. He traveled many days in the wilderness to reach Mount Horeb, stumbling and lamenting his fate before he would eventually arrive at the mountain where Moses is reported to have received the Ten Commandments. On his journey, he collapsed under a broom tree and fell asleep, even wishing to die at that point. An angel touched him and told him to eat the bread and drink the water that God had provided for him, which he did, but then he went back to sleep until the angel again awakened him and told him to eat.

Sleep is a great escape, and it can also be a time of healing and restoration. During last year’s Pumpkin Patch, a young man named Justin came to the church right out of rehab. He had been sent to First UMC because part of his release was to attend AA meetings. When he arrived, he was exhausted and barely able to function. He hadn’t eaten or slept in two days, and it was clear to us that he was discouraged and depressed. Some of us helped him go

downstairs to the basement where the AA meeting would take place later, and we set him up with a little food and a couch where he could sleep for a little while until the meeting started.

We learned later that the AA folks were able to help him, and two weeks after that, he came back to the church office, looking great, and offering his thanks. He said he was doing really well, and he was so appreciative of how we had taken care of him when he was really down. Sometimes ministry is a very small thing – offering crackers and cheese and a place to sleep. What may have seemed like an impossible situation to Justin who was struggling to move forward with his life, was turned around because of the kindness this church and the AA group offered him. We may have planted seeds of faith that will grow in him, who knows – only God.

Elijah's depression debilitated him. He ran away; he slept; he ate; he gathered strength to "keep on keeping on" and finally arrived at Mount Horeb. It's doubtful that he even knew what to expect or even thought about it because he not only was depressed, but he was very self-absorbed, feeling sorry for himself. Somehow, he had begun to think that he could do things on his own power, and when that failed, he was upset and let down.

Mother Teresa wrote: *"Do not allow yourself to be disheartened by any failure, as long as you have done your best. Neither glory in your success, but refer all to God in deepest thankfulness. If you are discouraged it is a sign of pride because it shows you trust in your own powers. Never bother about people's opinions. Be humble and you will never be disturbed."*

*(No Greater Love, quote found at Text This Week under the commentaries for today's passage at the Center for Excellence in Preaching, Douglas Bratt.)*

Maybe Elijah had started to believe that he had been able to do all those miraculous things on his own power. Maybe he had too much pride in his accomplishments. Maybe he reached a point where it was all about him, and God had been pushed to the background. It's so easy to do. Think of the number of famous preachers on television who have succumbed to believing that they had accomplished so much, but who fell out of power and prestige for misconduct and a variety of other reasons. Imagine the journey back to God for them or for anyone who goes through such a tough time.

In some ways, the story of Elijah on the mountaintop reflects life's journeys. He stands at the mouth of the cave and stays there somewhat defiantly in spite of God calling for him to come out of the cave. While he hovers at the opening in the mountain, what seems to be a safe place, some powerful forces of nature pass in front of him: "a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces, an earthquake, and a fire." (vv. 11-12) It certainly held Elijah's attention.

There are times in life when we experience the powerful winds, the earthquakes, the fires of every day living. None of us are exempt from the challenges of life or feeling overwhelmed by the storms of life. These are forces that can drag us down, discourage us, cause depression and despair. It is during those times when we long to have an equally powerful experience of God's love and care; when we really want to hear God's voice speaking to us. How does that happen? Sometimes God speaks to us in the sheer silence that often follows tragedies or unsettling (maybe even horrific) events in our lives. How? How does God speak? I have often

said that I just would like to have God call me on the phone and clearly tell me what to do. Even a voice message would be fine, but that isn't the way God or faith works.

Elijah had shoved his faith aside, and his trust had disappeared. That can happen to us, too. Yet, God's voice speaks in a variety of ways when we stop to listen. There is a video that has been going around about a boy who tries to tell his mother, whose name is Linda, to listen. (PLAY VIDEO)

I suspect that Elijah was like Matteo saying, "Listen, God, listen" and God was like Linda saying, "You need to listen to me!" In times of frustration or feeling like God really isn't listening, maybe the best response is to stop, wait, and just be in the silence, as Elijah finally did, and listen, wait, try to trust that God will speak. It's not an easy journey to move out of that place, as we saw with Elijah.

And it's easy to look for and expect to find God in the huge events like Elijah's wind, earthquake and fire, but it's easy to forget that we can recognize God's care and support when we look for it even in the small, everyday events. It happens without fanfare: an unexpected phone call from a friend who was just thinking about us; someone who does a small act of kindness; a person who tells us that we aren't alone on the journey; cards of support from friends or even someone we don't know very well; a hug from a child; even just a smile from someone can lift our spirits and send us the message that God is with us. We, as God's church, can be part of making those kinds of "touches" happen.

A few months ago, I had lunch with a dear friend who is a retired UCC pastor. We meet monthly and check in with each other, and a few months ago, she shared with me that she had started a blessings journal. Her goal is to write down five blessings from each day. It helps her to find the positives in her life, especially in light of the negative messages that are sent through the news and the attitudes she encounters from others while she is out and about in her community. She decided that the negatives just dragged her down to the point where she felt discouraged.

She went on to say that she had been doing the blessings or gratitude journal for about four months, and she has noticed a difference in her mind set and her reaction to things has been more appreciative. Apparently, there are days when she has a hard time naming five things, but she always manages to find something, even if it is that she noticed a yellow flower blooming outside her house. I decided to follow her example, and I have discovered that it really does help me to have a more positive attitude, and I feel as though I'm seeing God's presence more often and recognizing those little touches of the Spirit's work throughout my day.

And, I'll share something that most of you don't know, when I'm stressed or worried, I tend to have nightmares. I write my five blessings right before I go to sleep, and my nightmares have been decreasing. I think it's because my mind is set on God rather than what the world offers or on my fears or worries. God can speak to us in even the smallest thing, and we just need to listen, to notice, and to pay attention.

The Bible is full of people who stray away from God, feel alone and in despair but eventually experiencing God in new and profound ways: Hagar, the young female slave of Abraham and Sarah, ran away into the wilderness where she encountered God; Moses ran from Egypt only to hear God's voice in a burning bush while he was tending sheep; Jonah didn't want to deliver God's call to the Ninevites to repent, and he was swallowed by a large fish, escaped, then encountered God in the wilderness. We can learn from these ordinary, everyday people in the scriptures and in our lives that God is still speaking to us, but we need to listen. God calls all of us – just regular people, to love, compassion, kindness, trust, and sharing with others.

It's helpful to remember that it's not about us ultimately, but about God. One of my previous District Superintendents used to remind me of that regularly. We would be talking, and I would be telling her about something that was frustrating me, and she would say, "You'll be fine. Stay centered, and just remember, it's not really about you!" Good reminder. Elijah's purpose was to guide the people of Israel, to set an example, and to call them to accountability when they strayed. It's a big responsibility, and maybe he wasn't very good as self-care because he crumbled after a huge success when he encountered the prophets of Ba'al.

If we don't have good self-care and spiritual growth, we will not have a foundation that will sustain us when we reach those places. We can sink to a place where it's difficult to move forward, but having a strong anchor in Christ helps us to eventually recover. Reaching out for help, such as through the prayer chain or asking someone to pray or just be there for us provides us with companions on the journey and opens the opportunity for others to minister to us. Professor Roger Nam wrote to those who are preaching on this passage: *"I pray that you allow this passage to speak to the tired, hungry, exhausted, emotionally spent, and dejected. May your . . . community stop waiting for wind, earthquake, and rain. May . . . they seek out God in the sheer silence."* (found at Text This Week under the commentaries for this passage).

May we seek God's word in our lives and recognize that God speaks to us every day in many different ways. May we be open to God's movement in our lives and in helping others to also recognize God's voice and God's love through us.

Let us pray:

**Holy God, who speaks to us in the silences of our lives and invites us to listen closely for the Spirit's Presence, be with us as we continue to seek after you. Guide our hearts and open our eyes and ears so that we may gain new glimpses of you--trusting that there is deep faithfulness in the riskiness of listening deeply. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.**

*(The Rev. Stuart Higginbotham is senior associate priest at St. Benedict's Episcopal Church in Smyrna, GA. Day 1 sermons on this passage found at Text This Week.)*