

# Meadville Messenger

**Psalm 34:18...**  
**The LORD is close to**  
**the brokenhearted;**  
**he saves those**  
**whose spirits are**  
**crushed. (CEB)**

## RAMBLING REX

*(first shared July 2019)*

The last couple of years have been brutal. At All Saints Day in 2018, we saw eighteen family members and friends celebrated. The number of hospital visits and those with long-term convalescence continues to be greater than we would consider normal. Combine these with the death and grief we have experienced in our community, region and state coupled with the natural disasters and continued flooding in the Delta region is enough to drive us mad with grief and anxiety. Each of these deaths, illnesses, tragedies and weather episodes brought anxiety, grief, pain and sorrow not only to family members but to whole communities. The pain that was experienced by these families and communities reminds us of painful times in our own lives. This reminder often leads us to be more anxious as these former times of grief and pain impacted us in often unpleasant and unhealthy ways.

Revisiting the idea of pain reminded me of a work I had read while in seminary by C. S. Lewis entitled, *The Problem of Pain*. In it, Lewis explores faith, good and evil, pain, sin and God's role in each of these. As an atheist, Lewis had observed that if there is pain in the world then there is no hope of a benevolent God existing in the world. All he could see was the pain caused by crime, war, disease and terror. But what Lewis eventually found was that "we were made that God may love us." (48) But if God loves us, why do we have to endure pain and why do these tragic things have to happen? For the first part, God created us as creatures of free will and there are times our pain derives from bad decisions made in our free will and there are times that simple errors in judgment are made as we live out each day. Sometimes, it seems that things just happen. Lewis suggests that "the possibility of pain is inherent in the very existence of a world where souls can meet". (89)

Pain is a part of life that finds its way into our midst with neither rhyme nor reason. Lewis insists that "what is good in any painful experience is for the sufferer (to submit) to the will of God. Well that sounds so simple but what does that look like. A few years ago, there was a horrific report of the death of

### In this Issue:

REMEMBERING BRO. REX

MOVING FORWARD

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September, 2021

Lily Kate. About a week after the tragic car wreck in which Lily Kate was killed, an article appeared in the Gwinette, GA newspaper that gave the details of the aftermath of the tragic wreck that took Lily's life. The goodness came when Lily Kate's Mom noted the devastation in the body language of the man who had crashed into their van. He was charged with vehicular homicide. The article captured the incredible work of God and his goodness in this horrid pain as in these earliest moments of their grief, Lily Kate's family was moved to express to the man that crashed into their vehicle that he was forgiven by them. They felt it was exactly what Lily Kate would have wanted. It is my suspicion that it was what Lily Kate would have wanted because she was trained well in serving a loving God who made us in order that He may love us.

Before I submit this article for printing, it is possible more pain may enter our church family. Lewis indicates that the "very settled happiness and security" we seek, "God withheld from us by the very nature of the world...we are never safe." (112) What Lewis means is as we are going about living a happy life, the shattering sound of a late-night phone call or the eerie knock on our door or the appearance of that person who should not be at our workplace will eventually happen. And our world again is shattered by pain and loss.

The amazing thing is that though God made his great creation with this seemingly incomprehensible flaw, it is in this very time that God is often working his greatest blessing. Lewis understood that in experiencing the devastation of a tragic event, there was waiting "joy, pleasure, and merriment" right in the middle of the grief and pain. Lewis concludes, "Pain has no tendency, in its own right, to proliferate. When it is over, it is over, and the natural sequence (that follows) is joy." (116) God allows our pain that he may give us joy. He loves us so much that "he saves those whose spirits are crushed". Praise be to God for his presence in our pain!

Peace and Joy and Love,

Rex Wilburn, pastor  
Meadville UMC



## REMEMBERING BRO. REX



Reverend Rex Alan Wilburn, 59, went to his Heavenly home on August 26, 2021, while at King's Daughter Medical Center in Brookhaven, Mississippi. He was born on April 11, 1962, in Somerville, Tennessee, to Joseph Willard Wilburn Sr. and Eva Ray Pierce Wilburn. He grew up in Moscow, Tennessee and attended Early Grove United Methodist Church until being called into the ministry.

Reverend Wilburn was a graduate of Rossville Christian Academy, the University of Memphis, and Memphis Theological Seminary. He was a devoted minister to the United Methodist Church for 30 years. His charges included Ashland, Pope, Etta, Bruce, Houston, and Meadville, Mississippi. He was a faithful servant to the Lord, his family, his churches, and his community. His hobbies included playing golf, announcing at his community's ballgames, and watching the Memphis Tigers and St. Louis Cardinals play.

Reverend Wilburn is survived by his wife of 36 years, Pamela Hobson Wilburn, of Meadville, Mississippi, a son, Matthew Wilburn of Meadville, and a daughter, Robin Moss (Matt) of Pittsboro. He also leaves behind a brother, Joe Wilburn (Bell) of Moscow, Tennessee, and four sisters, Eva Harvey (Larry) of Memphis, Jan McDonald of Memphis, Anita Lawson (Joe) of Potts Camp, and Ann Gandy (David) of Potts Camp, along with a host of nephews and nieces. He

was preceded in death by his parents, and brother-in-law, Jim McDonald.

The celebration of life for Reverend Wilburn will be held on Thursday, September 2, 2021, at 2:00 p.m., in the chapel at the Holly Springs Funeral Home, with a visitation to be held from noon until service time. Burial will be at the Early Grove Cemetery.

*I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. At last the champion's wreath that is awarded for righteousness is waiting for me. The Lord, who is the righteous judge, is going to give it to me on that day. He's giving it not only to me but also to all those who have set their heart on waiting for his appearance. 2 Timothy 4:7,8*



April 5, 2020. COVID limited our celebration, but Bro. Rex performed the ceremony for us. Love and miss him much. Prayers for comfort for family and friends. - Ed and Libby Herring

Terry Oglesby described Bro Rex as a jolly man. He enjoyed talking with Him, especially about sports. Bro Rex made Terry feel like "he was at home" in MUMC. He described him as a people person that was involved in the community also. Terry enjoyed his preaching style.

Carol Oglesby fondly remembers bro Rex walking into her preschool Sunday school class on his way upstairs to the sanctuary. He would have a sparkle in his eyes and a smile on his face. He especially liked it when the children were singing and playing musical instruments. He would always pause and watch them. He said it was music to his soul. Carol also loved to watch him laugh. He really enjoyed life! He always carefully looked at all sides of a situation. He was always prepared for meetings, sermons and other activities. Carol's heart is broken but she will always remember how wonderful of a person he was.

*I loved Bro. Rex dearly. He was such a wonderful, supportive friend and pastor. He was understanding and agreeable and never complained about any song or music we did. In fact, Bro. Rex was always affirming and encouraging and praised me for little things which meant a lot.*

*Also, Rex walked with me, and also my sons, through some of the toughest things in my life. Cancer, surgeries, chemo & radiation, and the hardest of all - losing the love of my life after fifty years of marriage. Having Rex near by and hearing him praying over me so sincerely gave me the assurance that God had not "left the building" of my life.*

- Pat Jones

Bro. Rex will always be special and have a special place in my heart. When my Zach was married in Columbus, I looked up and there was Bro. Rex. He had made the drive to the wedding, all my himself. With tears in my eyes, I gave him a big old hug and said Thank you. Several months later I was so glad I got the opportunity to tell Him just how much his coming meant to me. He was so easy to talk to and I will miss his big personality, that smile that lit his entire face. Until one day..... - Stephanie McCormick

Last year, I went through a terrible time of daily bullying and harassment from a school employee. It was one of the worst times of my life. Bro. Rex helped me through that time, when I could not talk to anybody else. He was always so sweet to me when I was feeling scared to play the piano by myself at church. I could also talk to him about music and musicians we both liked, like Eddie Van Halen! I learned so much from him. I loved how he loved big, always calling me a Child of God, like he did everyone else. Most of all, I'm proud to say he was my friend. I'm going to miss him so much.

- Vana Hurst



Brother Rex became such a special part of our family. He will be truly missed, but we have peace knowing Dani has a special guardian angel looking over her.

- Morgan & Dain Poore

Our hearts are broken with our loss of Bro. Rex. We know he has finished the race and is singing praises to our Heavenly Father. Our memories will keep him alive in our lives. He always told people about meeting Barbie at the church. When he walked in Barbie was carrying one of the poles used to hang banners. He laughed about being afraid of Barbie ever sense. He always let you know how happy he was to see you. His smile lifted your spirits with his caring spirit. He enjoyed his crossword puzzles, but would put them down to talk with you. We have heard many tales of him visiting his flock. But he didn't stop at that. He visited our families and friends. He was very loving and will be greatly missed.

- Grady & Barbie Fleming

I moved to Ridgeland just a few months after Bro. Rex came to Meadville. That didn't stop him from driving up and visiting me. He was always so kind. I enjoyed our visit and always told him I was his psychiatrist. We'd visit for a couple of hours while he shared his life. I always looked forward to those visits and will miss him greatly.

- Delores Martin



I'm not sure if he learned his laugh from Santa Claus or if it were he that taught Ole St. Nick to laugh from the belly with echos of joy and jolly, but his hearty laugh is just one of the many things I will miss about Rev. Rex Wilburn. I'll miss his response saying, "Congratulations. It's the cleanest word I know to say," when you shared news of misfortune. I'll miss his greeting, "Good morning, Child of God." I'll miss him.

Even though, Bro. Rex lived several hours from his family, that did not keep him from participating in special occasions. Weddings, funerals, birthday parties, ball games – if a family member were involved, Bro. Rex was going to go the extra mile (literally!) to be there. That included church family too. I remember turning around at my daughter's college graduation and being surprised to see him standing behind me. Two days before Christmas last year, Bro. Rex preached my father's funeral. In May, he presented my son with his high school diploma. Less than three months ago, he was next to us at my daughter's wedding. People

were important to Bro. Rex and because he treated them with loving kindness and each individually as a beloved Child of God, he was important to people. Another favorite preacher of mine always quotes Teddy Roosevelt, saying, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Quite simply, Rex Wilburn cared.

A month ago, I was making plans to apply to a Bible college and needed a pastor's reference to do so. Bro. Rex was very encouraging and eager to support me in whatever way he could. One of the questions asked how the applicant had been involved in Christian Service and to describe their experience. After listing several of the tasks I perform for the church, Bro. Rex added, "If I were to leave, the church would be sad. If Samantha were to leave, the church would be lost." I don't know about that, but I do know that now that he has left, the folks at Meadville UMC are both sad and lost. We are better because he came to Meadville and many of us will never be the same. Rest in peace, Bro. Rex. - Samantha Sivils

*John Wesley said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, so long as ever you can." This is how Bro. Rex lived, and it is how he will be remembered.*

## HYMNOLY 101

*hymn (n) from the Greek hymnos  
meaning: a song of praise to God*



Fanny Crosby, America's most prolific hymn writer, wrote 8,000 Gospel songs and hymns during a lifetime, which spanned nearly a century. She passed away in her 95th year. All of her days, except the first six weeks, were spent in blindness.

Frances Jane Crosby was born in Putnam County, New York, on March 24, 1820. A poorly trained doctor applied a mustard plaster poultice to her eyes when she was only

six weeks old, rendering her totally blind. Even in her childhood, she realized she had a special gift.

She often said, "I have a jewel - content."  
When only 9 years of age, she wrote:

*"O what a happy soul am I,  
Although I cannot see,  
I am resolved that in this world  
Contented I will be.  
How many blessings I enjoy  
That other people don't.  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,  
I cannot, and I won't."*

During her 15th year, she entered the New York Institute for the Blind. Her record there was such that after graduation, she was asked to teach at the institute. She remained on the faculty for 11 years.

She told S. Trevena Jackson her little "love story," which he recorded in his book, "Fanny Crosby's Story of Ninety-Four Years," She said...

"Some people seem to forget that blind girls have just as great a faculty for loving, and do love just as much and just as truly as those who have their sight. When I was about 20, a gifted young man by the name of Alexander Van Alstyne came to our institute. He was also blind and a musician. We soon became very much concerned for

each other...I placed my right hand on his left and called him 'Van.' From that hour, two lives looked on a new universe, for love met love, and all the world was changed. On March 5 in the year 1858, we were united in marriage.

One day in 1873, Aunt Fanny was visiting with a friend, Mrs. Joseph Knapp, a musician of sorts and wife of the founder of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. During their visit Mrs. Knapp played a tune on her piano, which she had recently written. She then asked Fanny, "What does this tune say?" After kneeling in prayer for a few moments, she rose and declared, "It says, 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!'" Fanny began to dictate verses to Mrs. Knapp, who wrote them down, fitting them to the melody just as we hear it sung today.

*"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God.  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

*Chorus:  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long,  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long."*

Crosby captured the poetic essence of the Wesleyan understanding of Christian perfection in the phrase, "O what a foretaste of glory divine!" The entire hymn is focused on heaven, a place where "perfect submission" and "perfect delight" [stanza 2] will take place. The earthly existence is one of "watching and waiting, looking above" [stanza 3]. As we submit ourselves to Christ and are "filled with his goodness" and "lost in his love" [stanza 3], we are remade in Christ's image and are moving toward Christian perfection.

This hymn appeals to the senses in a rich way. Not only do we have a "foretaste of glory," we experience "visions of rapture [that] burst on my sight," and we hear "echoes of mercy, whispers of love" [stanza 2].

The refrain calls us to "praise. . . my Savior all the day long," echoing I Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."

Fanny Crosby readily claimed God's personal revelation as a source for her hymns; her personal revelation then became a communal inspiration as Christians throughout the world sang her hymns and confirmed her faith experience as their own.

Fanny Crosby died Feb. 12, 1915.

## Moving Forward

Dear church family,

We grow through what we go through and these last few weeks have certainly provided lots of growth opportunities. So many in our church family have been sick, battling covid, and working through a very tough life season. Through it all, our resolve remains strong and we are doing what we do best – showing up for each other and bridging the gaps. It is our privilege and great joy to be part of such a caring body of Christ during such unprecedented times!

At this time, our pulpit will be filled by lay speakers for the foreseeable future and we will all share in the responsibilities of Sunday morning. Continuing our corporate worship is important to our spiritual well-being and now is an important time to come together as the body of Christ to worship, pray, and lead with the gifts and talents that God has given each of us. The PPR committee lay leadership will lead by example over the next few weeks and beginning September 5, the opportunities to serve in morning worship will be open to **all** of you, our church family. Please consider how you can help lead during this time.

There are four primary areas of the morning worship where lay leadership is needed:

- Announcements
- Morning Prayer / Prayer Requests
- Lectionary Scripture Reading
- Lay-Speaking / Sermon

Everyone in our church family is being called to step up and participate in Sunday morning worship – adults *and* children – as ALL are called to participate in serving. Consider where **you** would like to serve. What are **your** gifts and talents? How can **you** best bridge the gaps in our church body? What area(s) is God nudging **you** to participate?

Does the thought of speaking in front of a group scare you or does it thrill you? Do your knees get weak thinking about sharing a message that is on your heart or do you get excited about the opportunity? Either way,

it's okay! There will be lots of grace extended as we are all being called upon and we will grow *together* as we venture outside of our comfort zones.

Please complete the short survey provided by writing your name at the top and indicating which areas you are willing to serve on Sunday morning (remember, there's lots of grace). We will rotate the servers each Sunday so that everyone has a chance to participate and use their gifts and talents, so volunteering does not lead to a long-term commitment!

During this time, we know that many are concerned and have questions regarding the direction we are headed. We have never been through this situation before, but are confident that God is with us and leading us through this season. So we will continue to do what we do best – show up and bridge the gaps. This season requires all of us working together – united as the body of Christ. Everyone working together and doing their part makes the whole body complete and function as it designed to work. You are an important part of the MUMC church body and your participation is vital to the sustainable health of our church family.

We are praying for each of you by name and for the future of our church. May we each rise up and be strengthened in a way that can only come from a 'growing' season such as this one.

God is equipping us. He is leading us. Let's trust Him and follow closely.

Join us as we experience the faithfulness of God in this 'growing' season of our church family. We anticipate great things ahead and look forward to serving alongside each of you.

May God's richest blessings be yours,  
Sue Sullivan

On behalf of the PPR committee:

Melinda Bradford, Doc Gabbert, Bill Halford, Ashley Priest, Ed Youngblood, and  
Tammy Torrey (Finance Chair)

(continued on back)

# Meadville Messenger

September, 2021

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we though many, are one body of Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:4-5

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:15-16

Cut out and drop in offering plate, mail back to church, or email the office.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Place an X by each of the areas of service you would be willing to serve below and place in offering plate before/after service or email the church office: [office@meadvilleumc.com](mailto:office@meadvilleumc.com)

\_\_\_\_\_ Announcements

\_\_\_\_\_ Morning Prayer & Prayer Requests

\_\_\_\_\_ Lectionary Scripture Reading

\_\_\_\_\_ Lay Speaking / Sermon

\_\_\_\_\_ Special Music

\_\_\_\_\_ Greeter

\_\_\_\_\_ Nursery

\_\_\_\_\_ Sunday School (Substitute) Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## SUNDAY SCHOOL!!

Children, youth, and adult Sunday School classes will resume Sunday, September 12. Please plan to be here as we get started back!

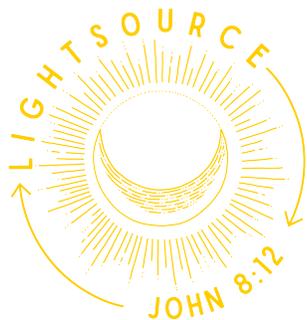
## LightSource Student Ministries

Hitting the restart button!!

This month we are excited to launch our new youth program: **LightSource**.

Based on John 8:12 that reads, "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." it is our

goal to empower MUMC students to carry the light of Christ into the dark world in which we live.



LightSource will be led by Tommy & Samantha Sivils. Tommy and Samantha have a heart for teenagers and are excited to instill a love of the Word of God and igniting a heart for Christ in the youth of Meadville Methodist.

LightSource will meet on Sunday Morning's for Sunday School at 9:45 AM beginning on September 12 and on Wednesday evenings at 6 PM beginning on September 15. This ministry is geared for youth in 7th-12th grades. Students do not have to attend MUMC to participate.

As our student ministries get under-way, we ask that you commit to pray for our youth and youth leaders. We are hopeful that the impact we have on this generation will be evident not only in these students, but also our church and our community!

## **COLEMANISM:**

If you want to let God laugh, tell Him your plans.



The Mississippi Conference Office of Spiritual Leadership is making available to you an **online basic lay ministry course**. This course is an introduction to lay ministry, and it is foundational for all courses in lay servant ministries. Join in this training with laity across the conference so that you can discover and employ your personal spiritual gifts as God intended, and consider the importance of exercising servant leadership, developing future leaders and accountable discipleship.

The training will be held, **Saturday, October 2, from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.** However, you do need to [register by Friday, September 24](#). Please let Samantha Sivils or Sue Sullivan know if you plan to participate.

## **Operation Christmas Child**

September's suggested gift item is GAMES! Every child loves something that gets their hands and minds involved. Games are a great way to do just that! Remember there is a box in the church narthex for donations!



Games

September

# SEPTEMBER

*Two thousand twenty - One*

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	3	4 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
5 11 AM Morning Worship	6	7	8	9 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	10	11 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
12 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Morning Worship	13	14 10 AM - Jolly Elders 12 PM - Grief and Loss Support Group	15 6 PM • Mid-Week Bible Study • LightSource Students	16 10 AM Sewing Group 5 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	17	18 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
19 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Morning Worship	20	21	22 6 PM • Mid-Week Bible Study • LightSource Students	23 10 AM Sewing Group 5 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	24	25 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
26 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Morning Worship	27 5:30 PM Auxiliary League Meeting Fellowship Hall	28	29 6 PM • Mid-Week Bible Study • LightSource Students	30 10 AM Sewing Group 5 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)		

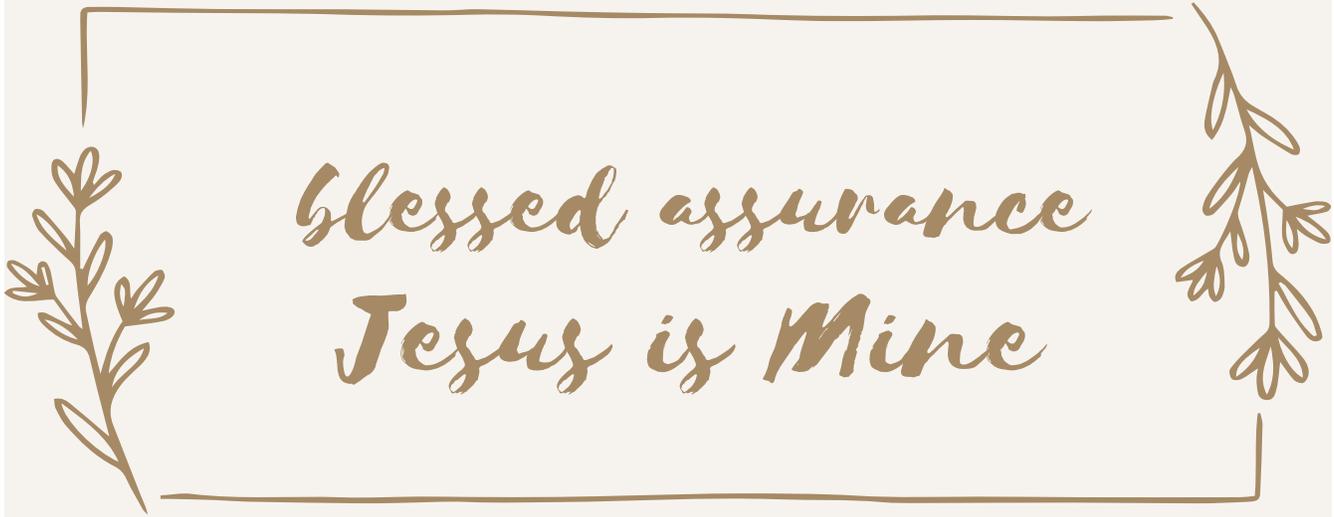
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**Celebrate!**  
**August**  
**Birthdays**  
**and**  
**Anniversaries**

September 04	Todd Spring	September 15	Dacey Sivils Shands
September 04	Gail Hopkins	September 16	Liesl Holt
September 04	Connor Wallace	September 22	Chuck Freeman
September 05	Bo Gabbert	September 22	Vana Hurst
September 05	Will Halford	September 24	Aiden Jeffus
September 08	Graham Cowart	September 25	Mark Clay
September 08	Connor Sivils	September 28	D.J. Furlow
September 09	Cam Wallace		
September 14	Ann Mullins		
September 15	Jean Peterson		

*I thank my God every time I remember you.*

*Philippians 1:3*



Chosen by God to Proclaim Christ through Worship, Study, and Service

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