

CONNECT



NEWSLETTER

September 2023



ALL YOU CAN



MOVING INTO 2023



Church of the Evangel, UCC



by *Brian Ward*

The word 'Next' means we have received a reward. We have satisfactorily completed an assignment, task, or project, and 'Next' recognizes our ability to do something more significant.

So, with the reward of 'Next,' we embrace the challenge to show that the trust placed in us was not misplaced.

Our lives aren't about what we have done but what we do next.

Every day, you have opportunities to do something new and challenging. Somewhere in that challenge is your

"Next." There is a reward with your name on it.

To whom much is given, we know much is expected, and if you don't believe you are blessed many times over, look at the news for a fresh perspective of how blessed you are.

If you feel you need a fresh start today, well, that's your 'Next.' Be bold and embrace that feeling. Believe it. Act on it now.

The reward of 'Next' encourages us to step out in faith today, growing and sharpening our skills. 'Next' is a call to put our feet in the water and move forward along the paths of success as they open for us.

It's about our effort, growth, success, and giving thanks.

So, what's 'Next' for you?



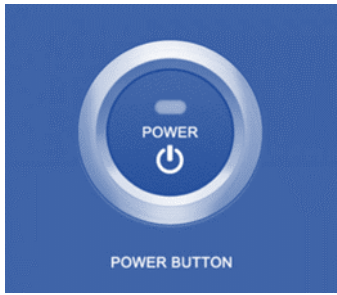
Up Coming Events

Church of the Evangel, UCC

- Church of the Evangel, UCC: 116 Anniversary Celebration: Sunday, October 8, 2023 @ 10:30 am
- Faith & Wellness Ministry: Faith & Wellness Seminar Saturday, November 11, 2023 @ 4:00 pm on Zoom
- Thanksgiving Dinner Saturday, November 18, 2023

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The Power of Pause

by Sheryl Phillips

In recent months, the word pause has become very popular. It's a concept that has been widely researched and encourages us to take a break and refocus...on the things that matter.

Pause is essential for us to navigate our challenging world. We live such busy lives, pushing forward, struggling, and constantly on the move, and a regular pause helps us recalibrate and refocus on the things of importance at the time.

That much-needed break from our activity realigns us with our purpose for that moment. But often, we resist enjoying a pause moment and miss our opportunity to be refreshed in our time of inactivity. Our times of inaction are equally as crucial as our activity agendas.

The moment of pause is monumental as it gives us the vision for a change of course and the time to reconsider the decision we are about to make.

Pausing to connect with God and trusting Him to guide you through your challenges should

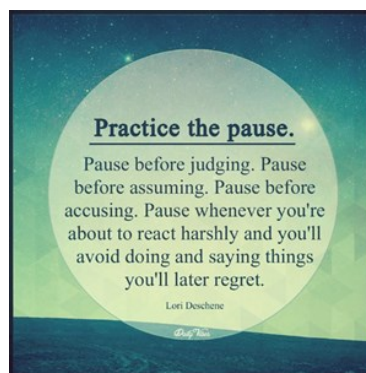
be a regular part of your daily spiritual journey.

By ourselves, we are weak. When you arrive at a place where you feel overwhelmed, engulfed by life's challenges, devastated, and just going through the motions and not being productive, it's time to pause. When you are unsure of the next steps to take, it's advisable to pause. If you try to keep going, you will frustrate yourself.

We need to constantly ask God for strength and guidance. If we stop talking, overthinking, and quiet our minds, we can hear God speaking to our hearts in our pause moments

Isaiah 40:30 says, *"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles they shall run and not be weary ..."*

God is always with you, whatever journey you may be on. He is ready to be your guide if you let him. He promises never to leave or forsake us, so we need to find the time in our daily lives to pause and connect with Christ.



Pausing connects us with His wisdom as we consider our next step and His strength to continue our journey. It allows us to receive spiritual input that shines light on our challenges, be they physical, social, emotional, spiritual, environmental, intellectual, occupational, or financial.

We need to pause and look at the big picture as we tend to lose sight of it and its blessings when we become self-centered.

Pausing is a healthy habit, not a waste of time. Pausing helps you to be more productive, to gain strength for your journey. If you look at the life of Jesus, you see many instances when He paused to connect with His Heavenly Father to gain strength to continue His work here on earth.

Jesus used His wisdom to pause and so should we. Use the power of pause to slow you down in this fast-paced world, to help you gain a fresh perspective, to connect with our Heavenly Father. Matthew 11:28 reminds us to pause and go to Jesus to find rest when we are weary and burdened. So, don't be afraid to use pause as you navigate the dimensions of wellness. It's a healthy habit to develop. It will help you to be more effective in dealing with life's challenges.

(continue on next page)



Today, let's pause to appreciate the stillness, so we can hear God's leading, pause to quiet our minds so we can think more clearly, pause to seek godly counsel from a spiritual leader, or that person or group that you trust, pause to research your options, pause to gain a new perspective, pause to connect with God.

Trust in the power of pause.



**PRESS
THE
PAUSE
BUTTON**



by *Brian Ward*

It may seem like the situation or conditions have not changed today, yet we must adapt. Even when the day has changed, the problem may persist, so adjust, we must.

And when the situation changes, we must be willing to adjust to our new conditions. Life changes our positions, so we must recognize those changes.



There is that call in our hearts to adapt and adopt the changes that would guide us into new thinking, speech, and behavior. Becoming familiar with the change process takes a while, but we get there through daily practice. Our Savior wants to coach us in using the tools of our new thinking. So, He recommends that we yoke ourselves to Him.

The expression, 'Out with the old, in with the new,' is an invitation to a daily refresher course our Savior teaches, and

it challenges us to look at our self-value. The Scripture: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:5), should inspire us to ask, "What would Jesus do?"



Seeing the chameleon reminds me of the biblical description of Joseph's coat, 'the coat of many colors.'

To some, his coat may symbolize perseverance. As Joseph's life developed, he endured, adapted, and overcame conditions, each of which seemed worse than the previous one. He survived. So too, the chameleon is created with the changing ability to adapt for survival.

By remaining attached to the 'vine' of life, we will receive, like Joseph, the strength and wisdom to endure, adapt, and overcome our hardship challenges.

Adapting requires thinking beyond what we have been thinking; a leap of faith is always required.





***Happy Birthday
to a Grand Lady -
Vera Biddle***

by *Stephanie Bennett*

On September 1st, Vera Biddle accomplished another praise-worthy milestone in her life. She celebrated her 107th birthday.

Vera was born in Grenada in 1916, where she lived with her father. She was educated there and became a nurse. When Vera migrated to New York, she continued her nursing career at various hospitals. She considers herself a caregiver even to this day. Her warm and inviting smile has a way of endearing people to her. Just ask her many neighbors living on her block. They love Vera.

When asked about the secret to her longevity, Vera said it was 'good living,' a good family, and having a good relationship with her God. She is grateful for having a loving church family here at Evangel. Yes, she misses being able to attend on Sundays physically; but the church will always be in her thoughts and heart.

May the peace of God be with you every day, Vera, as you continue to glorify Him with your life! You are a role model.





Friends for the Journey

by Sheryl Phillips

When we plan a trip or some journey, we usually take along family members and or friends. We travel with people we love and whose company we appreciate—people we trust and whose council we depend on. We feel comfortable and assured that someone has our back in challenging circumstances. We also support our traveling companions in any situation they encounter.

On our spiritual journey, we also need companionship. We need individuals or groups whose wise counsel we depend on. Challenges fill our lives, and it is always encouraging to know we have friends along the path to help pick us up when we fall and enable us to keep going.

As Christians, we must keep reminding ourselves that we are not alone on our journey. God is always with us, even though we sometimes feel alone and abandoned. In Isaiah 41:10 (NIV), we are reminded that God is with us, so we should not be afraid. He will strengthen us and hold us up. No matter what challenges life throws at us, we are confident that God will meet us where we are and guide our path forward. He provides the tools we need for our journey; we must be willing to use them.

He provides the companion of prayer. We know that we can take all our concerns to Him in prayer.

Prayer is an essential ingredient to help build our faith and trust in God. During challenging times, we must bring our fears to the Lord.

He also gives us hope, compassion, companionship, and empathy and promises us strength for our journey.

Life's challenges can sometimes distract us from God and the truth, but we are reminded to rely on God in times of trouble, and He will provide the travel companion, strength.

Faith and hope are also essential travel companions as we encounter doubt and fear. Life is filled with challenges that can cause us to doubt. In these days of economic uncertainty, natural disasters, increased violence in our communities, and international conflicts, we can turn to our life companions Faith and Hope to help reassure us that God is still in control. No burden is too heavy or circumstance too difficult with friends encouraging us and the heavenly promises of our Lord to turn our despair into joy and our doubt into a stronger faith and hope.



So, remember, you are not alone on this spiritual journey. Many people care about you, and there are others whom God has assigned to you to care for and help on their journey. He provides the tools and the companions we need, and remember, God is always with us no matter the circumstance.



Friends for the Journey

God

Trusted

Friend/Confidant

Faith

Hope

Prayer

Trust

Strength

POETRY CORNER



Back to School

by: Karen Benjamin-Abrigo

Our youths are back at school
 smartly dressed in their khaki and blue or the colors they choose.
 Bags are packed, excitement fills the air
 The euphoric yells as they see their friends
 Happy to be back again.
 Parents and caregivers are happy too
 It's been a long summer of finding extra food and
 Activities for kids to do! Yes, it's time for school.

Teachers are ready, open doors, open minds, open hearts,
 welcoming environment.
 Ready to make a difference in the lives of children
 Developing, cultivating, nurturing growth mindsets.
 Allowing for students' agency. They say...
 Yes! the wonders, ask the questions, take risks, and ownership.
 Facilitating not lecturing but empowering the children in their care.

But the struggles are real. Amidst mental illness, lack of interest and behavioral issues.
 Social media has its tentacles on the minds and time of students.
 The cell phone addiction is a crime. Anxiety, lack of sleep, poor academic performance are
 characteristics of abuse - no place in schools.
 Go back to communication through the school.

Students, set your goals
 Affirm your greatness
 Keep your eyes on the prize
 Challenge your mind
 Forgive your mistakes
 And be grateful.



Ministry Corner

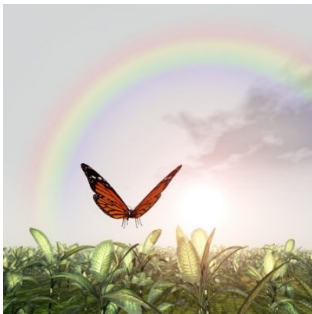


Naming Rainbows

by Brian Ward

Meteorologists have been naming storms for years, and so have we. We have survived Hurricane Lost Job, tropical storm Illness, and depression Eviction. Those seasonal events have caused us to be 'under the weather' in our attitude toward life and God.

What if we started naming our rainbows instead and singing songs about them, identifying and recognizing God's goodness in our lives and giving praise?



All of us have experienced rainbows that allowed us to breathe sighs of relief from our stormy situations. Those times

when God stepped in and made a way, removed the dark clouds of the challenge, and filled us with a kaleidoscope of colors of hope and joy. Name your rainbow as you give thanks and praise.

In her story, *The Rainbow*, author Maralyn Lewis asks, "When was the last time you stopped and took the time to admire a picturesque rainbow in the sky?" She reminds us to count our blessings, name them one by one, and talk about how they reduced the intensity of our storms to category zero.

Few things are more beautiful than rainbows, as they are nature's evidence that beauty can come from darkness.

Your rainbow is unlike anyone else's rainbow. God uniquely designed yours for you, who are unique in every aspect of your creation. Each time He shines his light on your challenge, He reflects His love and care for you. Be proud to name your rainbow as you give thanks and praise.

Remember, when your storm seems to be the most significant storm you've faced, expect to see the brightest rainbow appear in your life. Name your rainbows, acknowledging God's presence in your life.

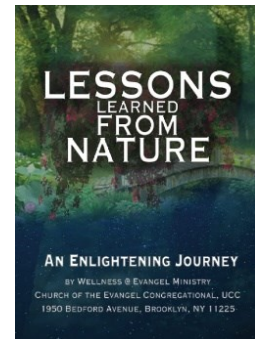
Maya Angelou has challenged us to "try to be a rainbow in somebody's cloud."

Today, teach someone the art of naming rainbows. Show them how to have hope and experience joy and peace of mind as they count the many colors, each a blessing, in their rainbows.

In our rainbows, there will be provision, protection, and peace.



(*The Rainbow* is one of many nature stories in the book *Lessons Learned From Nature*.)



A truly satisfying read.





Lessons Learned from Nature: An Enlightening Journey is an excellent compilation of fifty Nature stories. It will inspire you to appreciate God's majesty and splendor and learn the many lessons He wants to teach us.

Paperback
\$15.00

eBook
\$3.99



Available on Amazon or you can contact Sheryl Phillips, or any Wellness member to order from the church.

Word Search

Godly Character Traits

A	E	G	A	R	U	O	C	O	U	R	T	E	S	Y	R
T	L	O	V	I	N	G	O	B	E	D	I	E	N	C	E
T	F	E	S	Y	O	B	N	D	Y	L	O	H	Z	C	S
E	R	L	R	O	P	A	T	T	N	E	I	T	A	P	P
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E	I	M	E	A	C	R	P	Y	N	H	S	N	A	E	S
C	U	A	G	K	M	E	F	W	E	A	H	G	P	C	J
N	N	R	A	P	A	N	U	C	S	M	Q	O	M	S	U
I	E		H	U	M	I	L	I	T	Y	P	C	O	I	S
S	G	R	N	E	R	O	U	S	Z	L	S	U	C	D	T

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Alertness | Attentive |
| Content | Courage |
| Courtesy | Compassion |
| Discernment | Forgiving |
| Faith | Friendly |
| Good | Generous |
| Genuine | Holy |
| Helpful | Honest |
| Hope | Humility |
| Just | Joyful |
| Kindness | Loyal |
| Loving | Merciful |
| Obedience | Patient |
| Sensitive | Sincerity |
| Servanthood | |
| Thankful | Trustworthy |
| Wise | Zeal |



Create Ripples

by *Brian Ward*

Each of us is a drop of water that can create ripples. As we do something to disturb the calm where nothing is happening and move beyond ourselves, we will inspire others by the waves of our encouraging acts.

We can be that small wave on the surface that brings into action what lies dormant below the surface of inactivity. The excitement awakens interest in our lives and other people's lives.

We aren't required to do anything majestic, but as we move in small waves, we and others will begin to live lives that send out ripples beyond ourselves.



Our small waves may appear calm, but that movement on the surface excites us. Seeing the joy in us triggers others to rise from their sleepy desire to come alive, which we will notice and be inspired by. A colorful

outlook on life will gradually replace the gray portraits we have painted of our present and future.



Soon, our acts will create ripples beyond anything we could imagine. We will be hard-pressed to find a better way of investing our valuable time. Watching our sharing spread like ripples on the water's surface and going beyond the limits of our eyes will continue to excite us. It's that excitement about life that needs to be our daily investment as we pour into the pond of life we live.



Let us do it with excellence. We need to do it with passion because what we pass on pays dividends. We enrich lives as we connect with them.



God sent His angels to shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me." (Daniel 6:22)

The Lions' Den Hotel

by *Brian Ward*

Like Daniel, you occasionally may have to stay 'overnight' in a lion's den.

Could your mind be at peace, allowing you to rest as comfortably as Daniel? Would it be because, like Daniel, you would immerse yourself in prayer?

Daniel's prayer practices led to his overnight stay at The Lions' Den Hotel. And it was his prayer practices that kept him safe and comfortable among the lions.

Sometimes, it's because of our positive, prayerful attitude that we 'win' a stay at the lions' den. We see ourselves as a 'straight arrow,' as Daniel did, but some people envied him and his prayer practices and considered him a threat. Our prayer practices also make people uncomfortable.

So, are we 'open' when we pray? Daniel was! His heart was open to receiving, and he never hid during prayer. Daniel positioned himself by an open window facing Jerusalem,

“praying on his knees. He had a prayerful spirit, and some felt that kneeling in prayer three times a day was excessive, plus he was not praying to King Darius.

Daniel was earnest and disciplined in his prayer life as he believed in God’s word.

Don’t be surprised if your positive praying practices get you time in the lions’ den. Keep praying and let others be surprised you are so comfortable and not losing sleep because just as Daniel’s lions ‘had teeth but no bite’ when Daniel’s God sent His angel to shut the lions’ mouths, your lions do not have ‘bite.’ Just as God made Daniel unappetizing, He has made you unpalatable to those who envy you.



So before packing your bag for your next stay in The Lions’ Den Hotel, get comfortable reading your Bible and developing a disciplined prayer time. Pray and expect God to deliver you as you maintain an ‘overcoming’ spirit.

Like Daniel, through your faith, your God will guide you through your situation.



Coco Gauff: The world watched her play, and the world watched her pray!

With YOU, I Can Do All Things

by *Brian Ward*

Setting your mind on victory and keeping it set will prove that you can be a good match for your daily challenges.

God enjoys a good tennis match, and as He prepares your mind with the spirit of achievement, you will declare victory at the end of your day. The fact is that He is all about goodness and success for us.

Knowing and not being ashamed of the Source of her strength, Coco Gauff, champion, dropped to her knees in a prayer of thanks for the world to see. She had just won the U.S. Open. The world watched her play, and the world watched her pray!

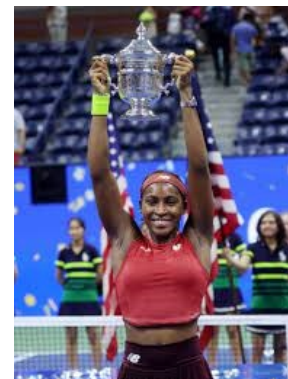
“I was just saying thank you,” Coco said, and there could not have been a better place where everyone was gathered around the table (television), also giving thanks to God with her for her triumph.

The tough times she endured made the moment even sweeter. That’s a good perspective for us to have on our challenges. Challenges create champions!



Dedication to our purpose develops the self-discipline necessary to overcome our challenges. When we feel we are losing, we can mount a comeback, orchestrated by our Source, because He wants us to know that we are the Overcomers He has trained. Believe in Him, and we will believe in ourselves.

Congratulations on the win, Coco, and on your journey and win, readers. Drop to your knees and say “Thank you” for today’s win.



Seeing her witness to God was beautiful—strangers they are not.

After winning in Cincinnati earlier this year, she gave thanks on National TV, “I’d like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for covering me.”

God matters in Coco’s life, and she told the world.

What about us?



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Photo by Ray Raman

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

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WE APPRECIATE YOUR DONATION



Faith & Wellness Ministry

The purpose of the Faith & Wellness Ministry is to create a Faith-Based Health and Wellness program that focuses on Education, Health, Exercise, Nutrition, Stress Management, and living a Spiritually rich life.

There is a direct relationship between Spirituality or faith and health. God made us with a spirit, soul, and a body and they work together in amazing ways. Our program is designed to teach individuals about an integrated approach to health; living a healthy life based on Christian principles, and an integration of mind, body, and spirit to achieve total wellness.

AN OPEN INVITATION

Our Faith & Wellness Ministry

Welcomes You

Mondays and Fridays @ 8:00 pm on Zoom

Contact Sheryl Phillips:

sheryl.weightlossolutions@gmail.com

PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY MINISTRY

Thursdays @ 5:30 pm on Zoom

Contact Darrell @ 917-689-0386



These candles burn in loving memory of our pastor, Rev. Cynthia Jackson.

They also burn in loving memory of our church members who went to be with the Lord in recent years.

They burn in loving memory of the thousands of lives lost to COVID-19.

They burn for the families who lost loved ones.

These candles burn in memory of the lives lost in recent natural disasters, and for victims of gun violence.

The memory of your loved ones will continue to glow in your heart.