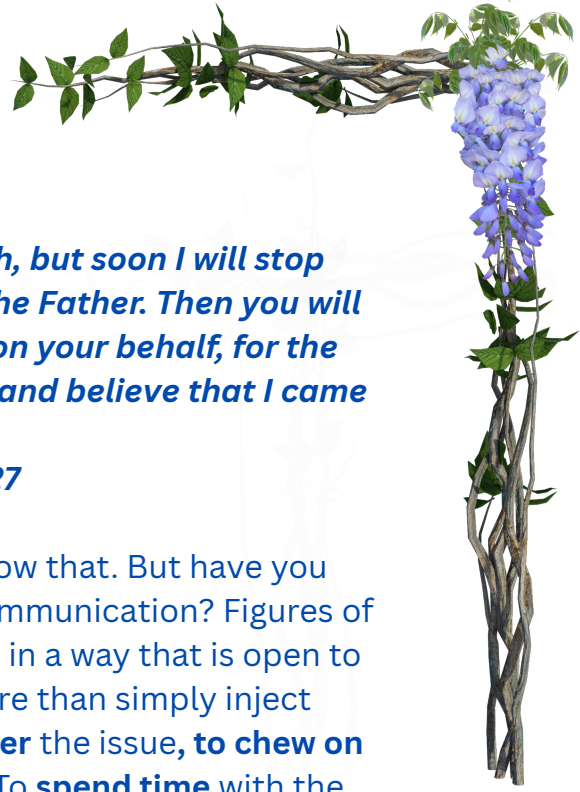


# Westover Reflections - May 2026



*“I have spoken of these matters in figures of speech, but soon I will stop speaking figuratively and will tell you plainly about the Father. Then you will ask in my name. I’m not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf, for the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God.”*

*-John 16:25-27*

Jesus told stories. He **taught in parables**. We all know that. But have you ever stopped to think about the significance of such communication? Figures of speech **do not** state their message **baldly** but express it in a way that is open to multiple meanings. Stories, images, and symbols do more than simply inject factual information into our heads. They ask us **to ponder** the issue, **to chew on it, to ruminate on the basis of own experiences of life**. To **spend time** with the image and allow ourselves to pause in wonder.

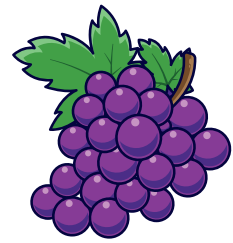
**Look!** I understand that some folks would prefer that Jesus had spoken in **plain language**. Some would prefer that He had defined **truth** with legal definitions and logical explanations (I, to be sure, have sometimes wish for such). I suspect that in this current climate where in so many are **“anti-this, anti-that”** more than a few of us have wished that Jesus had enunciated an exhaustive **“black-and-white”** morality that laid down the law unambiguously and definitively.

**Instead, Jesus chose to speak in parables**, encouraging us think-to ponder-matters from our own standpoint, letting His words **“leaven”** our thoughts so that they may rise to a higher plane-a **Christ-like plane** that enabled the Spirit to lead us to a new understanding of truth that is capable of speaking the Good News of the Gospel both to us...and this little world in which we dwell.

**Truth is:** Jesus spoke in parables out of respect for His listeners. He left it to the Pharisees to lay down the law. He preferred, or so it seems to me, to initiate a process of reflection that would allow His disciples to arrive at the fullness of **truth** not by marching along the highway, like people blindly following the crowd, but by following a **meandering path** that was more expressive of the complexity of individual lives and the untidiness of daily living, while also confident that our prayers, though not always perfectly pure, are acceptable in God’s eyes.

**Still in His Peace,  
William**

# *First Fruits of Worship*



*By Bruce Smith, Director of Music Ministries*

## **Being Open During Worship**

Everyone knows what a clam looks like. Shell shaped with hinged top and bottom shut very tight. It takes a sharp knife to pry it open to discover the meat inside. There's a reason why we tell people to "clam up" – in other words, say nothing, do nothing, express nothing. The same can be said of our attitude and mindset during worship. We can bottle up all of our connection with the Lord and just "go through the motions" of worship and not let anything in, and not let anything out.

I don't believe that is the way God wants our worship. He desires our hearts and minds to be focused on Him, and our spirits open to hear what He has to say to us. I heard a great Pastor once say "It's not that God isn't communicating with us – we're just not listening!" And it's no wonder...We have so many things the world throws at us to distract – to do lists, relationship problems, physical illness and brokenness, the news of the day, etc... What are we to do to get our clammy arms and hearts open?

## **Put The Worldly Concerns Behind You**

***"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind"  
Romans 12:2***

We enter worship each Sunday with many things on our minds – getting everyone up and out to church, what's for lunch, and other problems the world puts in our minds. And the word is "mindful" – we have to be mindful of our worship, meaning we purposefully set aside those thoughts and cares, and say – "right now, Lord – my mind is set on you!"

## **Be Open To The Spirit**

***"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24***

Sometimes, we Methodists get a little scared of operating in the Spirit. We're afraid of what He will do to us. But God loves us and wants to speak to us each time we worship to answer our prayers, and share a vision for our life and future. He does that via the Holy Spirit – so we best connect with that spirit by not being afraid of it!

## **The Result Of The Open Clam!**

***"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing" Zephaniah 3:17***

God wants you to experience joy, healing, forgiveness, restoration, guidance, and comfort when we draw near to Him. If you are anxious, He will quiet your spirit. If you are worried, He will comfort you with His mighty hand. If you are lost, He'll guide you to the path. Not a bad deal, right? Remember how an oyster (another one of those tightly hinged clammy sea creatures!) produces a pearl? An irritant or particle gets inside the shell through the tough and tight hinge and the defense mechanism is to create the environment for a beautiful pearl to form. It's what gets into the oyster that allows the pearl to form. If nothings gets in – there is no beautiful pearl.

So for us, we need to open our clam shells and allow God's Holy presence in during worship. And the pearl will be how He changes our life!



## BBQ news



The United Methodist Men's BBQ is coming up soon!

There will be a planning meeting, *with lunch provided*, for everyone willing to help. Meet in the Wesley hall on May 16, 12:00-1:30 PM. We'll talk about the BBQ plans and make sure everything is cleaned and ready to go for the big day. Please RSVP to Les Watkins if you will be at this preparation day.

The men need lots of volunteers to help during the BBQ! If you can scoop slaw, collect money and tickets, slice cakes, refill tea, etc. your help will be greatly appreciated!

We are also in need of homemade desserts to serve with the meals. Cakes, cookies, pies, brownies, banana pudding, etc. are all welcome!



And, of course, don't forget to invite friends and family to come and enjoy a delicious pork and/or chicken BBQ lunch or dinner on the 22nd.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Les Watkins or Kent Gibson.



## Game Night

Game night is Friday, May 15. The United Methodist Men are sponsoring a taco bar for dinner at 6:30 PM. Bingo and board games will start after dinner. Join us for fun, food, fellowship and prizes!



## Craft circle & UWF

This month we will be decorating tote bags to accompany the blankets that we make for Interact. We'll be using stencils and paints, so be sure to wear something that is "oopsie" proof. We'll meet in the Wesley room at 10:00 AM on May 9.



Bring your sandwich or salad and join us for lunch at noon.

UWF will start our new book study, *The Most Overlooked Women of the Bible*.



All are welcome at our morning of fellowship, food and fun.

## Happy birthday to:



- 1 Kimberly Holder
- 1 Anna Sargent
- 5 Camryn Watkins Lucas
- 10 Laura Brooks
- 10 Travis Allen
- 13 Janet Giannattasio
- 14 Ruth Miller
- 17 Deena Poole Scott
- 20 Y'Duy Ksor
- 20 Treu Ksor
- 21 Alma Foley
- 22 Jennifer Price
- 25 Sandra Johnson-Leu
- 27 BJ Decoeur
- 27 Mark Treni
- 31 James Carter



## Mark your calendars

- Saturday, May 9 **Craft Circle** 10:00 AM
- Saturday, May 9 **Lunch** 12:00 PM
- Saturday, May 9 **United Women of Faith** 12:30 PM
- Friday, May 15 **Dinner and Game night** 6:30 PM
- Saturday, May 16 **BBQ planning meeting & lunch** 12:00 PM-1:30 PM
- Friday, May 22 **UMM BBQ** 11:00 AM-2:00 PM and 4:00-7:00 PM