



# RECTORTOWN Reporter



540-364-1066

1-470-728-9060 Pastor Cell

[www.rectortownumc.org](http://www.rectortownumc.org)[pastortaewonkang@gmail.com](mailto:pastortaewonkang@gmail.com)[secretaryRUMC@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryRUMC@gmail.com)PO Box 301  
Rectortown, VA 201403049 Rectortown Rd  
Marshall, VA 20115

## PARADOX OF THE CROSS

"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."

—1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NIV)



**When John Wesley was at Oxford University, he formed the 'Holy Club' to practice biblical teachings on campus. Members of the Holy Club participated in Bible study, prayer meetings, and fasting, and they regularly visited orphanages and prisons. They did all these things so thoroughly that people began to call them 'Methodists.' The term was initially used to ridicule their way of life. However, John Wesley and his colleagues willingly embraced the name 'Methodist,' and were even proud of it. In other words, the name 'Methodist' is paradoxical. It was intended as a slur to disgrace Wesley and the Holy Club members, yet it accurately described who they were. Today, it's our name as well. Reflecting on the origin and paradox of the name 'Methodist' can help us better understand the meaning of the cross of Jesus, which is also paradoxical.**

**Let us now consider the paradox of the cross. Jesus was crucified, but what did that mean to those living in the Roman Empire in the first century? Crucifixion was a Roman method of execution, reserved for those who opposed or threatened the Empire. To be crucified meant being publicly recognized and stigmatized as an enemy of the state, a sinner, a thief, a rioter, and more. For people in the Roman Empire, the cross symbolized dishonor, fear, disgrace, and imperial justice. Being crucified was seen as the fate of an unforgivable sinner, someone beyond any hope of mercy. This was the dominant mindset in the Mediterranean world during the first century.**

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## PARADOX OF THE CROSS, CONTINUED

However, the first Christians began to speak differently. They were certain that God had resurrected the crucified Jesus, and that this risen Christ was the Messiah and Son of God. This is the core message of the Gospel, and it caused great shock to both the Roman Empire and the Jewish communities of the time. The resurrection, put simply, meant that God had overturned everything. Acknowledging God's overturning power, the cross—once the most dishonorable symbol—was newly recognized as the most glorious one, through the power of God. The authors of the New Testament, writing in the first century, declared that Jesus' cross and his crucified body were no longer symbols of disgrace, fear, and dishonor, but of divine grace, great joy, new hope, life, salvation, and holiness. For example, in the Gospel of John, the resurrected Jesus says to his disciples, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe" (John 20:27). The Apostle Paul writes, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

In short, the early Christians believed that Jesus' cross and his wounded body were tangible expressions of God's grace and love for all humanity. This is also what we believe. Therefore, we take to heart the words of the Apostle Paul: "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). These words reveal to us the paradoxes of the cross. They also show us that God has the power to overturn all things. Jesus' cross reveals the power of God to transform and renew.

The resurrection, God's ultimate overturn, reveals the authenticity and paradox of Jesus' cross. Through God's power, the cross—once a symbol of disgrace and dishonor—becomes a pathway to grace and honor. It is no longer seen as a method of imperial justice, but as a demonstration of God's justice. Jesus' wounded body becomes a divine accusation against human injustice and violence. Fear is replaced with joy, despair with hope, and death with new life. All of this stems from the paradox of the cross. This is why we are proud of the cross of Jesus, for it is the power of God.

As United Methodists, we believe in the power of God. The cross of Jesus was originally meant to dishonor and disgrace him. It symbolized death. Yet, Jesus willingly bore it, trusting completely in God's overturning power. Moreover, he taught his disciples that anyone who wanted to follow him must take up their own cross. Siblings in Christ, the power of faith is not about predicting or avoiding unfortunate events, difficulties, or crises. Rather, the power of faith leads us to confront these challenges, find God's presence within them, and hold onto His hand. The life of Joseph in the book of Genesis illustrates this power of faith and God's ability to overturn circumstances. He said to his brothers, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good..." (Genesis 50:20).

The cross of Jesus is the power of God, and we are proud of it alone. Amen.



## CHILI COOK OFF

And the  
Winner is...



Congrats!

**Cindy Stolte!**

Jim Harrington, 2023 Champ, presented  
her with the winning apron.



*Thank You*

**To the wonderful group that  
braved the weather!**

**And to muggie for her hard  
work in preparing for this  
event!**

## OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Carol Paul - 3rd  
 Megan Thomas - 3rd  
 Roberta Rector - 3rd  
 Jeff Pearson - 5th  
 Luke Warfield - 5th  
 Caroline Haley - 8th  
 Jarod Hall - 9th  
 Larry Scheuble - 10th  
 Erica Cooper - 11th  
 Logan Thompson - 14th  
 April Gannon - 20th  
 Michael Rininger - 20th  
 John Martin, Jr. - 21st  
 Thurston Willis - 30th



## OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

Vicki & Jimmy Willis - October 18th



## OCTOBER MEETINGS & EVENTS

### **Admin Council**

October 3rd at 7pm

### **Worship**

Cancelled

### **Secretary Out of Office**

October 7th

### **Trustees**

October 9th at 6pm



### **Columbus Day/Indigenous Day**

October 14th

Offices Closed



### **Fig Leaf**

October 15th at 10am



### **Halloween**

October 31st



**RECTORTOWN UMC MISSION STATEMENT**  
 SERVING GOD THROUGH **P**RAYER, **A**CTION,  
 AND **L**OVE THROUGH **S**ERVICE.