

Westover Reflections

March 2025

"I tell you, this the tax collector, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God..." -Luke 18:14 (9-14)

I grew up in Orlando, Florida, went to school at **Edgewater High School**, the same school that Howie Dorough of the **Backstreet Boys**. I even went out once with his sister, Caroline, and remember little five-year-old Howie! Caroline, who was a really sweet lady who died too young from Lupus, and I remained friends throughout our high school days. (Wait! Maybe some of you don't know who Howie Dorough is. No worries. Your children, or grandchildren, know.)

If I could go back and repeat a time in my life, it would be my high school and college years. **Seriously!** With the exception of my parents divorcing, I had a wonderful time...save for the moments when I would get **"dumped"** by my girlfriends for some guy who didn't treat them as good as I did. I was told more than a few times, **"you are too nice."** And I would respond, **"I can be bad. Just tell me what to do."** (Fortunately, Mo came along during my first year of college and she **kept me** because...she wanted a guy who was nice, and I was smart enough to know when something good came along for me.)

I once got dumped for a **Winn-Dixie** bag boy. Really? My response to that, after much begging, was, **"Wow! I'm nowhere near as bad as him."** Admittedly, I have more than once prayed that he was still a bag-boy at **Winn Dixie**. Oh, how we can be so **self-righteous** at times.

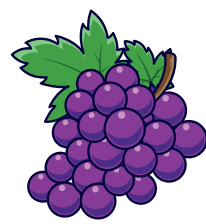
Of course, you do know that self-righteousness is not a new human tendency. More than a few of us still fall into this trap today, especially when it comes to using the **moral bankruptcy** of celebrities or politicians, who are such easy targets, to excuse our own **not-as-bad habits**, like me absentmindedly listening to something on my phone when Mo is talking to me...again the one good thing that came out of being **dumped** all those years ago, which is to say that even **a blind squirrel finds an acorn once in a while**.

You know: I am thinking that the **most challenging part** of our Bible verse is that Jesus makes a **despised tax collector** the good, humble guy. In truth, he is one in a long line of unexpected heroes in the Gospel.

When I pay attention to the Pharisee and the tax collector, I imagine myself standing in line for heaven on the Last Day, seeing some get ahead of me, and immediately thinking, **"Really? Him? To be sure, I was nicer...better than..."** And that, of course, points to what I have come to see as the biggest risk to self-righteousness, something that I have come to understand as my spiritual life, and my adult self, who has been blessed far more than I deserved, has matured: **we, too often, miss the chance to find beauty and goodness in surprising people and surprising places.**

Still in His Peace,
Pastor William





Memories of God's Goodness

“Do you see what we’ve got? An unshakable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God.” Hebrews 12:28 (The Message)

I am regularly in a place that brings back a strong and emotional memory for me, and I get choked up at the thought of it. For me, it’s my sweet mother. She loved to eat at Briggs Restaurant, and so when I go there, I remember all the times we sat there and ate and talked about our lives. It is a warm, loving memory that I can’t (and don’t want to) shake. These memories impact our lives on a number of levels. “How did I get here?” memories about what decisions or actions brought you to the place where you are. “Landmark” memories that mark a certain moment or place in your life. And “who was there” memories about people who ministered to you when you were in need or who were present to commemorate a big event in your life.

Given how powerful these memories are, we ought to refer to them in our worship lives. I have some powerful spiritual memories of my family (like my grandmother playing “How Great Thou Art” on the organ to wake everyone up each morning), but more powerful are those God memories. These are the recollections of God’s goodness in my life that literally bring me to my knees in thanksgiving. These memories are very personal, but point to God’s faithfulness in our lives. How He rescued me from bad decisions and actions. How He guided through difficult decisions. How He spoke to me through a friend. How He healed me or a family member. How He challenged me to take on a new ministry. How He closed a door and opened a new one. How He fulfilled every physical need when I stepped out in faith.

When we are in the midst of worship, do you think back on these God memories? When we sing a song like “Thank You, Lord” by Dennis Jernigan, do you harken back to God’s provision when you sing

***“For all that you’ve done I will thank you...
For all that You’re going to do...
For all that You’ve promised and all that You are
Is all that has carried me through
Jesus I thank You!”***

When we allow ourselves to take a trip down “God Memory Lane”, we allow ourselves to worship out of a truly grateful heart. We spiritually well up with the thoughts of how good God has been to us. It bolsters our faith, and draws us closer to this often distant God. It puts a distinct memory thought on Jesus, our friend who is always there, but we don’t always see.

Paul’s letter to the Colossians reminds us that we are to live in the presence of thankfulness.

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” Colossians 2:6-7

So, I challenge you to review your God memories. Allow yourselves to well up with emotion at the recollections of just what amazing things God has done for you in your life and in the lives of your family. He’s been good, all the time, and all the time, He’s been good. Dab those eyes, tell Him “thank you, Lord”. Don’t worry, no one’s looking!!

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is March 3. Pastor William will be in the church parking lot from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM for the imposition of ashes.

Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner

The United Methodist Men are hosting a pancake and sausage dinner on Tuesday, March 4 at 5:30 PM. Dinner is free but each person is asked to bring 2 items for the blessing box. Suggested items are canned ready-to-serve pasta or soup, tuna, cereal bars, peanut butter or similar items. Come join us for great food and fellowship and to support a great cause!



Game Night

Game night is back! On Friday, March 21 we'll have lots of fun and food in the fellowship hall. A chili dinner will be served at 6:30, followed by Bingo and other games. This is a free event, but donations to cover the cost of dinner and prizes are encouraged. Any extra donations will be used for supplies for the Blessing Box. It will be *right* to be there, you don't want to be *left* out!

United Women of Faith

We'll meet on Saturday, March 1 to start our book study of *The Most Misunderstood Women of the Bible*. If you would like to join us and need a book, please contact the church office. Please read chapter 1.

Craft Circle

We will meet at 10:00 AM on March 1st. We'll each be making a spring wreath to keep. If you are planning on joining us please let Sharron Gibson know so that we can be sure to have enough wreaths for everyone. We'll also need to know what colors you would like for flowers and ribbons. Text or call at 919-614-0467 or email at Sharron.Gibson9194@gmail.com We hope to see you there!

Happy Birthday



3 Margaret Daniels
11 Jane Brown
13 Barbara Epley
16 Samantha Price Gradle
18 Deloris Garska
20 Ed Worsley
20 Michael Marshall
30 Stephen Adebiyi
31 Bobby Massengill
31 Robert Daniels

Mark your calendar

March 1 Craft Circle 10:00 AM
March 1 lunch 12:00 PM
March 1 United Women of Faith 12:30 PM
March 4 Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner 5:30 PM
March 5 Ash Wednesday-imposition 11:30-12:30
March 9 NO adult Sunday School
March 21 Game and dinner night 6:30 PM
March 30 One Board meeting 1:30 PM
April 12 Craft Circle and UWF
April 19 Easter Egg Hunt
May 30 UMM annual BBO

Westover UMC 2025 Budget

	Budgeted Accounts		2025 Budget	Year-to-date
Ministry to Others	Apportionments	501 - World Service & Connectional Ministries	20856	
		503 - Interdenominational Cooperation Fund	30	
		504 - Africa University Fund	65	
		505 - Black College Fund	290	
		506 - Episcopal Fund	1037	
Ministry Through Staff	Pastor's Salary	601A	31500	
	Pastor's Travel	601F	3000	
	Pastor's Housing Allowance & Utilities	601K	6500	
	Office Administrator	602	11232	
	Director of Music	604	28188	
	Staff - Social Security/Medicare	608	2702	
Buildings and Facilities	Building Expenses	706A - Maintenance & Upkeep - Church & Education Building	6000	
		706B - Generator	0	
		706C - Landscaping	1000	
		706D - HVAC	2000	
		706E - Equipment purchases	2000	
		706F - Playground	1000	
	Duke Energy	701A	11000	
	City of Raleigh	701B	2700	
	Dominion Energy	701C	1000	
	Communication	701D	2000	
	Exterminators	702-Economy Exterminators	1825	
	Custodial Supplies	703	325	
	Paper products	704A	500	
	Basic beverage/condiment	704B	500	
	Property insurance	705A-Guide One	13200	
	Workers' Comp insurance	705B-Soveriegn Insurance	600	
	Custodial Services	707	12000	
Ministries	Children's Ministry/VBS	804A/806H	1500	
	Christian Nature	812	250	
Education	Upper Room	806I & 806J	350	
Music & Worship	Music Ministry	810A - Software, sheet music & supplies	150	
		810B - Equipment repair/maintenance	1600	
		810C - Subscriptions	740	
		810D - Guest/substitute musicians	1250	
	Worship	811A - Worship	500	
		811B - Homecoming expenses/speaker	200	
		811C - Honorariums	400	
Administration	Office expenses	900A - General Office Supplies	1000	
		900B - Postage	300	
		900E - Copy Paper	100	
		901 - Computer Update/Repairs/Purchase	100	
	Computer software subscription	903-Power church	455	
	Payroll processing	907-Stancil	1795	
Total			173740	
Designated Funds	Builder's class	407.78		
	Craft Circle	615.61		
	Pastor's Discretionary Fund	526.54		