

# PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



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PILGRIM CHURCH A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATION

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## Down-time Faithfulness

By Pastor Paul Eknes-Tucker

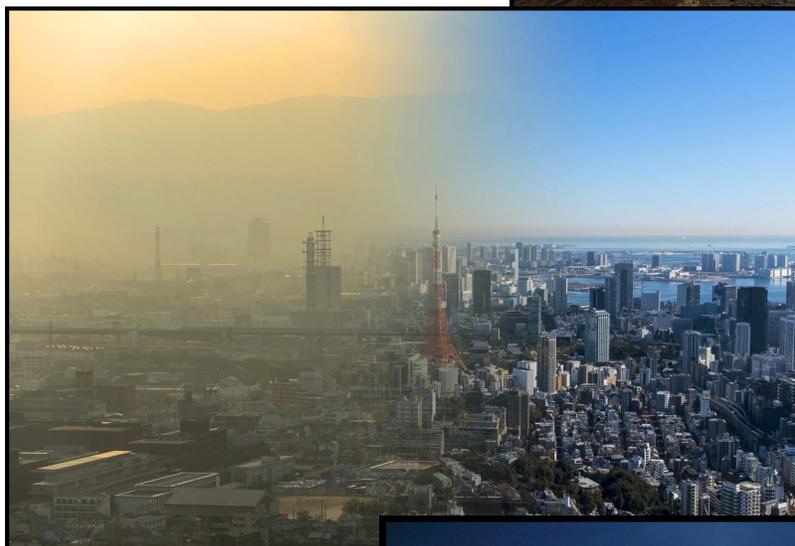
Maybe, like me, you have found yourself with much more time on your hands than you did during Ordinary Time. There have been some great benefits to Non-Ordinary Time caused by the COVID pandemic. Air pollution has greatly decreased around the world. People in India are once again able to see the Himalayan Mountains that have been obscured by smog for years. The haze over many American cities from constant tailpipe exhaust has lifted. We know it is a temporary respite, but what a change has happened in a short time.

While new worries replace old ones, one of the realities I have come to recognize more readily is that not having my hectic routine has caused a new awareness in me during down-time. I wonder about the connection between economic stagnation and the passion of protests. Has down-time given more of us an ability to pay more attention to the stain of rampant racism? Has the threat of a virus with no vaccine raised our awareness of the fragility of life to the

point where we care more about how fragile other lives have been all around us?

There is a gift in down-time, if we have the will to pay attention. When our personal volition has no effect on the global forces swirling around us, it can make us aware that God's grace

has always been available to buoy our spirits, even when we pretended not to need it. Now, we need it. Like a breath of fresh air filling our lungs, it opens us to breathe in awareness that



every breath is a moment of life -- no longer than a few seconds and the only thing important in that moment. I don't often think of such things when life is busy.

*How about you?*



# God Acts in History

By Ron Vander Schaaf

Dr. Carl Michalson was one of my theology professors in seminary. He taught us to think of God, not some remote mysterious being, but rather one who acts in history. His book, *"The Hinge of History"* maintained that Jesus was the **"hinge of history."**

I think that sometimes God has acted in our lives and in our presence in ways that we chalk off to coincidence or luck. Too many times I have found myself in situations that I have come to believe that God put me there and helped me deal with the situation. Let me give you some examples.

One summer Patty and I were on vacation at a timeshare in Virginia. My daughter, Ellen, and her husband, Ray, and their 2 year old son were with us. The four adults were sitting at the table near the staircase where Nathan was playing on the landing about five steps up from the main floor. But I noticed that there were some large toys on that floor. I thought that if Nathan should tumble down the stairs the toys might do some damage to him. So I got up from the table to move the toys away. As I got to the staircase he came tumbling down. I reached out my right hand and caught him in mid air. I've come to believe that God moved me to do that. Another time Patty and I were in New York City. A woman, probably in her 70's was walking in front of us. Suddenly a teenager was in front of her, grabbing at a pendant on a chain around her neck. She was holding onto his hand while they struggled. I thought to myself I can't let this happen. So I ran up behind them with my fist raised. He let go of the pendant but grabbed her purse and ran down the subway steps. In the process of grabbing her purse she fell to the street and hit her head on the curb. It started bleeding. So we accompanied her to a nearby hotel lobby. On the way she explained that the pendant was her mother's and very important to her and she also explained that she had been through the *blitz* so this was nothing. In the lobby of the hotel we encountered a bridal party who were getting ready for the

wedding. The bride's father, a doctor from Britain, took over care of the woman. Soon a Con Ed worker came into the lobby with her purse. He had seen the action from across the street and had chased the youth into the

subway. Now, I live in a Senior residence, Town Village. About a year ago I visited two women within a three week period. Both were quite ill. Their condition was so bad that

I thought that we should call 911. Of course they both resisted. But I persisted, calling family members of both of them who talked with them. As a result both were taken to the hospital and got the needed treatment. ***The EMT's were the same group in both calls. They didn't say anything but I figured they were putting out the word to other women here not to let me visit them.***

This last experience is kind of in the superfluous category. No one was hurt or injured or in trouble. Rudyard Kipling's house in Vermont is available to the public. Patty, I, my five college freshman housemates and their wives rented the house for a week. Near the



DON'T GET LOST IN ALL THE NOISE.

*Listen for*

THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

last day I had one more picture on the roll (*remember film by the roll*). So I wandered out into the flower garden in the backyard. I had the camera cocked and focused on one of the flowers when, for the only time in my life, I heard a voice say, ***"Don't take that picture."*** But no further instructions. So I went up a little hill to another flower garden and pointed the camera at a wild iris. As I did so a hummingbird came to the blossom. **CLICK!** I captured the hummingbird.

***Maybe God wasn't busy that day and had time to go to the garden with me.***

**YOU ARE  
EXACTLY  
WHERE  
YOU  
NEED  
TO  
BE!**



# Just Doing What Is Required

By Ron Collins

**In Micah 6:8 we read, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (NIV)**

Let's look at some words. Required; considered essential, not something above and beyond what you are doing, just a basic part of your life. It's like breathing, you don't think about it, you just do it. With that said, let's look at what God wants you to do every day. Act justly, have an understanding of the difference between right and wrong. But it goes beyond just understanding, *ya gotta put it into action.*

Some people want justice for their group but not others. Some people are looking for vengeance not justice. You hurt me, I'm going to make you hurt too. However, God said that vengeance is His, He will take care of it. He knows that our emotions can keep us from doing what is right for all. The emotion or passion we do need is making sure that justice happens. Seeking justice is always active and sometimes we have to get out of our comfort zone to make sure it happens.

Next we are required to love mercy. To love mercy is not just feeling sorry for something or somebody, it must be put into action also. Every day we have opportunities to show mercy to those who are placed in our path. Mercy, loving kindness, is to be shown to all of God's creation. This includes not giving that special salute to that guy who cut you off while driving down the highway. It includes **NOT** saying, "Well I guess someone slept through math class", as you stand in the checkout line. Loving mercy just got real. Is there any hope for us to make this happen? The answer is **YES**. Jesus was asked, what was the greatest commandment?

***His reply was that we are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and also to love our neighbor as we love our self.***

Following these commandments is how we can love mercy. When we do this, there is no room for anything else.

Now this brings us to walk humbly with God. In Psalm 46:10 we read,

*"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth!" (NKJV).*

**GOD  
IS IN  
CHARGE!**



Sometimes, to be blunt, we are just full of ourselves. Instead of being still so we can hear God's voice, we enjoy the noise we make, showing the world how religious we are.

Over the last 30 plus years I have heard a lot of preaching. There were the *shouters*. There were those who made 'God' a **three syllable word**. Then you had those who felt it was their job to **scare the 'hell' out of you**. Not much was said about being still so you could hear God. Many wanted to bring attention to themselves, their clothes, education or the crowds of people they had preached to. It doesn't sound like a humble servant of God to me, being still and knowing who God is, being thankful for what He has done for you, having the heart of a servant. These are a few of the qualities of a humble person.

**When we love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and love our neighbor with the same love as we have for our self, Micah 6:8, becomes real and possible.**



# Spectacular Sunflowers...

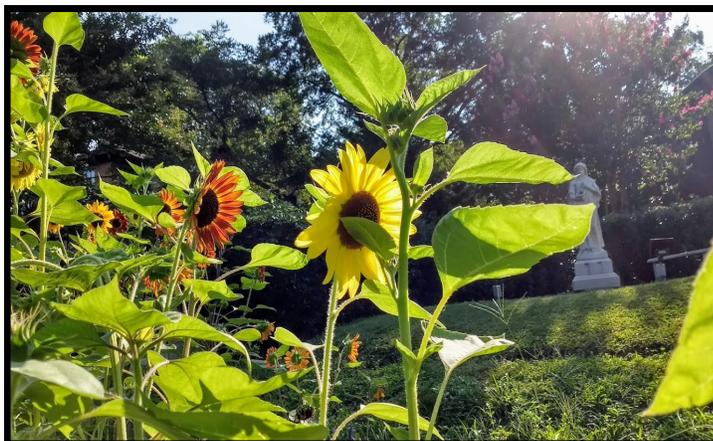
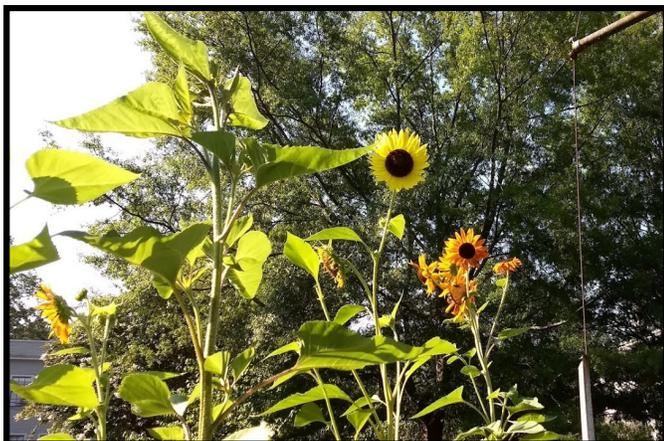
## GOD'S AMAZING BEAUTY!!!

**A few months ago we saw this guy planting something in front of Unity of Birmingham. He has since earned the name Johnny Sunflower Seed. Birds, bees and people are loving them. If you haven't already, why not take a stroll and enjoy.**





**MORE Sunflowers** 



# Taco Crescent Ring

Sponsor recipe courtesy of Pillsbury™

## **INGREDIENTS:**

1 Pound Ground Beef  
 1 Package (1 Ounce) Old El Paso™  
 Taco Seasoning Mix  
 1 Cup Shredded Cheddar Cheese (4oz)  
 2 Cans (8 Ounce Each) Pillsbury™  
 Refrigerated Crescent Dinner Rolls  
 Shredded Lettuce, Chopped Tomatoes,  
 Sliced Ripe Olives, Taco Sauce and/or  
 Salsa (Add these ingredients as  
 desired).

## **DIRECTIONS:**

Heat oven to 375°F. In 10-inch nonstick skillet, cook beef until no longer pink. Add taco seasoning mix and ½ cup water. Simmer 3 to 4 minutes or until slightly thickened. In medium bowl, mix beef mixture and cheese.

Unroll both cans of dough; separate into 8 triangles. On ungreased large cookie sheet,

arrange triangles in ring so short sides of triangles form a 5-inch circle in center. (Dough will overlap; half of each triangle will hang over edges of cookie sheet. Dough ring should look like a sun.)

Spoon beef mixture on the half of each triangle closest to center of ring.

Bring each dough triangle hanging over side of pan up over filling, tucking dough under bottom layer of dough to secure it. Repeat around ring until entire filling is enclosed (some filling might show a little).

Gently separate dough perforations on top until filling peeks through. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until dough is golden brown and thoroughly baked. Cool 5 to 10 minutes before cutting into serving slices.



**SERVINGS:** 8  
**PREP TIME:** 20 Minutes  
**INACTIVE:** 5 min  
**COOK:** 25 min  
**TOTAL TIME:** 50 Minutes

Sponsor recipe courtesy of Pillsbury™  
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 Read more at:  
<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/taco-crescent-ring.print.html?oc=linkback>

# My Hula Hoop

By Michael Bowen

## RAINBOWS

By Jim Ball



We are all aware of what a hula hoop is, and many of us have tried our hand at it. Not only fashionable and fun, spinning a hula hoop about is after all, great cardiovascular exercise. So why am I reading this article about hula hoops and what can I do with this information? To answer these questions, let us consider all the powerful properties of this round plastic toy and how we can live better, healthier and more peaceful lives because of it.

Centuries ago, the traditional "hula hoop" was made of dried willow, rattan, grapevines, or stiff grasses. Even though they have existed for thousands of years, they are often misunderstood as having been invented in the 1950's. The hula hoop did gain international popularity in the late 1950s, when a plastic version was successfully marketed by California's Wham-O toy company. In 1957, Richard Knerr and Arthur Melin started with the idea of bamboo "exercise hoops." With giveaways, national marketing and retailing, a fad was started in July 1958.

Now imagine that we and all human beings have a hula hoop around us, just floating in space. In this hula hoop resides our rights as people, our feelings, our needs, preferences and desires. Essentially, the hula hoop surrounding us is the physical boundary of our personal space, and at any given moment we only need to worry about what is inside our hula hoops. What is inside our hula hoops are only the things we can fit inside them. We don't need to worry about the future or the past because we definitely cannot fit either the future or the past into our hula hoop.

We need a safe place to store ourselves with protection and honor. That safe place is our

own imaginary hula hoop.

In some 12-Step recovery programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, members are encouraged to practice The tradition of not having opinions on outside issues, thereby not allowing themselves to be drawn into controversy (paraphrased). It seems that when we stay out of other peoples' business and not inject them with our own opinions, we can better keep the focus on ourselves and what we need to change. Additionally, we all need healthy boundaries that define who we are and what we stand for. Setting boundaries is not about controlling situations or other people, rather is more about honoring and protecting ourselves. We each have our own hula hoops, and when we keep our awareness in our own hula hoop and not jump into someone else's, then we will get to know our own boundaries and needs, and be better able to communicate them to others.

When life is going on around us and we become frustrated, angry and/or fearful, we then must step back into our own hula hoop and work on us. In that hula hoop, we can be safe in the right here, right now, and be comfortable with ourselves and everything we cannot change going on around us. A friend once said, "When I get back in my hula hoop and work on myself, everyone around me gets better." He is

not actually changing other people, but identifying his own needs and feelings about certain issues, his preferences and desires. In other words, working on ourselves makes us more tolerant, forgiving and keeps us on an even keel.



On a hot summer day  
as I was sitting under a shed  
enjoying a much needed shower,  
a rainbow appeared!  
A beautiful, beautiful rainbow  
placed there by God!  
Seeing the rainbow,  
I smiled, feeling so loved,  
so loved by God, our Creator!  
God made this rainbow  
to show His unfailing love  
for me, for us,  
for all creatures of the earth.  
This symbol of God's love  
is flashed in abundance  
all over the world  
from a burst water hydrant  
in New York City  
to a cascading stream  
in the Indonesian jungle!  
God, showing His love  
for all peoples of the earth!  
God creates rainbows  
in refreshing rains, flowing branches,  
mountain mists, ocean sprays,  
morning dews,  
waterfalls, geysers,  
splash parks, fountains,  
soap bubbles and spider webs!  
Many, though never seen  
by the human eye,  
still proclaim God's love  
for all mankind!  
God flashes them  
over and over, all over the earth  
saying to all,  
"I love you, I love you!"  
Thank you, Lord!  
"Thank You, Lord Jesus,  
for the privilege  
to be a rainbow  
in the storms of life.  
Prepare me, Holy Spirit,  
to be a rainbow  
in someone else's cloud".  
All praise to You, Lord,  
for this beautiful symbol of Your love!  
Thank you, Dear God for rainbows!  
And thank You, Dear God, for Your love!

References: Genesis 9:8-17; Angelou, Maya, American Author, Poet; 1928-2014; Dees, Morris, Southern Law Center, b. Dec. 16, 1936; Lord Byron, British Poet, Jan.22,1788 - April 19, 1824.

# LORD, MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT!

By Ron Collins

A simple definition of instrument is: *a tool or device for a particular purpose.* There are all kinds of instruments: musical, medical, mechanical, legal, and then there is **YOU**. Yep, you are an instrument. **What kind?** Well, that's up to you. To paraphrase lyrics from a song: *"...you are a promise, you are a possibility, you are a great big bundle of potentiality."* There is a reason that you are here at this point in time. You are that instrument that God has made for a particular purpose. I pray that all of us will daily be open to standing up, stepping out, and moving forward as we continue on this journey to become the instrument that we were created to be.

Saint Francis of Assisi, I think, said it best. *"Lord, make me an instrument of*

*your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen"*



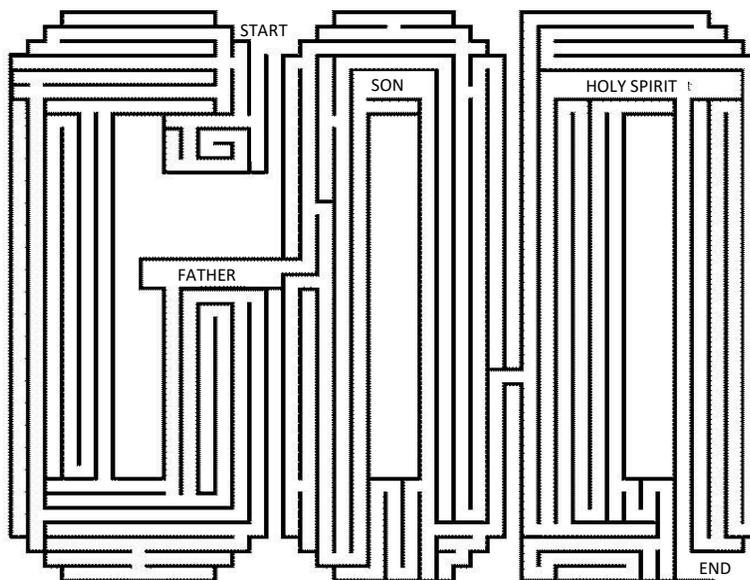
**May God's richest blessings be yours as you continue your daily walk of FAITH!**

## Bible Who-Dunnits from the New Testament

See how many of these *who-dunnits* you can solve on your own. Then you can check the Bible references for any that are left.

The idea is to match the *who* with the *dunnit* by putting the letter of the correct answer in the space.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>___ 1. Disowned Jesus even after he swore never to do so. (Matthew 26:69-75)</p> <p>___ 2. Persecuted the Christians until he was struck down and blinded. (Acts 9:1-4)</p> <p>___ 3. Betrayed Jesus for money. (Luke 22:4-5)</p> <p>___ 4. Refused to believe Jesus had risen from the dead until he had proof. (John 20:24-26)</p> <p>___ 5. Tried to cheat by pretending to give a larger gift to the church than he really did. (Acts 5:1-4)</p> <p>___ 6. Gave Jesus up to be crucified even though he knew Jesus was innocent. (Matthew 27:24-26)</p> <p>___ 7. Had John the Baptist beheaded to please Salome. (Matthew 14:6-10)</p> <p>___ 8. Carried Jesus' cross to Golgotha. (Matthew 27:32)</p> | <p>A. Judas</p> <p>B. Peter</p> <p>C. Saul/Paul</p> <p>D. Thomas</p> <p>E. Herod</p> <p>F. Ananias</p> <p>G. Simon of Cyrene</p> <p>H. Pilate</p> |
|--|---|



## MONTHLY QUOTE:

**AUTUMN is  
a second SPRING  
when every leaf is  
a FLOWER.**

By Albert Camus

## PILGRIM BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST



- Brian Bland ~ August 11th  
 Eric Nelson ~ August 12th  
 Lea Skelton ~ August 14th  
 Nancy Lavender ~ August 19th  
 Keith Clevenger ~ August 25th



## PILGRIM ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST

Steve & Nancy Lavender  
 August 22nd

**IF WE HAVE MISSED YOUR BIRTHDAY, WE APOLOGIZE!  
 PLEASE LET US KNOW & WE WILL GLADLY ADD IT!**