

**Pr. Kathy's Book Club**  
 first Wednesdays of the month  
 childcare always available  
 Hazel Dell campus 10:00-11:30am

September 6  
*All the Light We Cannot See*  
 by Anthony Doerr

October 4  
*Behold the Dreamers: A Novel*  
 by Imbolo Mbue

**College Address Sought**  
 Messiah is looking for mailing  
 address and emails for all higher  
 education students. Please  
 email address to Jessica Potts at  
 jessicap@messiahvancouver.org.

twitter.com/MessiahVanWA/  
 twitter.com/MessiahVanWaYth

facebook.com/messiahvancouver  
 facebook.com/pages/Messiah-Lutheran-Youth

# FL!P

FAITH LIFE !N PROGRESS

**Three Years Old – First Grade**

4:00–4:40 PM Godly Play ..... Rm 105  
 4:45–5:15 PM Praise Patrol ..... Rms 205-207  
 5:00–6:00 PM Dinner ..... LL Dining

**Second – Fifth Grade**

4:00–4:30 PM NewSong ..... Sanctuary  
 4:35–5:15 PM CHAOS! ..... Gym  
 5:00–6:00 PM Dinner ..... LL Dining  
 6:00–7:00 PM Godly Play® ..... Rm 105

**Sixth – Eighth Grade**

3:00–4:00 PM Homework Club ... F Hall  
 4:45–5:15 PM Pax Christi ..... Sanctuary  
 5:00–6:00 PM Dinner ..... LL Dining  
 6:00–7:00 PM Confirmation ..... F Hall

Fall 2017  
**10:00 AM to 8:30 PM Wednesdays**  
**Nursery Care Available**  
**9:45–11:45 AM and 3:45–8:45 PM**

**High School (9th – 12th Grade)**

4:00–5:00 PM Homework Club ... F Hall  
 4:45–5:15 PM Pax Christi ..... Sanct  
 5:00–6:00 PM Dinner ..... LL Dining  
 6:00–7:00 PM Wed. Night Live! ..... Yth Rm  
 7:00–8:30 PM Messiah Choir ..... Sanct

**Adult**

10:00 AM Pr Kathy's Book Club ..... Rm 205  
*(1st Wednesday of the month)*

10:00–11:30 AM Adult Bible Study ... F Hall  
*led by Pr. Peter & Intern Pr. Ryan*

4:00–5:15 PM Moms' Time Out ..... Conf. Rm

5:00–6:00 PM Dinner ..... LL Dining

6:00–7:00 PM Adult Bible Study ... Music Rm  
*led by Pr. Peter & Intern Pr. Mary*

7:00–8:30 PM Messiah Choir ..... Sanct

Messiah Lutheran Church  
 and Preschool  
 905 NW 94th Street  
 Vancouver, WA 98665-6842

North County Campus  
 Tri-Mountain Golf Course  
 1701 NW 299th Street  
 Ridgefield, WA 98642

Church: 574-7081  
 Fax: 571-7779  
 Preschool: 574-2686

Messiah office hours  
 8:00 AM–3:00 PM Mon–Thursday  
 8:00 AM–Noon on Friday

messiahvancouver.org  
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905 NW 94th Street, Vancouver 98665

**MESSIAH** CHURCH & PRESCHOOL LUTHERAN

# the Sounds of Messiah

## FALL KICK-OFF

- Pr. Kathy's Book Club  
September 6
- Choir Rehearsal begins  
September 6
- Preschool New Parent  
Orientation  
September 7
- Kick-off Sunday  
September 10
- Messiah Preschool begins  
September 11
- High School Breakfast begins  
September 12
- Wednesday FLIP begins  
September 13
- Confirmation begins  
September 13
- Martha Circle begins  
September 14
- Orchestra Rehearsal begins  
September 17
- Handbell Rehearsal begins  
September 19
- Preschool Chapel begins  
September 27



Mary Beenken  
 Seminary Pastoral Intern

## deep roots, new life

My road to Messiah started seven years ago. Of course, that is not entirely accurate—I was raised Lutheran by faithful parents who were devoted to the church and I was tended at every turn by people of faith, all of whom shaped my path. However, if I had to point to an experience that set in motion all the events that would one day bring me to this community, I have to go back to 2010. That year I spent the summer between my sophomore and junior years of college teaching English in Rwanda.

The weeks that I spent there rank between both the most incredible and most difficult of my life. It is impossible to visit Rwanda without becoming intimately familiar with the realities and repercussions of genocide. It left its mark in some way on every aspect of Rwandan life and on every face I encountered, living as well as dead. But I also found incredible beauty there: in the most breathtaking landscape I had ever seen and in the hope embodied by the children and adults who were my students. I was especially intrigued by how religious practice had been shaped by Rwanda's collective experience. Thousands of people had sought refuge in churches, only to be slaughtered within their walls. Yet, nearly everyone I met, leaned profoundly on faith and found deep solace in their religious communities.

It confounded me: How could these people still believe in God after what they had seen? How could they still go to churches when their loved ones had died there and when clergy had often aided and participated in genocide? Rwanda didn't shake my belief in God—but it did make me angry with other Christians, with Christianity itself... even with God. I couldn't understand how God could let genocide happen. The Bible seemed too full of violence. When I returned to Minnesota for my junior year, I had little patience for the Christians back at my little Lutheran college, for vapid theology, or for empty praise songs. (continued)

“In the pouring of wine and the breaking of bread, I couldn't escape from the promise that God binds up the deep wounds of this world...”

## this issue

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- P8** Joy Lord give me strength
- P9** David the masters garden

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 905 NW 94th Street, Vancouver 98665

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“Like any tender seedling just emerging from the soil, it took a while for me to notice a new call growing in my heart.”

Nevertheless, God didn't let me dwell in my disgust for long. As I searched for confirmation that differences didn't have to be divisions, I was led—perhaps inevitably—back to the table and the church that had cradled me from birth. In the pouring of wine and the breaking of bread, I couldn't escape from the promise that God binds up the deep wounds of this world and gives us each other to hold in our deep, shared humanness. Here I thought my spiritual journey had been truncated by the suffering I learned of in Rwanda—but there was God, coaxing up a green shoot from those deep roots of my languishing faith.

Like any tender seedling just emerging from the soil, it took a while for me to notice a new call growing in my heart. In fact, I would stumble all the way into my first semester at seminary before it occurred to me that I might one day be a pastor. Even then, I was still suspicious of the church. I never stopped being haunted by those questions I first encountered in Rwanda—questions about faith and meaning, about the absence or presence of the divine, about violence and reconciliation in humanity. However, God never let me indulge those questions for long without showing me that there is always new life to be found in the Body of Christ. To prove it, God sent my husband Nathan and I all the way to Vancouver, Washington, to spend a year immersed in the loving arms of Messiah Lutheran Church.

Messiah, you have shown me what life in the church can be. You have challenged and inspired me and taught me so, so much. But more than anything else, you wrapped Nathan and me in your love. In Rwanda, I first began to hunger for deeper richness in what I experienced of the church. Now, seven years later, I cannot deny that I have indeed been fed—over and over and over—by this beautiful community here.

You have sprouted some new roots in me as well. Once I never thought I could be a pastor—now I feel I was made for this work. And through your careful tending and nurturing, I found the confidence to apply for a preaching fellowship that will bring me, once again, to Rwanda (and five or six other countries) to learn more about how people experience God after living through genocide. It's a strange thing, holding at once the excitement of coming travel with the sorrow of leaving this extraordinary place. But we go knowing that you have planted us deep, watered our roots, and given us new life. With all our love, thank you.



Mary's fellowship requires that she blog frequently throughout the coming year. You can follow her journey at: [othermaryblog.wordpress.com](http://othermaryblog.wordpress.com)



## journey of faith

At age 30, I accepted a promotion to run a new manufacturing plant. It was a bet-the-company move, tripling the size of the business with a new product line if it worked (and bankrupting the company if it did not). It was a big career move for me, and I had no idea how to run a manufacturing plant. (No, really.)

Two years later, with the plant at full speed and running per plan, I walked into our house and said to my wife, Heidi, “I have to quit my job. It's killing me.” Her immediate response: “Yes you do. It's killing both of us.”

I had much invested in my title, my role, my status. I liked telling people what I had accomplished. I had achieved success by the “important” markers: title, responsibility, income. But it was killing me and the ones “For what purpose did God make us?” I loved. I was good enough at the job to get the plant on-line and producing under some difficult circumstances (with help from many others). However, it required me to be someone I was not. I quit with Heidi's agreement and no forward plan.

Leaving was hard; it felt like failure for a long time. I experienced loss and grief. I also immediately felt relieved and energized. Over time as I worked to reconnect with who God had created at my core, I alternated between a narrative of failure and a narrative of faith. The job change happened quickly; the personal transition took time, and honestly still continues. It has all been worth it. The new life that grows from the deepest part of me convinces me it has been worth it.

I think the journey of faith, individually and corporately, is like this: stripping away the non-essential so we can find our way back to God. I went to a conference at Luther Seminary a couple weeks ago, titled *Reinventing Church*. One presenter put it this way: every 500 years or so the Church needs to hold a massive rummage sale, digging through the closets and



chucking the things that no longer make sense, stripping away things we no longer need, recognize, or even remember acquiring. We have to ask, “For what purpose did God make us?” What is helping us accomplish that? What is no longer useful? What is actually getting in the way?

It can be hard work. Sometimes we have to let go of things we have grown to like, or even things we've used to define ourselves beyond God. However, the promise is new life, and a deeper life in God. That is the journey we all travel, and that we travel together at Messiah.



Greg Rhodes  
NCC Project Manager

for more information about all events, adult ministries, and small group opportunities, go to [messiahvancouver.org](http://messiahvancouver.org)

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Marsh White, Custodian



Hannah Norem  
Summer Intern

## experiences and the body of Christ

“So, what exactly are you going to do on this internship?” seemed to be the most important question on my friends’ and family’s minds before I drove halfway across the country to Vancouver. To be honest, I cannot tell them all of the things I did on this internship because sometimes words fail to adequately describe what I did this summer, but I can give words to some of the things I experienced. I experienced the feeling of welcome by so many members of the congregation. I experienced the support of not only the congregation but also the entire body of Christ, affirming that some kind of ministry was part of my vocation. I experienced the laughter of children and adults at Vacation

Bible School when trying to pull apart two (unused) toilet plungers!

Above all, I witnessed the incredible power the Holy Spirit has on people’s lives and the larger community. From the first days of my internship, I saw firsthand the deep roots that Messiah has in the greater Vancouver community through the smiles of middle school students at Jason Lee participating in Club Greatness to the excitement of soon-to-be Columbia River graduates as they ate a Messiah muffin for the last time. These same roots were present in the rich history Messiah has as an institution and the legacy it already has in the region. So many of y’all have told me stories about how Messiah has blessed you and changed your life for the better, and I am so grateful for those stories. But, as literary maven J.R.R. Tolkien writes in the iconic novel *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

*All that is gold does not glitter, not all those who wander are lost;  
The old that is strong does not wither, deep roots are not reached by the frost.*

As I think about my own future life direction and the path that this summer has in part set me on, I try to locate the deep roots in my life. Even though I am only 21, I feel I have at least a few deep roots that are pretty similar to Messiah’s—I love my Texan roots and the community I was raised in, and I appreciate my background and family history for what it is (even if that background “doomed” me to go into some type of ministry ☺). With all that being said, it is hard to ignore the new life just around the corner for me. I will go back to Sioux Falls and finish out my senior (!!!) year at Augustana, and I will graduate and attend graduate school somewhere completely different than the snowy upper midwest. I will again say goodbye to my

friends and family, but I know that the deep roots I have planted in Sioux Falls will persist through the frosts of young adulthood.

Similarly, I think this new life is just around the corner for Messiah. There is no dearth of opportunities for a church like Messiah to put itself at the center of and see what amounts from them. God is at work in this place, and I cannot wait to see the exciting future that is no doubt in store for Messiah!

I am so immensely grateful for this summer and what it taught me about the wideness of God’s love, how strangers can turn into friends, and what can happen when you lick a slug. Thank y’all for this incredible experience, and I am so excited for the new life that is in Messiah’s (and my) future!



“I am so immensely grateful for this summer and what it taught me about the wideness of God’s love...”



## God’s plan. not mine

It was the evening of December 11, 2016 and I was working hard (or hardly working) in the Gustavus library when I heard a soft ping from my MacBook signaling I had just received an email. I looked up to see that the email was from my campus pastor, Brian. The subject read, “Summer Ministry Opportunity (Washington)” and I was instantly intrigued. The link in the email brought me to the website of Messiah Lutheran Church in Vancouver, WA. I was routed to a page on the website where there was a post about



Zach Croonquist  
Summer Intern

the church’s summer internship program, which was described as a 10-12 week program designed for college students who are discerning a call to ministry. I couldn’t help but feel that this was a perfect opportunity for me to test drive this whole “being a pastor” thing.

You see, I’ve been dead set on going to medical school for at least the last ten years of my life—I had even taken the first year and a half of pre-med classes in college. However, one day, earlier in the semester, after my cell and molecular biology class, I remember having this vehement sense of discontent with the path I was on. This realization was incredibly unedifying, as I had had this dream of being a doctor for so many years. I didn’t care so much that my plan was changing, but what did bother me was not knowing what my plan would become. I did not enjoy living in “the gray” without any sense of direction. However, I knew that God was up to something by placing the Messiah summer internship opportunity in my life. I am so glad I let God take the reins and lead me where God wanted me.

“I didn’t care so much that my plan was changing, but what did bother me was not knowing what my plan would become.”

When I arrived in Vancouver on June 2, I pulled up to Dorothy and Lloyd Summers’ house while they were in the midst of a garage sale. I hesitantly walked up to the woman who looked like she was in charge and once I saw that her name-tag read “Dorothy” I sheepishly introduced myself. Without any hesitation, I was embraced with a warm hug as Dorothy exclaimed, “My summer son has arrived!” From that moment, I knew I was in the right place. It truly felt like a Prodigal Son moment. I had turned from my self-sufficiency and abandoned my own plan and “come home” to seek God’s will for my life.



Whether it was helping with VBS, going on pastoral care visits, visiting with the women of Monday morning, preaching, engaging in spiritual direction, meeting with my support committee, or going on the Wallowa backpacking trip, I feel like I have fully engaged in my discernment process over these past ten weeks.

It has been an honor and a blessing to spend the summer with you, Messiah. I feel as though I have grown deep roots in this community, it is as if I have a second home and family here in Vancouver. Moreover, because of your encouragement, love, and steadfast support, I am empowered to lead my life down a new path—God’s path. I am so grateful for how you have all helped to work and weave a remarkably rich tapestry that has become my life. Thank you, thank you, thank you. God bless!





Joyce Handran  
Preschool Administrator

## a deep-rooted friendship resurrected

During this last year, I reunited with a very dear friend from my childhood. During the years just prior to middle school, we were inseparable. We developed a deep friendship rooted in honesty, respect, faith and trust. As we entered middle school, we remained friends but saw less of each other due to differing class schedules. After high school, life took us in different directions and eventually we lost track of each other. We both ended up moving away from our hometown and failed to stay in touch. I thought about my friend many times over these past 20 years, wondering where life had taken her and what had become of her. I searched for her, but had no success.

Last summer, I discovered that my friend was not only moving back into the state but possibly to Vancouver. She was exploring a job opportunity in town and we made plans to meet. When we finally reunited, we were able to talk and share with one another as easily as we had in our youth.

A couple of weeks ago, this same friend and I took a walk along some forest trails. At one point, we walked under a log that had fallen over the path. It was a good-sized log, so at one time it must have been a healthy tree with a solid root system. For whatever reason, the tree fell and became a nurse log, “a large decomposing tree trunk that has fallen; the decaying wood provides moisture and nutrients for a variety of insects and plants.” The new plants that sprout out of such logs thrive on the decaying tree and grow to form deep root systems of their own.

Seeing the fallen log got me thinking about the friend walking beside me. We were fortunate that the values and faith we shared in our youth were sustained and nursed over the years, somewhat like this nurse log, only to sprout new life 20 years later.

*“For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease.” Job 14:7-9 ESV*



By Wing-Chi Poon - self-made; in Schooner Trail, Pacific Rim National Park, British Columbia, Canada., CC BY-SA 2.5

## roots that reach

Church is changing. I’m guessing that this does not come as news to most, as many recent conversations have been devoted to what the future of the Church looks like amidst a shifting culture. With this change comes an important question: How will the Church respond? A lesson from nature shows that a healthy tree, much like a church, is one with deep roots, firmly planted and drawing nutrients far and wide. But what does that look like for the Body of Christ?

The Church is not an island; we are meant to go out, love, spread, and cultivate. Deep roots reach out, they take chances and risks in order to spread. They work to encompass, embrace and include more; working to expand our understanding of what “church” is, and what it can be. I think this is where we will find our future.

What if our calling is investing in ministries and relationships outside of ourselves and what we have come to know as “the Church”? (continued on next page)



Alison Treichel  
Administrative Assistant

## Preschool Calendar Dates

September 7

New Parent Orientation 7-7:30pm  
in church fellowship hall

September 11

3 & 4-day preschool classes begin

September 12

Tuesday–Wednesday Tots begin

September 14

2-day morning 3yr old classes begin  
Thursday–Friday Tots begin

October 10 & 12

Class picture days

October 20

No School (Vancouver Public  
Schools’ parent conferences)

November 10

No School, Veterans Day observed

November 22-24

No School, Thanksgiving break

## Classroom Visits

All classes (including the Tots) will be offering families an opportunity to visit the classroom prior to the first day of school. This hour-long classroom visit will take place during the week of September 4 in the child’s classroom with a parent/guardian present the entire visit. You will be notified of the specific date and time of your child(ren)’s classroom visit via email from your child’s teacher.

What if we were to expand our definition of ‘church’, try new things, and dig deeper into places that we never expected or never thought the Church belonged? What if we stretched ourselves? What would this all look like? What would we find by opening ourselves up to change? My best guess is that we would find new life for the Church, for our communities and families, for church goers and non-church goers, believers and non-believers, and for ourselves. Our future is not defined by the past, how things have been done, or how we have come to define ‘church’, but rather our willingness to take up the new challenges that we face.

There are many questions here, and I’ll be the first to admit that I don’t have the answers. What I do have though, are ideas. I’m sure that some of you do too, and that is where this all begins: with thoughts, ideas and conversations. We are going through this change together, and it is in the midst of this change that we have been afforded the perfect opportunity to evaluate and re-imagine what our role and calling in God’s plan is. Let us be roots that dare to reach out.

## ground and supported

*“They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.” Jeremiah 17:8*

I love hiking. I like being outside and close to nature, with only the sound of chirping birds and bubbling streams. I like exploring new places and the excitement of not being entirely sure where the path will take me. I have always felt close to God when in nature. Some have described this as one of the “thin places,” a Celtic Christian term for those rare locales where the distance between heaven and earth collapses.

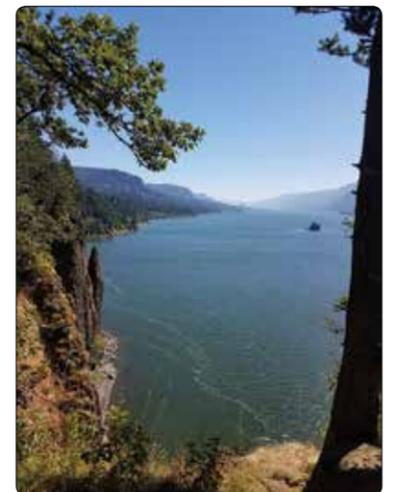
One thing that has always amazed me, especially on the many trails in this area, are the stunning trees that line the sides. Some trees are straight, but most are leaning to and fro, some even look like they are supporting one another. They have stood through years and years of seasons and encountered a variety of weather and storms. They have deep roots. They are grounded. The part we see may look a little twisted and bent and not sure of its direction, but at its

core, the roots hold firm. The branches continue to sprout new life and leaves.

Messiah has deep roots. I have always felt this congregation supports one another no matter what challenges are presented. Sometimes we aren’t quite sure where the path will take us, but that can be part of the excitement too. It’s interesting that the church is in the “Green Season” (do you notice the banners or the color of the ribbon on the acolyte crosses)... what a perfect reminder that we are continually growing.



Jessica Potts  
Director of Youth  
and Young Adult Ministries





## Lord, give me strength

"Lord give me strength!" This is what my mother would say in an exasperated tone when I was trying her patience, which I did frequently. Now, however, this has been my saying, my prayer, and my request, as I get ready to say farewell to all of you here at Messiah. As we look for houses and for a new community to call home up north, I cannot help comparing everything to the people here. You have all been with us through more than you know, but the most beautiful part of our lives have been while employed here.

Joy Studer  
Director of Children's  
and Family Ministries

Every person in this church, children especially, have made a difference in our lives and Everett has grown up with a church family that loves and adores him.

From newborn baby to now two and a half, Everett has been in the office with me, carried and loved on by staff and moms group, adored and praised by all of Messiah and made friends with fellow "littles" of



the church. When we found out that we were expecting Everett, one of the first people we told was former Pastoral intern Joe. When I was in the hospital having Everett, former Pastoral intern Kristen came to my side (though I told the nurses no one was to come in, tricky Kristen).

When we were ready for Everett to be baptized, it was former Pastoral interns Ben and Kristen that together did the most beautiful job. When we moved offices around, former Pastoral intern Alison was here to share the space with us, and was always kind about Everett's napping schedule and working with the lights out. When we would come to church this past year, Everett always looked for Pastor intern Mary and I truly believe she helped grow his love of dinosaurs. Not to mention his bond with summer interns, both Austin and Zach.

Oh Messiah family, how you open your hearts and doors to interns and new staff members each time is just beautiful. You let the church change and grow, and grow alongside it. Sometimes it hurts to say goodbye, but the way you can continue

to say hello and welcome the next person is a gift. THIS is what makes Messiah such a healthy congregation, your ability to adapt with a smile. You have loved our little family and made Everett feel a sense of security and welcome that you did not even know you exude. Therefore, for that and so much more, Gareth and I would like to say thank you. For loving us, for welcoming us, for opening your hearts to me being the Director of Children and Family Ministries and helping us grow our faith through being part of yours.

*Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8 (NRSV)*



## the master's garden

In a fertile, green garden, life began for Levi. The Master turned up the soil, enriched it with minerals and then into that freshness laid the seed, "You will be beautiful and grace my landscape with glory! Stay close, join my garden and flourish!" Levi pushed through the soil, with one tender branch and then another, thanking the Master for giving warmth, water and food. Levi grew strong, enjoying all the wonderful flowers growing around him.

Especially fond of the older plants, he lay at their feet, absorbing their conversations and learning everything possible about the purpose for which he had been planted. He sat beneath the shadow of their teaching, day after day. In the coolness of their wisdom he basked, even when his friends razzed him, "You are silly and stupid! Stop wasting your time on those old codgers! Come outside into the sun of play and frivolity! Make your own happiness!" Levi watched from his place of learning, thinking that it might be fun to forget the wisdom of the elders just this once and go romp in the sun without a care. But the old and wise plants reminded him "Remember the master's words," and Levi chose to remain.

As the days continued, Levi noticed that his stems were strong and true. He was growing in wisdom at the feet of these wise old plants... but certainly he was much wiser than they! It was getting boring listening to them. They certainly didn't know what he knew; they had no style in the way that they worshipped the Master; their ways were stuck in the past. They didn't even know how to absorb today's new minerals which enhanced his superior mind and thought processes. So Levi chose a journey of moving away from the old ones. Over several months he slowly wandered, looking to those young friends dancing and cavorting around in the sun, listening more and more to their adventures of travel, play and carefree living. He was certain

"What a waste of time it had been to sit in the shade, listening to the warning words of the elders. How fun it was to do what he wanted."

these friends were right. What a waste of time it had been to sit in the shade, listening to the warning words of the elders. How fun it was to do what he wanted.

Years passed and Levi and his friends became older and weaker. They no longer could do the things they wanted because their limbs were stiff and brittle. Sustenance from the soil that they had tilled no longer gave nourishment. They were hungry, thirsty, shriveled and no longer beautiful as they once were. They turned away from one another in isolation. Selfishness filled the meager soils of frustration all around.

"Master, forgive me for forsaking your garden for my own desires. I want to flourish and be beautiful for you"

Tired, Levi remembered the cool and refreshing shade at the feet of the wise ones, "Remember the Master's words." What were those words? He closed his eyes and thought way back. Oh, yes! I remember! "You will be beautiful and grace my landscape with glory! Stay close, join my garden and flourish!" Levi knew at that moment that he was not flourishing, but rather languishing. He silently prayed, "Master, forgive me for forsaking your garden for my own desires. I want to flourish and be beautiful for you." The Master Gardner said to him, "You are beautiful. I named you Levi, which means 'to join or be joined.' Do you not know that alone you will die, but together with my garden you will live? And in this life you will share my glory with all those in need. You will be my priest."

Levi returned quickly to the garden, sitting with the elders, gaining strength and vigorous limbs from their shaded soils of nourishment. He thought, "Truly the Gardner was right. I need to be with those in the Master's garden to flourish. But my friends also need to flourish and need this life giving nourishment." So from that day he wandered from the wise ones to the isolated, sharing the nourishing words of the Master Gardner, then returning to the wise ones to refresh his own soul. Back and forth he went, day after day and though it seemed often useless, things slowly began to change. His friends began to come out of their isolation, their limbs began to perk up. The soils of frustration were transformed into soils of hope and nourishment. Over many years, Levi continued and the garden expanded and grew into a landscape of great beauty! And the Master Gardner smiled, "Levi, truly you are who I made you to be, one who joins others together, my priest! What glory!"

*"Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:22-25*

"He was growing in wisdom at the feet of these wise old plants..."

"Years passed and Levi and his friends became older and weaker."

"The soils of frustration were transformed into soils of hope and nourishment."