



# Hilltop Highlights

March 2021



Lynn Miller Jackson  
Pastor  
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## Claiming the Promises of God

Promises. Promises. Promises.

Shortly after I met my husband, MJ, he did something that was less than endearing. I do not recall the action but the conversation remains clear. When I addressed his faux pas, he responded, "I promise not to do it again until the next time." What? Whoa! I stopped in my tracks and questioned, "What do you mean... 'until the next time'?" Making light of an awkward situation, he answered that he had used that line many times without any response. It was clear that we were embarking on a different experience together and there was intriguing and perhaps challenging work ahead. Our exchange was establishing rules of engagement in this territory called relationship. Words matter. Promises matter.

We are in the Season of Lent, a time to reflect, realign and re-energize our relationship with God. Through the prophet Joel, God addressed people struggling in different ways – distracted by life, doubtful of what would come, depressed or distressed by current conditions, disobedient or distrustful of authority, disrespectful to God, themselves and others, etc. Perhaps there were some folks who would promise God "not to do it again until the next time." Our loving God, who was planning a 'parental correction', urged faltering folks to rend their hearts and realign their lives with the ways of God. In the midst of God's threats of discipline in Joel 2:1-17, we find promise in God's nature.

*"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity." (Joel 2:12-13)*

What does this have to do with us? We are among the faltering folks. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God but are now justified by God's grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23-24). This is the ultimate promise. God's word and God's promises apply to us today. God's words matter. God's promises matter.

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# PASTOR'S MUSINGS

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This Lenten Season is a great time to revisit the promises God has made to us. Our Lenten sermon series focuses on some of those promises. As we study God's word and its application in our lives, it is up to us to open our hearts to claim God's promises. God desires a unique relationship with each of us that is unlike any other relationships we share. When we truly rend our hearts and return to God, we embark on an experience that is both intriguing and challenging, comforting, confronting, and convicting, that requires work that will nurture and stretch the breadth and depth of our being. When we truly rend our hearts, we say "Yes" to our commitment to God. Our words matter to God. Our promises matter to God. Our hearts matter to God.

- As we lean into Lent, how are we actively opening ourselves to claim the promises of God?
- How are we reading the word of God more intentionally and more closely?
- As we rend our hearts, what is God revealing as our spirits engage with the Holy Spirit?

## District Meetings

All clergy and laity of the Utah/Western Colorado District are invited to a monthly gathering with Superintendent Elizabeth McVicker on the 4th Tuesdays at 2:30 pm.

Let me be crystal clear. Lent is not a time for a cursory glance at faith. To rend your heart to God is worthy of strenuous effort. It is only by doing the work of faith—taking the initiative to dig deeper for understanding; confessing our sin and shortcomings; forgiving and praying for forgiveness; seeing what we have not wanted to see; hearing what we have not wanted to hear; and admitting and acting like we are the change agents and energizers of the world—that we can truly identify with Christ. When we do the work, we can better embrace the richness of the life and ministry of Christ who did the work before us, the fullness of the promise of Resurrection, and live as disciples of Jesus Christ—disciples who make disciples.

As we open our hearts doing the work, we open ourselves to what God has in store for us. Let's rend our hearts and claim the promises of God. For all that is to come, to God be the glory

The Link for the meetings are: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94059988601?pwd=dElaVTRlEdqMHhly05GT3BnQjVtdz09>

Meeting ID: 940 5998 8601

Passcode: 732358

# STAFF PARISH RELATIONS

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## By Bob Scarborough, Chair

Our Staff Parish Relations team of Reverend Lynn, Jo Brace, Matt Pettibone, Susan Kovach, Emma Robison, Caitlin Collins, Stu Long, Tiffany Moser, Andrew Smith, and myself; as well as by position, those who serve with us- Susan Dunlap, Lay Leader of Hilltop and JoAnne Jirsamyers, Lay Member to Annual Conference will continue to pray and discern how to care and support our pastor, staff, and the Hilltop community.

All members of the team are listed in the church directory, both by phone number and email. If you would like a complete member listing, please send a request to Bob Scarborough, Team Leader at [robs1909@aol.com](mailto:robs1909@aol.com) By the Book of Discipline, we are nominated to serve by our L,S, & D (Leadership, Selection, & Development) committee. We are then voted on at the yearly church meeting, in early December of prior year.

The Book of Discipline says this committee must meet at least quarterly. It has been Hilltop's practice to meet the 1st Wednesday of each month and we have been doing that via Zoom for almost a year. It is important for our community to understand the functions and responsibilities of the committee. Below is a quarterly breakdown of what we typically are working on. Hilltop, just like all churches in our denomination pay attention to those things that bring new vitality and growing of the faithful to the community.

## January-March

1. Hold orientation for the committee work.
2. Hold a staff recognition event to celebrate our leadership.
3. Establish relationships with congregation, leaders, staff, and clergy.
4. Set pattern to identify ministry candidates.
5. Establish and review plans for dealing with rumors and conflict.

## April - June

1. Monitor strategies to meet expectations, adjust as appropriate.
2. Conduct legal review.
3. Conduct policy review.
4. Review any plans and policies for staff changes, as needed.
5. Set expectations as the basis for evaluation in the 4th quarter.

## July - September

1. Review written job descriptions and staffing needs.
2. Review salary and benefit packages
3. Establish and review continuing education plans.
4. Monitor strategies to meet expectations and adjust as necessary.
5. Engage in leadership development.

## October -December

1. Conduct annual evaluation of our senior pastor.
2. Make reports to charge conference (annual church meeting with D.S).
3. Complete unfinished business.

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# MUSIC & ARTS MINISTRY

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Roberta Shimensky  
Music Director  
801.571-5777

## Promises of Change

I am always in search of repertoire, for the Chancel Choir, the Sanctuary Singers, the Youth, duets, soloists, instrumentalists, etc. I also spend a good deal of time searching out repertoire for the Gospel Choir. This gives me a great opportunity to listen to many composers and discover new ones.

Through my years of studying and listening to gospel music, I have grown to love the music of one of my favorite composers, Richard Smallwood. Richard Smallwood is an American multi-Grammy-nominated writer, singer, and pianist gospel artist (b.1948). Smallwood graduated from Howard University with a major in piano, and later went on to earn his Master of Divinity. His style is unique in that he is one of the few gospel artists who have successfully blended classical with gospel.

Of all his many and varied accomplishments, perhaps most people may know him for having composed the song "I Love the Lord," sung by Whitney Houston in the movie *The Preacher's Wife*. Another very popular song of his that the Gospel Choir has sung is "Total Praise."

Smallwood's life has been widely successful by anyone's standards and has truly been a life of worship and praise; few would know that his life has been one of great pain, and personal suffering and struggles.

There was a period in Richard Smallwood's life during which he experienced great losses in the death of his mother, and several dear friends and colleagues. It was around 2006 when he became overcome by

all the negativity in the world: disease, poverty, hate, injustice, etc., and he sank into a deep depression, unable to write even a single note or word for years.

Then came the idea of *promises*: "We who are children of God, there are promises that he has made to us in his Word; he would never leave us, he would never forsake us, he would provide for us..." During this time in the world, we need to be reminded of these promises made to us by God.

Smallwood's idea was that he would compose an album in which all the songs would deal with different promises made by God. To do this, Smallwood has said he did a lot of reading of the bible and read a book that listed all the promises of God in the bible.

It is easy to tell people to trust in the Lord but when we are hit with negativity, it is not always easy to have that trust. People need to be encouraged and reminded that God "has our backs." One of the songs the Gospel Choir will be singing in our next season is Smallwood's "Sow in Tears."

*Darkness will fall; the tears will come,  
for all of these things come to everyone.  
But in God's Word, it's promised to us:  
If you sow in tears, you'll reap in joy.*

*Tears are for cleansing stress and relief,  
created by God just to give us release.  
They're not in vain, for soon will come peace.*

*(Continued on page 5)*

# MUSIC & ARTS MINISTRY

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## Leadership Opportunity

Music & Arts Ministry is looking for someone to lead the Praise Band! We all can say how wonderful it is to have the Praise Band as part of our worship life and out-

reach – this is your chance to step up and join this dynamic ministry. Contact Roberta Shimensky

[music@hilltopumchurch.org](mailto:music@hilltopumchurch.org) to express interest and get more information.

*(Continued from page 4)*

*If you sow in tears, you'll reap in joy.  
So don't be afraid to cry.  
He sees your tears. He hears your prayers.  
Your mourning He'll turn to dancing.  
This, too, will pass. Your day is coming;  
the tears may flow but don't let go.  
If you sow in tears, you'll reap in joy.*

Psalm 126:5-6: "May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves."

There are different ways to interpret this passage, the most obvious being: life may be hard, but if we remain faithful, God has promised us joy. But another way to look at it is that, when we feel and care very deeply for one another, for all our fellow brothers and sisters, we feel and share their sorrow and pain in a very personal way. It is when we share in the hurt and pain of other people, through injustices and inequities, in our own hearts, that the greatest good is achieved. Then we *all* shall reap in joy.

## March Birthdays

Jen Strickland.....	March 1
Steph Pettibone.....	March 2
Emeline Feiloaki.....	March 3
Zyia Feiloaki.....	March 3
Mary Bilbao.....	March 4
Matt Mettibone.....	March 6
Tony Gentilcore.....	March 8
Stu Long.....	March 11
Ruth Eden.....	March 22
David Floyd.....	March 22
Jim Woodmansee.....	March 22
Kris Garrison.....	March 22
Mary Jean Davison.....	March 23
Judy Stevens.....	March 23
Karl Schlager.....	March 25
Marge Dropek.....	March 27
Linda Shaul.....	March 29





# MOTHER'S MORNING OUT

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Becky Elliston  
MMO Director  
[mmo@hilltopumchurch.org](mailto:mmo@hilltopumchurch.org)

## Claiming the Promises of God

Promises are complicated. When we make a promise, we have every intention to see it through. The busyness of life can take over and we begin looking for ways to compromise on the commitment we have made. I am guilty of this. I have made numerous promises that weren't realistic and have ended up having a hard time keeping my word.

The year my daughter was in 6th grade, she asked for a laptop computer for Christmas. It had become necessary to keep up with her homework. I "promised" that if she asked Santa, he would agree that this was important and would probably leave one for her under the tree. By the time I got around to picking it out and ordering it, there was slim to zero chance that it would arrive before Christmas. (Which it did not) Christmas morning, she awoke to a printed picture of her new computer artfully rolled up, decorated with a beautiful bow and tied to the tree. We both cried and I had to deal with the hurt of a broken promise.

The good news is that God always keeps his promises. He promises to be with us, to protect us, to be our strength, to answer us, to provide for us, to give us peace and to always love us. God will never look for a way to compromise or to give us a sorry substitute for his covenant he has made with us.

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

-Isaiah 41:10

Mother's Morning Out is excited to announce that we will be providing Summer Camps for children 18 months thru 3.5 years of age. We will have camps in June and July and registration will be open March 1st.

Are you looking for a fun, part-time job over the summer? We would love to have you join our team! Please contact Becky Elliston at [mmo@hilltopumchurch.org](mailto:mmo@hilltopumchurch.org) for details.

## Join MMO for Summer Camps 2021

We will start our day outside with free play and craft time. Learning circles will come next, followed by everyone's favorite...SNACK! Story time and small motor skill play will finish out our morning.

- Week # 1 June 8-10 Dinosaur fun
- Week #2 June 15-17 Bugs and Butterflies
- Week #3 June 22-24 Under the Sea
- Week #4 July 6-8 Music Makers
- Week #5 July 13-15 Super Slime

Camps will be Tue, Wed, Thurs from 9:30 am- 12:30 pm; are for ages 18 months – 3.5 years old.

We plan to spend as much of our day outside as possible. Enrollment will be open at [app.enrollsy.com/r/RXkMzt16F](http://app.enrollsy.com/r/RXkMzt16F) beginning March 1st, 2021. Please contact Becky at [mmo@hilltopumchurch.org](mailto:mmo@hilltopumchurch.org) or 801-571-5777

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## UMW Thanks You

Once again, the Hilltop United Methodist Women would like to **thank** everyone who took part in our Christmas fundraiser. Since we could not get together for our annual Christmas dinner, we asked members to donate the price of their Christmas dinner ticket fees to the UMW. It has been a challenging year for the UMW as we could not hold our bi-yearly consignment

sales which are a large fundraiser for us. Thankfully, from the Christmas donations, we were able to raise close to \$2,400.00. We used these funds to help the Crossroads Urban Mission, 4th Street Clinic, the Rescue Mission and the Pastor's Relief Fund. Going forward, we plan to have a fall consignment sale pending the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

### *SPRC (Continued from page 3)*

4. Hold annual consultation with D.S. (District Superintendent).
5. Prepare for recognition and staff year end Christmas gifting.

We have a job to do for our church and staff; but more important, we have a ministry and responsibility to strengthen the body of Christ. In good times and challenging times good communication is important. For that communication process, we base our work on Mathew 18:15-20. We encourage anyone with a concern to read this scripture. This is Jesus' instruction to those struggling with relationships in the church. A committee member will always encourage a person with a concern to go directly to that person and have a respectful heart to heart dialogue. If an issue or conflict is not resolved after a face-to-face (or ZOOM) meeting this can be brought to the SPR committee on a one page summary completed by the person with the concern. This will be discussed in complete confidentiality in the committee

led by the chairperson( Bob Scarborough in 2021).

Follow-up may include assignments to team members and discussion at subsequent meetings. Anonymous concerns will never be entertained. The committee will be sensitive to all matters that need to be kept confidential.

We prayerfully encourage all to self-examine and discern the real issues and come to healthy solutions. This is an opportunity to exercise the best spiritual practice in the church and learn behaviors that can enrich and enhance all of our lives.

In this season of Lent leading to Easter we are moving forward in our responsibility to our staff and community. We are on our way, following in the path that God has shown us through his holy Son and all believers in the rainbow. We "can do" this ministry that Hilltop is blessed with doing in our community and world.

Amen, and May It Be So.



# WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

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## Children's Books for Discussion of Race and Inequality at Home

by Karen Moser

We are a family of readers, and we all enjoy a good story. We loved meeting Grace, a girl in early elementary school, a fellow story fan, and a budding actress and dancer with a big imagination. Especially as we continue to stay home and stay safe, escaping into fiction and playing pretend games has helped us have adventures even when our adventuring in the real world is limited.

**This Month's Book:** *Amazing Grace* written by Mary Hoffman, pictures by Caroline Binch. Available in the Salt Lake County and Salt Lake City Library systems

### Summary

Grace loves to act out the stories she reads and she always plays the main character, of course! When her teacher announces that her class is going to perform the play *Peter Pan*, Grace knows just who she would like to be and volunteers right away. Her classmates are skeptical and ask some questions that turn out to be hurtful. Can a girl be Peter Pan? Is Peter Pan Black? With encouragement from her loving Nana and Ma, Grace believes in herself and auditions for the role anyway. In the end, Grace is a fantastic Peter Pan and proves to herself that she can do anything she sets her mind to. The edition we borrowed from the library included a short essay from LeVar Burton, who proclaimed *Amazing Grace* one of his favorite children's books of all time. With that kind of praise from the Reading Rainbow host, you just have to check it out!

**Bonus:** *Amazing Grace* is one of the books on Mensa's Excellence in Reading list for early elementary age children. We are working on this challenge and have found some new favorites from the list in addition to revisiting classics. There are reading challenges for students through high school, so the program grows with your child! More information here: [Excellence in Reading \(mensaforkids.org\)](http://ExcellenceinReading.org).

### What Do The Kids Think?

Heidi- "I like that Grace didn't give up, even when her classmates said mean things."

Clark- "I think it was good because she could be anything she wanted."

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you ever tried to do something when others told you that you couldn't or shouldn't do it? How did you feel when you succeeded?
2. Grace's Ma and Nana supported her dreams and encouraged her not to give up. Who supports you and helps you reach for the stars?

If you have recommendations for books to feature in future months, please e-mail me at [moserka@gmail.com](mailto:moserka@gmail.com).

Happy Reading!



# MISSIONS

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## Family Promise Matters

In this season of Lent, God's promises to Family Promise are bearing fruit! Like many other programs during the pandemic, Family Promise suffered greatly. The last time we housed families at Hilltop House was in May 2020. We "pivoted" and met the challenges to still provide meals and overnight hosts for several families. By August when our next hosting duties arrived, the families were being permanently hosted at Christ UMC, but we still provided meals and some hosts. Family Promise and all other host churches are extremely grateful to the staff and congregation of Christ UMC for providing a consistent haven for many families during a very difficult time. In November, for a variety of reasons, Family Promise was forced to close the entire program. It was a sad time for all of us who have been a part of Family Promise for some 25 years. Through the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021, a search began for a new Executive Director with a plan to resume services as soon as possible. Several pieces of property were sold to generate revenue, and new board members were recruited, including our own Mike

Montoya. Besides being a past Family Promise coordinator, Mike and his family have always had a passion for supporting families in need.

The waiting is over and a new Executive Director starts on March 1st! He is someone who is known to many of us and we are very excited about the



coming months. Rev. Brian Diggs was the director of the UMCOR warehouse for over 10 years until its recent closure. Prior to that, he was the senior pastor at 1st UMC downtown. He has the compassion, love of people, and skills to rebuild Family Promise so that it can again serve transitionally homeless families in Salt Lake City. There are many staff positions to be filled and the support of all host churches will be vital. More volunteers for the board are needed as well. We don't know how long it will take, or how the new program will look, but we will be ready to serve. That is God's Promise to all of us. It is also our promise to those who need our help to regain their independence and care for their families. We welcome your prayers for our involvement, for Rev. Diggs and the future of Family Promise. If you have questions, feel free to contact Mike Montoya or Kevin Day.



Hilltop United Methodist Church  
985 East 10600 South  
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## Sunday Schedule

Sunday School for All	9:00 am
Worship	9:00 am
Fellowship Time	10:00 am
Worship	10:30 am
Fellowship Time	11:30 am

Pastor Lynn Miller Jackson  
Email: [pastor@hilltopumchurch.org](mailto:pastor@hilltopumchurch.org)

**SHARE YOUR BOUNTY**  
Every first Sunday share the food God has provided.  
Bring in nonperishable foods that will go to the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake and Crossroads Urban Center.

A graphic of a brown paper bag with a red heart and the text "FOOD DRIVE" is positioned in the lower-left corner of the food pile. The bag is filled with various food items, and the text "FOOD DRIVE" is printed in bold, black, capital letters on the front of the bag.