

This is the Child Who Changed My Life...

A 2009 Lenten Devotional

By and for the Virginia Conference
United Methodist Church



Coordinated by the
Children's Initiative Committee

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The Season of Lent

Theme: *Retreating Into the Wilderness with Jesus*

Dates: Lent is a forty-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection. Lent begins on 25 February 2009 and ends on 11 April 2009, which is the day before Easter.

Colors: In most churches, the decorations are purple, the royal color, to prepare for the King.

Ref: www.kencollins.com

All God’s Children Camp
 for Children of Incarcerated Mothers

August 16-21, 2009
 Camp Occohannock on the Bay (OOTB)
 (week-long, overnight camp)

Be a mentor for campers (age 7-12)
 (Mentor Application available at www.vaumc.org)

Donate Camp Supplies:
 Your Sunday School class, UMM or UMW circle, or Vacation Bible School can help the camp by collecting supplies, such as... new or gently used sleeping bags; pillows; pillow cases; flat twin sheets (no fitted sheets); rain ponchos; large bath towels; shampoo and soap (smaller bottles preferred); laundry bags (duffle bag size); cloth tote bags with handles; plastic shower totes with handles; swim suits (assorted sizes); pool shoes (assorted sizes) (call 1-800-768-6040 ext. 138 to find out where to send donations)

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rev. Tonya M. Douce
Associate Pastor, Fairlington United Methodist Church, Alexandria
(Alexandria District)

Scripture

“When Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, ‘He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.’” Matthew 8:14-17

Meditation

I first met Julie in the ICU at Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Julie’s father attended my church, and I had received a somewhat frantic call from him while working in the office that morning. When I stood next to him and looked down at Julie, who was sedated and hooked up to more tubes than I count, I knew why he had been upset. Though her parents never said so explicitly, they feared for her life. It was a fear that I shared.

Over the next three months I continued to visit Julie and her parents at Children’s National Medical Center. For many weeks Julie’s condition barely changed. But, one day, Julie began to get better. Slowly but surely, her condition began to improve. A month later, Julie left the hospital for a stay at National Rehabilitation Hospital. A month after that, she went home. This past summer Julie attended our Beach Party Vacation Bible School, where she “surfed through the scriptures” surrounded by children who embraced her regardless of the fact that her physical and mental condition was different from their own. In October she walked into our church’s community Halloween party dressed as Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz.

Julie taught me that God DOES still perform miracles. God performs miracles through the skilled hands of doctors, nurses and therapists. God performs miracles through the acceptance of children who instinctively know that our God-given beauty comes from within. And, yes, God performs miracles through the prayers of the faithful. Just ask Julie - if you can get her to stop playing with her friends long enough to respond.

Action Point

Pray for those who are sick, especially the children of our churches, our communities, and our world. Pray that God will heal the broken bodies and broken spirits of the youngest members of our society. Pray that a miracle will occur.

Prayer

God bless our children, all of the children of our world! Amen.

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This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rev. Bass Mitchell

Epiphany United Methodist Church, Vienna (Arlington District)

Scripture

“Then he took a child and put it among them...” Mark 9:36a

Meditation

During a Sunday children’s message, I showed the children the offering plates and asked them to tell me what they were for. They all knew that we put money in them. When I asked why, they looked kind of confused (as did some of the people in the congregation, confused and a little concerned at the direction this was taking). I explained that we give for lots of reasons, but mainly to say: “Thank YOU!” to God.

I gave each child 10 pennies. I explained the tithe, that is, it would be 1 penny from the ten. I told them about making an offering, which, to me anyway, means that which we give beyond the tithe, that is, 2 pennies or more. Then I asked them to come up and make their tithes and offerings in the plates before they went out to children’s worship. A couple turned and ran out, clutching their pennies in tight little fists... (to the nervous laughter of some in the congregation)... Others came forward (somewhat gloomily) and dropped a penny in the plate... (to the silence of the congregation)... Others dropped in a penny and one or two other pennies... (some smiled in the congregation).

The last child, a bright faced little girl, came up to the table, moved up on a step before it since she was so short, and looked wide-eyed with wonder into the plate. She slowly put her hands over the plate, since it took both hands to hold the pennies, and let them all fall into the plate, the sound echoing through the sanctuary, and she turned and bounded in joy out of the door with her other companions...(some looking kind of uneasy out there and others joyous)...

Moved myself, I turned to the people and could only say, “I do not think I need to preach today.”

Action Point

Think of a mission or ministry that you feel led to support (financially or otherwise.) How can you fulfill this calling during Lent?

Prayer

Loving God, Jesus came and taught us so many things and through such unexpected means. He taught us about simple faith and trust through holding up the most powerless among us still - children. May I not be childish but childlike in my trust, in my giving, in my love this and everyday. And make me ever aware and alert to the many ways you teach us through others, especially the little ones you still hold and bless in your arms. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Dawn Skinner

Bethany United Methodist Church, Purcellville (Winchester District)

Scripture

“...they caused the cry of the poor to come to him, and he heard the cry of the afflicted.” Job 34:28

Meditation

I remember my first year mentoring at-risk children at the All God’s Children Camp where a boy had been stung by a bee while we were on the nature hike. Observing the two-adult-rule, his mentor asked me to accompany them back to the nurse’s station. As we walked back, I was very conversational, talking to the young boy who remained quiet, removed, uninterested in my friendship. I recalled that I had been bee-stung the week before where the pain took me to the floor - on my knees crying. Observing no emotion, I began doubting the boy, judging his attitude and summed him up as someone who just didn’t want to be on the nature hike. Stopping, I asked him to show me where he was stung (show me the nail marks in your hand, I don’t believe you’re the risen Christ). He pointed to the source of his pain. Not only was he stung, the stinger also remained stuck in this poor boy’s leg. Ashamed, I wanted to cry the tears he could not cry.

That day, I learned to resist surfacing assumptions about the side of the social border he came from and started learning to make space for sacred ground with at-risk children. That day, I began loving this boy and his family. For five years I have been an advocate for at-risk children, youth, and their families. When they hurt, I feel their pain and respond in acts of faith in every way possible.

Action Point

What can you do to support this summer’s All God’s Children Camp?

Prayer

Lord, we pray for the children who are never allowed to cry and for those who have cried so much they can’t cry anymore. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Janet Moore

Providence United Methodist Church, Quinton (Ashland District)

Scripture

“And a little child shall lead them.” Isaiah 11:6

Meditation

Child-like faith, how it always amazes me. In December 2008 I had the privilege of traveling with my daughter, Rayna, and my granddaughter, Ruth (four year old triplegic with Cerebral Palsy,) to a Shriner’s Hospital visit for Ruth. I have never doubted that Ruth is one of God’s special angels, and it is confirmed over and over again as I see God in her.

We stopped for a quick break at McDonald’s and I witnessed the most beautiful thing. After blessing our food and as we sat in the booth to eat our snack little Ruth got on her knees, put her elbows on the ledge by the window, folded her hands together and looked out the window up into the sky. She said, “God, it’s getting dark. It’s time for you to put the sun away and put the moon and stars up in the sky. Amen.” She then sat down and ate a chicken nugget. Soon she said, “I have something else to say,” and assumed again the praying position. Again she reminded God about the sun, moon and stars, and thanked him for the umbrella to protect her from the rain...and ate another chicken nugget. Then, again went to God in prayer, this time saying, “God, thank you for Mr. BJ and Mr. Hal bringing me on this little trip to the hospital. Amen.” And she ate another chicken nugget. One last time she assumed the praying posture, saying, “God, thank you for bringing Mommy and JoJo and for my special bed to sleep in tonight. That’s all. Amen.” She then finished her last chicken nugget.

It has not been the first time we’ve seen this special connection between Ruth and her friend, God. She talks to God as though she can see and hear Him wherever she is. I have many times asked God why he made Ruth the way she is. I have asked God to let her sit, stand, walk, jump, run, hop, skip, and DANCE...all of those things she sees other children do. But, I now have finally come to the conclusion that not only is Ruth made “perfect”, just as she is, but that God made her one of His special angels. I am so truly blessed and honored to be so close to God when with Ruth, because she has the spirit of God in her; and all those she comes in contact with are changed. If a 4-year-old triplegic can be thankful in all things and talk to God about every little thing, I know I can strive to do the same. A little child SHALL lead us.

Action Point

Reflection: Why is it that a four year old has no problem talking to an invisible God, never doubting her words are heard? Why is it we as adults struggle to find what we believe are the “right” words to pray?

Prayer

O Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief! Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Christy Hermansen

Sterling United Methodist Church (Arlington District)

Scripture

“...And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:17-19

Meditation

“I want my own,” Ella demands, pointing at a pile of snow tubes. “I want to go down that.” She gestures again, this time towards her older sister, Grace. Grace is walking with their cousins, dragging a snow tube through the cold towards a steep hill. Determined to keep up, Ella is too young to understand that at two-and-a-half years old, she is the healthiest she will ever be. As she gets older, keeping up will become more difficult. She will fit school in between hospital visits and will try to get her homework done amid extended bouts of fatigue. She will watch other kids dedicate their free time to sports and other childhood activities knowing her choices are different. She will listen to their seemingly trivial complaints about clothes, their parents’ rules, and school work while she worries about what the results of her next blood test will show.

Later, tired after a morning spent snow tubing, Ella cuddles in her mother’s arms, her head on her mother’s shoulder. It’s bittersweet to look into her trusting eyes, knowing she believes her mother’s arms can keep her safe from anything. Ella has a rare kidney disorder called focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS). There is no cure and the best available treatments prescribe medication that will take a huge toll on her body over time. Her future will be disrupted at will to accommodate a kidney transplant, dialysis, and likely recurrence of her disease in a transplanted kidney.

Ella wanders into my thoughts every day, especially when my two-year-old twins are creating havoc. Ella is my niece, and my sister and I were pregnant together. I wonder, “Why Ella? What’s the point? She’s just beginning to explore life and so much has been taken away from her.” I find myself grieving for what might have been. Part of me has trouble accepting Ella’s diagnosis and I yearn for a miracle. Another part tries to understand and I pray for Ella. I pray that she is “filled to the measure of the fullness of God” following her biggest disappointments; and that she feels Christ’s love deeply enough to sustain her courage, her heart, and her spirit through whatever He has in store for her.

Action Point

Pray today for a child (or for anyone you know) who is facing terminal or chronic illness.

Prayer

I pray for God’s blessings for all children with long term illnesses like Ella, and for my own healthy children. I pray for doctors, researchers, fundraisers, and all of us that He will fill us with his love and work through us to provide healing. Amen.

**CHILDREN’S INITIATIVE COMMITTEE
ALL GOD’S CHILDREN**

The Virginia Conference Children’s Initiative Committee works with churches and districts to implement The Episcopal Initiative on Children and Poverty. The focus of the initiative is to reshape the church’s mission to respond to the issues of children and poverty. Every United Methodist is called to engage at least one child in a one-on-one covenantal relationship that builds both spiritual and moral bonds.

Local churches are asked to value their responses to the needs of children in poverty. Spiritual and economic sanctuaries can be provided in many ways for children, parents, and others responsible for children. Having a moral role in the community, local churches have many opportunities to reach children throughout society, as well as to learn from the children’s faith and commitment to God. Districts and Annual Conference ministries/agencies are encouraged to provide "Centers for All God’s Children" that speak to the needs of those orphaned by parents who are incarcerated, estranged by abuse, marginalized by economics, or ignored by society.

The Virginia Conference Children’s Initiative assists churches in the following ways:

- Develops resources around the issue of children and the poor
- Creates resources and organizes special events to raise awareness about public policy issues related to children and the poor.
- Conducts All God’s Children Camps for children whose mothers are incarcerated

Online: www.vaumc.org

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rosemary Girard

Fairlington United Methodist Church, Alexandria (Alexandria District)

Scripture

“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” 1 John 3:18

Meditation

Being part of Voices of Youth and working at a camp for at-risk kids in Brazil, I witnessed God’s love and learned important life lessons from two young campers.

The children at this camp had nothing. The snack they had at camp was the only meal most of them had each day yet they were the most joyful kids I’ve ever met.

We celebrated our last day in Brazil with a fiesta. Rafaela, one of the campers with whom I spent a lot of time, slipped a note into my hand. Inside was a small flower magnet with a smiley face, and a note in Portuguese which said, “From: Rafaela, To: Someone Special.” There was also a drawing of two girls and a house, Rafaela and me at the Shade and Fresh Water building.

Diana, another camper, rushed toward me and grabbed my hand to be her dance partner. During one of the songs, Diana stopped dancing. I wondered if something was wrong. She then reached into her pocket and retrieved a beautiful, glittery butterfly hair clip. She motioned for me to lean forward. She pinned the clip to one of my braids, continued dancing, and smiled from ear-to-ear the entire time.

I was so thankful for the gifts I received that night and I cherished the love and friendship these two girls had shown me.

They made me realize how much I’ve taken for granted. They taught me that one doesn’t have to speak another’s language to show them kindness, friendship, or God’s love. These amazing children taught me that the happiest people don’t necessarily have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything they have.

Action Point

What treasured possession have you given away to someone special in recent days? How freely do we share our “things” and who might we help or bring light to if we practice generosity each day?

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the generosity of children. Thank you for the example given to us by Jesus to share what we have with all those around us. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rev. Kendra Swager,; Caroline Charge (Ashland District)

Scripture

“Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my groaning. Harken to the sound of my cry, my Ruler and my God, for to you I pray.” Psalm 5:1-2

Meditation

My father died suddenly at age 44. It was the summer between my sophomore and junior years at college. I was supposed to begin an internship at the Murphy Harpst Vashti United Methodist Children’s Home in Cedartown, Georgia when I returned to school that fall. “I should arrange to postpone the internship,” I thought. “It will be too demanding. I am tired, I am depressed, and I need a light load.” But the shock and depression I was carrying made it seem less cumbersome to go through with the internship than to complete the many withdrawal forms by the deadline.

I showed up my first day, knowing it would be meaningful, but having little excitement or energy for the work. Then I met the children and youth: Marissa, Roger, Dante, Eric, Cindy, and others. Over a period of weeks, I learned more than their names. I came to know their stories. Abused by their fathers, mothers, uncles, foster parents, neighbors. Abandoned by their parents. Tossed around. Diagnosed. Unwanted. Given up on. The realities of their young lives were worse than anything I could have fictionalized.

My grief was real, but it came into perspective quickly. I had a wonderful, kind and loving father. He was truly exceptional in many ways. We were only together for 20 years, but I had an amazing father who nurtured me. The children at Murphy Harpst either never knew their fathers or had been treated so heinously by them that years of healing and therapy were the only hope for them to move toward anything resembling what you might call a “normal” life.

The pain of Marissa, Roger, Dante and the others helped jump-start my healing. In return, I gained the energy and enthusiasm that, I pray, helped lead to their healing. I don’t know where any of those (no longer) young people are today, but I remember them and give thanks for their courage, their lives, and their hope. They helped me find my courage and my hope.

Action Point

Is there a place you might visit or volunteer? You might meet someone who could help lead you to a transforming experience if you step out of your comfort zone.

Prayer

Remind us, Lord, that in suffering, we might find healing; in the midst of pain, we might find hope; and even in death, we might discover life. Keep us all in your loving watch. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Martha Ann Nicholas

Lebanon United Methodist Church, Mechanicsville (Ashland District)

Scripture

“Don’t worry about anything, instead, pray about everything.” Philippians 4:6

Meditation

When I was a little girl, I always dreamed of what my life away from the despair of my brother’s death would be like when I grew up. It has not exactly been what I expected but looking back, I don’t suppose I would change a thing. I met and married my husband who led me to God. We were baptized together. Sadly, I had cancer three times so with my health history it was unlikely we could have children. Life became as normal as anyone’s. Time passed and we grew closer to God. My “FAITH” gave me hope. I wanted a baby so much so we prayed for one and within a month, I was pregnant. Our daughter Sydney “FAITH” Nicholas joined us healthy and adored.

Our daughter has grown up in church to be a strong believer and she is an extraordinary girl. God gave her to us as a gift, but not without trial. She sometimes displays painful behavior associated with bipolar disorder. I was weak from my own illness when she was diagnosed but there was no time for that anymore. We had to be positive and follow a strict treatment plan. My daughter needed me. Her amazing heart and love for God could turn very quickly into what most people would see as another person. I know that my daughter is in there though and I just hold her tight with all my strength until she is able to find her way through the darkness back into the light. She knows she is ill; it affects her in a lot of ways but once I understood this disorder, *it changed me*. I became stronger and I believe *it saved my own withering life*.

My “FAITH” has been challenged repeatedly but God always keeps me around.

I don’t know why my daughter is bipolar but God chose me to be her mother for some reason and I hope that means he has just as much “FAITH” in me as I have in him.

Action Point

No matter the child, you must look into their heart. It is our responsibility as Christians to look beyond the person’s appearance and actions and love them as we would love any other. If you are blessed with the opportunity to make a difference in a child’s life, you should. Without a doubt, you will end up gaining just as much as they do.

Prayer

God, bless every one of your children who struggle with illness, especially those illnesses that are difficult for others to understand. Bless every parent, spouse, child, and caregiver of those with mental or emotional illnesses. Help us all to be more patient, more open, and more like you. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rev. Linda Ray
Community Ministries Coordinator, United Methodist Family Services

Scripture

“For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Galatians 3:26-27

Meditation

A little boy named Trenn entered my life for a time. He was six years old, eyes full of wonder and hope even though they had seen hardship and abuse. One of his hopes was for a family and he eagerly began calling my husband and I Dad and Mom as he joined our family as a foster child. Trenn enjoyed reading and learning, playing and singing, and was very curious about life in the church. He and his sister came into our home in the fall and remained there until January. We shared Halloween, and Thanksgiving, a trip to the “Nutcracker Ballet,” and Christmas morning.

The thing that I remember most about Trenn, even many years later, was his desire to be baptized. The first time he asked about baptism, I answered his questions and told him truthfully that we would have to ask his grandmother and his social worker. He kept asking, urging, begging. I finally asked him why this was so important to him. I will never forget his response. “I may never stay in one house or be a part of one earthly family, but I want to be a part of God’s family.”

So, after several more conversations with persons concerned for Trenn’s care, he was baptized on a Sunday morning with some of his caregivers and a church full of persons who had been family to him for awhile and are family to him in spirit always.

I wish I could tell you more of how the story ends, but I don’t know that myself. Trenn and his sister lived with my family two more times in short-term placements and there was in him an abiding faith that was larger than his years. Through faith and baptism Trenn was, is, and will always be a part of God’s family and in my heart.

Action Point

Consider being a foster parent, even if only for a short time, and let God’s children share their faith with you.

Prayer

God bless Trenn and his sister, wherever they may be today. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Reesee Michalochick, Director of Children’s Ministries
Virginia Beach United Methodist Church (Norfolk District)

Scripture

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Colossians 3:12

Meditation

His name is Jacob and he is a child that can warm your heart and pluck your last good nerve at the same time. He is six years old and comes to me with four other children each day for 30 minutes of additional instruction in reading skills in a small group setting for struggling readers. On this particular day, he had been unusually whiney and combative with his fellow students.

Only two months into the program and the same issues were occurring every day, so I knew it was time to talk to the teacher. As we were returning to class, the teacher leaned out the door and motioned me over. Before I could tell her what I was dealing with in small group, she told me that Jacob’s dad had been in the hospital for some time, suffering from cancer and the prognosis was not good. His mother was spending most every waking hour at the hospital and Jacob was being passed between various relatives and babysitters.

My heart sank. My impatience of the moment before melted into a huge bowl of guilt and sorrow. Here was this six-year-old little boy, whose father might not live. His mother is constantly at her husband’s side and Jacob is left behind. He has to deal with his father’s illness, his mother’s absence, the obvious learning problems he struggles with daily as well as his lack of social skills and friends. Now wearing the glasses of compassion that I wish I’d had with me moments before, my vision cleared. I could see that this child needed more compassion than usual. I understood why he had behaved as he did and I regretted my own irritation.

This child, that I truly love, taught the teacher a lesson that day. As human beings, if we could look at everyone through glasses of compassion, it would be a much kinder world. We’d be more patient on the road, more tolerant in the workplace, more considerate among strangers, more Christ-like in all of our actions. Because the reality of our world today is that everyone *does* have their own personal tragedies and demons, most unseen, and some of us do manifest our demons in a lousy attitude or a bark instead of a kind response. But looking through those glasses of compassion, we would give each other the benefit of the doubt instead of the brunt of our anger. Jacob taught me that lesson and made me a better teacher. This is the child who changed my life forever.

Action Point

Think of a person who sometimes “plucks your last good nerve.” Whatever the reason for your difficulty with this person, spend time in prayer for them... for the things you know about them and the things only God knows.

Prayer

O God, give me glasses of compassion each day. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rev. Alec Miller, United Methodist Family Services Chaplain

Scripture

“‘As for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD. ‘My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever,’ says the LORD.” Isaiah 59:21

Meditation

Anyone who has ever planned worship knows that sinking feeling when something goes horribly wrong. In my case, I had foolishly planned an entire worship service for the United Methodist Family Services youth that required the use of multi-media projection. Several of the youth had practiced their roles and I had spent weeks preparing the service. On that morning, with no backup plan, the computer failed to work properly. I called the youth into the hallway and informed them of the problems as I felt my frustration rising and my sense of worship quickly sinking. I heard myself say, “Everything’s gone wrong!” At that moment, Carla, a youth who had seen darker days than I could ever imagine, calmly stared at me through her green glasses. When I finally calmed down enough to ask her what she was thinking, she responded, “How can everything be wrong? I mean, we’re alive and we’re in Chapel.” I stood there, with my jaw fallen to the floor as the truth about life, God and worship was handed to me by a child. Carla’s words left me humbled and speechless as I was reminded why worship is sacred. Her statement reminded me that Worship is the time when we practice the present-Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about by living in communion with ourselves, with others and with God. True Communion needs neither pulpit, nor projector, but simply requires honest presence. Moments later, I returned to the Chapel and we gave praise together in worship. Sometimes, it takes a child to reveal the truth about the Kingdom and I recall this truth each and every Sunday.

Action Point

Pray for the teens at United Methodist Family Services and their youth counselors that these cottages continue to be a place of healing and learning for all of God’s children.

Prayer

Lord, help me to know the difference between a disaster and a small problem. Give me patience, give me wisdom, and give me trust in your providence. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rick Dawson, Executive Director
Camp Highroad Christian Adventure Camp

Scripture

“...that’s why I am suffering now. But I am not ashamed! I know the one I have faith in, and I am sure that he can guard until the last day what he has trusted me with.” 2 Timothy 1:12

Meditation

As a camp director I come into contact with campers from all walks of life and with all types of challenges. One weekend I was at the pool helping a group of campers who were attending a special camp for kids who had lost arms and legs. One young teenager, who had taken off his prosthetics and had use of only short stumps for all four extremities, asked me if he could take the swimming test. The test consisted of jumping into water over your head, swimming two lengths of the pool, and then floating for one minute. I explained the test to him and asked him if he still wanted to make the attempt. With a big smile he said “sure”. He rolled into the water and started to twist and turn and thrash in the water. His progress was painfully slow and I soon wondered how long he could keep up the level of exertion and if he could make the two laps. At one point I moved to another location at the pool’s edge just in case I needed to go in. As his body twisted in my direction I saw the same smile that I had seen when he first asked to go in. It took what seemed like an eternity but he eventually completed the laps and the float and was declared eligible to swim. His demonstration of perseverance was in inspiration to all of us “able bodied” attendees. I talked with him later and he told me the only “handicap” he had was a part of his mind saying “you can not do that”. From that day forward I remembered him whenever I faced a challenge and wondered if I should go on. We all have a tendency to use excuses when we should persevere and have faith.

Action Point

(1) Remember when dealing with others that they have challenges that we may or may not be aware of. (2) Give physical and monetary support to organizations working with groups less fortunate than ourselves. (3) Take a good internal look at ourselves and see if we have the “right stuff” to carry on.

Prayer

God bless all of those who are overcoming adversity, bless those who are in the midst of their struggles, and those who don’t yet have the courage to face their difficulties. Let your inspiration guide us wherever we are in our journey. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Barbara Justis
Adams United Methodist Church, Parksley (Eastern Shore District)
Mother of Clinton Thomas Justis II
July 7, 1982-December 25, 2004
Organ Donor

Scripture

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.” Romans 12:15

Meditation

Grandparents rejoice in the wonder of grandchildren. When my son announced that he was going to be a father, I was filled with as much apprehension as I was joy. I felt they were rushing especially when he had accepted the responsibility to raise two little stepdaughters, but what was I to do but be happy for him.

Little did I know that my son would not live to see his son. He died in a car accident 6 months before Clint 3 (as we call him) was born. I was the one who sat in the corner of the dimly lit room in the hospital as the technician announced the baby on the sonogram screen was a boy. I sat with tears streaming down my cheeks and my heart pounding as I heard her counting toes, fingers, and then listening to his heartbeat. I thanked God for the little baby that would be our lifeline in the days, months, and years to come. I thanked God that he knew what was best for us.

Clint, now 3 ½, and his sisters are a joy. They love church and they are learning to love God. Their laughter and willingness to help and to serve is an inspiration to everyone. In part, our church mission statement says “we are a small church where the love of God is visible in everybody” and truly the love of God is visible in their faces. They beam with God’s love.

As a grandparent, I take great joy in knowing that my children and grandchildren are gifts from God, on loan from heaven. I mourn for my son every day. My heart says he was called home too soon, yet in his going home, God saw fit to trust me with his son. I’m blessed.

Action Point

Look into the face of a child today and see the love of God. You will be blessed by the simplicity of it.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for your gift of life. Let us see you in all those we meet today. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Alouise Ritter
Lower United Methodist Church, Hartfield (Rappahannock District)

Scripture

“For it is by faith that we are saved by grace and this not of yourselves but it is a gift of God lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

Meditation

Kelly was one of my second grade students who asked me one of the most profound questions ever put to me by anyone. This beautiful little girl was a Korean child adopted by American parents. Her father, a Christian, was a giant of a man who seemed to fill the entire doorway when he entered the classroom.

The mother was Jewish and a woman of small stature. I was always glad whenever her parents came to visit this special family. Most often grandma and grandpa came by the classroom to help whenever they were needed. Grandpa became very good at helping boys and girls thread needles to make a quilt square for pot holders.

Following lunch one day, I began writing the afternoon assignments and activities on the blackboard. Soon I found my little dark haired friend standing at my elbow; first on one foot then on the other. This little routine went on for several minutes. Suddenly, Kelly blurted out what was on her mind.

“Mrs. Ritter, when you die, are you going to heaven?”...There was a long pause. Then pointing downward she continued... “Or are you going down there?”

“Oh, Kelly,” I said. “I’m living my life so that I will be ready to go to heaven.”

Smiling, Kelly skipped back to her desk, sat down to begin her work with the satisfaction that she knew where her teacher would spend eternity.

People become uncomfortable, fidgety, uninterested, and even defensive when asked about their faith - especially when it comes to dying. Because of her childhood faith, Kelly's story opens people's hearts and their minds to receive the message of grace to all who choose to believe.

It is always a good reminder, especially for me.

Action Point

Are you at peace with your life and, someday, your death? Talk to God about your trust in him through every age and stage of your life.

Prayer

Thank you, heavenly Father, for those who remind us of your love. Thank you for the children who witness to your grace with such innocence and trust. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Trinity United Methodist Church Sprouts
Alexandria (Alexandria District)

Russell Broman	Kevin Juneau
Amanda Dorris	Tess Moran
Paul Johnson	Grace Vannatta
Eric Juneau	Rachael Vannatta

Scripture

Daniel 6 – “Daniel in the Lion's Den”

Meditation

Anne Frank is a child who changed our lives. She lived during a very scary time when Hitler and his army were trying to get rid of all the Jews. Since Anne and her family were Jews, they had to move from their nice house to hide in a very small space. They had to be quiet all the time so that no one would know that they were there. Anne and her sister could not play many games. They could only whisper to each other. They hoped that no one would find them or turn them into the army. It must have been a very scary time to live in Germany. Eventually Anne and her family were discovered by the Nazi army and they were taken away to concentration camps.

The life of Anne Frank has changed our lives because she taught us how to be bold and full of courage even in very scary situations. The story of Daniel in the lion's den is also about someone full of courage, even in a scary situation. Daniel had to be bold in order to pray to God even when it was not allowed. Then when he was punished and thrown into the lion's den, he still had to be brave and believe that God would save him.

Action Point

Both Daniel and Anne Frank had to be very brave in their situations and they had to trust God. It can be hard to trust anyone when you are scared. Just like the people of Israel did not trust Moses when he was on Mount Sinai getting the Ten Commandments. They built a golden calf instead because they were scared of what might have happened to Moses on the mountain. What kinds of things in your life are very scary? Can you be brave? Can you trust God? Pray to God for boldness and bravery. Ask God questions. Ask God how you can be brave when you are very scared.

Prayer

Dear God, give me courage and make me brave. And when I cannot be as brave as I want, let me know I can trust you to care for me. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Rev. Dick Faris
Retired pastor (Charlottesville District)

Scripture

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:4 - 7

Meditation

We were packing up to go home after a wonderful Volunteer in Mission experience in Haiti. Our team had helped the Haitian people complete final work on their sanctuary, and had marked that event with a three-hour worship celebration. Now in departing, we left some shoes, clothes, and gifts for the local folks. As I descended the stairs of the church where we had stayed, I encountered two Haitian boys, probably ages 8 and 12. As usual they had their hands out to ask for help. Not beggars, the children were desperate for whatever the well-off Americans could give them. I remembered that I had left a pair of sneakers in the box provided upstairs, so I retrieved them and bent down to put them on the bare feet of one of the boys. Since I couldn't speak Creole and they didn't speak English, I gestured to them about the shoes. They were too large for the smaller boy, so I put them on the taller lad. As I tied the laces and was rising, I heard one of them say in perfect English, “God bless you, Sir.” And I about lost it! I was overwhelmed with the realization that I was blessed beyond measure, and it had taken the words of one of the least of God's children to remind me. Hopefully, this experience has given me the inclination to listen more intently to God's whispers in unexpected places. And to give thanks continually for all of the Lord's rich blessings.

Action Point

Make plans to go somewhere you don't usually go (maybe as far away as an international mission trip or maybe just a trip into the inner city or into a rural county.) When you go, notice the children you see and pray for each child and their family.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for speaking to us in a still, small voice. Help us to quiet ourselves and tone down the noise in our lives that we might hear you better. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Ellen Allen Holm, widow of Dr. Glen Alan Holm
Manassas St. Thomas United Methodist Church in Bristow, Virginia

Scripture

“ And behold I make all things new. “ Revelation 21:5

Meditation

When I was younger, the excitement of Easter was a number of things - the new dress and hat, the expectation of an Easter egg hunt, the anticipation of the wonderful dinner after church on Easter Sunday morning, and most of all the time spent with my family. As I grew older and had my own children, it was having everyone ready in their Easter finery, to church on time, and having my home ready for the festivities to follow. I always knew Easter Sunday was the day to focus on an amazing moment - the resurrection of our Lord.

His broken body made new again.

Somehow over the years, my focus changed, I became concerned with the good things of Easter and not the best thing. As we were a ministry family, Easter was a busy day but my thoughts and heart were not always focused on the real reason Easter was so special.

Three years ago, my family near and far away prepared for Easter as we always had. We also were preparing for the arrival of our first grandchild. Rising very early Easter morning, we prepared to attend church as a family. My husband went on to prepare for his part in the sunrise service. The family raced after him in another vehicle. The day was chilly, and dark, and silent. The service began, songs were sung, the sermon was shared. A beautiful day dawned. As was the Easter Sunday tradition, a Sunday morning breakfast was served. With my husband's blessing, we took off to Virginia Beach to see our new arrival. That four-hour drive had never seemed so eternal.

We arrived at Leigh Memorial Hospital in Norfolk with great anticipation. Into the hospital room we filed, quiet and anxious. The new father and his wife were fine. We waited. The nurse entered with the new little one so tiny, so new, all her fingers and toes, so beautiful. I took her in my arms. Thoughts raced through my head. It's not the finery, not the Easter egg hunt, the family meal; it's the sacrifice that brings new birth. I wept. I knew in my heart. “He makes all things new.”

Action Point

For your reflection: When was the moment God's love in your life made your feel renewed?

Prayer

Loving God, as we prepare for Easter, make us new in ways we cannot even imagine. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Jennifer Austin
Administrative Assistant at Charterhouse Therapeutic Day School
(United Methodist Family Services), Richmond

Scripture

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” 1 John 4:7

Meditation

I cannot speak of only one child at United Methodist Family Services (UMFS) Charterhouse Day School that has changed my life. How I ended up working at UMFS is a story in itself where God's hand was completely at work to accomplish His purposes (Romans 8:28). From the moment I knew I would be working at the school I began praying for the students. Prayer is the greater work. Jesus spoke of praying continually (1 Thessalonians 5:16). The love and compassion I have for the children at school is a love that comes from God, a love that extends to the depths of what I could ever “do” or experience on my own. Each of these children is amazing. Each of these children has shown me things that make them so special and continue to humble me. Psalm 139: 13-14 tells us that God created our inmost being and He knitted us together in our mother's womb. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. The Lord knows the plans He has for each of these children (Jeremiah 29:11). Philippians 2: 3-5 tells us to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others. They have taught me to have more of a servant's heart and compassion beyond words. Specifically, they have changed my life in me being able to love deeper not only at the school but with others in my life. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8). The time I get to spend with the children is precious and meaningful to me. They have all touched my heart in their own special way. God created each of them and knows every hair on their head. I am honored, humbled and grateful to work at the Day School and each day I get to know the children better.

Action Point

I would be grateful if each of you would pray for the children at our school and challenge you to allow God to show you how to love the way He loves (Romans 12:9). When He pours His love into your life you will never be the same. Last and most importantly, I would like for each of you to pray for the children to come to know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for the ways you teach us your word through the life of a child or teenager. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Margaret Dierdorff

Floris United Methodist Church, Herndon (Arlington District)

Scripture

“...and a little child will lead them.” Isaiah 11:6

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...” Jeremiah 1:5

Meditation

As our daughter awaited the birth of our first grandchild, she was told that a sonogram was needed, as a potential chromosome imbalance had been detected that could result in serious health complications and early death for her unborn child. Facing this potentially difficult situation was only possible through faith and prayer. The day of the sonogram many of us were in prayer, not only for good results, but also for the strength to handle the results - whatever they might be.

As the sonogram was being done, the technician said, “Well, look at that - it looks like the baby’s hands are together, as if the baby is praying!” Our daughter responded, “I wouldn’t be a bit surprised, because a lot of others are praying right now, too.”

I am happy to report that this little “praying baby” is now 9 years old, healthy, and a blessing to all of his family. This little boy’s act of prayer - even from the womb - has been an inspiration to us and to many who have heard this story.

Remember - God knew each of us - even before we were in the womb!

Action Point

Reflect on your own prayer life. How often do you pray? What types of prayers do you pray? For whom do you pray? What changes might you like to see in your prayer life and how will they come about?

Prayer

God of us all, call us to prayer in both good times and hard times. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Carol Sanger

Crewe United Methodist Church, Crewe (Farmville District)

Scripture

“O, taste and see that the Lord is good!” Psalm 34:8

Meditation

She was seven and she wanted to join Mom and her sister Emily (age 10) for the daily morning walk the two had begun taking together just two days earlier (a habit has to begin somewhere after all.) Mom and Emily had spent their time walking determinedly from point A to point B and back, intent on the healthy aspects of a brisk walk—very little talking and lots of intense walking.

Kate wanted to join her two favorite people in their morning constitutional, but Emily groaned and moaned that Kate would just slow down the pace and generally be a pain—as younger sisters can be. Mom, trying to mediate and have an enjoyable time with both her daughters, said Kate could come, but that she would need to keep up the pace along the walk.

The first three minutes of the walk the next morning went fairly well, with folks getting into the pace and concentrating on the matter at hand...but then Kate heard a bird sing and called attention to it. The mother’s comment was, “Bird. What bird? I don’t hear a bird. Well, would you listen to that.” Emily just “humphed.” The walk continued on. Kate next stopped to investigate a beautiful butterfly and wanted to share her “find” with her companions. The walking party stopped to “oh” and “ah” appropriately. The walking continued. So also did stops to investigate a pretty rock, wild flowers, a feather, and...

Twice the time to cover half the distance as the previous mornings, but that morning I (yes, I am the Mom) learned that we can rush from place to place accomplishing much along the way, but that the trip is more breathtaking when one takes time to see the wonder and awe in God’s creation—particularly through the eyes of a child of God.

Action Point

Arrange to spend time with a child. Have no agenda, no itinerary. Just visit a park or enjoy time together in your home. Let the child lead you and see where the visit takes you!

Prayer

Slow us down, O Lord. Open our eyes, our ears, our hearts this Lent. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Teresa Wolf
Curamericas Global, Inc.

Scripture

“Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me.” Matthew 25:40

Meditation

What if you turned on the news and heard that a terrible accident had claimed the lives of 26,000 children today? And that if the cause of the accident wasn't fixed, a similar number would die tomorrow? Wouldn't we do everything in our power to stop this from happening? Unfortunately, this is not a “what-if” situation. Every day, approximately 26,000 children die in the world of preventable, treatable diseases.

In a small village in the highlands of Guatemala, the Curamericas-Guatemala community workers discovered a 4-pound, 2-month-old baby girl named Martina. She was malnourished, close to death, and her mother Maria begged for help for her baby. The Curamericas staff quickly began teaching her how to feed Martina and how to spot the signs of sickness. Now Maria knows how to care for Martina, and she is thriving at a healthy weight.

Action Point

Curamericas Global (www.curamericas.org) offers many opportunities for churches to make an impact on children's lives in impoverished areas of the world. Support for our programs is crucial for Curamericas Global to continue treating malnutrition and disease, and educating mothers in how to spot diseases in their children and seek treatment. We also offer volunteer mission opportunities for church groups to have a hands-on experience at our international project sites. Check our website for more information about our 25-year history of working with churches, and call us toll-free at 1-877-510-4787 to speak to Teresa Wolf about how you and your church can save children's lives.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, who asked children to come to you for solace and grace, please be a presence with children around the world, especially those living in poverty and poor health conditions. Be with them, hold them close, and let them feel your healing powers. Let others know the many ways they can help those in need. The children around the world who struggle in conditions beyond their control need our help. Let us be the ones who make a difference in their lives. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Wanda Perkinson, Administrative Assistant, Petersburg District

Scripture

“Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.’” Matthew 19:13-14

Meditation

It was March 1, 2008, and the Volunteer In Mission Team that I had been a part of was “taking a day off” to tour the area of Port-a-Prince, Haiti, where we were ending a week of construction work, painting and relationship building. It was my very first mission trip out of the country and I had been so blessed at this point that I thought all of the “hallelujah moments” had passed. But, I was wrong.

We were visiting the Wings of Hope, an orphanage for children with mental retardation or cerebral palsy. One little fellow, who had a smile that would melt an ice berg, held the most precious “hallelujah moment” of my life in his heart. We were upstairs with the director and this little fellow, when I asked him for a hug. After a big bear hug, he took my hand and said, “Come on,” and began to lead me down this ramp that led us to a room lined with about 15 wheelchairs with children who had cerebral palsy. This angel looked up at me and said, “You wanna say hi?”

I most certainly did say hi to these precious children of God. But, it wasn't until I could control the tears that immediately stung my eyes when I realized that this precious soul, who could have so easily soaked up all the attention for himself, chose instead to lead me downstairs so that his friends could have some attention, too!!! What a selfless act of love. What a wonderful example of how we are to share God's love to all his children. Let the little children lead us. Amen.

Action Point

Is there a church in your district or area preparing to go on a mission trip? Find out how you can help support them... in prayer, with financial gifts, or by sending items needed for their project.

Prayer

O God, save me from turning the spotlight to myself. Let me share with others all of the joy that you have brought to my life. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Wendy Rilling LeBolt

Floris United Methodist Church, Herndon (Arlington District)

Scripture

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” 1 John 3:1

Meditation

Especially during the summer months I like to rise early for a quiet morning run. It can be quite hot, but that doesn't bother me. Problem is - it bothers my family. When I get home and lend pungency to the kitchen, they send me to the shower. All of them, that is, except my 12 year old daughter, Olivia. She comes and gives me a big morning hug. “Don't you care that I am hot and sweaty?” I ask her. “No,” she assures me, “because I love you.”

That stops me in my tracks. How many people do I avoid because their look or their smell or physical condition is off-putting? The homeless man on the street. The elderly woman in the nursing home. The immigrant seeking work. The addict needing a fix. The gang member looking to belong. All these are Your children, too, Lord. And they need to feel loved. To be touched. Perhaps, even to be hugged.

What a constant reminder Olivia is that love doesn't love from a distance. It comes close. Close enough to wrap its arms around. Our other senses take second place, when we sense a need. May we be love in action.

Action Point

Thought: Who are you holding at arms' length?

Prayer

Loving God, help me sense the needs in the people I encounter. Show me the power of love as I reach out to others. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Joseph S. Matney

Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, Vienna
(Arlington District)

Scripture

“Hear, my child, and be wise...” Proverbs 23:19

Meditation

In the fall of 1991 while visiting our young daughter, Rebecca, at the hospital she introduced me to a friend, a youngster whose father is from Afghanistan and whose mother is American. She is 11, quiet, bright eyed, petite - a sweetie. Her name is Mountain and she is Moslem.

Early in their hospital stay of several months, Mountain asked about Rebecca's illness and offered a prayer from her Moslem tradition. Rebecca offered a prayer for Mountain from her Christian tradition. Two young girls praying across traditions that could have divided them.

Later I asked Mountain about her prayer and she recited it for me. As she spoke, the words sounded like water flowing over stones in a gentle stream. I asked her about the meaning of the prayer and she replied she was still learning and I should ask her mom. Her mom told me that the prayer was never written, although it did have a symbolic representation. Further that the prayer did not have an assigned meaning. The prayer is known as the “Kalima” and is learned by visiting many people and learning about prayer. Then as a person prays, their thoughts are of the memories of the many people and lives they encountered while learning the prayer. Learning the Kalima was a life long matter. Her mom graciously wrote out the words of the prayer phonetically -- on a piece of the hospital's stationery.

Bishmala Rhamono, Raheim Lila, iiL La La, Mohammed Da Rahbul, Lulu

Later Mountain's mom gave us a porcelain plaque that is symbolic of the Kalima, asking us to keep it on a high shelf.

Mountain knows that she contracted full AIDS from a blood transfusion. Rebecca moved to another hospital and we lost contact, but in a brief call to Mountain's mom the following spring I learned of Mountain's death. She told me that Mountain often prayed for Rebecca. On many mornings I look toward a high shelf and offer a prayer of memories - of Mountain.

Action Point

Reflect on how your faith journey is enriched and informed by people of all ages and faiths.

Prayer

Remind me, O God, that you speak to us in many voices. Let me hear you more clearly and have the courage to follow where you lead. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by Susan Hughes

Redwood United Methodist Church, Rocky Mount (Danville District)

Scripture

“Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11:29-30

Meditation

I had been fighting tears for months, warding off the inevitable impact of my eldest daughter going away to college, knowing the bittersweet transition would eventually come. The day after her departure I could no longer contain my sadness. Seemingly inconsolable, I realized I needed.... something. Weighing my need against the idea of my youngest son seeing me in such a state, I hoped for the best. As I approached him, he became visibly worried, and started to cry asking, “Mom – what's wrong? Are you OK?” I told him I needed a hug and he came to me, his heart freely breaking for mine. I had seen him hugging his sister the night before she left, crying into her chest, and knew that he too was impacted by this change. His instinctive sympathy for my sadness transformed into empathy and our hearts knit even tighter together as we sat holding each other, crying and sharing. At bedtime he whispered to me that if I ever needed him again, he would be there for me. He was honored that I had entrusted him with my need. My heart melted, so thankful for the blessing of this precious boy.

Later, awareness came over me like a crescendo, filling my soul with emotion - I had seen Jesus! He found me on my knees and held me. I can still picture His 11 year old face searching my heart, His eyes filling with tears before I spoke. He knew me and was there, listening and understanding, loving me with His warm embrace. His bedtime whisper still lingers in my ears, a witness to the active presence of Jesus in my life.

Action Point

Once I started listening to God's whisper in my life I have been amazed at the variety of places I hear it. I don't know that I ever expected to feel such a jolt of Christ's grace and message of love for me in the simple act of a child. Have you ever humbled yourself to the mystery and wisdom of a child? Christ's amazing rhythms of grace can be experienced as we are fed by those we serve.

Prayer

Dear God: Thank you for the privilege of having children in our lives. Let us be open to all they have to teach us. Amen.

This is the child who changed my life...

Submitted by: Rev. Teresa Smith

Affiliated with Regester Chapel United Methodist Church, Stafford
(Ashland District)

Director of New Pathways, a ministry designed to spiritually guide people from suffering to hope (www.newpathways.us)

Scripture

Romans 8

Meditation

She was three years old. Energetic. Darling. Brown eyed. She called me, “Mommy!” I was thirty-three. Getting some energy back having recovered from yet another clinical depression. It was springtime and I was wrestling with the angel of God.

Depression turned me into family members whose behavior I loathed. Those family members of mine behaved in picky, irritable, verbally abusive, sharp tongued, and explosive ways, over nothingness. This monster within me had screamed at a two and a half year old for biting her fingernails. Because of her I wanted to be healed. I wanted her to have a life free of the wreckage wrought by uncontrolled Dysthymia (ongoing low grade depression) and bouts of Clinical Depression. Because of her, I fought for and found hope.

In the struggle I came to find that Romans 8 speaks truth when it says that God works good through all things for those who love the Lord. Each time I hand over my suffering to God, God uses it. Instead of finding myself stuck in the dead end of bitterness and anger, I am connected to other people. God sends other people to me who need to know: healing is possible, medication can offer God's healing, self-esteem is buildable, counseling can bring to us the love of God and new ways of seeing. Hope is attainable

Action Point

What do you need to do to give a child a better life?

Prayer

O Lord, thank you for seeking us when we are unable to seek you. Show us how we can reach out to our friends and neighbors when they are in difficult times. Amen.