

A NEW HEART FOR A NEW YEAR

a series of conversations and study based on Celtic wisdom

2020 was a year of great change. "Unprecedented" has become a repeated refrain. Social unrest. Political upheaval. Economic uncertainty. A global pandemic. Where do we go from here?

Forward.

You are invited to step forward into community, conversation, and prayerful transformation through the ancient words of a Celtic prayer, *Lord of My Heart*. These video interviews, scripture, and discussion questions are all designed to draw you deeper into this ancient prayer and begin something new where it matters most: in your heart.

Unprecedented and challenging realities are likely not confined to the year that was. As we've already seen, struggle and unexpected twists will show up this year, too. Listen to these conversations with five creative and inspiring leaders, then reflect on the discussion questions by yourself or with a small group. We trust you'll find God's hope for a new life and a new world filling your heart and propelling you...

Forward.

Yours in Christ,

David Charlton	Senior Minister, First Christian Church , Shelbyville KY
David Emery	Lead Pastor, Harvard Avenue Christian Church , Tulsa OK
Michael Karunas	Senior Minister, Central Christian Church , Decatur IL
Ike Nicholson	Senior Pastor, South Suburban Christian Church , Littleton CO
Michael Swartzentruber	Senior Minister, South Elkhorn Christian Church , Lexington KY

LORD OF MY HEART

Lord of my heart, **give me vision** to inspire me,
that working or resting, I may always think of you.

Lord of my heart, **give me light** to guide me,
that at home or abroad I may always walk in your way.

Lord of my heart, **give me wisdom** to direct me,
that thinking or acting, I may always discern right from wrong.

Lord of my heart, **give me courage** to strengthen me,
that amongst friends or enemies, I may always proclaim your justice.

Lord of my heart, **give me trust** to console me,
that hungry or well-fed, I may always rely on your mercy.

Lord of my heart, save me from empty praise,
that I may always boast of you.

Lord of my heart, save me from worldly wealth,
that I may always look to the riches of heaven.

Lord of my heart, save me from military prowess,
that I may always seek your protection.

Lord of my heart, save me from vain knowledge,
that I may always study your word.

Lord of my heart, save me from unnatural pleasures,
that I may always find joy in your wonderful creation.

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall me,
rule over my thoughts and feelings, my words and actions."

Ray Simpson, in *Daily Light from the Celtic Saints: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life*

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| 1 : VISION | guest - Rev. Terri Hord Owens
General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) |
| 2 : LIGHT | guest - Rev. Dr. Jonathan Hall
Senior Minister, First Christian Church, Colorado Springs CO |
| 3 : WISDOM | guest - Mary Berry
Founder and Executive Director, The Berry Center, New Castle KY |
| 4 : COURAGE | guest - Rev. Ruben Rodriguez
Lead Pastor, Mountair Christian Church, Lakewood CO |
| 5 : TRUST | guest - Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes
Executive Regional Minister, Central Rocky Mountain Region, Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ) |

Session 1: VISION

introduction : David Emery

session : David Emery in conversation with **Terri Hord Owens**

PRAYER FOCUS

*Lord of my heart, **give me vision to inspire me,**
that working or resting, I may always think of you.*

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Ephesians 1:17-18 (NRSV)

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.

MAIN IDEA

If the heart is the source of our motivations, then it will need a vision to guide it. When we give our heart to God, we are saying 'I'm yours, guide me in the path you have in mind for me.' **Vision begins with a surrendered heart.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⇒ When life becomes difficult and the future is uncertain how do you take care of your heart?
- ⇒ How does the first petition of this prayer prepare us for the challenges ahead of us in 2021?
- ⇒ How does a daily habit of reading scripture give us a fresh vision to inspire us?
- ⇒ What was most inspiring thing that impacted you in Terri Hord Owens' interview?

SESSION 2 : LIGHT

welcome : Dave Charlton

session : Michael Swartzentruber in conversation with **Jonathan Hall**

PRAYER FOCUS

*Lord of my heart, **give me light to guide me,**
that at home or abroad I may always walk in your way.*

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

John 8:12 (NRSV)

Again Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

MAIN IDEA

The light God provides makes visible not only new things but also old things. **With God's light we learn our way** through change and uncertainty, and we learn to tell bigger stories.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⇒ What new things or what old things did you begin learning in 2020?
- ⇒ How will you make intentional space for God's light to enter into your life?
- ⇒ Where have you noticed light beginning to overcome the darkness around you?
- ⇒ What one-sided stories in your community might be illuminated to make space for more stories?

SESSION 3 : WISDOM

welcome : Ike Nicholson

session : Dave Charlton in conversation with **Mary Berry**

PRAYER FOCUS

*Lord of my heart, **give me wisdom** to direct me,
that thinking or acting, I may always discern right from wrong.*

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

1 Corinthians 1:18-21 (NRSV)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

MAIN IDEA

Wisdom, in the scriptures, is often portrayed as being 'counter-cultural'. The Beatitudes, and indeed the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount, becomes an exposition of the counter-cultural wisdom of the Kingdom of God. How do we know, though, when we are adopting a spiritual wisdom born of God, or adopting a wisdom that is part of the culture in which we live and might be in opposition to the wisdom of God? How do we know the difference?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⇒ How do you determine the basis for what you think is right? Are you sure you are not 'kicking against the goads'? (Acts 26:14)
- ⇒ In these days of unprecedented change, how do we know the difference between change that is moving us forward in a helpful, healthy manner and that which is not?
- ⇒ In what ways do you see the wisdom of Jesus and the kingdom of God as 'counter-cultural' today?
- ⇒ In one year, two years, five years, ten years, as we look back upon this time, what do you think we will be able to see, in retrospect, that we cannot see now? How much will our perception be shaped by the wisdom of a later time?

SESSION 4 : COURAGE

welcome : Michael Karunas

session : Ike Nicholson in conversation with **Ruben Rodriguez**

PRAYER FOCUS

*Lord of my heart, **give me courage to strengthen me,**
that amongst friends or enemies, I may always proclaim your justice.*

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Joshua 1:5b-9 (NRSV)

I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. 9 I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

MAIN IDEA

Courage is a gift from God. Courage assumes we are entering a context of uncertainty and opposition or the gift is unnecessary. **To pray for courage assumes we are willing to go where we have never been.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⇒ A gift of faith is the refusal to live as an intimidated person. Who are some people and stories that have displayed the courage to live undaunted by intimidation?
- ⇒ What are some of the results you have seen others suffer as a result of lost courage? In your own life?
- ⇒ What are some of the lessons you have learned together with your sisters and brothers in your church, in your community, in your family during this pandemic?
- ⇒ What is the river God is calling you and yours to cross? What are the giants that God is calling you to face? Consider sharing your own goals, hopes, and vision for which you will need God's gift of courage.
- ⇒ You have made it this far through the pandemic and you are probably already thinking about your future. How will God's gift of courage manifest in the days ahead?

Session 5 : TRUST

welcome : Michael Swartzentruber

session : Michael Karunas in conversation with **Joan Bell-Haynes**

PRAYER FOCUS

*Lord of my heart, **give me trust to console me**,
that hungry or well-fed I may always rely on your mercy.*

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Jeremiah 17:5-8 (NRSV)

Thus says the Lord:

*Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.*

*They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes.*

*They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.*

*Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.*

*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.*

MAIN IDEA

Where we invest our trust determines the kind of life we have. To receive God's vision and wisdom, and live by God's courage and in God's light, is to place our trust in God. It is always tempting to trust in human things, but only those who trust in God withstand the uncertainty of an ever-changing world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⇒ Describe a time in your life when trusting in God impacted you in a profound way.
- ⇒ What has been your biggest challenge to trusting in God? How have you dealt with that?
- ⇒ Jeremiah 17:7 says that those who 'trust in the Lord shall be like trees planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. They shall not fear when the heat comes.' What does that verse mean to you when it comes to your own faith journey?
- ⇒ What does 'consolation' mean to you?
- ⇒ If consolation were a spiritual practice (like worship, prayer, or bible study), what would it look like if people were practicing it more?

FEATURED GUESTS



Session 1 : VISION

Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Teresa (Terri) Hord Owens was elected as the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada in July 2017. She is the first person of color and second woman to lead the denomination. She is the first African-American woman to lead a mainline Christian denomination. Rev. Owens was Dean of Students at the University of Chicago Divinity School and pastor of First Christian Church of Downers Grove, IL prior to her election. Terri's resume includes more than 20 years in corporate America as a technology management consultant and executive, leading diverse teams in data management in health care and other industries before she entered seminary.



Session 2 : LIGHT

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Hall, Senior Pastor, First Christian Church, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Rev. Dr. Jonathan B. Hall serves as Senior Pastor at First Christian Church in Colorado Springs, CO. He was born and raised in Huntsville, Alabama, attended Transylvania University, Eden Theological Seminary, Claremont School of Theology, and holds a Certificate of Ecumenical Studies from Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Geneva, Switzerland. For his doctoral project, he wrestled with his own story and the difference between privilege, blessing, and luck. In his free time, Jonathan likes to go to the water park with his family, mountain bike, hike, train for triathlons and adventure races, travel, play pickleball or racquetball, and read historical books with lots of footnotes. Jonathan and his wife, Annie, have two boys named Malachi and Zion, and a kitten named Bo Whiskers.



Session 3 : WISDOM

Mary Berry, Founder and Executive Director, The Berry Center, New Castle, Kentucky

Mary Berry is the founder and Executive Director of The Berry Center, in New Castle, Kentucky. The Berry Center was founded in 2011 to advocate for sound agricultural principles, small farmers, small communities, and local economies, among other work. The Berry Center is, in essence, institutionalizing the work and philosophy of the Berry Family - Mary's grandfather John Berry, Sr., a lawyer and farmer; her uncle, John Berry, Jr., also a lawyer and state senator; and her father, Wendell, arguably the most important writer and voice in America on agriculture, local economies, ecology, and related issues. >>>

The Berry Center has established a unique partnership with Sterling College to create the Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College, which educates young farmers in a full-time, tuition free program in Henry County, Kentucky. They are also home to Our Home Place Meat, a beef program patterned after the tobacco cooperative model which provided farmers with livable profits while keeping money in local economies. Home also to The Agrarian Culture Center and Bookstore at The Berry Center, and other initiatives, there are numerous ways in which Mary's work with The Berry Center is transforming the landscape of agriculture, small communities, and local economies.

Session 4 : COURAGE

Rev. Rubén Rodríguez, Senior Pastor, Mountair Christian Church, Lakewood, Colorado



Pastor Rubén Rodríguez is the Senior Pastor of Mountair Christian Church, on the border of Lakewood and Denver, Colorado. Mountair Christian Church is one of the most active congregations in that area of Denver with a Food Bank that serves both the working poor and the homeless. The Mission Statement for this dynamic congregation is "Reach, Teach, Serve."

Ruben was born in New York, raised in Puerto Rico, and repatriated to the mainland in 1986. Trained as an Electronics Engineer, he was a small business owner/entrepreneur and worked in International Business for 20 of those. He served in lay ministry, mostly with immigrants, in churches from different denominations/theologies in the early 90's and has been serving in a pastoral role since 2005. He has helped in New Congregation development and mission experiences. He has lived in Central Florida, Seattle, Lexington, Atlanta, and in the Denver area for the last 7 years. Ruben also studied business at Northwest University and has an MDiv from Lexington Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 2009 in the Christian Church (DOC).

Session 5 : TRUST

Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes, Executive Regional Minister for the Central Rocky Mountain Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes is the Executive Regional Minister of the Central Rocky Mountain Region and has served in that capacity since 2017. She received her Masters of Divinity from the University of Chicago in 1999. She was ordained into the Christian Church that same year and served as an associate minister in Kansas City and Hyattsville, MD before becoming co-pastor of the United Christian Parish of Reston, VA in 2005 - a congregation with connections to 4 denominations. Joan is well respected in our denomination, having served as the first vice moderator of the General Assembly and secretary of the National Convocation, as well as the boards of the Christian Church Foundation and Church Extension Fund. She is someone who brings people together, as evidenced by her being awarded the Capital Area Bridge Builder Award in 2017.