

# The Fast I Choose: *Living with Intentionality*

## Witness

### Weekly Lenten Prayer Service

*Please see your Lenten Orders for Praise & Prayer booklet.*

### Check in

*Participants are invited to share a bit of their soul each week by answering this check-in question.*

What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?

### Sermon Focus

*Participants should take turns reading the section below.*

This week Pastor Andy told a (kind of funny) joke (*Editor's note: It was hilarious.*) about United Methodists being in the “witness protection program” because in recent history we have not been great at “witnessing” in our ministry.

Historically, United Methodists have been involved with many social justice causes including child labor and women’s rights. Our denomination has a building on Capitol Hill adjacent to the United States Capitol and the Supreme Court, right there on Maryland Ave. Our witness as a denomination was/is seen by the world in our work for equal rights and protection of human dignity. Our human rights and charity efforts across the globe are well known to world leaders.

But our witness is not one that could be described with the classic definition – a more personal invitation or pronouncement of God’s work in our lives. It’s no wonder that the 2008 General Conference (the legislative branch of the United Methodist Church) added the language of witness to our baptismal and membership vows. United Methodists do not usually participate in altar calls, and we’ve not been a denomination to hang “hell” or “damnation” over people as a motivator to get them into our pews. Our message of Wesleyan grace is the most predominant of our beliefs, especially as compared to other denominations. Basically, United Methodists believe that you are less likely to be coerced by fear to come join us than you are to be invited by grace.

And so, our personal witness is not nearly as central to our faith practices as other groups. But we lose something in that. We may feel like our witness is bragging, or we may feel that if we witness to God’s work and invite someone to church that we may sound coercive. Remembering that it is our work to witness and not to convert, may be helpful.

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At the heart of conversion...is God. It is God's work to convert people, to move their hearts closer to God's will for their lives. Our work is to share our own stories and the stories of others when we see this conversion take place. We, as people of faith, may experience this conversion daily. We may witness to God turning our heads and hearts to God with each breath, within a ministry, within communion, while hanging out with loved ones. We may witness God in tragedy and in nature.

No matter where it happens, we've promised in our baptism and membership vows to witness to these things to witness to God.

## Discussion Questions

1. What does it look like to intentionally participate in the life of the church by our *witness*?
2. Outside of this All Church Study, when was the last time you talked with someone about God? When was the last time you pointed out God at work in the world to someone else?
3. When have you encountered a time when you've felt like your experience/witness were not valuable?

## Spiritual Practice

*Each week of Lent we will participate in a different prayer practice.*

This week we will participate in the spiritual practice of gratitude in order to witness to God's work that we experience in others. Make a list of seven people to whom you can reach out, to tell them how you witness God in them. Set an alarm and reach out to one person each day.

Also, take two minutes to write down what you are grateful for. Feel free to write these lists in your Prayer Journal.

## Closing Prayer

*Have a new person lead the prayer each week.*

God of amazing works, we thank you for showing yourself to us through your creation. Help us to better witness to you, to keep our gaze externally focused, to remember to seek you in all things. We thank you for this Lenten journey that we have taken together. We thank you for church community, for your presence, and for your sacrifice. It's in the name of your Son and by the power of your Spirit we pray. **Amen.**