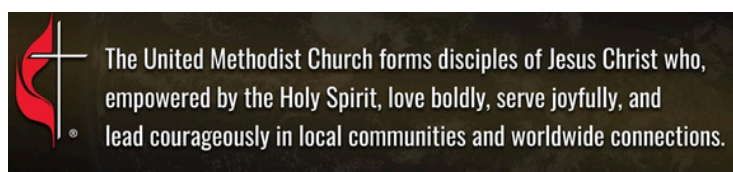


“Love boldly”

Sermon by Robb McCoy

The United Methodist Church Council of Bishops has created a new Guiding Vision for the UMC. For the next three weeks we will examine the three main parts of this statement: love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. Philip, Ananias, and Peter exemplified these ideas in the book of Acts.



Loving boldly means that disciples are willing to take risks. Philip's bold love helped shape the world. The ripples of his bold love spread to Samaria and Ethiopia. His bold love helped take the Gospel “to the ends of the earth” as Jesus commanded before his ascension.

His bold love drove him to Samaria, a place he would not have been welcome. He was able to share the good news with people and convinced Simon, a famous sorcerer (whatever that means), that Jesus was the Christ. He helped bring the Good News to an influential man who helped spread Christ to a foreign land.

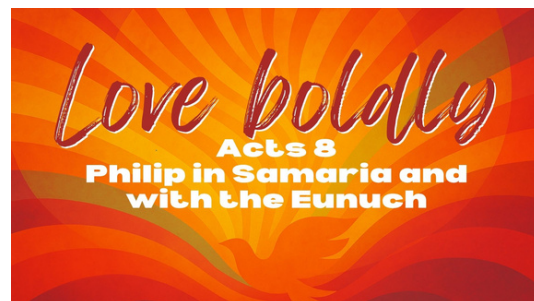
Then his bold love took him to an Ethiopian eunuch on the way home from Jerusalem. The man was reading the Isaiah scroll and Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

The man replied, “Without someone to guide me, how could I?” Philip sits with him, teaches him, and baptizes him. Once again, it was an incredibly bold act of love to connect with this man who was as “other” as a person could be. Philip, driven by the Spirit, built relationships with a Samaritan sorcerer and an Ethiopian eunuch.

For us, bold love may never drive us to such lengths, but maybe we can be empowered to find the “other” among us in need of friendship.

A few days ago my wife, Sarah, went to visit a couple of the kids of our church at their school picnic. It was an end-of-year celebration at Longfellow School where families are invited to have “Lunch on the Lawn.” She went and surprised the kids and brought them treats too.

While she was there, she met one of their friends. A little girl from Ghana with a head scarf and a beautiful smile.



Sarah is the kind of person who can befriend a child instantly. She cares for them, listens to them, jokes with them, and they all bonded immediately.

The next night she was at Hauberg Park for a softball game. Our daughters are teammates in the Rock Island Slow pitch League. The little girl she met at Longfellow School excitedly ran up to her. They were both surprised and delighted to see each other. The little girl lives near Hauberg and came to watch the softball games, and though I wasn't there I imagine the conversation:

“Do you understand what's going on?” Sarah asked.

“Without someone to guide me, how could I?”

So the next day Sarah came to the park and met the little girl again. She brought two gloves and a ball. They played catch. She also met the little girl's Mom. Another night I was finally able to come to a game and I met the little girl, her Mom, her little sister, and her little brother.

We played catch together. They brought Sarah a gift of sandals and they shared the snacks they brought. The whole family started cheering for Ellie and Lucie as they came to bat. We have made plans to see each other again. We will likely have dinner together soon. I want to make them dinner and teach them how to bat.

A new friendship between two families was born out of Sarah's desire to show up for friends from our church. Her bold act of love to go to a place where she wasn't explicitly invited helped create a new friendship. When she saw a little girl interested in softball, she shared her interests and her resources. More importantly, she shared a smile and friendship. Was it bold? It may not seem like much, but it was an act of love. From it, a new friendship has been born and we have no idea where it could go. The ripples of friendship can reach far and wide, and with the Holy Spirit, a world may have been changed.