

Monday - March 29

Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 6:32-35 (NRSV)

One of the most anticipated youth events at PUMC is our annual Fall Retreat. I don't need to remind you of the difficulties and limitations that COVID brought; we all remember and are still living in the midst of some of these. As we thought of ways to somehow replicate our retreat for the fall of 2020 I felt disappointed. It felt like trying something different would take away from tradition, the spiritual renewal that is sought on retreats and the deep connection that students walk away with to God, and each other.

Fortunately, we were blessed by the incredible hospitality of Camp Wesley staff and warm weather, which allowed us to spend lots of time distanced outside. That retreat ended up being our highest attended, ever. Now, this is not the part where I felt a spiritual renewal coming on. The response to the retreat actually made me quite nervous considering the safety protocols that needed to be in place for any gathering. Again, all thanks to Camp Wesley and mindful youth & adult leaders; we had a very safe, socially-distanced weekend.

My spiritual renewal hit afterwards, once everyone went home. Normally after a retreat, everything goes back to normal. Not this time. After months of virtually trying to fill our cup through zoom we finally were able to safely reconnect in-person and when we all came home...things did change. I witnessed a hope for our young people like never before. Youth continued to have meaningful conversation from the retreat with newly made friends, engaging in Bible study, coming to Sunday school, a few of them even formed a youth band.

During one of the most difficult and trying years, our youth nevertheless inspired me with their relentless faith and response to God's call and their own community of faith. Thanks be to God for these young spirits.

Hannah

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for offering opportunities for us to continually seek you and experience a renewal within our hearts. Even when we question your presence, you make it known to us that you are with us and you love us. Through your Son we receive the Bread of life; may we continually be nourished by him. Amen.