



February 2024: Passion for Christ

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Hi! I am Rev. Suzanne Block the District Superintendent of Genesee Valley and Mountain View Districts. It is a blessing to be a part of: Praying Our Way Forward.

The theme for the month of February is Passion for Christ.

The Oxford Dictionary defines passion as a strong and barely controllable emotion; as well as the suffering and death of Jesus.

Synonyms for passion include: desire, hunger, or thirst.

In Greek passion means "to suffer, to be acted on."

For our purposes I will be focusing on the desire, the hunger or the thirst for Christ.

According to the Apostle Paul, from **Galatians 2:20**, My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (NLT)

The same scripture from the Message, **Galatians 2:19-21** What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So, I quit being a "law person" so that I could be God's person.

Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God.

Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that. (The Message)

When our lives have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, our egos are no longer central & we are no longer driven to impress God. Our desire is to be more like Christ. More like Jesus.

We live with this inner passion for Christ. To love fully those around us; to offer water to the thirsty; to visit those in prison; to care for the sick; to clothe the naked & to feed the hungry.

In the United Methodist tradition, we are mindful of both personal piety; which includes reading the Bible, receiving Holy Communion, as well as being a part of a worshipping community.

And Social holiness: which is the practice of obeying Jesus' commandments to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind; loving your neighbor as yourself and loving one another.

During my recent trip to Greece, I had the opportunity to climb Mars Hill located in Athens Greece. It is known as the Areopagus and is a prominent rock. This is where the Apostle Paul preached to the gentiles and can be found in Acts 17:22-34.

Paul's passion for sharing about God, Jesus and the resurrection did not stop even when he was mocked or scoffed at. Even when only some believed. Paul's passion and love for Jesus kept him moving forward so that more and more people would hear the Good News.

This experience to Greece has given me a renewed passion for deepening my prayer life, releasing time wasting habits; strengthening my desire in building relationships and sharing the Good News with joy!

This is a paraphrase: John Wesley once said, 'Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, & desire nothing but God, and we can change the world!

May our passion for Christ lead us to fully love and care for others and to continue sharing the Good News that is only found in a life with Christ.

So that all may come to live with a passion for Christ and change the world.

Amen.