



May 30, 2018

FAITH IS A PRACTICE

Faith is a practice. No one is perfect at it. That's why we keep practicing.

The leader of a Yoga class told us that yoga is a practice, and this freed us to do as much as we could and not worry about what we couldn't do or didn't know. It freed us to trust that each time we came back, our practice would be fuller.

The Christian faith is a set of practices, including prayer, music, study of scripture and theology (all the things we do in worship), and also community relationships, service, forgiveness, and compassion for our neighbors. That's just a partial list, but you get the idea. As we practice our faith, we are drawn more and more into the life of God, the eternal and abundant life that Jesus promised. It doesn't happen all at once.

Have you heard about the "Couch to 5K" program? It is a plan to help non-runners work up to a five kilometer run. I love the name, because it recognizes the simple truth that you can't just get up one day with no practice and run a 5K race. From the couch to 5K takes nine weeks, three workouts per week. Start slowly, and practice. Keep it going, and you'll run a marathon.

Christian practice takes time. The attentiveness of prayer, the joy of celebration, the strength of our compassion, our willingness to be generous and to forgive: all of these abilities grow over time as we practice them. Often, we are already well-practiced at distraction, resentment and fear, but the qualities of faith are already sown in us. To practice faith is to uncover our real selves and to let them flourish.

The Dalai Lama says that the practices of faith will make us like a strong tree with deep roots. Such a tree can well withstand even a terrible storm, but the time to grow roots is not when we see a storm on the horizon. Faith practices take time, and when we are battered by storms, we will find that our spirits are strengthened by a well-practiced attention to God, good relationships with a community, and a depth of compassion for ourselves and for others.

We are blessed by a community in which to practice our faith together.

We are not perfect. We practice.

I'll see you in church!

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister