

PASTOR'S PEN DID YOU KNOW?

In our Methodist Tradition, Wesley taught that there are the stages of progression of relationship with God: unbelief, belief and sanctification. The first stage is unbelief. In the stage of unbelief, people fall into one of three camps: either they have just not heard enough about God to make a decision. Or they have heard of God, but have never been motivated to seek God. Or lastly, they have decided against God generally because to their understanding some aspect of the nature or actions of God is illogical to them, so they throw belief out the window.

In this first stage, Wesley taught that God is acting on us through His grace, to activate faith in us. Wesley called this God acting on us with “prevenient grace” which he called the grace which goes before we have faith. The person who has made up his or her mind against God is the hardest one to get through to and sometimes it never happens. I always tell people who are atheist, that if they have made up their mind against God, they are not being intellectually honest, that the only intellectually honest position is to say, “I am willing to change my mind if presented with compelling evidence.” In other words, to get to know God, you need at least to keep an open mind. In my experience, openness to being shown the reality of God is required, because as a rule, God does not kick down the doors and force his way into our lives, He knocks and waits for us to listen and open the door. God tugs at our heart strings, prods our conscience, works to open our eyes, and to puncture the shell of false conceptions of God we may have. Sometimes, it can take many years for someone to open their mind to the possibility of the reality of God.

Once you have accepted that there really does seem to be a God, then at some point in this stage, you come to truly believe in and then accept God as your God. According to Wesley, our accepting God as our God, results in God accepting us as His child; this brings with it a new expression of God's grace, Wesley called “justifying Grace.” “Justified” means that God has found you acceptable to be received into Heaven. Here is where Jesus Christ comes in. He died on the cross, receiving a punishment he didn't deserve, a punishment that we do deserve, as a substitute for us, to obtain forgiveness for our sins. So, faith in Jesus and accepting his self-offering brings us justification in God's eyes.

This next stage of progression, in relationship with God, is the “getting to know you” stage, and it involves our gradual awakening to the realities of God. During this stage, Wesley taught that God is acting on us with “sanctifying grace.” Sanctifying is meaning that God's graces is helping us to live Holy lives. Paul tells us: “He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them” (2 Corinthians 5:15 NLT).

The way God's grace strengthens our faith is that it takes us from the most basic levels of faith on up. The Bible tells us the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fear of God is a part of this stage of getting to know God, if you are not at first at least a little bit afraid of God, I would question whether you have really thought about and gotten to know God. At this stage of progression, our relationship with God continues and the Holy Spirit is working within us, helping us to take away or overcome everything in us that doesn't belong or that prevents us from a closer relationship with God.

Eventually, in time, we move into the friendship/love relationship with God, when we can say, “I am a friend of God.” And when we can say, “I truly love God more than anything else.” Then, we are in a most excellent place. In this stage of progression, our relationship is made up of a series of revelations from God, mostly about ourselves, which causes us to have crises of faith. Then, we make adjustments and these lead us to an even closer and more loving relationship with God, in which we also obey and truly experience God working in our lives on a frequent basis. Eventually, at the highest level is what Wesley called “entire sanctification” which he described as being free of sin in thought and action. Jesus said, “You must be perfect - just as your Father in Heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48 TEV). Obviously, this is an exceptionally rare and difficult stage to achieve and almost no one gets there, but this is the goal we are to aim for.

In His Grace, Pastor Tim



JULY CALENDAR

July 1 (SUNDAY)

COMMUNION

8:30am Awake Coffee
 8:45am Awake Service
 10:00am Adult Sunday School
 10:00am Children's Sunday School
 10:00am Traditional Worship
 11:00am Coffee Fellowship
 11:30am Adult Sunday School

July 2 (MONDAY)

5:00pm Tai Chi
 7:15pm Boy Scouts

July 3 (TUESDAY)

6:30pm AA Big Book Study
 6:30pm Sea Band Practice
 7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

July 4 (WEDNESDAY)

OFFICE CLOSED-4TH OF JULY HOLIDAY

July 5 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast

July 6 (FRIDAY)

July 7 (SATURDAY)

8:00pm AA Meeting

July 8 (SUNDAY)

8:30am Awake Coffee
 8:45am Awake Service
 10:00am Adult Sunday School
 10:00am Children's Sunday School
 10:00am Traditional Service
 11:00am Coffee Fellowship
 11:30am Adult Sunday School

July 9 (MONDAY)

9:00am Drama Camp
 7:00pm Trustees Meeting
 7:15pm Boy Scouts

July 10 (TUESDAY)

9:00am Drama Camp
 6:30pm AA Big Book Study
 6:30pm Sea Band Practice
 7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

July 11 (WEDNESDAY)

9:00am Drama Camp
 5:00pm Tai Chi
 7:00pm Finance Meeting ??
 7:00pm Ladies Bible Study
 8:00pm AA, Alanon Meeting
July 12 (THURSDAY)
 8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast
 9:00am Drama Camp
 6:00pm Street Ministry

July 13 (FRIDAY)

9:00am Drama Camp
 7:00pm Drama Camp Program

July 14 (SATURDAY)

8:00pm AA Meeting

July 15 (SUNDAY)

8:30am Awake Coffee
 8:45am Awake Service
 10:00am Children's Sunday School
 10:00am Adult Sunday School
 10:00am Traditional Service
 11:00am Coffee Fellowship
 11:30am Adult Sunday School

July 16 (MONDAY)

1:00pm Prayer Meeting
 7:15pm Boy Scouts

July 17 (TUESDAY)

6:30pm AA Big Book Study
 6:30pm Sea Band Practice
 7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

July 18 (WEDNESDAY)

5:00pm Tai Chi
 7:00pm Ladies Bible Study
 8:00pm AA, Alanon Meeting

July 19 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast

July 20 (FRIDAY)

July 21 (SATURDAY)

8:00pm AA Meeting

July 22 (SUNDAY)

8:30am Awake Coffee
 8:45am Awake Service
 10:00am Adult Sunday School
 10:00am Children's Sunday School
 10:00am Traditional Service
 11:00am Coffee Fellowship
 11:30am Adult Sunday School

July 23 (MONDAY)

1:00pm Prayer Meeting
 7:15pm Boy Scouts

July 24 (TUESDAY)

6:00pm Street Ministry
 6:30pm AA Big Book Study
 6:30pm Sea Band Practice
 7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

July 25 (WEDNESDAY)

5:00pm Tai Chi
 6:00pm Street Ministry
 7:00pm Ladies Bible Study
 8:00pm AA, Alanon Meeting

July 26 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast

July 27 (FRIDAY)

July 28 (SATURDAY)

8:00pm AA Meeting

July 29 (SUNDAY)

8:30am Awake Coffee
 8:45am Awake Service
 10:00am Children's Sunday School
 10:00am Adult Sunday School
 10:00am Traditional Service
 11:00am Coffee Fellowship
 11:30am Adult Sunday School

July 30 (MONDAY)

1:00pm Prayer Meeting
 7:15pm Boy Scouts

July 31 (TUESDAY)

6:00pm 5th Tuesday Street
 6:30pm AA Big Book Study
 6:30pm Sea Band Practice
 7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

PAC A SACK - COLLECTING DURING SUMMER

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Evangelism as Paradox

One of the famous phrases from my childhood spirituality that rolls around in my head from time to time is this, “God loves you just the way you are, but God loves you so much not to leave you that way.” Maybe you’ve heard a version of this in your life or it rings true. When it comes to Evangelism, God’s love serves as the fuel, the fire and the basis. We love because God first loved us. Our love for God must overflow into other people – yes, especially non-churched, unchurched, de-churched and antichurch people.

So the paradox becomes how do you love someone, truly, authentically and fully, while at the same time, not wanting them to remain the person whom you love right now?

Now, if my wife, Amanda, reads this, I might get into some trouble, and that’s ok. When we got engaged and started dating (long story), one of the conversations we had was that we both had a deep desire to be loved the way we were, and we didn’t want to have to change to make the other person happy. Both of us truly did love the other person, both of us wanted to be married to the other person, but the truth is, being in relationship with one another has changed us and changed us dramatically over the last ten years.

This is how it is with us and God. We cannot be in an authentic relationship with God and NOT be changed. Likewise, if we are going to be in an authentic and loving relationship with others (and our relationship with Christ has become a part of who we are) then Christ necessarily enters the relationship with us. Since this is the case, if that other person has a full encounter with Jesus Christ through their relationship with us, then they inevitably will be changed as a result.

So how do we love others as they are, but love them so much that we can’t wait until they know Jesus Christ and are different? It starts with first, allowing ourselves to be transformed by Christ first. Then, in the power of that transformed love, to genuinely love others where and as they are. After all, that’s what God’s love is all about – For God so LOVED the WORLD that He gave His only Son. Notice it doesn’t say, God so loved the world as it COULD BE, or as God would REDEEM it to be, just that God LOVED the world. Jesus is often depicted going out into the world and meeting people who were dirty, dusty, broken and bruised (and of ill repute) where they were. So, if we love Jesus and have been transformed, then we must go and love everyone we meet. And the paradox will resolve itself.

Your Servant in Christ,
Pastor Nathan, Associate Pastor



Happenings

This is just a quick blurb to ask you to pray for our youth (and chaperones) as we embark on our yearly youth trip from July 7-13 in Tennessee. Ask for God’s guidance and protection and for the Spirit to move among our youth that they might come back knowing Jesus and with a renewed commitment to serve God in this world.

We thank you for your prayers and look forward to giving you a good report!

In Christ,
Pastor Nathan,
Youth Pastor and Associate
Pastor



Congregational Care Ministries

Once again this month, I want to provide practical tools for spiritual health in times of need or crisis. This month's prayer resource focuses on the issue of Discernment. Times of discernment arise throughout our lifetimes. Whether we have children at home for whom we want to provide the best future, whether a major life change such as college, retirement, or care assistance looms, or whether we simply need to determine whether or not to buy a new car or make a new friend, discernment occurs throughout our lives. As Christians, we must pay particular attention to choices like these as Christ calls us to reflect kingdom values through our choices and not simply parrot what the world would have us do. My prayer is that the leadership of Rev. Dr. Brall will give you fresh eyes in a time of need or help in thinking and praying through your own discernment.

In Christ,

Pastor Nathan, Associate Pastor

DISCERNMENT

The Rev. Dr. Cathy Brall, Director of Field Education

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and sorry I could not travel both and be one traveler, long I stood" ("The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost).

"For to me, life is Christ, and death gain; but what if my living on in the body may serve some good purpose? Which then am I to choose?" (Phil 1:21-22).

"Pastor, I've got to choose between A, B, and C for my next (job, house, school for my child, etc.)—can you help me decide what is best?" Or "Pastor, can I meet with you to talk about what God wants me to do about XYZ situation?" Requests such as these are calls for discernment, for helping someone or a group of people—or perhaps even our own self—find the guidance or direction needed to make a godly choice. Even people who generally have a less-than-robust prayer life are willing to talk with God when faced with a difficult or weighty decision. Sometimes they choose to seek advice with someone they view as God's representative—a minister, church-going relative, or wise and trusted friend.

The process becomes discernment when it includes conversations (prayer) with God and others in order to seek God's will and perspective on the situation at hand.

Several years ago, a friend recommended "In Search of Guidance," by Dallas Willard—the first book that I read on the topic of discernment. A revised edition was published under its current title, "Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God," which highlights the importance of both conversation and relationship in seeking discernment. It's a book that I still treasure, re-read from time to time, and frequently recommend to others. This book helped me understand that God wants us to know God's will for our lives and that God isn't interested in playing hide-and-seek games

with us or waiting until we've reached some high level of spiritual attainment near sainthood to let us in on God's direction. Similarly in a sense to our experiences with healthy and life-giving human relationships, God desires that as we grow in relationship with Christ, we become mature people who naturally perceive and desire what would be pleasing and glorifying to God in our actions, attitudes, and choices. As we grow in our knowledge and love of God, we become better discerners.

In the preface to his book, Willard describes a picture of his children happily playing in the yard and writes that he didn't have a particular preference for any specific sort of play they might undertake. As long as his kids were engaged in any of a number of acceptable options, they were completely within their father's will. Willard then comments, "Generally speaking we are in God's will whenever we are leading the kind of life he wants for us. And that leaves a lot of room for initiative on our part, which is essential: our individual initiatives are central to his will for us" (Willard, *Hearing God* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999], 11).

I have repeatedly found this comment helpful because there are times when we struggle to come to a definitive answer or the one, right (and often implied perfect) decision or choice, when God may, in fact, not have a preference for a specific option among a group of equally good possibilities. There may be two or more good choices. Practically speaking, each of these possibilities offers us a different path with varying circumstances, blessings, and challenges that will present unique opportunities for nurturing our relationship with God and helping us to mature spiritually. For example, choosing one particular job or house over the other acceptable options may open a door to a particular set of people and circumstances that will provide opportunities for us to grow in patience and generosity. Choosing another equally good job or house may lead to a different door or path to grow in these same virtues—or perhaps other virtues entirely.

God's concern is that our choices would continue to allow for growth in our relationship with God (knowing and loving God more deeply/fully/experientially) and that our character would more closely resemble that of Jesus were he to be living life's path in our shoes.

First of all, over the years I've learned to hear God's voice in ways that generally remain consistent to my experience and relationship with God. I pay more notice when God catches my attention or communicates with me in ways that have been significant to my relationship with Christ. On the one hand I've had experiences in which I knew unmistakably that God had spoken or nudged me to make God's will and perspective known—almost always when I hadn't been actively seeking to hear from God. Conversely, at other times, no matter how hard I've tried or prayed, I haven't been able to make God speak or force God's will to be made explicitly known to me. Rarely does God let me know what's going to happen in the future. When God does disclose it to me, it may be so that I will be better able and prepared to serve others. Hearing from God and not hearing from God both tend to grow me in humility, strengthen my trust in God's providence, and build up my faith.

Continued

Book Review
Without You There Is No Us
 by: Suki Kim



Suki was a writer disguised as a missionary disguised as a teacher. For her and 30 other missionaries, locked in a heavily guarded campus in an empty Pyongyang suburb, her job, along with the other teachers, was to teach English to 270 male North Korean students.

Living there, they were completely shut off from the rest of the world. No news came in or out. There were no phones, no letters, no emails. Nothing happened that was not permitted by the North Korean regime.

Suki's first trip to Pyongyang was in 2011. Everything she needed for her assignment needed to be packed - everything from clothes to a small refrigerator to toiletries, antibiotics, protein bars, and vitamins. She prepared as best she could for the assignment she would never forget.

This is a fascinating book that will have the reader's thoughts lingering back on its story for months. Freedom will take on a new meaning. A MUST READ that is in the 2018 UMW Reading Program, available through the Pinellas County Public Library.

Submitted by:
 Lynda Olsen

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Congregational Care Continued

Lastly, God has at various times given me guidance or knowledge that I have no idea how to apply because the time to use it will come later. After making a sincere attempt to understand such revelation without any success, I've learned to put it aside, to continue walking my current path, and to wait patiently for God's further direction when the time is right. All such things are part of the great adventure of walking with God through one's own life and in ministry alongside others.

This prayer of St. Richard of Chichester can be helpful to those struggling with discernment: Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Consider also this prayer of Thomas Merton: My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

GOD

The man whispered, "God, speak to me."
And a meadowlark sang. But the man did not hear.

So the man yelled, "God, speak to me!"
Thunder rolled across the sky. But the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, "God, let me see you."
A star shone brightly. But he noticed it not.

And the man shouted, "God, show me a miracle."
And a life was born. But the man was unaware.

So, the man cried out in despair, "Touch me, God, and let me know that
you are here!"

Whereupon God reached down and touched the man.
But the man brushed the butterfly away and walked on.

Moral: Don't miss out on a blessing because it isn't packaged the way
you expect.

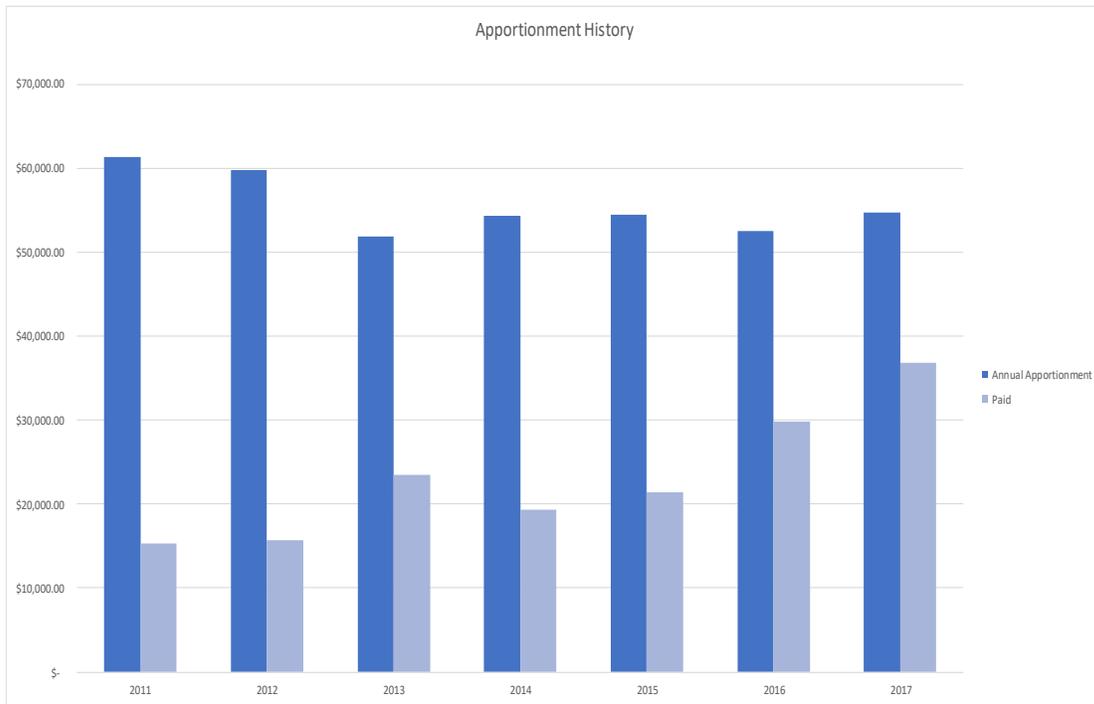
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Apportionment History and Current 2018 Status

Oakhurst UMC has continued to improve on our commitment to paying our *fair share* of connectional apportionments over the last 7 years. This trend is shown in the graph and Apportionment History data box, developed by Bob Blain, Church Treasurer.

Year	Annual Apportionment	Paid	% paid
2011	\$ 61,372.00	\$ 15,255.00	24.86
2012	\$ 59,727.00	\$ 15,719.00	26.32
2013	\$ 51,936.00	\$ 23,455.00	45.16
2014	\$ 54,373.00	\$ 19,324.00	35.54
2015	\$ 54,527.00	\$ 21,420.00	39.28
2016	\$ 52,490.00	\$ 29,803.00	56.78
2017	\$ 54,760.00	\$ 36,829.00	67.26



Apportionment collections and payments through May, 2018 are showing that the end of year apportionment payment percentage will exceed the actual amount paid in 2017. Praise God! The positive trend continues!

The 2018 Apportionment amount due at the end of December = \$54,919.
 The current actual amount of apportionments paid through May = \$25,853.
 Current % of apportionments paid through May 2018 = 47.08%

We have been blessed with generous benevolent donations this year and we praise God for these financial gifts. More individual designated giving is needed in order for Oakhurst to reach 100% paid for 2018. **Pew envelopes or our pledge envelopes may be marked for Apportionments** and I ask you to prayerfully consider making a financial gift for that purpose. God Bless!

Rick Jacobson, Interpreter of Connectional Giving.

Ephesians 3:20 “Now glory be to God who by His mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of – infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts or hopes.”



UNDIE SUNDAY - What a success!! The Clothes to Kids program offers each referred child an opportunity to shop for and pick out their own school clothing (5 sets) in respectful shops in Clearwater, St Petersburg and a new store in Tampa. Thank you to all for the donations you gave in support of this program!!



JONI AND FRIENDS

Jon and Barbara Trezona spent another week as short term missionaries in their support of families with disabilities. They worked with *Joni and Friends*, Barb in the class-room doing crafts, Jon with an individual camper in the mornings, and taking people tubing during the afternoons. On a Thursday evening special dinner for the parents [without their children], they were treated to 'sunset boat rides' on both Mona Lake and Lake Michigan by Jon and other boaters. This is the third year that Barb and Jon Trezona have volunteered their time and stayed with the Leeds' family at their Michigan home.



Gulf Central District Summer Fellowship

Presents

Heavenly Healthy

“I honor God with how I care for my body because it is the temple of the holy spirit.”

1 Corinthians 6:19

YMCA Fitness Programs

Healthy Snacks

Instruction on a
Relaxing Therapeutic

Hand Massage

Cooking with an Air Fryer

Spirituality of Healthy Living



*Today will be my day.
I am the best me there is.
I know that I am a winner.
God will always be with me.*

United Methodist Women
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August 25, 2018

1 p.m.—3 p.m.



Embracing Autism

Annette Clairry, RN, MSN-BC

If we are to change how the world sees autism, we need to learn about autism from those who know it best - those who are autistic. Doing so will dispel stereotypes such as autistics do not have feelings, autism only

affects children, or they have no empathy. Stereotypes are fallacies at best and at worst can be deeply hurtful to people with autism and those that love them.

Children with autism grow up to be adults with autism. There are 1.5 million people in the U.S. with autism and an untold number of additional adults who may have never been diagnosed. This is a generation of people who are misunderstood and often invisible. They try to fit into the normal sensory world but with great difficulty. People with autism don't look any different from anyone else - so often they are expected to function just like anyone else despite this developmental disability affecting social communication, sensory function and repetitive behaviors.

Frustrating? Yes, it is for people with autism. Let's ASK and then patiently LISTEN to what the person with autism is experiencing. We might learn what he/she wants, needs, feels. We might discover he just wants to connect or enjoy something together with us. Or we might learn how she wants us to help support her efforts to live a meaningful adult life.

Learn about autism from people with autism. Really listening to someone shows respect and caring. Listening without judgement builds relationship and self-esteem. It's the human thing to do, and what we are called to do as Christians. It's a way to extend radical hospitality - accepting others as honored guests and really getting to know them. So they don't feel alone.

Kim Clairry Miller, an adult with autism and an attendee of Oakhurst UMC, has a passion for letting others know what it is like to live with autism. Her goal is to help people understand and to make our communities a more hospitable place for others like her. She will be speaking at the International Autism Conference, which will be held in the U.S. this fall.

A Plea for the Forgotten Generation... Adults with Autism

By Kim Clairry
(Connect with Kim at kimclairry.com)

We are the forgotten, the unseen, the hidden

We are hiding behind the masks you, society, created

These masks that cover us also kills us.
Suffocating we struggle to be seen

Seeing us will help you realize
That we are just like you

Wanting to love and be loved
Hoping to be understood to understand

We desire to raise families
To hold jobs
To be part of society

Yet we are hidden, suffocating, hiding

Peeping out we do not dare
Harsh labels and words like daggers are wounding

The unsaid of who we are is unknown
But the said is also unknown
To your ears
We are hidden, hiding, afraid, and scared

Now I call to you my dear friends

Come out,
Try not to be scared

Some will not hear
They will not see

But some will.

I promise
Be brave
Be bold
Begin being you

Again, movement we must make

Or else those like us will remain hidden
Remain hiding
Behind the masks they created for us

Movement we must make

continued

Once they see
Once they hear
Once they understand
We can make movement

I cry out for help

Please.

I am trying to pave a path
To make everyone understand
That we are all the same

Wanting to love and be loved
Hoping to be understood to understand

That we desire to raise families
To hold jobs
To be part of society

But

The possible seems impossible
When suffocating without support

So

Alone I stand on solid ground
Surrounded by both worlds

I wish I could make you all see

That the masked
And the masking
Is making
Move me to
Impossible

For We are the forgotten, the unseen, the hidden



**I put the
thingamabob inside
the whatchamacallit,
turned the
doohickey and the
wuteveritis still
doesn't work.
Any idea's?**

New
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