

Resources for sustaining joy

Vision readers

As I worked with writers for this issue of *Vision* on the theme of joy, it became clear to me that we don't talk about this gift of the Spirit often or easily. Or at least we don't talk about it in a primary way often or easily. We talk about the joy of ministry or the joy of gardening, but joy is secondary to the topic. When it comes to joy itself, we are remarkably silent.

We sometimes include in *Vision* issues a review article or a resource listing on the topic of the issue. In lieu of a review article by a single author, I decided to ask subscribers to *Vision* whether there is a particular resource that nurtures their joy in leadership and ministry and whether they'd be willing to write a hundred words or so about it for the benefit of their fellow pastors and church leaders. I asked: "Is there a piece of music that you turn to? A poem? A particular writer? A practice or discipline? Is there a particular article that you have found helpful? A biblical passage? What generates or restores joy for you?"

Here are their responses.

—Mary Schertz



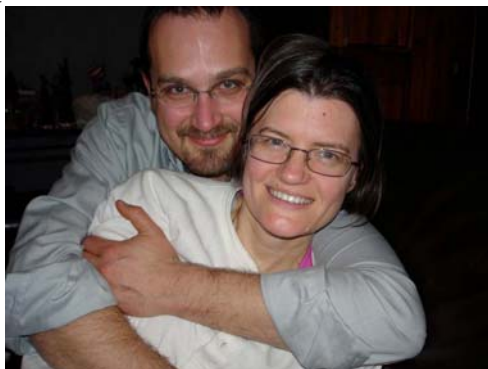
Restored by play

I am restored to joy when I play. For me, play can be sewing and working with colorful fabrics or coloring a mandala or creating a collage or using my paints and paintbrushes. All of these involve colors and physical engagement with a particular medium.

Playing removes me from the distractions of computer, Internet, and office. Play moves me from the critical and structured side of my brain to the intui-

tive and creative side. I am in a meditative space where I am more receptive to surprise and joy. I am more open and joyful. I feel restored by joy.

—June Mears Driedger (Lansing, Michigan)



Altars of blessing

“Everybody has a thing,” my friend Christine said. “Do your thing.” When I do my thing, I find my joy. When a stranger entrusts me with his or her story, I experience joy. Like Jacob, I build an altar to mark the spot. I return to recover my joy. Over time the joy grows deeper and

richer. I look out over all the altars in my landscape and realize how blessed I have been. How often held in prayer, how many have reflected the face of the divine. Truly, God was in this place, and I did not know it.

—Kelly Carson, Bloomington, Indiana



Beauty sets the stage

Joy is an elusive emotion that calls me to go beyond myself, beyond circumstances or context to something bigger and greater. It cannot be forced but only invited to come.

For me, beauty is a key component that sets the stage for the possibility of joy to show up. Soaring music—such as “Gabriel’s Oboe” from *The Mission* soundtrack, or George Winston’s *Autumn* CD—is beauty in sound. Beauty in vision takes many forms, but I especially find it when I am sur-

rounded by nature with all her many shades of color, smells, and textures. In nature, I find rest, renewal, and restoration, just as Psalm 23 declares.

A resource I have found particularly helpful is John O'Donohue's book *Beauty: Rediscovering the True Source of Compassion, Serenity, and Hope* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004). O'Donohue invites the reader to consider various forms of beauty for restoration and renewal, such as color, shapes that dance, imagination, attraction, the beauty of the flaw, and beauty and death. He also explores the call to beauty, where beauty dwells, and God as beauty. There are multiple small treatises exploring various aspects of each topic, which are excellent for personal prayer and reflection.

—Terri Geiser (Elkhart, Indiana)



Joy is

If you had been an observer of the driver of a red Ford Focus driving home to Newton, Kansas, from, let's say, Beatrice, Nebraska, at 10:00 p.m., after a meeting with the church council, you would have seen a conference minister singing at the top of her lungs to either the rock 'n' roll station on the radio (my fav) or the CD of *Sing the Story*. Great joy!

There are, of course, other moments of great joy. Reading (most anything) by Kathleen Norris, Barbara Brown Taylor, or Walter Brueggemann; listening to music, especially symphonic, organ, reggae, and women's voices. There are the delightful moments of grandchildren's remarkable honesty and those tender goodnights from a spouse. There are the comfort foods of Zwiebach and mashed potatoes, the guilty pleasures of Krispy Kreme doughnuts and Arby's chocolate turnovers. The joy of deep friendships that can resume on a moment's notice. The feel of a freshly washed dish and the smell of laundry just dried in the morning air. Great poetry and biblical psalms. Art created by friends and pieces displayed in Italian museums.

Joy is rest, a Sunday afternoon nap, and the lack of pain. Joy is vocation and vacation. Joy is.

—Dorothy Nickel Friesen (Newton, Kansas)



Children help me remember

I turn to children for restoration and refreshment! Just now I was singing a vacation Bible school song from this week: “I got the joy of Jesus!” Children bring out the joy in us as they marvel at commonplace occurrences and objects that we pass by every day. They bring the joy of laughter and lightness, as they don’t know yet how to take themselves too seriously. And they bring the joy of being, as they are so obviously precious and (mostly) innocent. They help us

remember that at our core we are each of us beloved children—not loved based on our performance or achievement. That is pure joy—the joy of being, being God’s creature in God’s creation, and letting that be enough. Children help us to remember.

—Matthew Insley (South Bend, Indiana)



On a river of joy

A resource for sustaining joy that immediately comes to mind for me is “Sing for Joy,” the radio program started by Alvin Reuter, a Lutheran pastor in Iowa, now produced at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. I first heard it on WAUS while studying at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, Indiana), and have become a regular listener. It can be accessed online, but I usually tune in an AM station out of Sioux Falls that comes in clearly enough (most of the time) to listen in Mountain Lake on Sunday

morning. The program plays sacred music featuring the biblical themes in the lectionary for each Sunday. When I’m using lectionary texts for preaching, listening to “Sing for Joy” is like a reward for doing my homework.

Hearing Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere mei, Deus* always brings joy through my ears. I hold my breath for the soaring soprano line. Another resource is *The Joyful Noiseletter*, publication of the Fellowship of Merry Christians. I enjoy these newsletters when they arrive in the mail, and I keep them in a couple of large three-ring binders. And yes, I pull them down and reread when I need more joy—and I also quote them in the church newsletter.

Jep Hostetler's book *The Joy Factor* is another I turn to. (Jep introduced me to the Fellowship of Merry Christians and their newsletter.) I am not sure I remember the exact wording of his statement, but it's something like: "You can be in a boatload of sorrow on a river of joy."

—E. Elaine Kauffman (Mountain Lake, Minnesota)



Puppies!

Is it too silly to write about the joy infusion that comes into my life when we have litters of Golden Retriever puppies? We have a litter right now, and caring for them is such a blessing and gift of joy.

—Jane Thorley Roeschley (Graymont, Illinois)



A gift of the Holy Spirit

In the book of Philipians, Paul teaches us from prison that we can have joy in spite of what we are going through or what we have been through. It does not matter where we are, who we are, or who we are with, because joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit that comes from the inside. Joy is produced by the Holy Spirit regardless of our circumstances.

The joy we are seeking only comes from being filled with the

Holy Spirit, so never allow sorrows or disappointments to cause you to forget for one moment the promise of Jesus our risen Savior, the promise to send us a Comforter—the Holy Spirit. Joy only comes from the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed that our joy would be complete, and he promised that the Father would send us another helper to abide with us and make our joy complete. All you have to do to receive the joy of the Holy Spirit is receive the Holy Spirit.

How do you receive the filling of the Holy Spirit? The same way you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You ask and believe. The Holy Spirit responds to belief, just as Jesus did when we believed that he has saved us. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith. Faith only comes as we choose to believe the promises of God. The Holy Spirit is a promise: receive him. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be filled with the word of God. The Holy Spirit can only operate within the believer's knowledge of the word. The Holy Spirit renews our heart, but it is our responsibility to renew our minds. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by him. Being controlled by the Holy Spirit brings joy, peace and love.

Receive the Holy Spirit, if you want your joy to be complete!

—Dianna Graham (Elkhart, Indiana)



Joy motivates ministry

Joy for me is an elusive thing. I feel happy, ecstatic, fulfilled. Joy, however, never seems to come as a result of any ministry. For me, joy is not a result of anything, but it is a source of motivation to do the will of God in my life. Without the joy of my salvation by the grace of God through Christ Jesus, I have no reason to keep pursuing the means of ministry that I am pursuing. I draw off of the passage in 1 Peter 1:8–9: “Even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an

inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” For my walk, joy does

not come as a result of anything I do but because of what is now possible in me because of and through the grace offered by Jesus Christ on the cross. Because I have this new possibility, I can joyfully pursue the ministry God has for me, without worrying if I “fit the bill.” It is by the grace of God that is with me that I can do what I am currently doing. This is my joy, my motivation, and my inspiration.

—Kevin Swartzendruber (Goshen, Indiana)