

May 2019

Dear Saugatuck UMC Friends,

Martin Luther once said, "If you're not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don't want to go there." Sarah in the Old Testament said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me" (Genesis 21:6).

I agree with those sentiments. Years ago my dentist was filling a cavity. He had several tools in my mouth as well as his fingers. Like most dentists he would talk while he worked. I knew my dentist went to the Catholic Church and was a religious man. And as he worked and talked he asked a question, "Pastor, do you believe God has a sense of humor?" Just as he said those words there was a flash of lightening, the lights blinked, and then the sound of thunder. There was no need for me to answer his question. I just smiled.

My grandkids call me the silly grandpa. And I like that. I would much rather be remembered as being silly than as being mean or grumpy. And the reason I am silly around my grandkids is that I love to hear them laugh. I am so pleased when one of them says, "Grandpa you're silly." I just believe that God has a sense of humor, that he sometimes laughs, and that he loves to hear the laughter of his children.

The word laugh first appears in Genesis 17:17. Here God tells 100 year old Abraham that his 90 year old wife Sarah was going to have a baby. The Bible says Abraham fell on his face and laughed. Later in chapter 18 three visitors appeared to tell Abraham again that he and Sarah would have a son. Sarah is eavesdropping and when she hears she is going to have a baby she too laughs. In chapter 21 the child is born and Abraham gives him the name Isaac, which means, "God's laugh."

I am convinced that God smiles and laughs. I am also convinced there are times when he wants us to have a good laugh. I used to give my kids this advice when they were growing up. I would remind them that when you cry you cry alone, but when you smile the whole world smiles with you. And by the way it is biblical to smile and laugh. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

One pastor offered this prayer for laughter:

"Lord, help me today to create more laughter than tears.

People look better and feel better when they laugh.

Let me be a dispenser of joy and fun.

Never allow me to forget that ministry is all about encouragement.

Amen."

In Christ,

Emmett & Mary