



THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

# THE WAY OF LOVE

with Bishop Michael Curry

## Season 2, Episode 4: Turning to Hope for the World and in Our Lives

**Bishop Michael Curry:** This is Bishop Michael Curry and you're listening to *The Way of Love*. In this episode, we're talking about the practice we call "Turn" – pause, listen, and choose to follow Jesus.

[music]

**Sandy Milien:** Welcome back to *The Way of Love*, a podcast from The Episcopal Church about following Jesus and changing the world. In season two, we're talking about the Way of Love beyond the church walls. I'm Sandy Milien and I'm here with Kyle Oliver.

**Kyle Oliver:** Thanks, Sandy. We're talking about the practice turn today and we'll be speaking with Ruth Anderson and Greg Farrand of Second Breath. That's a center for spirituality based in Greensboro, North Carolina. We'll be chatting with them about ways to pause each day and how we can gradually find purpose and meaning as we meet God in the silences of our lives.

**Sandy:** Yes, but before we do that, we have a different take on the word "turn". We spoke to Bishop Curry recently about some of the big challenges facing our world today and what it would look like to turn our societies toward love and life. He told us a little bit about some inspiring leaders he believes are showing us the way.

**Bishop Curry:** I can think of three examples that involve young people in particular, and one that involve people on the exact opposite of the age spectrum. There are signs of hope, it seems to me, both for deep and a real faith and signs of hope for the human family regardless of faith.

One is the young woman, Malala, there was an attempted assassination on her because she was from Pakistan and she was advocating, especially for young girls to get an education. I grew up learning that education is always the key to emancipation and for girls not to have that opportunity or even boys, anybody not to have that opportunity is wrong. That is a violation, if not of a formal human right, it is a violation of human dignity.

She was advocating and really working as a young teenager. She's a young kid and somebody tried to kill her. I think she and her family now relocated to England and live there but she's continued her advocacy for young girls and young women and for all children to have access to excellent education so that they can develop into everything they can. That's a sign of hope for the human family itself.

The second one that comes to mind is a young woman from Scandinavia, who I think is a teenager. She is passionate about saving this environment and this earth in which we live, and it is very fragile, and we've got some choices to make, and we've got a few years to make these choices and decisions.

She is probably one of the most articulate advocates for saving this earth, of doing everything we can to stabilize the climate, and to prevent the destruction of the planet where we all live. She's actually getting a hearing from world leaders.

Remember the story about the emperor has no clothes? It's like this little kid. The emperor's pretending that he's got clothes. Everybody, all the adults will say, "Well, the emperor says he has clothes. He has clothes". Even though he didn't have any! But it's this little kid who says, "Mommy, he didn't have any clothes on". Then everybody opens their eyes.

This young girl is like that, all this pretense of how powerful we are and we got to make more money and we got to do this so we can all make more money and be more powerful, it has no clothes.

Maybe it's taking a child to tell us that the pretense that we've been living under has no clothes, and to stop the games and to stop the nonsense, and to use the resources and the brainpower and the technology, and to use our commercial capacities to actually reverse climate change, and actually stabilize and save this planet. Maybe I just see that as a sign of hope. This kid is I just think is incredible. This isn't a big politician, it's a young woman, a teenager.

Third, is a group of students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas School where the shooting happened not long ago. Those young people have continued their work advocating for responsible and sensible approaches to guns and gun ownership but more than that, there's a whole cluster of things that we as a society have to do and can do to mitigate a culture of violence that enables horrendous acts.

Now, I daresay they will continue to do that or something similar as their lives go on. I just think they are indications that the Spirit that actually is God, is actually still working in this world.

The last one are two obvious religious figures, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Their book *Joy*, they did together. The writer did it, got the two of them together and spent a week or something like that with the two of them and just chronicled the conversations. It's a remarkable book of two deep people of faith and wisdom and lived experience who've learned how to live lives of integrity and make a profound difference in the world.

To do so, not from a dour, depressed, the world is going to hell in a handbag, all that, but actually did so with a sense of joy, of hope and dogged determinism that the world doesn't have to be a way it often is and it can be different. Those two guys, they've lived it. That's a sign of hope. From the young to the old, God is still in this world and still stirring the pot.

[music]

**Kyle:** Who are the people speaking a prophetic word in your life? What role might you have to play in joining their call to make life-giving changes in our societies?

[music]

**Kyle:** We've put this episode together in reverse order of the experience of turning. We just heard from Bishop Curry about where our discipleship needs to take us in the days ahead and some of the people leading the way. We also know that sometimes we get so busy that it can be hard to even hear that voice calling us to change directions.

Here's Sandy to introduce our guests who have a lot of experience helping their students learn to listen.

**Sandy:** For today's episode, we have two special guests with us. We have Ruth Anderson and Greg Farrand. Can you guys introduce yourselves and tell us who you are and your ministry and where you come from?

**Ruth Anderson:** My name is Ruth Anderson and I live here in Greensboro, North Carolina. I'm a co-director of Second Breath Center.

**Greg Farrand:** My name is Greg Farrand and as we've said, we're co-directors of the Second Breath Center, and I'm also an Episcopal priest at a church here in Greensboro.

**Sandy:** Great. Can you tell us a little bit about the history of Second Breath and how it started and just whatever you want to share with us?

**Ruth:** Second Breath started over 25 years ago when a small group of people from Greensboro went up to Church of the Saviour in Washington, DC, this tiny band of people, very dedicated, faithful people just held the question, *How does God want to transform this little part of our city?*

They built hospitals, they built schools. We came back to Greensboro and decided we could do that here; an inward journey of faith and an outward journey of service and over the years, we have rebranded to the Second Breath Center, a school that offers classes, workshops, retreats.

**Greg:** I stumbled into Second Breath 11 years ago. I had planted a church and by all external measures - I've been pastoring it for about eight to nine years - and by all external measures, it was a huge success. We were growing like crazy, diverse, lots of powerful ministries, but I just found myself internally really burning out.

I was fraud, I was not experiencing joy, I felt myself sliding into some depression, and it didn't make sense based on all the circumstances. It was impacting all these areas of my life, my family, I just was struggling, I was doing all the things that I was taught, praying, and reading, and studying but it was primarily attempting to have fullness of life just through the head through the intellect.

It wasn't working out. At that time, I learned about Second Breath and I was dubious about any new program, but I risked it and I walked into the first class, which is called "The Inward Journey of Faith". There were stay at home parents, and yoga instructors, an electrician, and also retired folks, a grad student.

There was this fresh articulation of Christian spirituality that was so resonant with what to me, I read and hear from Bishop Curry, the power of love, the reality of our interconnectivity with God, with one another, with all of creation that started landing in my heart.

Beyond that, what Second Breath taught was they just gave us this toolbox absolutely overflowing with these practical spiritual practices that we could fold into our lives. As I started, all of a sudden, it was like I was stepping into a space of authentic internal connection.

It was like I shifted from an intellectual belief system to actual inner experience of God's presence and love, stuff that I've been preaching for decades but experienced truly in my life at that point. It was transformative. It gave me an entirely fresh perspective on my call on who I was, what my life was about and breathed new vitality into my marriage, into my parenting.

From that, it actually led me from the Presbyterian Church slowly into The Episcopal Church, which is actually where I grew up. Now, I have the incredible privilege of being co-director, I'm so passionate about it because I've experienced the impact personally and now I get to see so many people and to see their lives transformed too. It's just such a joy. I'm giddy about it that I get to do this for a living.

**Sandy:** Could you give us a brief description of other practices, maybe two or three that you guys teach?

**Greg:** Sure.

**Ruth:** One of the things that we talk about is having a relationship with silence. We have learned over the years, if we start teaching traditional centering prayer 20 minutes twice a day, most people cannot go there and they try but then they get sorely disappointed and feel like they're a failure at centering prayer so start with little steps and that really helps folks and so we just talk about silence.

Notice how little silence there actually is in our lives and then again, in my own experience, when I was starting to think about silence, I knew there's no way at that time in my life as an executive, I couldn't imagine having 20 extra minutes a day. It occurred to me that my drive time to work was 20 minutes and so I started, this is my little step, to drive to work without the radio on.

That was the beginning and then it occurred to me that I could do that on the way home too, 20 minutes on the way home and then it evolved. I was reading scripture in a new way like I was taking lunch at my desk, but with the door closed and I just sat in silence for a couple of minutes. It opened myself. I was learning practices that open my mind, open my heart, get me grounded in my body. I just did that and then it occurred to me and I was mortified when I realized I didn't know some of the folks who worked in our warehouse, I did not know their names. I started to go in the back door through the warehouse.

Gradual, gradual, we teach some traditional wisdom practices, but we also trust that people, if they get the concept of developing relationships with silence and they really honor their own lives, they'll find ways to create those spaces where God can be alive to us, where we can be alive to the other person.

**Greg:** Spiritual practices oftentimes are done with, "Now I'm going to get peace. Now I'm going to zen out and finally be able to cultivate happiness or attain the presence of God." What we tell people is, "Look, you've already got it. You are immersed, you are marinating, you're swimming in divine love and presence." We don't attain anything. It's just an issue of awareness. Spiritual practices can be so simple and they can seem so simple that they're silly.

For example, just creating the space out of your life to look at the clouds for five minutes, staring out your window and look at the clouds and when you're done, you can say amen because you just cultivated a rich time of awareness with God if we're willing to simply step off that hamster wheel and create space for stillness. It doesn't take much room for the spirit to flow in and begin to shift our consciousness to grow in us an awareness of what Jesus called the kingdom of God.

**Sandy:** Thank you for joining us today. This episode was produced by Kyle Oliver and me, Sandy Milien and was edited by Kyle. Our theme and reflection music is by Ana Hernández. Jerusalem Greer writes our reflection guides. Chris Sikkema writes our show notes. Our website is by Kaleb Heitzmann and you can check it out at [wayoflove.episcopalchurch.org](http://wayoflove.episcopalchurch.org). Learn more about Second Breath at [secondbreathcenter.com](http://secondbreathcenter.com).

**Kyle:** You can subscribe to this show wherever you get your podcasts, and we'd especially love it if you'd rate and review it or share it with a friend. If you'd like to contribute music, a prayer, or feedback, write us at [wayoflove@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:wayoflove@episcopalchurch.org).

**Sarah Barton Thomas:** This is Sarah Barton Thomas from Atlanta, Georgia. God of Creation, you have given us examples of the Way of Love across age, space, and time. Help us to see those examples as beacons while opening our eyes and hearts to notice those in our own communities turning towards Jesus and walking in love. Give us open minds as we create spaces where your Spirit can be alive within us and we can be alive to one another. Amen.

**Bishop Curry:** The way of Jesus is the Way of Love, and the Way of Love can change the world.