

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

412 Cedar Street, P.O. Box 307
Paw Paw, MI 49079

269-657-3762

Sunday services at 9:30 am

All are welcome to attend

April
2015



YOUR MORAL BUCKET LIST

Reprinted from "The Weekly Words of Wellness Newsletter"

I have never really had an official bucket list, but am always intrigued to hear what others have on their lists. Typical items on such lists include going bungee jumping, rafting through the Grand Canyon, flying in a helicopter, learning and performing live comedy, writing a memoir, going on a medical mission trip, running a marathon, going on an extended silent retreat, and buying a motorcycle. The closest thing I have to a bucket list item is a desire to ride my bicycle across the United States. (Let me know if you would like to join me--maybe next summer?)

The term "bucket list" of course refers to a list of things a person wants to do before he or she passes away, before a person "kick's the bucket."

This past week I read a column by David Brooks, a writer for the *New York Times*, that put a unique spin on the concept of the bucket list. The title of the Brooks column I am referring to is, "The Moral Bucket List." If you have not already read this inspiring column, I highly recommend doing so. Because Brooks raises so many important ideas, the rest of my column for this week will highlight a few of Brooks' salient points regarding the virtues that he believes people with high moral character work to possess.

Brooks begins the column by reporting that he notices that some people he meets radiate an inner light. He finds these people remarkable in their vitality, their sense of humor, their deep desire to do good in the world, and their desire to care for others--all without any need to call attention to themselves. Brooks finds himself wondering how these people came to develop a bright inner light. He concludes that just as any other trait, skill, or attribute can be developed with practice over time, becoming a person who radiates an inner light is also something that can be developed with practice. Brooks describes a set of practices and experiences--what he calls the equivalent of a moral bucket list--that he believes are common to those who radiate a deep peace and joy in life.

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One of the best parts of Brooks' column, in my opinion, is the distinction he makes between "résumé virtues" and "eulogy virtues." Résumé virtues are those traits and skills that will get a person ahead in the world and in the work place. Our culture highly values the development of such virtues. Eulogy virtues "are the ones that are talked about at your funeral--whether you were kind, brave, honest or faithful. Were you capable of deep love?" In my experience, these eulogy virtues require us to make conscious and intentional choices over an extended period of time if they are to be developed. They often require a person to travel a road less traveled in the process, a road that will not readily be acclaimed by our surrounding culture.

NOTE: I've placed a link to the Brooks article on the home page of our website. It's at the top center of the page. You can't miss it. Ed.

Brooks reflects on several practices that he believes are essential in developing moral character, practices which he believes are the source of the inner light he is drawn to in others. His list includes:

- Practicing profound humility
- Wrestling with one's inner weaknesses
- Being deeply rooted in connection and community with others
- Sharing energizing love, the kind of love that radically de-centers the self
- Finding one's deeper call, one's true vocation and purpose in life
- Taking a leap past one's greatest fears

Brooks refers to this list as a moral bucket list. While the specific details will be different for each of us, this map for developing moral character can be used by any of us at anytime.

The term "bucket list" of course refers to a list of things a person wants to do before he or she passes away, before a person "kick's the bucket." The things that Brooks is talking about though are not just things to do before you die, or things to do to make it easier for the person who will write your eulogy some day. Brooks is describing a set of practices, a set of habits, which will create an abundant life right now, a life characterized by spiritual and emotional depth in one's own life and in one's relationships. Such a life is quite noticeable by the light that it radiates, a light that others cannot help but notice and appreciate.



Maggie shares the food and fellowship at our last community dinner.



Alex and Grayson win hands down!

**THE BEST DRESSED COUPLE AT
EASTER SERVICE**



The Altar Guild, as always, outdid themselves in preparing the altar for Advent and Easter



Larry Chase made a presentation to the attendees at church last Sunday. He said the Building and Grounds committee came up with a proposal to install the carved doors in the sanctuary. The concept photo above shows how the doors might be installed. The idea was generally well received by those present. If the Vestry approves the project, construction can begin this month.