

1. Jesus, the center of our faith

**2. COMMUNITY, THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE, Pastor Florence**

3. Reconciliation, the center of our work

## STORIES OF A HEALING COMMUNITY

Last week Weldon preached about how Jesus  
lived out a radical new vision of community.

It was a dream God had from the beginning,  
a dream that got lost and that Jesus came to make possible once again.

This Jesus, who lived, died and rose again  
to restore our relationship with God and with each other,  
is the center of our faith.

We believe that being made right with God, salvation, is essential to wholeness.

But where the rubber hits the road,  
where the vision is lived out and experienced, is in community.

Jesus taught that God's forgiveness is not an abstract idea,  
it becomes a reality as a person is restored into relationship.

Illness such as leprosy and blindness were not only cured,  
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as people were restored into community.

What we would call mental illness today was not only healed,  
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Social outcasts became part of Jesus' circle of friends  
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Because we are physical and relational beings,  
we need to experience forgiveness in physical, relational ways.

If forgiveness and new life is to become more than  
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Instead, I want to tell a series of stories about how  
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She has three children—the oldest two sons are in college.  
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After everything has been settled, the church has a service of healing for the family.  
They invite family and friends,

and the college-age sons come home for the event.  
The family of faith mourns together,  
they look to God for strength to go on  
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A young man and woman are engaged to be married.  
But during pre-marital counseling it is found that a big issue in their relationship  
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He is concerned about her long-term health.  
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But she has tried to stop and has been unable.  
So a couple from church invites her into their home  
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Today they are married with children and active members of the church.

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At that time he is cleared and given back-pay  
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A Mennonite man kills his wife in a shooting.  
He maintains it was accidental, but the court ruled otherwise.  
While he is in prison he is visited by Mennonites from another church.  
They accept him into their church when he is released  
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He continues as a faithful member and husband for over 30 years.

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A church decides to sponsor a refugee family from El Salvador  
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A family with three small children opens their home.  
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Today they have found a permanent home in Canada.

A young girl shares that she is unmarried and pregnant.  
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The church discerns the gifts of a young couple for ministry,  
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These are stories of churches that became communities of healing and hope.  
Hurting people were surrounded with love and support.  
Disenfranchised people were welcomed and loved and accepted.  
People were rescued from the grip of destructive lifestyles.  
Others were given a chance to start over.  
The church became a sounding board for important life decisions.  
In all these cases, the congregation became a holding vessel for hope  
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Salvation for the people in these stories was not an empty word.  
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May we at Faith Church become  
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Next week Weldon will help us think about  
how we allow this healing community  
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