



# Letters from the Heart

*Reflections on the Psalms*

A gift for you from  
United Methodist-related Campus Ministry  
and the American Bible Society

# Introduction

The Psalms have been referred to as “the prayer book of the Bible,” “book of praises,” and “the psalter.” A collection of songs of praise and thanksgiving, personal and communal laments, wisdom and retribution, Psalms were used originally in the corporate/community worship experiences in Jewish synagogues and then in Christian churches.

These reflections and prayers on various Psalms were written by college and university students, as well as a campus minister, who are involved in campus ministry sponsored by The United Methodist Church. They, like you, have experienced what life has dealt them—the good and the bad. They, like you, have felt love, hatred, friendship, betrayal, pain, comfort, anger, peace, doubt, belief, joy, racism, etc. At one time or other, they have probably doubted the existence or goodness of God. Their experiences and emotions mirror those of the writers of the Psalms. But, through it all, they learned about the steadfast love of God and the importance of “praising the Lord,” who is with them in all of life’s situations.

These students and campus minister, from the Wesley Foundation at the University of Texas-Pan American and the Steering Committee of the United Methodist Student Movement, invite you to experience the “rich blessing” contained in the Psalms. These students invite you to enter into a relationship with the God “whose love is eternal” (Psalm 136). As you reflect on the Psalms, enter into the experience and pray your own prayers. Remember, whatever you encounter as a student, God is there to guide and be with you.

Many people worked together to make this booklet a reality. A special word of thanks is given to the following persons: the writers—Erika Muñoz, Paul Perez, Albert de Leon, Patty Aguirre, Kenia da Silva Guimaraes, and David Moreno; my assistant, Billie Upton, who provided editorial assistance; Gerlinda Roland, who translated the reflections into Spanish; the Office of

Interpretation, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), whose staff helped with editing, layout, and design; and Shirley Delph and the staff at the American Bible Society (ABS), who co-produced this project with the Campus Ministry Section, GBHEM, The United Methodist Church. The ABS supplied the biblical texts in the Versión Popular and Good News Translation.

This resource is provided in Spanish and English and contains particular Psalms that will speak to your life as a student. May God bless your time at school. May God's richest blessings overtake you everyday of your life.

In Christ,  
Lillian C. Smith  
Director of Ministries with Women and Persons of Color  
Campus Ministry Section  
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry  
The United Methodist Church

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# P.E. 101

## Psalm 150

Nope, we're not talking about physical education here, we're talking about a spiritual and virtuous one. P.E. is Praising Eternally! Our God deserves our entire dedication for all that God does for us and a whole lot more. Before, during, and after your biology midterm or calculus final, God was there. Not sure where to begin? For this basic requirement, allow the Israelites to be your new professors.



### *Psalm 150* *Praise the LORD!*

*Praise the LORD!*

*Praise God in his Temple!*

*Praise his strength in heaven!*

*Praise him for the mighty things he has done.*

*Praise his supreme greatness.*

*Praise him with trumpets.*

*Praise him with harps and lyres.*

*Praise him with drums and dancing.*

*Praise him with harps and flutes.*

*Praise him with cymbals.*

*Praise him with loud cymbals.*

*Praise the LORD, all living creatures!*

*Praise the LORD!*

May we, though college students living in today's fast-paced world, never forget to praise God from whom all blessings truly do flow.

Erika N. Muñoz  
Junior, Nutrition Major  
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# A Student's Prayer

## Psalm 25.5

**Teach me to live according to your truth,  
for you are my God, who saves me.  
I always trust in you.**

In this journey of life we constantly have surprises. In retrospect, I can see that God has always guided me. God has helped me maneuver challenges, understand my purpose in life, and develop my spiritual gifts.

God has helped me understand that I am in this world for a reason and I have a mission to fulfill. Being raised in a Methodist family, my parents gave me strong Christian values. They taught me to serve God by being a servant of humankind. Practicing doctrines from John Wesley, especially the one, “the world is my parish,” meant that I was always active in my church, nationally and internationally, and also in my community—by helping people with their struggles, and fighting for justice and peace.

God's surprising journey has taken me to different parts of the world in mission. It has included a scholarship to attend college in the United States. When I left Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I left not only family and friends, but a part of me and the fruits of work that I had done for 20 years. However, before I left, one of the most important things I did was to ask God to strengthen me, to show me the way, and to guide my life so that I'd continue on God's mission.



Here in the U.S., I had to learn to sing God's songs in a strange new land. Sometimes, God takes us to many places not only to show us that God is God, but how to serve God's people. I have learned to always trust and depend on God.

It is very important for young people from all over the world to understand that we are part of the body of Christ; to love, understand, and help one another. God will guide us along this journey of life, by teaching us many lessons so we can learn and share with one another our life experiences. These experiences will continue to make us grow and help God's people.

I will always remember to ask God to guide and show me the way that I need to go so that I can continue to serve God's people.

God requires us to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God. May God continue to bless and keep each and everyone of you. Let God guide you, teaching you to sing God's praises in a strange new land and to serve God's people everywhere.

Kenia da Silva Guimaraes

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Clark Atlanta University  
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## Psalm 25

### A Prayer for Guidance and Protection

**To you, O LORD, I offer my prayer;  
in you, my God, I trust.  
Save me from the shame of defeat;  
don't let my enemies gloat over me!  
Defeat does not come to those who trust in you,  
but to those who are quick to rebel against you.**

**Teach me your ways, O LORD;  
make them known to me.  
Teach me to live according to your truth,  
for you are my God, who saves me.**

*I always trust in you.*

*Remember, O LORD, your kindness and constant love  
which you have shown from long ago.  
Forgive the sins and errors of my youth.  
In your constant love and goodness,  
remember me, LORD!*

*Because the LORD is righteous and good,  
he teaches sinners the path they should follow.  
He leads the humble in the right way  
and teaches them his will.  
With faithfulness and love he leads  
all who keep his covenant and obey his commands.*

*Keep your promise, LORD, and forgive my sins,  
for they are many.  
Those who obey the LORD  
will learn from him the path they should follow.  
They will always be prosperous,  
and their children will possess the land.  
The LORD is the friend of those who obey him  
and he affirms his covenant with them.*

*I look to the LORD for help at all times,  
and he rescues me from danger.  
Turn to me, LORD, and be merciful to me,  
because I am lonely and weak.  
Relieve me of my worries  
and save me from all my troubles.  
Consider my distress and suffering  
and forgive all my sins.*

*See how many enemies I have;  
see how much they hate me.  
Protect me and save me;*

*keep me from defeat.*

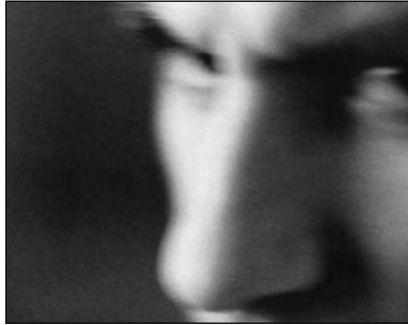
*I come to you for safety.  
May my goodness and honesty preserve me,  
because I trust in you.*

*From all their troubles, O God,  
Save your people Israel!*

# Need Justice?

## Psalm 109

Justice? That is what David is praying for in this Psalm? Is justice revenge? I found this Psalm to be very harsh the first time I read it. I couldn't imagine praying for someone else's harm. God is not about revenge. God is love. But then I began thinking about the



little things I sometimes say under my breath. The things about the person who cuts me off on the way to work; the guy on the way to class who bumps into me without apologizing; the person who can't open his/her mouth without offending someone. Under my breath I send little prayers to God.

I think we all do this. We send prayers to God for those who judge us without knowing us; for the powerful who make us powerless; and for those who have no regard for our feelings. "God, give these people what they have given me," is what we say. Is it revenge that we pray for? I think the answer is no.

Even though we are angry, I think deep down we pray that those at the top will remember those at the bottom; that those who have closed hearts will know love and empathy. I think we pray for understanding and the opening of minds and hearts. Not only the minds and hearts of those who have harmed us, but our own. We pray for justice. A justice that will come when we all recognize the pain we cause. A justice that is rooted in love.

Paul Perez  
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Michigan State University  
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## Psalm 109

### *The Comfort of a Man in Trouble*

*I praise you, God; don't remain silent!  
Wicked people and liars have attacked me.  
They tell lies about me,  
and they say evil things about me,  
attacking me for no reason.  
They oppose me, even though I love them  
and have prayed for them.  
They pay me back evil for good  
and hatred for love.*

*Choose some corrupt judge to try my enemy,  
and let one of his own enemies accuse him.  
May he be tried and found guilty;  
may even his prayer be considered a crime!  
May his life soon be ended;  
may another man take his job!  
May his children become orphans,  
and his wife a widow!  
May his children be homeless beggars;  
may they be driven from the ruins they live in!  
May his creditors take away all his property,  
and may strangers get everything he worked for.  
May no one ever be kind to him  
or care for the orphans he leaves behind.  
May all his descendants die,  
and may his name be forgotten in the next generation.  
May the LORD remember the evil of his ancestors  
and never forgive his mother's sins.  
May the LORD always remember their sins,  
but may they themselves be completely forgotten!*

*That man never thought of being kind;  
he persecuted and killed*

the poor, the needy, and the helpless.  
He loved to curse—may he be cursed!  
He hated to give blessings—may no one bless him!  
He cursed as naturally as he dressed himself;  
may his own curses soak into his body like water  
and into his bones like oil!  
May they cover him like clothes  
and always be around him like a belt!

LORD, punish my enemies in that way—  
those who say such evil things against me!  
But my Sovereign LORD, help me as you have promised,  
and rescue me because of the goodness of your love.  
I am poor and needy;  
I am hurt to the depths of my heart.  
Like an evening shadow I am about to vanish;  
I am blown away like an insect.  
My knees are weak from lack of food;  
I am nothing but skin and bones.  
When people see me, they laugh at me;  
they shake their heads in scorn.

Help me, O LORD my God;  
because of your constant love, save me!  
Make my enemies know  
that you are the one who saves me.  
They may curse me, but you will bless me.  
May my persecutors be defeated,  
and may I, your servant, be glad.  
May my enemies be covered with disgrace;  
may they wear their shame like a robe.

I will give loud thanks to the LORD;  
I will praise him in the assembly of the people,  
because he defends the poor man  
and saves him from those who condemn him to death.

## Totally Stressed Out

### Psalm 9.9–12

Guess what? God knows all about it. God's been there, done that, and wants you to know that you haven't been forgotten. You're actually at the top of God's list, because God cares about you more than you will ever know. So go on, seek God out. God is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and there's never a busy signal. Now that is a major deal.



Erika N. Muñoz  
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### Psalm 9.9–12

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,  
a place of safety in times of trouble.  
Those who know you, LORD, will trust you;  
you do not abandon anyone who comes to you.

Sing praise to the LORD, who rules in Zion!  
Tell every nation what he has done!  
God remembers those who suffer;  
he does not forget their cry,  
and he punishes those who wrong them.

# Keep the Faith

## Psalm 42.1–5

Above all, trust in the Lord with all you've got. You will face many challenges during the next four years of your Christian walk with the Lord, and at times you may stumble. That's perfectly alright though, because the important thing is that you get back up again. Never doubt the existence of your Creator and Sustainer, nor God's power. Whether it's a friend you've just met who says he's an atheist, or someone who is just really hurt inside. Be confident that the good Lord will use you as a disciple, and you will be ready. Praise be to God! Amen.



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## Psalm 42.1–5

### *The Prayer of a Man in Exile*

*As a deer longs for a stream of cool water,  
so I long for you, O God.*

*I thirst for you, the living God.*

*When can I go and worship in your presence?*

*Day and night I cry,  
and tears are my only food;  
all the time my enemies ask me,  
Where is your God?*

*My heart breaks when I remember the past,  
when I went with the crowds to the house of God  
and led them as they walked along,  
a happy crowd, singing and shouting praise to God.  
Why am I so sad?  
Why am I so troubled?  
I will put my hope in God,  
and once again I will praise him,  
my savior and my God.*

# Life's Trying Times

## Psalm 46

As you know by now, in your life's journey, things are not always easy. The struggles and hardships of everyday life sometimes seem overwhelming. During my time as a campus minister, I have witnessed many students struggling with issues that have caused them grief.



At our weekly prayer service, students are invited to write their prayer concerns on an index card, then place the card on the altar. This allows a student's concerns to be prayed for while the student remains anonymous, if they so desire. The cards are gathered at the end of the service and the concerns are shared in prayer during the week. Some concerns are as simple as relationships—romantic relationships, the concerns of developing commitments, and resolving conflicts. Tragically, however, there are frequently far more distressing petitions. “Pray for my mother who is dying of cancer.” “Pray for me as I am going through a divorce.” “Pray for me because I sometimes feel like killing myself.”

The petitions that are brought forth on those cards make it clear that we are people who need God. We need to have a relationship with God. We need to realize God is in our everyday life. The writer of Psalm 46 understood the hardships of life because these troubles are part of all our lives. But the writer also had a vital relationship with God. The writer knew God, and knew that God was there at all times. Too often, we only see God as being with us when things are going well, or when we feel good.

This is not true. God is with us all the time, as the writer says; “God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.” (Psalm 46.1) Receive this assurance, rejoice and know God's peace.

David J. Moreno, chaplain and director  
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## Psalm 46 God Is With Us

*God is our shelter and strength,  
always ready to help in times of trouble.  
So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken  
and mountains fall into the ocean depths;  
even if the seas roar and rage,  
and the hills are shaken by the violence.*

*There is a river that brings joy to the city of God,  
to the sacred house of the Most High.  
God is in that city, and it will never be destroyed;  
at early dawn he will come to its aid.  
Nations are terrified, kingdoms are shaken;  
God thunders, and the earth dissolves.*

*The LORD Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

*Come and see what the LORD has done.  
See what amazing things he has done on earth.  
He stops wars all over the world;  
he breaks bows, destroys spears,  
and sets shields on fire.  
Stop fighting, he says, “and know that I am God,  
supreme among the nations,  
supreme over the world.”*

*The LORD Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

# What Really Matters

## *Psalm 37.1–17*

You can have many possessions but they—homes, cars—will not fulfill you. (There are many men and women in this world, but none are like your father and mother.) It does not matter how much money you have, or how many things you own. What truly matters is how you acquired those possessions and how much value you place on them.

What is more important or valuable to humans? Their souls or the world they temporarily live in? There are many “gods” out there, but none is like your God, my God, Jesus Christ, the one who died for you and me. Jesus loves us so much that He told us, “you don’t have to die, I’ll die for you.” (The phrase too much of a good thing is bad for you, is true almost every time except only this one—because you can never have enough of God.)

“... the Lord upholds the righteous.” We ourselves are not righteous, but we are made righteous through God. God will hold us up. God will provide for us. “Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren’t you worth much more than birds?” (Matthew 6.26)

God says “I will save those who love me and will protect those who acknowledge me as LORD. When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them. I will



rescue them and honor them. I will reward them with long life; I will save them.” (Psalm 91.14-16)

God is our provider.

Albert de Leon

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Edinburg, Texas

### *Psalm 37.1-17*

#### *The Destiny of the Wicked and of the Good*

*Don't be worried on account of the wicked;  
don't be jealous of those who do wrong.  
They will soon disappear like grass that dries up;  
they will die like plants that wither.*

*Trust in the LORD and do good;  
live in the land and be safe.  
Seek your happiness in the LORD,  
and he will give you your heart's desire.*

*Give yourself to the LORD;  
trust in him, and he will help you;  
he will make your righteousness shine like the noonday sun.*

*Be patient and wait for the LORD to act;  
don't be worried about those who prosper  
or those who succeed in their evil plans.*

*Don't give in to worry or anger;  
it only leads to trouble.  
Those who trust in the LORD will possess the land,  
but the wicked will be driven out.  
Soon the wicked will disappear;  
you may look for them, but you won't find them;  
but the humble will possess the land  
and enjoy prosperity and peace.*

*The wicked man plots against the good man  
and glares at him with hate.*

*But the LORD laughs at wicked men,  
because he knows they will soon be destroyed.*

*The wicked draw their swords and bend their bows  
to kill the poor and needy,  
to slaughter those who do what is right;  
but they will be killed by their own swords,  
and their bows will be smashed.*

*The little that a good man owns  
is worth more than the wealth of all the wicked,  
because the LORD will take away the strength of the wicked,  
but protect those who are good.*

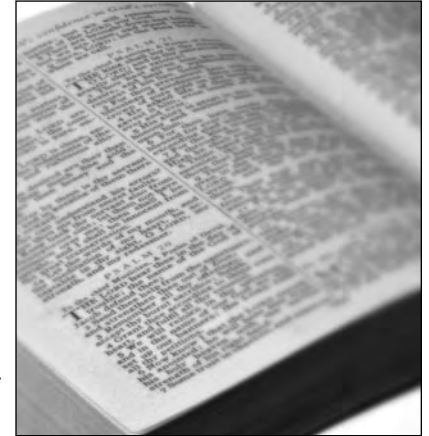
# Hidden Treasure

## Psalm 119.1-12

When facing trouble in life always remember the Word of God. Knowing the Word, or Scriptures, will make you stronger in your spiritual life. In days of temptation, having the Word in your heart will pull you through rough times. We must strive to be just like Jesus who was tempted by the devil.

Put on the armor of God so that you may be prepared for the enemy.

We should strive to be holy like Jesus and should follow his example. Memorize Bible verses, be prepared for anything that may happen during your Christian walk. Knowing God's Word will help us share God's love with someone who doesn't know God. We should always be ready for anything that comes our way.



Patty Aguirre  
Junior, Criminal Justice Major  
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## Psalm 119.1-12

### *The Law of the LORD*

*Happy are those whose lives are faultless,  
who live according to the law of the LORD.  
Happy are those who follow his commands,  
who obey him with all their heart.*

They never do wrong;  
they walk in the LORD's ways.  
LORD, you have given us your laws  
and told us to obey them faithfully.  
How I hope that I shall be faithful  
in keeping your instructions!  
If I pay attention to all your commands,  
then I will not be put to shame.  
As I learn your righteous judgments,  
I will praise you with a pure heart.  
I will obey your laws;  
never abandon me!  
How can a young man keep his life pure?  
By obeying your commands.  
With all my heart I try to serve you;  
keep me from disobeying your commandments.  
I keep your law in my heart,  
so that I will not sin against you.  
I praise you, O LORD;  
teach me your ways.

## Trusting God, More Than Trusting Ourselves

*Psalms 34:15–22*

Sometimes when we are going through troubled times we may think that we can handle our own problems. God wants us to trust that God can and will handle them. When asking the Lord for help in relationships, work, school, or even with a car payment, always trust in the Lord and have faith that those prayers have already been answered. Always remember that God will never leave you. God loves you!



Remember that Jesus is your best friend and that He will never let you down. You can always trust in the Lord and that God will rescue you from your troubles. God is a merciful God and will forgive you and me if we only ask with a sincere heart. As verse 18 states: “The Lord is near to those who are discouraged; he saves those who have lost all hope.” God will always be there for you and will take care of you. If you just got out of a bad relationship, God will be your refuge. If you are discouraged, God will comfort you. God knows the pain you experience. God wants to be your comfort and wants you to trust God. Always remember that God is watching out for you and will always protect you.

Patty Aguirre  
Junior, Criminal Justice Major  
University of Texas–Pan American  
Edinburg, Texas

# Keeping Company

## Psalm 1

### Psalm 34.15–22

The LORD watches over the righteous  
and listens to their cries;  
but he opposes those who do evil,  
so that when they die, they are soon forgotten.  
The righteous call to the LORD, and he listens;  
he rescues them from all their troubles.  
The LORD is near to those who are discouraged;  
he saves those who have lost all hope.  
The good man suffers many troubles,  
but the LORD saves him from them all;  
The LORD preserves him completely;  
not one of his bones is broken.  
Evil will kill the wicked;  
those who hate the righteous will be punished.

The LORD will save his people;  
those who go to him for protection will be spared.

The company that you keep is an important thing to consider. After all, it is our friends who encourage and challenge us. They can help push us to greatness or lead us directly into destruction. Think of times when a friend encouraged you to do something that wasn't right—get drunk, have sex because everyone else was doing it, the list goes on. If you haven't already found out, you will soon . . . not everyone who smiles and associates with you is your friend.



Beloved of the Lord, choose your friends wisely. Better yet, pray and ask God to send people who will be good friends; people who will live and act wisely and in ways that bring glory to God, themselves, and their families. Do all that you can to surround yourself with people who are actively growing in Christ.

Lillian C. Smith  
Director, Campus Ministry Section  
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry  
The United Methodist Church

### Psalm 1

#### True Happiness

Happy are those  
who reject the advice of evil people,  
who do not follow the example of sinners

*or join those who have no use for God.  
Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the LORD,  
and they study it day and night.  
They are like trees that grow beside a stream,  
that bear fruit at the right time,  
and whose leaves do not dry up.  
They succeed in everything they do.*

*But evil men are not like this at all;  
they are like straw that the wind blows away.  
Sinners will be condemned by God  
and kept apart from God's own people.  
The righteous are guided and protected by the LORD,  
but the evil are on the way to their doom.*

Need insight into a particular situation? The Psalms provide a wealth of insight about God and God's promises for our lives. Look at the list below.

### *God's promise of:*

**Love**—Psalm 136, 145.8-9, 147.11  
**Forgiveness**—Psalm 103.8-12  
**Salvation**—Psalm 37.39-40  
**Peace**—Psalm 29.11  
**Joy**—Psalm 16.11  
**Growth**—Psalm 92.12,14  
**Encouragement**—Psalm 10.17  
**Strength**—Psalm 73.25-26  
**Blessing**—Psalm 128.5-6  
**God's Presence**—Psalm 46.1,7  
**Answered Prayer**—Psalm 65.2,5

### *God's promise when you:*

**Feel guilty**—Psalm 130.3-4  
**Feel dejected**—Psalm 130.7  
**Feel despair**—Psalm 119.116  
**Are disappointed**—Psalm 22.4-5  
**Are depressed**—Psalm 34.18  
**Are persecuted**—Psalm 37.1-2  
**Are anxious**—Psalm 55.22  
**Are filled with longing**—Psalm 37.4  
**Are sick**—Psalm 23.4, 103.3  
**Are impatient**—Psalm 27.13-14  
**Are confused**—Psalm 32.8  
**Struggle with addiction**—Psalm 18.28-36

## ***What the Bible says about:***

**Anxiety**—Psalm 94.17-19

**Children**—Psalm 78.1-7, 127, 128

**Compassion**—Psalm 103.8-12, 116.5-6

**Death**—Psalm 116.15-16

**Eternal Life**—Psalm 23

**Faith**—Psalm 119.65-72

**Grace**—Psalm 86,103

**Happiness**—Psalm 33

**Hope**—Psalm 42

**Loneliness**—Psalm 14

**Peace**—Psalm 122

**Resurrection**—Psalm 16

**Revenge**—Psalm 94.1

**Reward**—Psalm 19.1-11

**Salvation**—Psalm 62

**Suffering**—Psalm 77

**Unity**—Psalm 133

Do you miss your church family back home? Or are you interested in getting involved with a community of believers with whom you can grow in the faith and live your Christian witness? Check out the campus ministry sponsored by The United Methodist Church. To find the closest campus ministry check out [www.gbhem.org/asp/campusmin.asp](http://www.gbhem.org/asp/campusmin.asp) or call 615-340-7415.