

UNRELENTING GRACE

A United Methodist Way of Life

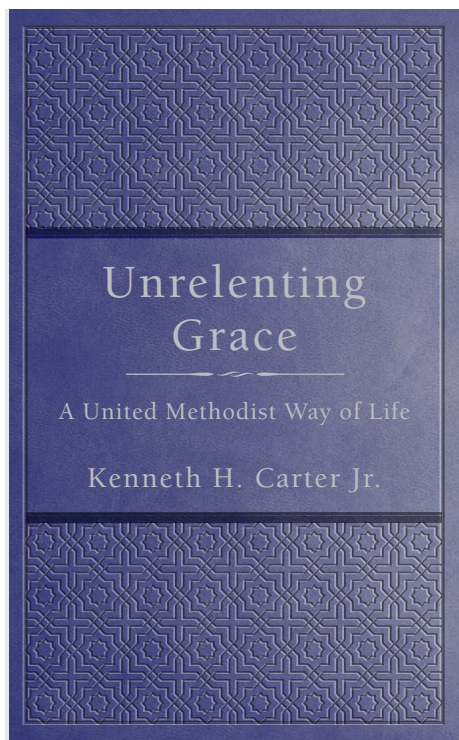
By *Kenneth H. Carter Jr.*

SPECIAL PREPUBLICATION OFFER

for your conference, district, or congregation through Friday, March 10.

United Methodist people long to love God and serve and love their neighbors. Many are hurting from the effects of the pandemic, social disruptions, and conflict about church practices and disaffiliations. The good news is that there is a pathway for repairing our brokenness, trauma, and estrangement. It is found by embracing grace, seeking holiness, and building connections. It is a distinctly United Methodist way of life.

How do we now envision this distinctly United Methodist way of life? How do we experience grace and extend it to others? How do we rebuild connections with others for the



journey toward perfection in love? We can choose to be in denial or spend our time in nostalgic wishful thinking, craving what has been or plunging into the depths of cynicism and discouragement. The more exhausted we are, the more appealing these options become.

There is another path.

We can see with fresh eyes the picture Jesus described about a treasure buried in a field. What if what we need is, in fact, hidden in plain sight? What if God's provision for our current journey is found in the gifts that have always spirited our renewal and vitality?

This accessible book provides guidance for taking small steps into the future as individuals and as communities of faith, offering these assurances:

- God is with us.
- We are not alone.
- God's grace is sufficient.

Unrelenting Grace is a four-part study helping United Methodists rediscover and redefine the core values of grace, holiness, and connection, which pull and prod our hearts closer together in unrelenting love.

THE FOUR SESSIONS AND STUDY QUESTIONS HELP US SEE:

1. *Unrelenting Grace As God's Gift to Us*
2. *Unrelenting Grace Connects Us to Each Other*
3. *Unrelenting Grace Is God's Way of Life in the World*
4. *Unrelenting Grace Heals Our Bodies (churches)*

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After publication, purchases of 100 to 499 copies will be available for \$9.50 each (non-returnable and shipped to a single location) and 500+ copies will be available for \$8.50 each (non-returnable and shipped to a single location).



Bishop Ken Carter writes:

I invite you to read these pages for the purpose of rediscovering the gift of a grace that saves; a connection that sustains; a holiness that is complete love of God, neighbor, and yourself. And to know that grace, connection, and holiness are our path to healing, perhaps your own healing, perhaps the healing of your congregation, and, dare we say it, perhaps the healing of the (United) Methodist Church.

After a pandemic, many of our church buildings look and feel different. Because of disaffiliation, many of us have a different relationship to these spaces. We are learning again that God’s dwelling place is within us. We know something is of God if we are becoming more loving (1 John 4) and we know the love is of God if we love (and not merely tolerate) those outside our community (Luke 10), those who are sinners (Romans 5), and those whom we perceive to be our enemies (Matthew 5).

We need to trust again in the nearness of divine presence.

The temple of God’s presence can be wherever we are. We will know something is of God if it changes us, if it forces us to reconsider the way we have judged others and wanted to live apart from them, if we have to give up something we cherish. We will know something is of God if we find ourselves making space for something greater that God wants to give us.

The love of God bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13). Love is not a sentiment; it is a sacrifice. It is staying at the table (John 13) with disciples who are imperfect and ambitious. It is the patience (Galatians 5) to allow God to remove our defects. This is purgation. It is easier to separate from the imperfection we see in the other than to do the spiritual work of confessing our own sin (Isaiah 6).

For us this work might seem impossible. But the gospel does remind us that what is impossible for us is possible for God (Luke 1).

And the good news? God is with us and for us. You are the dwelling place of God. And this is the gift of unrelenting grace.