

## Adult Bible Studies

### Current Events Supplement March 24, 2019

#### Calling to Salvation Luke 19:1-10

First United Methodist Church of Pahokee, Florida, does something not many churches would do: They actively engage in ministry with Miracle Village, a community that includes sex offenders and drug users. Their relationship began after Patti Aupperlee, former pastor of First United Methodist Church Pahokee, attended a worship service in Miracle Village's chapel.

Inspired by the music provided by the worship director, Chad Stoffel, Aupperlee recruited him to launch a new contemporary service at the church. They started with an Ash Wednesday service, unsure of how the congregation would accept the residents of Miracle Village. The two groups now worship together, sing in the choir together, and have times of fellowship. "As they have gotten to know one another," Aupperlee said, "people have begun to see each other for who they really are."<sup>1</sup>

The student book author writes, "The disciples also needed to learn that God offers the gift of salvation to all, even children, blind men, and tax collectors."<sup>2</sup> Saying that God offers salvation to all people is one thing. Realizing, understanding, and internalizing that God offers salvation to people others may see as unredeemable or unworthy of salvation is another matter. We can say it, but do we believe it? That is what the disciples had to wrestle with.

God offers the gift of salvation to all. That is the theology that First United Methodist Church Pahokee abides by in extending the hand of grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness to people society fears. Jesus set the example with Zacchaeus; and First Methodist Church Pahokee follows through with Miracle Village, affirming the residents as beloved children of God with whom they choose to worship and serve in the Kingdom.

1. Are there people you tend to view as "unredeemable" or "unworthy"? Why?
2. Does your faith community engage in ministry with individuals or groups others tend to ignore?
3. What challenges has your faith community faced with this ministry?

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<sup>1</sup>From "Miracle Village Story Takes Center Stage Off-Broadway," by Suzanne McGovern, The Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church ([flumc.org/newsdetail/miracle-village-story-takes-center-stage-in-nyc-11103306](http://flumc.org/newsdetail/miracle-village-story-takes-center-stage-in-nyc-11103306)).

<sup>2</sup>From *Adult Bible Studies*, Spring 2019, by Taylor Mills (Cokesbury, 2018); page 27.