

# 14 A Miracle Called Laughter

Jun

Forming a Family/Preparing a People

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

What Abraham, Sarah, and a few holy detours teach us about laughter, attention, and God's surprising grace.

## REFERENCES

Genesis 18:1-15, (21:1-7)

Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19

Romans 5:1-8

Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)

## COLORS

Green

## Worship Planning Notes

**Focus text:** Genesis 18:1-15, (21:1-7)

Have you ever heard of a “grey nomad”? If you’re not the parent of a young child obsessed with Bluey, ask someone who is; they will be able to tell you. In an episode titled “Road Trip,” Bluey’s family heads to a campground. While Mum, Bluey, and Bingo are happy to make several stops, Dad (Bandit) worries about staying ahead of the Grey Nomads, seniors who travel from place to place in slow-moving caravans of RVs. Dad (Bandit) worries the Gray Nomads will slow them down. Unfortunately, an extra bathroom stop leaves the family stuck behind the Grey Nomads, leaving Bandit frustrated until he notices the kids laughing as they play a made-up game in the backseat, unconcerned about how fast they get down the road.

I wonder if Sarah and Abraham would qualify as Grey Nomads. Somehow, I think they would. The story today emphasizes just how old the childless, nomadic couple is. And, just like the Grey Nomads in Bluey, when given the opportunity, they move slowly enough to notice and offer kindness to strangers. They certainly seem more concerned with the journey than the destination. The Grey Nomads aren't afraid to take every diversion. When there's a Giant Peanut, they pull off the highway to see the Giant Peanut. Was the Giant Peanut in their travel plan? Who knows! But it definitely isn't "on the way" to anywhere else.

Now, I would never compare Sarah giving birth to Isaac in her old age to pulling over to see a Giant Peanut. But, in a world where laughter and fun are diversions from "the grind," I wonder what a woman who laughs at the notion she would give birth in her old age and then names her child Laughter might show us about the holiness of diversions? How might laughter signal us to pay attention to what God is doing? How might laughter be the thing that God is doing?

So, find some ways to help your people laugh in worship. Truly! That doesn't mean turning your sermon into a stand-up comedy routine. And certainly, don't try to manufacture laughs. Nothing turns us off from laughing like feeling it's required of us. Instead, watch for moments that make you smile and chuckle this week around the church. What made you stop and pay attention? Share that with your congregation. Did you know the Mayo Clinic says laughter is good for us? Maybe share some of their suggestions for making laughter an intentional practice:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456>. In your prayers, singing, preaching, and everything else in worship, remind people that even when life is heavy, God's miraculous works are all around us, ready to surprise us with laughter if only we will pay attention together.

**Author bio:** *Dr. Lisa Hancock, Director of Worship Arts Ministries, served as an organist and music minister in United Methodist congregations in the legacy Northwest Texas and North Texas Annual Conferences. After receiving her Master of Sacred Music and Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology, she earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University, where she researched and wrote on the doctrine of Christ, disability, and atonement. Lisa is also the co-lead of the Growing in Grace: Accessible Worship for All God's Children initiative.*

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