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February 2021

From the Pastor's Desk

Every time we think of you, we thank God for you. Day and night you're in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, before God our Father. 1st Thessalonians 1:2-3 The Message

February 1, 2021

Greetings of Grace and Peace!

I must admit that this time of COVID has been wearing on myself as it is for most of you. I long to be gathered in worship and fellowship together: physically. I miss being with you and other friends. I miss relaxing in a restaurant. You may notice that the newsletter is a bit later than normal. This is partly due to procrastination, the snowstorm, and discernment of what to write about. February holds many ideas: Love as we celebrate Valentine's Day, remembering the victims in the Parkland Florida school shooting three years ago on February 14th, President's Day amid having our Capital being ransacked last month, February being Mental Health and African American History, or Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. So many ideas, and yet feeling a lack of excitement or energy to write about anything. But God is good!

As I sit in my office on this snowy day, my two youngest boys have just arrived home from school; being released early due to an impending snow storm. There is barely an inch of snow on the ground, but the air is filled with dry snowflakes. I hear my boy's laughter and excitement as they dash by my office window,

each carrying a snow disk for sledding. They are running through the parking lot and the grass looking for a place to slide down with their sleds. They make me smile. There is no place that will offer them the sledding they are longing for as the snow is not deep enough and shoveling has not occurred as to make any mounds for sliding. But that does not deter their hope. They joyfully continue seeking and hoping.

My sons' hope reminds me of believing, of living into my faith even when I cannot feel or see any evidence. (2nd Corinthians 5:7) It calls me to think about the COVID vaccines being rolled out, the blessings in the midst of this pandemic. Our stewardship campaign being one of the best since I arrived, both in the number of pledges and the amount pledged. New members that are interested in joining the church, being in the midst of planning a wedding and a baptism. A beautiful stained-glass prayer box given to our church as a place to surrender our requests to God. I am called to have hope and faith in the plans being made during this down time to revamp some ministries and give thanks for the many hours that others are spending in figuring and sorting our church history. My faith calls me to think of the people we are reaching through our Facebook LIVE and cable that we might never meet or know how our ministry touches them.

Hope does abound. I am reminded to surrender the ways things have always been and how I might want them to be right now. My faith calls me to live into the faith that God is working, even where I cannot see or feel. To hang on to my hope that God works for the good of those who love him. (Romans 8:28) We are not alone. God is with each one of us. Thanks be to God! Amen.

If this time is wearing on you or you need to talk with someone, have a distanced visit, or a prayer, please do not hesitate to call and let me know! I am not a mind reader. Unless you let the church know of your need or concern, we cannot be the church in praying for you or journeying with you. Please keep us informed of the joys and challenges in your life.

In Christ's Light and Love,

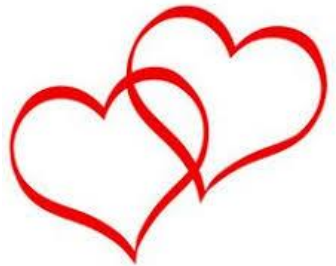
Pastor Pat

From the Deacons' Bench

Through November and December, health and family issues kept me away from consistent Sunday worship; not connecting with Pastor Pat and my church family had left me feeling spiritually, as well as physically, disconnected. My daily devotional and prayer time became haphazard- church and God seemed increasingly far away. Maybe you're feeling some of this yourself.

In January, as Deacon of the month, I've been able to be in Worship and reconnecting with others to find a liturgist for each Sunday, and resuming other leadership responsibilities. As a result, God feels closer again. I've been reminded that during this difficult time of remote worship and meetings, the life of the church continues. Prayer still goes on, people still take comfort and strength from gathering, even remotely. Just as importantly, processes of spiritual discernment and planning still go on: planning for the coming time when we can safely gather as a church family, exchange handshakes and hugs, and jubilantly throw open the doors, walk down the steps and open our arms and hearts to our neighbors, saying, "Come on in, sit with us awhile, you're welcome here!"

The heart of the church is still beating, thanks to God's uplifting and sustaining love. It manifests in the work and prayers of Pastor Pat, church leaders, and faithful congregants. Don't let yourself drift away- be present at Worship, even if it's in your pajamas on your couch in front of the TV, laptop, or phone. Let God sit with you, comfort you, and keep us all connected in a loving embrace.



Your sister in Christ,
Linda Hornig

Deacon Server for the Month

January

Linda Hornig

February Birthdays

Birthday Greetings to the following members of our church who celebrate birthdays in February.



Samantha Quill	02/07
Irene Cutting	02/10
Katrina Safford	02/10
Richard Harris	02/12
Clara Kern	02/18
Ashley Richter	02/18
Sarah Willoughby	02/18
Weston Willoughby	02/18
Kathleen Lee	02/19
Mary Black	02/22
Joshua Sterling	02/26
David Kruger	02/27





Prayer Corner



Evie Meacham
Ingrid & Beth (Schwabe)
Bob Schoolcraft
Audrey Burger
John (Jack) Bennett
Janet Brehaut
Beverly Pease
Winnie
Don Facey
Fran Brown
Frank & Phyllis Watson
Bob Green
Judy
Joyce Books

Bonnie Watson
Otto Kern
Carol Darnley
Gwen Wills
Lelum
Jackie Prior
Dennis Connor
Jeffrey Howe
Edith
Earl Schofield
Christopher
Josh G. & Family
Ann Kibbe

For shut-ins and those who are isolated
For first responders & healthcare workers
For those in rehab centers & nursing homes
For the homeless in the winter months
For our country
For all world leaders

Sympathy To...

Family & friends of Dennis Chaffee Sr.,
who passed away on January 19th.

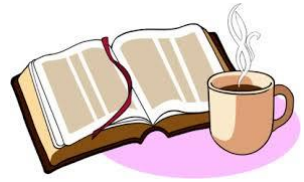


Stewardship Update

Thank you for your faithfulness to God through our church stewardship campaign this year. The number of pledgers increased over last year and so has our generous giving to God. Thank you for your generosity. The church does continue to have bills (insurance, heat, electricity, salaries, etc.) even when we are not meeting physically. Some folks donated a portion of their governmental assistance check. Thank you for that witness to tithe in all blessings. If you have not taken the opportunity to send in your pledge (giving) for next year, please take the time to do so. It helps our church be able to know how much ministry we can do this year and pledging is a way to keep you honest in your giving back to God. Faithful giving reflects your spiritual life.

Commonwealth West Lenten Study

Please join the **Conference-wide Lenten Study, Roll Down Justice**, Sundays from 7 to 8:30 pm, starting February 14 and finishing on March 21. Using biblical passages and Mark Miller's amazing hymns, this study will offer guidance to us as Christians and as United Methodists on how to be an anti-racist and inclusive church. You don't need any materials other than a Bible in your favorite translation. Follow this link to register for the Study:



<https://www.neumc.org/eventdetail/14965583?month=2&year=2021&day=1&display=m>

Office Documents Must Remain in Church

The Board of Directors has voted that no paperwork that belongs to the church be taken out of the church. If you do have any paperwork or records, please return them to the office as soon as possible. Going forward, if you need to take any papers out of the building, please make a copy and leave the original with us.

A Letter from Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

Beloved in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

During the week of Feb. 14, within a span of 96 hours, people of faith and of no faith will observe Transfiguration Sunday, Scouting Ministries Sunday, Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, and Ash Wednesday.

As we observe these days with the limitations due to COVID-19 and during a time of deep political and religious division, let us ask ourselves a deeper question: Whose voice do we listen to in the midst of the turmoil and fear we are facing?

When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, God spoke to them, saying "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" (Mark 9:7).

Do we listen to Jesus' voice as he speaks to us even today? Do our actions follow what we hear?

Recently, I read several articles and commentaries on social media in which people of different faiths and various theological perspectives challenged Christians to do Christianity, not "Churchanity." In other words, they expect we in the church to live the gospel, not just recite it.

As we journey through Lent, may we seek ways to listen deeply and intently in order that we might hear more clearly the voice of God amidst of the cascade of messages on social media!

You may wonder, "What should we do?" I have no easy answers, and I struggle with you to know what is mine to do. As I grappled with this question, my attention was drawn to a statement by Bishop Jonathan Keaton's wife, Beverly, who wrote:

"In this world of Great Expectations, I encourage you to Dance your Dance to your ability's best.

There will be many Beats that you will be expected to follow, and they can change without warning. This may cause you to be become flummoxed.

But remaining true to yourself and ever trusting in God, you will be enabled to accomplish what is meant for you to accomplish."

(Beverly L. Keaton, "Episcopal Spouses' Thrival Kit," Council of Bishops, The United Methodist Church)

We live in a world where our youth, our children and

grandchildren, teach us a lot! One of the things my grandchildren have taught me is a greater appreciation for the art of dance. I see the passion with which they dance and how easily they are able to synchronize their steps to the beat of the music. They not only hear the music, they feel it, and it dictates their movements.

May God help all of us to dance in this life, carefully listening to the voice of God. The world expects this of us. Even though the beat changes without warning, if we listen intently to the voice of God and follow that voice with courage and determination to the best of our ability, God will see us through! God promises us that!

God, who calls and sends,
we rely on your grace
to know and do your will.
So help us God,
to hear and heed your voice,
to follow the way of Jesus,
to trust the Spirit
who hovers and moves
among us and through us.

When the rhythms of life
change without warning,
when discordant sounds
confuse and confound us,
when we grow weary in doing good,
keep our hearts and minds
attuned to your voice
and lead us in paths of righteousness.

We pray in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Have a blessed and holy Lenten season.
In Christ's love,
Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

What Would Jesus Tell the US Capitol Rioters?

By the Rev. William B. Lawrence

According to published reports, when Jacob Anthony Chansley (aka Jake Angeli, aka the man wearing fur and horns) occupied the presider's desk in the U.S. Senate chamber during the insurrection at the United States Capitol on the Feast of the Epiphany, he and three others offered a prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, they thanked God that they could "be

where we are today.”

For at least one church member, that provoked questions. Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, “where two or three are gathered in my name, I’m there with them.” (Common English Bible). Did that mean Jesus was there, with the rioters and insurrectionists, as they trashed the Capitol and left six people dead? Was their invocation of Jesus’ name enough to ensure that he was on their side? Did their flags that bore the name of Jesus make the insurrectionists his disciples?

One of the choices we make when we read a passage of Scripture is whether we will take notice of the context. Matthew 18:20 is an excellent example. In its context, Jesus addresses a question about dealing with someone who “sins against you,” as Matthew 18:15 states. The passage outlines steps to be used in dealing with an offender who is a church member.

- First, speak privately with the offender and have a conversation just between the two of you. “If they listen to you, then you’ve won over your brother or sister,” Jesus said.
- Second, if that fails, take one or two others with you to talk with the perceived offender, so that the others can function as witnesses to the conversation and “so that every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses.”
- Third, if that step also fails, tell the church about the offense committed by the offender. In effect, this step involves going public within the faith community and asking the community to assess the offense. If the community agrees that an offense has occurred, and if the offender does not listen to the church, then the member should be treated as one now outside of the community of faith, who can no longer speak in Jesus’ name.

In summary, Jesus’ words about “two or three” who assemble in his name applied to a process of discernment and judgment, leading to reconciliation or rejection, with regard to an offense that has been committed (or is believed to have been committed) against the community of faith.

It is not a reference to some sort of magical blessing just because any two or three people claim to gather in Jesus’ name. It does not mean that a few individuals can just utter Jesus’ name and thereby claim his authority for what they say or do. It actually is about the authority of the church, or of two or three representatives of the church, to reach a judgment about an offense that has been committed against the faith of God’s people.

There is something further to be noted regarding the insurrectionists' claim. When they said that their actions at the Senate presider's desk had Scriptural authority — based on the fact that they were praying in Jesus' name — they were inviting Jesus' condemnation of them.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:21, "Not everybody who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter." The context warns that, on judgment day, there will be plenty of people who insist that they prophesied in the Lord's name, cast out demons in the Lord's name, and performed powerful actions in the Lord's name.

But such self-aggrandizement and self-adulation will not impress the Lord. In fact, Jesus will tell them, "Get away from me, you people who do wrong."

It is always best to read a text of Scripture in its context. Jesus' words about two or three gathered in his name become clearly understandable in their Biblical setting. Those people at the Senate presider's desk cannot claim they had the Lord's blessing. That is not their judgment to make. The only authority on earth to make such a judgment is the church. And the church might determine that Mr. Chansley, et. al., were engaged in evil that warranted Jesus' rejection.

Whatever happens to the insurrectionists when they are indicted, tried and (if convicted) punished for their violations of law, I think we have an authoritative basis in Scripture for the church to denounce their misuse of Jesus' name and his words. They may have committed an offense against the community of believers.

We could try following the steps in Matthew 18. Someone from the church could visit privately with Jacob Anthony Chansley (aka Jake Angeli, aka the man wearing fur and horns) to discuss his offense. If he chooses not to listen, a few other individuals could visit him and transcribe the conversation they have with him. If he does not agree that he has offended the community of faith and the church of the Lord, we can have a discussion of the offense within the community of faith. And we should be prepared to issue a public denunciation of his taking the name of the Lord in vain.

But we should not, and we cannot, let Mr. Chansley's false teaching remain without a challenge. In matters of Christian discipleship, the word of the Lord is not what we want the Lord to say. It may be his harsh word of judgment.

Lawrence is an ordained elder of The United Methodist Church, former dean of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University and former president of the Judicial Council.

Lenten Bible Study on Zoom
“Roll Down Justice”
Begins February 14th

See details inside newsletter