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From the Pastor's Desk

Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.— Philipians 4:6-7

Greetings in the Name of Christ,

We live a precarious time right now. It is easy to be overwhelmed and worried about everything. Common daily and weekly chores bring uncertainty upon us. If we become consumed by worry, we add to the negative powers which surround us and perhaps even have led to this situation. We have talked about some sins we have committed as a global people in our recent sermon series on looking at COVID through the Old (or First) Testament. They include our consumerism, greed, self-contentedness, egocentric need to gain power and control, lack of love and concern for our neighbors, exploitation of God's creation. What are we to do?

We might take notice of what Jesus did when he was led into the wilderness (Matthew 4: 1-11). He held onto his faith and repeated scripture verses to give him strength. Keeping up our spiritual disciplines, which include prayer, Biblical reading, fasting, will keep us connected to God. We might also examine how we act in our daily lives. Do our actions look

like Jesus' ways? Are we kind? Generous? Patient? Loving? Joyful? Honestly examining our lives, admitting where we fall short, and inviting God to forgive us and grant us grace to change is a good place to begin. Two scriptures which might give you a starting place to examine your lives (as well as good scripture to memorize) are Galatians 5:22-23 and/or 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7. This is not a once and done assignment, but to review your past history as well as daily actions.

St. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) This is a devotional ritual I am practicing and invite you to join me. Try being aware of your surroundings at all times and find things to give thanks for in prayer. As I practice this, I find that my heart is shifted to gratefulness swiftly, for we live in an incredible world. I am thankful for the screams of glee from children that remind us we are to be like children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:3). For the colors of flowers, for the yellow pollen that sticks in my throat but brings new life and shade from the leaves, for clean, running water which comes so easily through pipes to my house, etc. I must admit I am still struggling to give thanks for flies that invade my house and porch, but I am trying. As we give thanks for all that is around us, we change the negative spirit around us to one of gratefulness, thankfulness, and hope. Changing the spirit around us in the world today is very helpful and healing.

Now that we are allowed to visit in small groups, I hope to stop by and see many of you for an outdoor visit: porch, deck, lawn, etc. Kristen has called some of you to find out if you would like a visit, but if you have not received a call and would like a visit, please let me know (413-566-3711). If there is any way that the church can assist you, please call. If you have an idea to help the community heal and provide hope, we would like to know that also. Please call me or a Deacon.

In Christ's Light and Love,
Pastor Pat

From the Deacons' Bench

Learning (Again) How to Hope

Over the past few months global, national, and even local events have caused me to sometimes feel anxiety, depression, anger, frustration, sadness, and fear. I find myself struggling to overcome the negative feelings. But is optimism (*"hopefulness and confidence about the future"* - *Oxford Dictionary*) even possible now? I recently read an interesting article about optimism: is it only a personality trait you are born with, or can it be learned? If so, how?

In the '60s and '70s, research conducted by Martin Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, demonstrated that animals can learn "helplessness": after receiving an electric shock the animals became conditioned to helplessness. Even when placed in a new situation where they could clearly escape, they remained passive in the new situation. This was the result with dogs, mice, rats, and pigeons. **"They expected that there was nothing they could do, so they didn't try."** Experimenting with humans Dr. Seligman got similar results with two-thirds of the people, but one-third of the people could not be made helpless. What made those people so resilient? Over time, Seligman was able to determine that the people he could not make helpless tended to assume that whatever problem they were experiencing was temporary, just this one time and controllable; an "explanatory style" he associates with optimists. Pessimists, on the other hand, believe that bad events are permanent, pervasive and uncontrollable.

Dr. Seligman's research led to the creation in 1997 of the Penn Resiliency Program, designed to immunize people against learned helplessness, against depression and anxiety, and against giving up after failure: by teaching them to think like optimists.

Reading this, I realized the emotional and psychological "shocks" of the past few months had begun to condition me to

feeling helpless. Then I came across this writing of Paul, and marveled again at his ability, no matter what was happening around him and to him, to “bounce back” to abiding hope. In Philippians 4:10-14 (The Message) he says, “... *I’ve learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances...I’ve found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.*” (This bad situation won't keep happening over and over.)

Before that (v. 6-9) he shares his “program” for developing a hopeful mindset: *Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.* (This bad situation is not permanent.)

Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.” (I can control how I respond to this bad situation.)

I find it comforting that centuries before modern research Paul knew that each of us, through our choice to learn about Christ's life and practice his teachings, can instill within ourselves a hopeful and positive outlook, even in the midst of upheaval and pain.

Peace,
Linda Hornig, Deacon



Servers for the Months

Deacons

July	Karen Anable
August	Dave Anable
September	Linda Hornig

Anniversaries

David & Geraldine Kruger	07/06
Dennis & Marilyn Connor	07/12
Beverly & Wayne Burnell	07/14
Mark & Linda Casey	07/21
Paul & Nancy Willoughby	07/24
William & Ruth Haley	07/27
Gregory & Heather Webb	07/28
Phyllis & Kenneth Hultstrom	08/15
Frank & Phyllis Watson	08/17
Glenn & Brenda Olesuk	08/18
Jeffrey & Annemarie Sias	08/19
Kimberly & Dave Cummins	08/24
William & Lynn Cunningham	08/26
Otto & Clara Kern	08/30

Congratulations



Sunday School Birthdays

Amelia	Gardner	07/14
Aiden	Gardner	07/14
Logan	Paradis	08/06
Cameron	Regnier	08/13
Nathaniel	Wyman	08/15
Cody	Nunes	08/27



July /August Birthdays

Birthday Greetings to the following adult members of our church who celebrate birthdays in July and August.

Joshua Hummel	07/01	Sandra Wilk	07/30
James Brant	07/03	Elaine Evans	07/31
Theodore Zebert	07/05	Frank Watson	08/02
Nolan Fonda	07/07	Anthony Rogers	08/07
Teresa Kennedy	07/08	Kimberly Luthgren	08/07
Linda Hornig	07/09	Marion Cilley	08/11
Mary Howell	07/09	Robert Schoolcraft	08/11
Frances Brown	07/10	Shirley Facey	08/11
Nancy Zebert	07/11	Brandan Parry	08/15
Richard DeSanti	07/12	John Spear	08/17
Michael Stone	07/13	Jessica Quill	08/18
Paige Fonda	07/13	Nicole Hiersch	08/18
Philip Stoddard	07/13	Debra Anderson	08/21
Keith Lemelin-Bliss	07/13	Rebecca Varney	08/22
Heather Webb	07/14	Kristi Tessier	08/22
Nicole Gray	07/14	Janet Libby	08/24
Bruce Libby	07/15	Patricia Baker	08/25
Ashley Stoddard	07/16	Wayne Miller Fernandes	08/26
Priscilla Kibbe	07/18	Debra Doyle	08/26
Nancy Ryan	07/19	Dana Ramponi	08/26
Janet Brehaut	07/24	Laurie Bliss	08/29
Christopher Fonda	07/25	Phyllis Watson	08/30
Allen Schoolcraft	07/27		
Kathleen Hutchison	07/27		
Yvonne Godek	07/29		



Prayer Corner



Evie Meacham

Bob & Evelyn Schoolcraft

Stella

Kathie

Audrey Burger

John (Jack) Bennett

Janet Brehaut

Beverly Pease

Winnie

Karen Kielb

Richard Grant

Joyce Libby

Christopher

Gail Banning

Otto Kern

Stella

Carol Darnley

Gwen Wills

Lelum

Jackie Prior

Dennis Connor

Protection for first responders, including Lori Beth, Joshua, Matt, Meghan, Brendan, caregivers (Sherry & Rebecca), and all community workers, and governing officials trying to deal with all of this.

Sympathy to family & friends of.....

Jean Carroll

Julia Winetrout

Judy Ingle

Pamela Rogers' father, Robertson "Reggie" Clark



Summer Worship

There will be no change of time in our worship this summer. **Services will remain at 10:00 AM** as we worship outside in July and August.

Blessings in the Midst of Covid

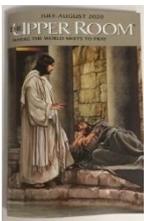
In the midst of our Covid situation, we are pleased to announce the following blessings:

- From the United Methodist Foundation of New England a \$3,000 grant for *Connecting in the Spirit* program.
- The United Methodist *Together for Tomorrow* has awarded a grant of \$4,200

Both grants will assist with the development of spiritual formation of both children and adults and a new ministry called *Messy Church*.

- Wellspring United Methodist Church of Shewsbury has blessed FCC with a two octave handbell set.

We are indeed blessed and look forward to embracing all of these gifts in sharing our good news with others.



Upper Rooms Available

We have copies of the May/June as well as the July/August issues of the *Upper Room* available in the office. You are welcome to come and pick up a copy . We will also have several available on the table in Libby Hall. If you would like one, but are unable to come to the church, please let us know and we will get a copy to you.

Money Matters

As we approach the end of June we are beginning to return to the way things used to be. We can almost enjoy a meal inside a restaurant. We can have a beer with a friend. We can go swimming. Our schools are actually going to open with limited restrictions (masks must be worn). We could say things are RETURNING to normal (even though it may be a “new normal” for a period of time.

However, it should be noted that your church has tried very hard to maintain the “old normal”. Newsletters are still published, prayer sessions are still held, visits are still made to the shut ins, and charitable donations through our Missions program continue. The food gathering and distribution is up and going now that the produce is starting to be harvested, Sunday service is being held (Outdoors). In short, despite the restrictions and cautions, we have continued to function as a church.

While that is why we are here, what has not changed is the need to fund those missions and activities essential to the life of the church.. Please do not forget your pledges made for 2020. They were made with goals of the church in mind and your charity should not change or diminish. The Church has functioned in some cases in new ways out of necessity but the missions have remained constant. We have not diminished our giving and we have continued to maintain our staff. To continue this we need you to be sure your pledged support is being attended to, as we emerge from this time our missions will probably be put under even greater strain. So as you review your pledges, keep that in mind. As I tell my grand grandkids when doing a job “more is better than less”. The same thought process when looking at the pledges can put us in a better position to respond to the greater needs.

Dave Anable,
Treasurer

A Prayer During Covid-19

Read ~~Psalm 17:1-7 (The Message)

God of all righteousness~~

So many voices are declaring these days as

a time of threat and danger:

a time to be cautious about whom you call friend

a time to watch what you say and to whom you speak

a time to be wary of wily, eloquent instigators of
trouble

Holy and justice-seeking God~~

How is it that we have come to this:

a time when we are fearful; shaking for lack of
confidence

a time when we are anxious; yearning for a steady
peace

a time when we are timid; knowing it is holy boldness
that is needed

Holy and loving God~~

Extreme racism, violence, injustices, prejudices of every nature exist in our land—a country that calls itself “the land of the free” even as many are not truly free. In the midst of a hate so powerful that lives are not valued, we like to think we are innocent. Yet in our hearts we know that doing nothing does not absolve us from complicity—a truth that has been taught to us through your Holy Word.

We need you now, O God, to keep us focused on paths of righteousness. Remind your people of their promise to follow the teachings of Christ Jesus. Give us the courage to move beyond temptations and invitations to declare ourselves outside of the conflict. May we instead boldly call out prejudices and injustices and speak truth to power. Give us strength to break free from the prison of fear and ignorance, pride and arrogance. Fervently, we pray, shine brightly the light of Your love on all your creation so the evil darkness of hate is abolished from this world.

All our prayers are lifted in the Blessed Name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

By Rene Wilbur, New England Conference Lay Leader

Join us for Outdoor Worship in July & August!

Sundays @ 10:00 AM

