



Gibsonville United Methodist Church

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The Newsletter Of Gibsonville United Methodist Church

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Gibsonville United Methodist Church exists to **Welcome** people to faith in Jesus Christ, **Equip** us with a faith that helps us grow as disciples, and **Send** us into the world to serve and to make a difference for Jesus' sake.

November 2020

Inside this issue...

- Upcoming Events and Information
- Anniversaries
- Birthdays
- Children's Ministry
- Memorials & Special Gifts
- Stewardship Update
- Youth Ministry



Remember we are live-streaming our worship service at 9am and 11am on Sundays. There is an archive available if you cannot sit in front of a computer on Sunday mornings. For live-streaming go to www.gibsonvilleumc.org and scroll down to LIVE STREAM, or watch it on Gibsonville UMC Facebook page. Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! (Psalm 150:6)



A Pen And A Thought



The following is an essay written by Pastor Barry when he was a seminary student.

Aaronide Blessing

Using the theological rhetoric of the Aaronide blessing of Numbers 6: 24-26, and the rich tapestry presented by the directions suggested by the six verbs of that blessing, prepare an essay on the subject, "Yahweh's Blessing, at Thanksgiving, 1986."

The church building stood there on the corner of the street, and as I pictured those hurting souls inside, I knew what they needed the most was not a historical review of Pilgrims, Indians, and various other characters from an age long since past, but a word that would somehow echo through the cathedral of their hearts and remain with them long after that warm and soft afternoon was gone. They were tortured, you understand, because an awful lot of them had believed, every line of it, the Great Lie, and that lie had left them O my God so awfully hollow and empty. They had pain, and that pain came from the numbness that goes hand in hand with having everything and needing nothing . . . when I spoke, I felt I had to whisper, because if I shouted they would not, indeed they could not, hear me, because it would be my noise mingling with their noise.

So I told them as softly as I could that Yahweh wanted to bless them. But this blessing was different, because it was the blessing of the Lord, and not the blessing of The Dream. This was a blessing that required some transportation of the imagination to those stifling, hot cotton fields of old, where little black boys and girls, where Mamas and Daddys were absolutely denied their existence, and where the sounds of hope and faith were pure because they were the sounds of tears and laughter, anger and patience, hate and love.

And one day Daddy got up. My God, he was so old, so young. And there was that look he gets. I could tell he was going to cry real hard. And he walked over to little brother, and this great priest of a man put his big black hands on little brother's head and told him no matter how hot the sun got, or how many times the cotton cut his hands to pieces, the Lord would keep him in

His hands and bind up those wounds.

And that great priest of a man told little brother that no matter how dark the sins of his oppressor got, or how dark and ugly his heart got because he could not live the way humans are supposed to live, the Lord would brighten the night because the Lord's face was light, and His face would shine brighter than the sun at noon day, way down deep inside little brother's heart.

And that great priest of a man, with those big, black scarred hands still on little brother's head, told him that when the cruel dirty world knocked him down and rubbed dirt in his face, and even if little brother did not remember the Lord during those times, or if he did remember the Lord during those times but cursed the Lord, the Lord would still be gracious to him, and forgive him, because the Lord understands about being empty and humble and servanthood.

And that great priest of a man told little brother that the Lord smiles, if you really want to you can see him smile, at those who really need a smile.

And then that great priest of a man, with those big black scarred hands still on little brother's head, looked around at all of us, with our hearts swelling and our eyes running, and told us the Lord would give us all a peace that passed all our understanding and experience, because it was a peace that was in no way tied to the things of the world.

. . . The congregation left that night in their big fine cars to their warm little houses, knowing they had experienced another life, and the Thanksgiving of someone else had given them blessing and peace.

Barry Lemons
Southeastern Seminary
November, 1986

Prayer Chain News:

We have a problem with Spectrum not delivering prayer requests as we have become accustomed. For prayer requests, mail to the Pastor (blemons@wnccumc.net). Prayer requests will be sent to you from there.

A Meaningful Month

Consumerism can prevent us from noticing needs, writes Walter Brueggemann (*The Prophetic Imagination*). A culture steeped in materialism and greed can "block out the cries of the denied ones...so that no one discerns misery alive in the heart of God.."

November, we celebrate Thanksgiving, Christ the King Sunday and the start of Advent. What does it mean that Christ is our King? How can we truly give God thanks and prepare for Jesus' coming? It's a good time to ponder What hurts God's heart—and how we can help.

If someone is lonely, perhaps we can invite them to Thanksgiving dinner. If we sense inequality saddening God, we might advocate for fair policies. If God is in pain because some of his children have too little, we can share our resources. In so doing, we welcome Christ the King among us, and give him meaningful thanks.

Growing Through Gratitude



Thankfulness, studies show, has multiple physical, mental and emotional benefits. Psychologist Robert Emmons calls gratitude "fertilizer for the mind" because of its powerful effects.

He admits gratitude isn't always easy — especially when life throws us curveballs (see the year 2020) — but says it can be most helpful during and after difficulties. Emmons suggests reframing challenges using thankfulness-based language. Ask, for example: Though I wasn't grateful for the experience at the time, how can I be now? What lessons did I learn, and how did I grow as a person?

Throughout his letters, the apostle Paul reframes his extensive sufferings and urges us to do the same. "Give thanks in all circumstances," he writes, "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NIV).



November Music News At GUMC

Writing these words in early October, I am put in mind of the annual remembrance of the death of Francis of Assisi on October 3, 1226. The text of the great hymn "All Creatures Of Our God And King" [UMH 62] derives from Francis's own *Canticle of the Creatures*, in which the wonders of God's Creation are interrelated and extolled, and where the Creator is given a wealth of human praise. Working outdoors a good deal of late, I offer my own voice of thanksgiving for what seem the ever-dependable changing of the seasons and the ever-plentiful bounty of life. What extraordinary beauty, diversity, and order surround us each and every day, thank God! Yet, lately I have also been reminded – as if the pandemic were not reminder enough – of the fragility of earthly life and humans' critical role in ensuring its perpetuation. Read on.

My wife Martha and I recently watched a stunning Netflix documentary "A Life on Our Planet," starring natural historian and broadcaster David Attenborough, now 94 years old, who calls this film his "witness story" and vision for the future. If you have yet to see this video, wait no longer! Without wanting to spoil any surprises, let me enumerate the documentary's major points: 1) the biodiversity of life on Earth is astonishingly strong but delicate; 2) the impact of humans on our environment is rapidly making this planet uninhabitable for all; 3) if we do not change our current ways of thinking and doing, we have very little time before Nature will have to rebuild the Earth (as it has done before); and 4) if we change our thoughts and actions, sufficient, though minimal, time remains to make sustainable life on Earth a dream come true.

Attenborough does not politicize the topic of this film, nor is there mention of a Creating God. The same does not hold true, though, for the 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis, well worth reading by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Listen for the similarities of viewpoint between Attenborough and today's Francis. Here are a few thoughts from the latter: "The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now." Clearly, some important leaders are calling us to *action* – immediate corrective action, in fact!

But hold on: didn't Jesus make exactly the same points 2,000 years ago? 1) Regarding the wonders of Creation, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow... even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these." (Mt. 6:28 – NRSV); 2) Concerning rampant self-regard and materialism, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (Mt. 6:19-20 – NRSV); 3&4) As for immediate action, "Change your hearts; for the Kingdom of the heavens has drawn near" (Mt. 4:17 – Hart translation). I'm getting more and more on board with this agenda, because I want our grandchildren – *all* our grandchildren – to heartily sing "All Creatures Of Our God And King" as they live in this earthly paradise!

Rob Hallquist
Director of Music in Traditional Worship

MISSION & OUTREACH

Say "**Thank You**" This Thanksgiving...to the saints who helped lay the foundation for GUMC. For many years the Youth Group has delivered Thanksgiving baskets to the elderly and shut-in members of our congregation. Join this historical tradition by bringing goodies to help fill the gift baskets. Suggested items include personal hygiene items, fresh fruit, stationary, large print books and healthy snacks. Please bring your donations to the collection basket located in the Welcome Center by **Sunday, November 22**. Thank you in advance!

Fruit & Protein Collection

Gibsonville UMC supports the food pantry for the community that is housed at First Baptist Church, Gibsonville. Families are served every week! Let's help supply them with canned fruits and non perishable protein items. Please bring items any day of the week and place in the plastic container provided outside the Welcome Center door and in the Narthex on Sundays. Suggested food items include the following: peanut butter, canned meat, canned meat stews, beans, brown rice, quinoa, canned fruit. Please be mindful of expiration dates on all donated food.



Community Christmas Mission

One of our church's special mission events is providing identified families with food, clothing, and toys for Christmas. Due to COVID19 restrictions, the SEND Committee will be modifying the way we usually do this. Unfortunately, we will not be able to host the Christmas party, but will sponsor families with a box of food for Christmas dinner, toys, and clothes.

You are invited to participate in this mission by making a financial donation that will be used to purchase gifts and food. Donations may be mailed to the church at PO Box 82, Gibsonville, dropped off at the office, or placed in the collection box at Sunday services. Please make checks out to GUMC and marked Christmas Mission. If you are interested in shopping for a child or family, contact Maria Harrison 336-263-0390 or Judy Shepherd 336-339-1697.

In uncertain times, our love and generosity to those in need is more important than ever. Thanks so much for your support.

Strangers No Moore

Some people open their holiday meals to strangers, and one host even did so inadvertently. In 2016, Wanda Dench texted 17-year-old Jamal Hinton about Thanksgiving dinner, thinking she was contacting her grandson. When a skeptical Hinton requested a photo and received a selfie of someone with a different skin color, he chuckled — but then asked if he could still come eat! Thus began a new friendship and a new annual tradition, which Hinton documents online. "Family is more than blood," says Dench. "It's the people you want to be with."

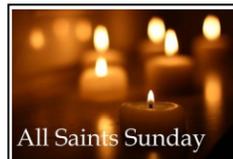
This year's meal will be bittersweet, with an empty chair for Dench's husband, who died of Covid-19 in April. To show support after that loss, Hinton sent his "grandma" a collection of loving video messages. Strangers worldwide expressed condolences to a woman who'd fully embraced a stranger.



- 3 Betsy Greeson
- 5 Carolyn Shelton
Mary Wagoner
- 6 Lillie Cline
- 10 Guy Novak
Janna Peacock
- 11 Emily James
- 12 Irma Walker
- 13 George Dees
Kyle Kimbro
- 14 Christy Geringer
Sharon Norwood
Frances Soule
Evelyn Stanley
- 17 Donna Jacobelli
- 19 Clarice Blackwell
Michelle Rash
- 21 Jamie Isley
- 22 Jim Ezekiel
- 23 Jennifer Kimbro
- 24 Ben McMillan
- 26 Leonard Mangum
- 30 David Glosson

Decorating the Sanctuary for Advent
Volunteers are needed (especially men) to help decorate the Sanctuary by putting up the Christmas tree on **Saturday, November 28, 9:30am**. Contact the church office (336) 449-4810 or email info@gibsonvilleumc.org for additional information.

All Saints Sunday



All Saints Sunday

On the first Sunday of November we observe All Saint's by remembering those who have run the race of faith and gone on before us. In the 9:00am and 11:00am worship service, we will name the church members who died since last All Saint's Sunday and light a candle on the altar table in their memory as a way to recognize the grief that we share in our loss and recognize the grace of our Lord.



- November 2
Ezekiel & Jessica Gillie
- November 16
Larry & Margaret Poole
- November 19
Michael & Wanda Whitesell
- November 23
Randy & Susan Randolph
- November 26
**Ralph & Susan Bland
Joel & Julie Isley
Walt & Patti Teague**
- November 28
Jim & Susan Ezekiel



11/1/20 - All Saints Sunday

11/8/20 - The altar flowers are given to the glory of God by Ann Moore in loving memory of Van Moore.



11/15/20 & 11/22/20 - The Thanksgiving altar arrangement is given to the glory of God by The Johnson & Morrow families in honor of all farmers.

Memorials & Special Gifts to Honor Friends Loved Ones

IN MEMORY OF

Dick Annand
Linda, Cindy, Billy,
Timmy & Family

Jack Buck
Jean Butcher

Jack Buck, Jr.
Jean Butcher

Charlie Butcher
Jean Butcher

David Butcher
Jean Butcher

Bennie Davenport
Jean Butcher

Van Moore
Fred & Charlotte Clos

Treva Pettigrew Cobb
Don & Glenda Blalock
Ginger Jarrett
Don Batemen, Ruth Ann
Martin, Jane Oakley
Donnie & Celia Summers

Lavon Whitt
Don & Glenda Blalock

IN HONOR OF

Ezekiel & Jessie Gillie
Tommy & Joyce Summers

Tootie Burke
Bookie Gates
Nell Geringer
Betsy Greeson
Linda Waynick
Amy Whitesell
Leslie Williams
Irma Walker

Donnie & Celia Summers
Joe Thompson

Offering Counters for November: Green Team
Emily Jones, David Teague, Melissa Troutman

Our Gifts

By our Gifts (as of 9/30/20)

Annual Budget	336,528
Operating Fund Received in September	22,592
Operating Fund Received Year to Date	198,259
Operating Fund Needed Budget to Date	252,396
Above/(Below) Budget to Date	(54,137)
Building Fund received in September	3,745
Building Fund received Year to Date	41,732
Mortgage Payments Year to Date	64,080
Above/(Below) Mortgage Payments YTD	(22,348)
Mortgage Principal Balance	683,725

A complete copy of the current financial statement is available in the Welcome Center.

This is a report given by the Pastor to the Church Conference in 2020

The Pastor shall give a report on the state of the church and an account of pastoral ministry as it relates to (¶ 340): providing support, guidance, and training to the lay membership in the church; ministering within the congregation and to the world; and administering the temporal affairs of the congregation. Include as a part of the report a statement outlining the pastor's program of continuing education and spiritual growth for the past year and plans for the year to come (¶ 349).

The main thing we have done at Gibsonville UMC in 2020 to provide support, guidance, and training to the lay membership of the church is completing a 13-month partnership with the consulting firm of Ministry Architects (MA). Ministry Architects is an internationally known ministry consulting firm that has helped over one thousand churches rebuild and revitalize their children and youth ministries. We have learned how to build the infrastructure and foundation for ministry that will last for decades, no matter who the pastor or children and youth workers happen to be. We have also learned the value and methodology of short and long-range planning, publicity using various forms of social media and other types of communication, budgeting processes, goals for membership, and planning large events when we are ready.

We hired three staff persons in the midst of the pandemic (Children Youth Director, Contemporary Worship Director, and Church Custodian). The CYD and I are incorporating things learned during our Ministry Architect experience with the multi-layered gifts and skills he possess for ministry.

We never missed a worship service during the pandemic, going virtual the first Sunday of the worship shutdown. We formed a Reopening Task Force very early in the pandemic. We incorporated all the CDC, State and Conference guidelines we possibly could into our reopening strategy. We reopened for live, indoor worship on October 4, 2020, as safe as we can be.

I am intentionally offering our SPRC Chair the help of United Methodist resources to effectively lead the SPRC in its work. I also plan to teach and enable my Leadership Team Chair to conduct an effective and theologically appropriate stewardship emphasis this fall.

In 2020 I completed (for the second time) the Conference sponsored course, School of the Spirit, led by Ann Starette and her team.

Like everyone else, I have been required to hone my technology skills and learn who to rely upon for help. Gratefully our new Children/Youth Director is adept at the use of technology and incorporating it into the life of the church. He has established his own YouTube Channel for Children's Ministry. Together we film a brief video each Wednesday to keep the church up-to-date on what's happening at the church. The video, "What's Happening," is new and available each Wednesday on the church

website by 8pm.

Beginning April 30, 2020 and continuing for six weeks, I participated in a cohort led by Brian Zehr of Intentional Impact entitled Post-Crisis Leadership. The virtual course consisted of lectures by Zehr and a guest speaker each week, break-out groups, and developing a 90-day plan for my church.

Currently I am participating in a webinar sponsored by Amplify Media entitled Justice, Love, and Humility: Pastoring a Divided Culture. Speakers include the likes of Diana Butler-Bass, Robert Jones, and Will Willimon. I was particularly challenged when Bass said something challenging the clergy who are "nearing retirement" to speak the truth about the challenges in our culture, and offer guidance and mentorship to the younger clergy to find their own voice.

I have no specific plans for continuing education for the remainder of 2020 or 2021. I always keep my eyes open for interesting opportunities, and am grateful for a generous CE allotment from my church and also the WNCC.

I have read several books this year: Virus As A Summons to Faith (Brueggemann); The Art of Public Speaking (Carnegie); The Gifted Pastor (Carter, Jr.); Longing For Spring (Heath & Kisker); Trump (Lee); Accountable Discipleship (Manskar); Preaching the Psalms (McCann & Howell); The Hope of Glory (Meacham); The Soul of America (Meacham); Scary Close (Miller); Searching for God Knows What (Miller); Through Painted Deserts (Miller); The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (Paludan); Erosion (Tempest); Forming Christian Disciples (Watson).

I pray and read Scripture in the morning using the daily and weekly lectionary readings.

Children & Youth

We **UPLIFT**, **SERVE**, and **CONNECT** with God's children and youth to instill a lifetime of faith and nurture Christian relationships.

Routine is King

Not knowing what your day looks like can be frustrating. Especially during these Covid times where planning is becoming increasingly difficult. I become a hot mess when I start my day off thinking I have my day planned, but I get a phone call or remember something I didn't add to my list, and my day becomes something other than what I planned it to be. I do not feel like I have accomplished much of anything on those days. The same can be said for our children. When they don't know what time breakfast is, or one day they stay in pajamas, and the next day they have to change into clothes, even though they are not going anywhere. What time is dinner? Are we doing a bath tonight? Lets change it up and read tonight! All these things cause a child to go bonkers trying to figure out what's next. It is also the cause of major meltdowns. That is why it is super important to make a schedule and stick to it as best as you can. For example, my kids have a bed time routine. After dinner

they get a bath or shower, get into pajamas, comb hair, brush teeth, and then we either read a book or have some family time, then its off to bed. Kids behave so much better when they know what to expect. If its bed time, they know all the steps before bed. It prepares their mind for what's coming. Same thing is true with our whole day. Get up at 7:00 am, eat breakfast, get dressed brush teeth, start virtual school, have a lunch break, free play, afternoon snack, quiet time, play outside, dinner, etc etc etc.....No matter what your schedule actually looks like, please keep it the same. Changing your routine can ruin a kids day. You have to find something that works for your family and keep it as close to that as possible. When you get a routine you feel like a king! Your day will stay on track, you will feel accomplished, meltdowns will not happen as often, and you will be productive. Your kids will appreciate it too!



Thanks to all who helped pack Trunk or Treat bags!

November

Youth Group will be creating and delivering thinking of you cards, along with home made bags and lap blankets to folks in nursing homes, or who have not had visitors in a while.

Upcoming Topics for Parents:

1. Consistency is the Key

Ezekiel will be hosting our first Parent Seminar on November 21st at 10am in the Fellowship Hall

*We have created a **Youtube Channel** with bible lessons, crafts, music, games, and more. Simply search for Gibsonville UMC kids and look for the red flame logo, click subscribe and watch in your spare time!*

Ezekiel Gillie: Children and Youth Director
ezekiel.gillie@gibsonvilleumc.org
336-449-4810 ext.101
919-864-0651

This is a summary of 2020 written for the Staff Parish Relations Committee

To: Staff/Parish Relations Committee
Re: 2020 in Review
Date: Sept. 17, 2020
From: Pastor Barry

I am writing this to you, the members of the SPRC, in advance of our coming together to do some significant work over the next couple of months. I want to remind us of our task as a Work Area in the church, and also of the significant ministries that have been happening during the pandemic. I will try to be concise, but also comprehensive.

WORK OF THE SPRC

In general, the responsibilities of SPRC are *administrative and supportive*. **Administrative:** pastoral and staff evaluations; maintaining a connection with the district superintendent (DS); and communication among pastor/staff, congregation, and DS. **Supportive:** To offer support to all staff and to recommend salaries and benefits for all staff. (Note: A lot of the ideas related to the role of SPRC are taken from Guidelines 2017-2020, Pastor-Parish Relations: Connect the Pastor, Staff, and Congregation). I have this resource in my office if you would like a copy of it.

Soon, Matt Morrow and/or Howard Hendricks, will be sending you a simplified version of work we need to do by the end of 2020.

Just for review, since the coronavirus pandemic shutdown began in March 2020, we have accomplished much as a church.

LIVE-STREAMING

First, we successfully shut down live in-person worship, but continued offering worship via live-stream on our church website and face book. This involved a team of people beyond myself: Joe Cline, Susan Flynn, Deleno Flynn, Ezekiel Gillie, Jessie Gillie, Rob Hallquist, Maria Harrison, Howard Hendricks, Emma Kirkman, John Landphair, Donna Lemons, Matt Morrow, David Peeler, Joyce Summer, Tim Wood, Sue Wood, and Edith Younger.

REOPENING THE CHURCH FOR WORSHIP

Second, we put together a Reopening Task Force back in May to help us prepare for the day when we would be able to reopen for live in-person worship. There were ten members of the Task Force who met nearly every Wednesday night this summer to get us prepared. Now that the day for reopening is upon us (Oct 4) most of the hard work with ordering supplies and the logistics have been ironed out. Thanks to Dianne Cline, Jane Deaton, Ezekiel Gillie, Howard Hendricks, Sue Hudson, Donna Lemons, Ann Moore, and Sue and Tim Wood.

NEW STAFF PERSONS

Third, we hired three new staff people this spring. Ezekiel Gillie is our brand-new Children/Youth Ministries Director. Jessie Gillie is his wife, and she is our brand-new Contemporary Worship Director. Everyone seems to

really love them and comment frequently on how blessed we are to have them as staff members. They also have three children in tow!

We put together a task force to hire them, too. Thanks to Shirley Beyer, Joe Cline, Jan Cole, Carol Kirkman, Terry McNeill, and Michelle Rash. (I apologize if I left someone out – I am not positive I have complete notes on the Selection Committee). Of course, the SC made their recommendation to SPRC, who gave the final go ahead to recommend our candidates to the Ad Board. The Gillie's started with us June 1, 2020.

We also hired Kibble Turner Davis as our custodian. Kibble was hired to replace his father, Kibble Davis, Jr, who died in the spring. Kibble began work around July 1, and has since taken over mowing duties, as well.

And let me thank Edith Younger, our always faithful and knowledgeable Administrative Assistant.

And Rob Hallquist, Traditional Music Director and pianist Extraordinaire!

We are indeed blessed by so much dedicated and talented staff!

RENOVATION TEAM AND MINISTRY ARCHITECTS

Fourth, we have completed our 13-month consulting process with Ministry Architects. The church took a gigantic leap of faith in August of 2019 when we agreed to work with MA to help us revitalize and renew our ministry to and with Children and Youth. The amount of much needed work and training that our Renovation Team and Ministry Architects accomplished together is phenomenal. Our new CYD (Ezekiel) has hit the ground running, implementing many of our ideas and infrastructure right off the bat.

TECHNOLOGY

Sixth, Ezekiel has brought us along tremendously when it comes to technology. He has a you tube channel designed for children. This is his (and his family's) work, not something "piped in." He single-handedly redesigned the church website to give it a more "user-friendly," look and practicality in using it productively. He is also starting a virtual (online) Sunday School for children.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

And he and I have started a video program called *What's Happening*, that can be viewed each Wednesday evening beginning at 7pm. We pick a place inside or outside the church to video a short talk from each of us about what is happening at the church in any particular week. You can also go to the archive to see what we have already done (accessible by date).

(Continued on next page)

Summary of 2020 written for the Staff Parish Relations Committee

(Continued)

POST-CRISIS LEADERSHIP

Seventh, I participated during the summer of 2020 in a six-week online cohort, sponsored by a ministry training firm named *Intentional Impact*, with twelve United Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Episcopal clergy from around the US. The course was designed to help each clergy develop a three-month plan to lead our churches out of the coronavirus pandemic. I developed a 90-day plan and sent it to all church members around the first week of August. (None of us anticipated the duration of the pandemic)!

SEXUALITY AND THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Finally, we began conversations regarding human sexuality within the context of United Methodist belief in 2019. On Monday, March 2 at 7pm, we met as a church to discuss a recommended Protocol for settling the sexuality dispute within Methodism. The Protocol was produced with tremendous deliberation and support from all across the theological spectrum and from all across the world-wide United Methodist Church. I think the discussion in our church went well, but as usual, some did not like that we have not slammed the door on some of the children of God, so they have "left" our fellowship. Discussing a problem that began in the UMC in 1972 was, according to some, expected to be solved by about 30 of our people at

an informational meeting within 90 minutes. I do not know exactly how many we have lost (in total) to this issue over the last several years, as the pandemic began only days afterwards, but across the years we have indeed lost some of our church family to such turmoil. I am so saddened by this. I am almost certain this will develop in 2021 into a bull-blown crisis in the world-wide UMC, again. Though I do not know how many we (GUMC) have lost, I do know how many God wants us to gain. God wants us to make disciples of every last and lost human being within miles of our doors. I will work until there is no breath left in me to make it happen.

CONCLUSION

Things have not been easy, but God has proven to be faithful (as usual). We are on new ground, but I am positive God will take each step of the journey with us.

I hope this has been a good refresher course for each of you. It has for me, that's for sure!

Do not forget, Howard or Matt will soon be sending you some more info. Please go over it very carefully, mark any dates, and please come to the meetings. They are so important to so many people!

Blessings,
Pastor Barry

Don't Lose Hope

A message from Jessie Gillie to the Acts29@9 Praise Team

*I just wanted to take a moment to say:
Thank you so much for all each of you do, not only in preparation of Sunday services, but in the lives of one another. I know that this pandemic has put an added stressor on our lives, our minds, and our hearts. But don't lose hope. Even though life seems to be changing more than it ever has before, God remains constant. He hasn't wavered, He hasn't abandoned us, and He hasn't become one iota less worthy of all of our praise. We can still fall on Him with all of our worries, doubts and fears, and He will catch us and hold us same as ever before. He loves you despite the storms that rage inside us. So, we can praise Him despite of, and because of, the storms that rage in the world. Your presence is more valued than you will ever know.*

The Simplest Prayer

An eccentric blind man nicknamed Joybubbles reportedly loved Mr. Rogers so much he listened to 10 hours of the TV show daily until he'd heard them all. One night, when Joybubbles was in a kind of awake dream state, he said Mr. Rogers visited him and offered to teach him how to pray.

Joybubbles protested that he couldn't pray because he always forgot the words. To which Mr. Rogers said not to worry; the prayer he'd teach had only three words. "What kind of prayer has only three words?" Joybubbles asked.

"Thank you, God," Mr. Rogers Replied.
—adapted from *The Wired Word*

Beyond Heroism

At a recent anti-racism protest, Black participant Patrick Hutchinson saw a white counter-protester fall. Fearing for the injured man's life, Hutchinson hoisted him over his shoulder and carried him through the crowd to seek help. Hutchinson was called a hero but says he just wanted to do the right thing.

According to Jesus, the right thing is to "love your enemies [and] do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). It's easy to love and be kind to our friends and people with similar beliefs. But when someone shows kindness to a member of an opposing group, we witness more than a hero; we see Jesus' love in action.