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Hello church family and friends and beloved weirdos of all kinds!

I don't know whether this often happens to you, but sometimes there are chunks of time – a few hours, or a few days, or even a few weeks – where similar things seem to jump up and grab my attention from all different directions. Like, I'll notice a theme in a song on the radio, and then again on a billboard or something, and then it will come up again and again in bits of conversation or in something on the news or something that flies across my social media feed. Whenever that happens, I think God is trying to get my attention.

It's been happening a lot lately.

I don't know exactly what God is trying to tell me in this, but I am clearly supposed to think about and pray about "unity."

It came up when I met with some of our local pastors this morning, as we try to restart our Ministerial Alliance after our long Covid hiatus. Theologically and in the ways we do worship, we are absolutely as different as can be – from prophetic and Pentecostal, to ultra high-church Lutheran, from conservative to liberal, and everything in between – and yet we felt the Holy Spirit present as we prayed for each other and talked about how we can bless our community in the name of Jesus Christ.

It came up in the Upper Room devotional reading for this past Sunday, about "oneness in Christ": "Today's reading from Romans 12 reminds me of the wholeness we find in community. With all our imperfections, we are each a very special gift to one another."

It came up in a few different conversations I've had with my brothers and sisters lately, about how we need to start gathering together again, the way we did before our parents passed away.

It came up in a tense discussion in a Facebook group about whether a pastor could express his love for friends and family members who are Black, and others who are gay, and others who are immigrants, by putting up rainbow and Black Lives Matter signs in their yard.

It even came up as I was listening to a podcast about Dolly Parton the other day, and the ways she is somehow able to be loved and appreciated by so many, across cultures and languages and political leanings. A great unifier, they called her. She laughed.

It's been everywhere. So I'm thinking and praying and considering, what does unity really mean?

We know it doesn't mean that everyone needs to think and believe the same. Although let me just testify that O Lord it is easier when we do! But God does not often call us to what is easy. He calls us to what is good. What is true. What is right.

I don't have an answer. Just the question that God seems to be directing me to pay attention to, and share. What does unity look like? What is it made of? How can we each be a bearer of grace and a gift to each other, especially when we think and believe differently?

One in the Spirit, one in the Lord,

*Pastor Dawn*

# Worship Any and Everywhere!

## DAVID: Shepherd, Warrior, Poet, King



This Sunday we begin a new series about David, the king who united the tribes of Israel, from whom Jesus himself is descended. David is responsible for writing many of the Psalms in our Bible, and he is remembered both for his great strengths and his terrible mistakes...for his faith, and for his faltering...for his humility, and for his pride. Imperfect though he certainly was, he is known as Israel's greatest king and a man "after God's own heart." We will begin together kind of where we left off with Samson and the era of the judges: Samuel has been appointed judge over Israel, but when he gets old the people demand a king "like other nations." God directs Samuel to anoint a man named Saul, and then when Saul rejects God and falters in his kingship, God directs Samuel to anoint a young shepherd boy named David, the son of Jesse.

And then, join us for refreshments and fellowship after worship in the Fireside Room. Thank you to everyone who brings goodies and makes coffee, and sets up and cleans up each week. You are such a blessing!

# News and Fun Stuff

## Vacation Bible School Needs You!!



Let's teach our kids about God, through Vacation Bible School! Our HERO Club kids and their parents are VERY interested in being a part of it, so with our church kids we will be serving 30-40 students with fun, love, and the Gospel. This year's VBS them is "Discovery on Adventure Island", and it's all about receiving and BEING the Light of the World with Jesus Christ. The curriculum is VERY easy to use, with absolutely everything scripted and explained, so that you have the freedom to follow it or do your own thing. **We are finalizing the dates, at the end of July or early August, from 9am til noon each day; we need leaders and helpers ASAP to make it a go.** Stay tuned for sign ups in your email and in worship. Join us!

## Monday Bible Study Group on Summer Hiatus

Our Monday Bible study is officially on a summer break. We look forward to gathering back together in the fall for a new study: "Women of the Bible Speak," by Shannon Bream.

## Men's Breakfast on Hiatus for the Month of July

See you bright and early for breakfast, prayer, and fellowship in August!

## No Adult Sunday School on July 4, but Going Strong All Summer

We are finishing up our study of the parables, and will start a new study on women in the Bible in mid-August. Join us!

## An Update from Your Finance Team

Your church is in great shape financially, thanks to your faithful giving and the management of your finance team. We are a bit behind in regular giving (around \$12,000 as of the end of May), which is normal for this time of year. If you find you are a little bit behind and are able to catch up, we would be grateful! We are very careful with our spending, but meeting our budget enables us to operate more creatively and freely, and to be better prepared when major expenses come up. And we do have some of those: one of our swamp coolers may need replacing in a hurry, which will cost a few thousand dollars, and the need for roof replacement is becoming critical. You will hear more about that soon, when we finish gathering updated information. In the meantime, thank you for your giving, and may God bless you in the giving even more than your church and your community is blessed by it!



## Mark Your Calendars! Church in the Park on August 29!

Join us for worship and a breakfast pot luck in Oats Park on Sunday, August 29 at 9:00am. Praise God, and bless the neighborhood with music, prayer, and scripture all at the same time. It's a ways off, but be sure to remember sunscreen, water, and a fold up chair. Let us know if you need a chair, we will bring some from church. ☺

## Back-to-Church Ice Cream Social on Sunday, September 12!

Check out and join new classes and all kinds of groups, and celebrate being a family of faith. With ice cream and lotsa delicious toppings! We'll have healthy stuff too. Another thing to put on your calendar!

## HERO Club Update!

The HERO Club summer program is off to a great start, with 42 students signed up and days that include reading, math, all kinds of different activities, regular field trips to the pool at Oats Park, and more. **The Club is fully self-funded by fundraisers, grants from SAPTA (Nevada's Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Agency) and Washoe County, and individual donations from supporters in our community.** Thanks to the hard work of Steve Russell, the program has also secured money from the Paycheck Protection Program, which helped it stay afloat during the Covid shutdowns. All of that money is funneled through Epworth's accounts (this at the advice of our insurance company), and all of the Club's expenses – including their portion of insurance costs and utilities -- are paid in full by those funds. This program is a great gift to our neighbors who need a great place for their kids to go while they work, and to our community as a whole as we work to build healthy, happy kids with a great future. Thank you for your support!



## Church Council Meeting July 11 After Worship

Join us for all kinds of updates, and to share in the planning of our ministries! All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

## July Birthdays!

Mike Berney, 7/1  
♥Debi Kissick, 7/1  
Jim Wieboldt, 7/1  
Dustin Stritenberger, 7/2  
Hayden Brown, 7/5  
Barbara Evans, 7/8  
Jackie Warburton, 7/8  
♥Darline Hughes, 7/9  
Grant Mills, 7/9  
Shirley McDonald, 7/12  
Ariel Endacott, 7/13  
Faye Tewell, 7/13  
Darrell Dugan, 7/16  
Aaron Fraker, 7/16  
Dan Wolf, 7/16  
♥Kathy Albiston, 7/20  
Jaime Lawrence, 7/23  
Jerry Noonkester, 7/23  
Laura Ivey, 7/24  
♥Bill Hughes, 7/27  
Wilma Miers, 7/31

♥We celebrate the lives and hold in prayer the families of these beloved friends who are celebrating in heaven with our Lord Jesus.

## True Discipleship is Intentional: Ideas to Grow Your Faith

From an article at [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org) by Crystal Caviness

Above all else, be intentional.

When it comes to personal spiritual formation, church members, lay and clergy alike, tend to agree that growing one's own faith means engaging in spiritual disciplines with intentionality.

*A disciple is one who knows Christ, is growing in Christ, serving Christ, and sharing Christ.* This includes connecting to God in a personal way and being intentional about seeking out those ways to connect on a regular basis. The lifelong journey to know Christ, grow in Christ, serve Christ and share Christ can incorporate customary practices, including reading the Bible and praying, as well as take the path of unconventional activities, such as journaling and spending time at the ocean.

### Starting the day quietly

"I start every morning in quiet time which consists of reading "The Upper Room," which I started using in 1967 when I was in junior high school," says Kim Simpson, a member of more than 30 years at St. Barnabas United Methodist Church in Arlington, Texas. "I also use another book and then I spend time in prayer. It can go from 15 minutes to one hour," Simpson says. "That's how I start my day."

### Spiritual growth in action

Pat Rankin, a member at Trinity United Methodist Church in Eugene, Oregon, admits she has trouble being still, so her spiritual formation involves walking the labyrinth in her church's courtyard.

"I walk a lot and prayerfully walk. It's a time for being able to focus and center and kind of just be calm," she says. "It's following a path too, so there's a lot to be said for that, the structure of it. Many times I will go in with a question or a concern and sometimes God speaks and other times He doesn't. At least at that point, I've unburdened myself or put it out there."

"Do those things that bring you joy," Rankin advises. "If it isn't bringing you joy, it isn't right. Really decide if it's right for you, then make it a priority, not just something for when you have time."

### Finding God in atypical ways

When it comes to his personal spiritual growth habits, the Rev. Junius Dotson (who passed away in February) liked to mix it up. "I'm one of those kinds of people who gets bored very easily," Dotson admits. "Whenever I talk about spiritual disciplines and healthy habits, I always let people know to experiment, to try new things."

Although Dotson regularly practiced what he called "healthy habits of a disciple" by being in the Word, praying, engaging in small groups, giving and fasting, the lifelong church member also found spiritual growth opportunities in what might be considered more secular activities.

"There are some things that we wouldn't consider to be a spiritual discipline but are very helpful in terms of helping us grow," Dotson explains. "I'm a music person. I love all types and varieties. And I know in those moments when I may be feeling dry, going through a dry season in my life, I've always found that reconnecting to music, whether it's going to a concert or hearing the music in a church I am visiting, is a way of jumpstarting my relationship with Christ."

"Find those things that inspire your desire to grow and to grow closer to God," Dotson counsels. "But I do firmly believe there has to be some level of commitment in doing them."