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Hello church family!

I don't know about you, but part of me feels like I have been sleeping through these past couple of months. Early on in this pandemic, when we thought it would be a relatively short, strange sort of adventure, we were full of ideas and determination to keep ourselves and each other encouraged, hopeful, and spiritually fulfilled. We celebrated as volunteers found ways to use their resources to make sure folks in need were taken care of, and we experimented with new technologies and ways of keeping in touch. But after awhile, once those good things were well in place (and still are), we sort of fell into something like a holding pattern, just waiting for this weirdness to be over so that we could get back to normal.

But now it's week 20, and things are definitely still not normal. Certainly better, in many ways! But new challenges continue to arise with school, worship, and community, and we are faced with the need to continually rethink and restructure as each day brings its new changes.

Maybe the stress is heavy for you right now. Maybe you feel tired, sad, worn out by it. Or maybe for you this time is one of badly needed rest, and recalibration...of healing, and a healthy re-ordering of priorities that you are thankful for. Or maybe your experience is something in between. Whatever your experience, I believe God is presenting a challenge to us in this: a way to truly love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength while everything about our life, including worship, is very different; a way to love our neighbor and love ourselves as Jesus has loved us, even when we can't express that love in the ways we are used to.

I believe that it is critically important that we do not sleep through this time. That we pray, and study, and be attentive to worship of God every day, now more than ever before. That we listen for God's leading, and find opportunities to practice our faith in Jesus Christ by being beacons of goodness and love. God is too powerfully present, and the light that we bear is too desperately needed in this community and in this world, for us to allow these pandemic circumstances to distract us.

Know that you are deeply loved, friends, by the God that never lets us go. Know that you are created for a purpose, because God's world is more complete with you in it. This week, I pray that we all find new ways, all our own, to share a bit of the love of Jesus Christ, and meet the challenge that God has set before us.

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us." Rom 8:35, 37*

In God's everlasting love,

*Pastor Dawn*

Oh, PS. Mark your calendars for a church council meeting after worship on Sunday August 9 at 10:30am. We will meet both in person and via zoom.

# Worship at Epworth and at Home!

This week, we continue our series on HOPE, and what the Bible has to teach us about it. We have found hope in the Psalms, as God's people have sung and danced and prayed in good times and in very difficult ones, and we have learned that part of our hope in God is that even our anger, our sorrow, and our confusion can be made sacred things when we dedicate them and

ourselves to God. "I put all my hope in God," we memorized from Psalm 40:1. We have found hope in the Hebrew scriptures through the prophets, as they warned the people of Israel away from disaster and then brought God's words of comfort and hope after disaster struck. "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans for good, and not disaster; plans for a future with hope," we heard, from Jeremiah 29:11. And last week, from Jesus' life as told in the Gospel of Matthew, we remembered that God's love for us is a personal thing, that the new life God offers us in Jesus Christ is available to us right

here and now, as much as in the next life. We remembered the greatest commandment about loving God, others, and ourselves, and noticed how when we focus on one at the expense of the others our life goes off-kilter and out of balance, and sin is the result: when we focus on ourselves and our own pleasure, we find only emptiness and a trail of broken relationships all around us; when we think we focus on God while ignoring the needs of the people around us, we become mired in self-righteousness and anger, because our love for God only becomes real when we love one another; and if we focus on loving others without loving God or ourselves, we lose touch with the source of Life and become hopeless and exhausted. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you as well," we heard from Jesus, in Matthew 6:33.

This week we will hear from the apostles, those followers of Jesus that he commissioned to continue to share the Good News after his resurrection. In their stories, and in their conversations with these earliest churches, we will hear our own stories. God has a tremendous amount of hope to offer. We will share Holy Communion together, too, in a way that Jesus really never did, not exactly. It is a practice born in the love feasts of the early church, the remembrance of the last Passover supper Jesus shared with his disciples, and the powerful experience of the Holy Spirit that makes this feast not just a meal, but a sacrament. At home, gather what you'd like to use when we share Holy Communion together, like bread or crackers and juice or tea or clear water. At church, we will share specially prepared, individually-wrapped packets of juice and unleavened bread. And through these simple tastes of God's goodness, we will share together the miracle of God's grace. ♥

## Masks and Distancing to Love One Another

None of us likes them, all of these rules and restrictions. But we are glad that every group and ministry is faithfully wearing masks, keeping good distance, wiping down the rooms that they use. Consider all of it a gift of love to someone with you, and someone who comes after you. You are a blessing.



**“Not only that,  
but we also  
glory in our  
sufferings,  
because we  
know that  
suffering  
produces  
perseverance;  
perseverance,  
character; and  
character,  
hope.”**

*Romans 5:3*

# News and Fun Stuff

## Bible Studies, Fellowship Groups Beginning!

Even as we continue to take good care of ourselves and each other with good, healthy practices, we are glad that some groups are ready to meet in person to care for our spiritual life together too. The Men's Group begins next week, on Monday August 3 at 6am in the Wolf Center dining room. Codependent's Anonymous has begun, and is meeting on Tuesdays at 5pm in the Good News Room. And Pastor Dawn and your Bible study leaders are exploring new studies to begin in the next few weeks. Your church encourages you to find ways to talk and pray together in small groups, in person or by phone, in whatever simple or creative ways you can think of! We need each other, friends, and Jesus is most powerfully present when 2 or 3 or more are gathered in his name.

## Hero Club Returns this Fall!

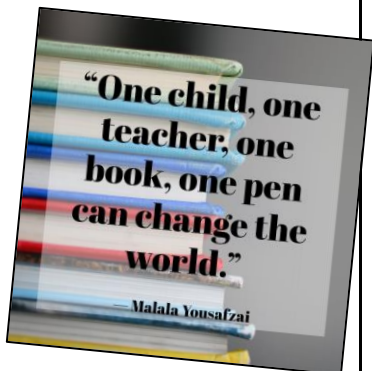
As of today, our schools have decided to return to in-person schooling on a schedule of two short sessions each day. We don't know all of the details yet, or whether this will apply to our private and charter schools, but it sounds like half of the students will go to classes in the morning, and half in the afternoon. Our Hero Club afterschool program is working closely with the Churchill Community Coalition and with the School District to create a program and a schedule that works well for our students, families, and teachers. We anticipate beginning in mid-September. Stay tuned! And in the meantime, keep us in prayer, especially Steve Russell and Lorri Freeman who are doing most of the work to plan and organize.

## Caring for Teachers at School and at Home

The school year is beginning in a very new and different way, and our teachers, students, and parents are under a whole lot of brand new pressures. There are all kinds of opportunities for us at Epworth UMC to offer support, encouragement, and supplies to help make their work easier and more joyful. We would love to hear your ideas! If you are a parent who will be keeping your kids at home, what could we provide that would make your life easier? What can we provide for teachers and/or their classrooms? Several of your church members are talking with the school district and reaching out to parents and grandparents they know for suggestions, and we would love to hear your thoughts as well. Email Pastor Dawn with your ideas, or call her at 671-5553, and stay tuned for details!

## HeLP Ministry Needs a Washing Machine

As you know, Epworth is blessed to provide free services to folks in need, including a place to do their laundry. Our washing machine is really struggling, so we are in the market for a new one! Please let us know if you have access to a gently used large capacity washer. We would be eternally grateful!



## August Birthdays!

Sophia Jeffs, 8/2  
Madison Tiede, 8/2  
Molly Eberhart, 8/4  
Jim Foster, 8/4  
♥ Robert McCallum, 8/5  
Michael Eberhart, 8/6  
Brody Hughes, 8/7  
John Miller, 8/8  
Ann Rapp, 8/10  
Steve Russell, 8/10  
Sylvia Fausey, 8/12  
Barbie Hertz, 8/12  
♥ Charles Burgess, 8/13  
Donna Strickland, 8/19  
Tim Bennett, 8/20  
Aydan Butcher 8/20  
Logan Butcher 8/20  
Carol Roeder 8/26  
Kay Knudtsen 8/29  
Susan Hurd, 8/30  
♥ Jerry Ivey, 8/31

*Ayden and Logan turn 6 this month! Six!!!*

♥ *Jerry Ivey, Bob McCallum and Charles Burgess (also known as Roddy) passed away in 2019. We love to think of them in paradise, resting beside cool waters with their Savior, where all is peace, joy, and love.*

## What Methodists are Doing: Africa University

*From an article at [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)*

Three decades ago, when African bishops of The United Methodist Church surveyed the emerging socio-economic and political needs in their countries, they called on the church to invest in higher education in Africa. At the cry of Bishops Arthur Kulah and Emilio J.M. de Carvalho—for “a university for all of Africa”—The United Methodist Church worldwide responded.

Today we’re still investing in Zimbabwe’s first private university for young men and women from all over Africa. These promising leaders are being equipped to transform their content through dynamic programs that include: agriculture and natural resources, education, health sciences, humanities and social sciences, management and administration and theology. The Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance offers postgraduate diplomas and master’s programs.

By the turn of this century, one-fifth of the world’s population will live in Africa. This is why it’s so crucial that Africa’s greatest needs—sustainable agriculture, disease prevention, ethical leadership and governance, and more—continue to be impacted by Africa University’s 4000+ graduates.

Africa University’s strong reputation is based on the relevance and impact of its efforts. Teaching at Africa University emphasizes the practical application of knowledge to alleviate poverty, build peace and stability, and drive development.

- Students get their hands dirty during field and test their ideas in the workplace through internships and industrial attachments.
- Faculty members enrich lectures with their know-how and their diverse experiences.
- Small classes and a close-knit campus community allow for meaningful interaction between the students and with the faculty and staff.

Ultimately, the students leave the university skilled in their fields and with a desire to contribute to their nations.

The desire of the university’s founders was to nurture an institution that would be deeply rooted in Africa—drawing its agenda and priorities from the challenges of African communities and combining the social wisdom and indigenous know-how of African people with new knowledge to aid development and improve quality of life on the continent.

Africa University is funded by its own huge, self-sustaining farm, by our Conference Tithe (formerly known as our “apportionments”), and by special giving from United Methodists around the world. When we give, we equip indigenous solution-finders who are tackling some of their continent’s most pressing challenges with wisdom, innovation and spiritual maturity. Because of our generosity, The United Methodist Church is making a difference in Africa.

To find out more about this ministry, or if you’d like to make a special donation, visit [www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/the-africa-university-fund](http://www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/the-africa-university-fund). You’ll find a lot of other great information, too, at [umcsgiving.org](http://umcsgiving.org), about what United Methodists are doing all over the world. ♥