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March 17, 2021

Hello, beloved members and friends of Epworth UMC!

I pray that your late winter and Lent has been filled with touches of God. I find I am seeing them and feeling them everywhere, little things that would be so easy to miss and forget about in the ordinary rush and bustle of life. My own Lenten disciplines are having the effect of making me much more mindful and...I don't know, awake? Or something. I hope yours are, too.

In our Wednesday evening Bible study, we have been studying the seven last words of Jesus on the cross. This week (tonight, actually) we consider the moment when Jesus from the cross looked at his mother, and the unnamed Beloved Disciple, and said "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." There is a lot of really interesting stuff in the study that we'll talk about, but what strikes me is an exercise at the beginning of the study that illustrates a really important Christian principle.

According to our author, an early Christian monk in the Sinai desert used this exercise to illustrate the connection between our relationship with God, and our relationship to each other. He put a candle on a small table, and arranged people in a circle around it. The candle represents God, he said. He asked them to all take 3 steps back, and to notice how this changed where each of them stood in relation to God and to the other people in the circle. Then he asked them to come back to their original position, and then to take another step or two forward, closer to the candle. Participants noticed that the closer they came to God (the candle), the closer they also came to one another.

Our relationship with God and our relationships with our neighbors are deeply interconnected. John 21:15-17, Matthew 25:40, John 13:34-35, Matthew 22:36-40 are great examples of how Jesus showed and taught about this truth. As I think about the candle exercise, and how inevitably we will be kind of on top of each other if we continue moving closer to the candle, it makes me wonder: is our relationship with God limited by our willingness to get close to each other?

I think the answer is yes.

"And who is my neighbor?" asked the young lawyer in Luke 10. Who is the "each other" that Jesus tells us our own lives will be interconnected with as we continue to draw near to God? Jesus responded by telling the story of the Good Samaritan.

If this pandemic has taught us nothing else, it has shown how much we need each other. We need to know that we matter to other people. We need to worship together, in our sanctuary and in our homes, lifting our voices as one in praise and prayer. We need to share what we have with those in need, and receive help from others when we ourselves are in need. God commands that we do all of these things, that we put aside all that divides us and allow our lives to be *deeply interconnected* with our neighbors'. When we do that, we inevitably draw nearer to God. And really, vice versa too.

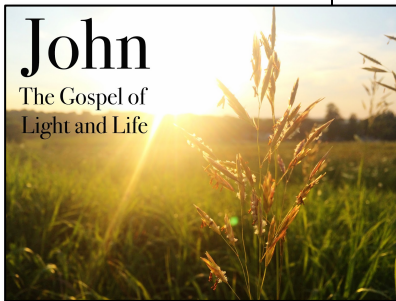
In faith, hope, and love,

Pastor Dawn

Worship Any and Everywhere!

An Example, a Command, and a Promise

This week in worship, we continue our study of the gospel of John, in chapters 15 and 16. This is part of Jesus' multi-chapter final sermon to his disciples, which begins with Jesus washing the disciples' feet and ends with his arrest. In it, Jesus spells out exactly what he has been trying to teach them by word and example, encourages them not to be afraid of what comes next, shows them how to cling to each other and to God after he is gone, and assures them that he will return. It's a lot for them (and for us!) to absorb. As you prepare your hearts for worship, you might like to read and pray with John 15:12-17, and listen for God's particular message for you.



**“I am the Way.
And the truth,
and the life. No
one comes to
the Father
except through
me.”**

John 14:7

Thanks to the excellent work of our city and county in getting folks vaccinated, and thanks to the faithfulness and diligence of our members, **we are able to welcome folks back in to worship at 50% capacity!** We continue to wear masks when we gather, and keep socially distant, and sanitize our spaces before and after each use, and we plan to keep up those practices long into the future. But we are able to have hymnals and Bibles in the pews again, and cushions back in the pews! The Praise Team will be joining us in worship again soon, too, and we are so glad to be able to sing and praise the Lord again. Whenever you feel ready, we would love to see you.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to learn the sound and video systems! Your participation and leadership is a tremendous gift to your church. Stay tuned for a training session very soon.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be talking together and making decisions about when is the right time to safely begin Sunday School, nursery care, and coffee and goodies in the Fireside Room. Our priority is always the health and safety of everyone, while we live out our faith. Your thoughts are welcome and really helpful to us as we prayerfully discuss and consider. Please send your questions and thoughts to Grant Mills grantmfi@cccomm.net, Doug Coval grandpa.doug@yahoo.com, Kathy Fraker kathyfraker@charter.net, and/or Pastor Dawn at pastor@eumcfallon.org.

And as always, please join us for **virtual coffee hour after worship at 10:45am**. Because we are worshipping in person, it takes a bit more time before she can get away to start the Zoom call, so we have shifted the time by 30 mins. You will get the link in your email as always; if you prefer to join by phone, here's the number:

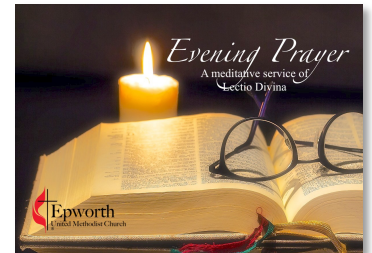
1 669 900 6833

Meeting ID: **870 1639 8986**

Passcode: **929340**

Friday Night Prayer

Every Friday night at 7:00pm, join us via Facebook Live for a quiet time of scripture and prayer. We use beautiful music, silence, and a special way of praying with the Bible called lectio divina to open our hearts to God. The video will be posted on YouTube after it airs on Facebook, so that you can use it to pray whenever it is the best time for you.



News and Fun Stuff

"The Gospel of John" Movie at the Fallon Theatre

Join us for a FREE showing of "The Gospel of John" starring Ian Cusick on **Sunday, March 28 at 2:00pm**. It is an outstanding movie, critically acclaimed, beautifully acted, and narrated by Christopher Plummer. It's a great way to begin Holy Week. The concession stand will be open, so it's a great way to support the Theatre! Invite your friends! Donations to Epworth's roof fund are welcome, too.

Special Council Meeting after Worship March 28

Please stay after worship on Palm Sunday for just a few minutes so that we can take an important vote that will allow us to access funds from the American Rescue Plan. Steve Russell will be there to answer any questions, and guide us in the specific vote. Thank you in advance for this few minutes of your time!

HERO Club Fundraiser at Ana's Café on April 17!

Ana's Café is partnering with the HERO Club for an all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner fundraiser on April 17 from 4 til 9pm. The meal includes salad, bread and a drink, too, for only \$10.99! Or only \$2.99 for kids under 8 years old. All proceeds go to the HERO Club. Spread the word!



March Birthdays!

Jill Pinder, 3/3
Kathy Reynolds, 3/3
♥ John McGarity, 3/6
Eunice Bailey, 3/8
Trent Kroll, 3/14
Debbie Moorhead, 3/15
Becky Miller, 3/17
Amy & Christina
Hesselgesser, 3/22
♥ Ed Miers, 3/22
Gail St Clair, 3/22
Pat Smith, 3/23
Abby Mulcahy, 3/24
Artemis Sears, 3/24
Debbie Sherman, 3/29
♥ Fred Roeder, 3/31

We can still hear the voice and see the smile of our beloved John McGarity. We miss him so.

Fred Roeder was the beloved husband of Carol, and Ed Miers the beloved husband of Wilma. Fred and Ed both past just a few years ago. We are so thankful for their faithfulness and love.

“Seven Words: Listening to Christ from the Cross” by Susan Robb. A Multi-Church Bible Study for Lent

Our Lenten study continues with the wonderful book by Rev Susan Robb, who – it turns out – is a United Methodist Pastor in Texas! We meet via Zoom on **Wednesdays at 7:00pm**. There are hard copies of the book available in the church office for anyone who might like to read it, on your own or for our study. The Zoom link, phone number to connect by ordinary house phone, and other info will be sent to everyone by email.

Easter Egg Hunt Saturday April 3 At 2:00pm!

Epworth UMC and the HERO Club are putting on an Easter Egg Hunt! We are inviting the neighbors, collecting filled plastic Easter eggs (THANK YOU to those who have already brought some, keep them coming!), and planning lots of fun surprises. This is a wonderful outreach of Christian love and care to our neighbors, come enjoy it and help us extend laughter and grace to our community.

Painted Rock Path of Easter Joy!

Thank you to everyone who is painting colorful rocks to make our path of Easter joy! We would LOVE to have it laid by Easter Sunday, so keep them coming. We will be laying out the path this coming week. We have as many stones as you could ever want here at church (thanks Maggie Neidigh!), and we need more and more and more, the more colorful and varied the better.

Chainsaws: An unlikely ministry partner

From an article at www.umc.org by Crystal Caviness

A chainsaw might seem like an unlikely ministry tool, but for hundreds of United Methodists, wielding a chainsaw takes them into the mission field. For tens of thousands more, the sound of the saw offers caring and hope.

Throughout the United Methodist connection, chainsaw-carrying disciples join emergency preparedness and disaster response teams, as well as find ways in their local communities to help their neighbors.

“We clean things up, listen to people and try ... to be a caring presence for Christ,” explains Catie Newman, disaster response coordinator with the Iowa Conference. “These teams just happen to do it with chainsaws.”

From cleaning up after destructive storms, to wildfire mitigation, to maintaining UMC camps and retreat centers around the country, chainsaw crews do all kinds of work around the country and in their own communities. “There’s just something about being in God’s creation and enjoying that beauty and communing with God in that type of setting,” Wes Hurlburt explains. “I want to maintain that opportunity for other people to enjoy the camps. The typical maintenance and clean up is very important for that. We like to go and volunteer and do whatever we can to help maintain the camps.”

The Rev. Loren Boyce at Rogersville First United Methodist Church in the Holston Conference isn’t part of a formal chainsaw ministry, but he definitely does ministry with his chainsaw. “One of my passions within my own theology is helping people, whether it’s with a chainsaw or a paint brush or a power washer,” Boyce states. He and members of his congregation and their youth group take care of trees downed by storms, and do other outdoor work for their elderly or disabled neighbors. “I believe,” Boyce says, “you literally are loving God by loving others.”