



# The Courier

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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January 2021

Court Street United Methodist Church

### **How Early Christians Handled Their 'COVID-19'**

Those in the early church faced two life-threatening epidemics within its first 200 years. Today, most of us sit confined in our homes, unsure of how widespread the COVID-19 virus is in our community, our country, or the world. Some have sarcastically dismissed the virus as being a political foil. Now such silliness is sobered by reality. Others try to spiritualize this pandemic, as if it is God's punishment for our erring ways. We are not the first Christians to face a global pandemic. Those in the early church faced two life-threatening epidemics within its first 200 years. The first was in 165 A.D., in which up to one-third of Roman citizens died, and the second was in 251 A.D. My point in noting these early Christians is for one basic reason: that we will choose hope over confusion, humility over arrogance, empathy over self-interest, faith over fear. So that in recognizing our frail humanity, we will welcome the pervading presence and life of the Spirit to assert God's will over our own distractions, providing us with a different way in which we view and make sense of what for too many is an existential reality. Instead, let us see today and tomorrow through the prism of God's grace and love. In these second and third-century catastrophes, Christians, who were then just a very small minority, exerted extraordinary impact on their societies. Facing headwinds of human devastation, they wasted no time, nor spared personal effort, to care for those struck down by those deadly pathogens. In so doing, Christians won approval from those who had seen them as a cult or a heresy. With their extraordinary acts of kindness, Christians were then viewed as a caring community and their faith taken more seriously. The first of these massive epidemics was smallpox (it is surmised) during the reign of Marcus Aurelius in 165 to 180. A hundred years later another destructive epidemic hit (it may have been measles), resulting in a massive loss of life. However, the extraordinary response from Christians contributed to an unprecedented growth of the church. How might we think differently, contrary to the swirling anxiety that fills our media, swamps our family conversations, and paralyzes us when we think of our finances? Below is a suggested way to frame our response. *First, pray and avoid people.* Listen to our medical experts and keep a distance while praying. Prayer isn't simple, nor is it always easy, but now we have time. Prayer is God's gift to us, allowing us to enter into conversation with him, engaging in issues and in the lives of people. *Second, pause and write to people.* Try taking out paper and pen and write your thoughts and insights. Craft for others to read what you are learning from this experience. Write the life-giving words of Christ to inspire others of his power over all creation. *Third, celebrate and unite people.* We need to celebrate in the middle of catastrophe. We should rejoice in the peace of Christ, which he gave to us alone. Can we find times of praise in the middle of suffering and dying? Christians are called on to see life empowered by hope. List what you can do today and tomorrow, for yourself and others, all the while relying on the Lord's presence and help. May hope be the defining word of our disposition, attitudes, and resolve, always invoking the Spirit of the living God to enable us to think differently than those who have no such hope. Grab hold of this biblical metaphor, the rainbow of hope, and daily set that in the sky of your living, so that you can visualize a new way of seeing today and tomorrow.

~ *Pastor Bill Burleigh*



## *Musical Musings*

### **QUARANTINE EDITION**

### **Hymns for The New Year**

There are some challenges with suggesting hymns for The New Year: The church's year starts in Advent which is a time of preparation for the coming of the Christ-child. The turn-of-the-year observation is purely based on the secular rather than the spiritual sense of new-beginnings. Nevertheless, there is a long-standing desire to mark the event, and a number of hymns have been written which focus on this without being especially suitable for Advent. These hymns, and others about new beginnings, are the basis of these suggested hymns in our Hymnal.

**"God of the Ages"** by Daniel C. Roberts *The UM Hymnal*, No. 698

"God of the Ages" (originally "God of Our Fathers"), its author's one claim to literary fame, was written for a small rural parish in Brandon, Vt., for the nation's centennial celebration in 1876. Daniel Crane Roberts (1841-1907) was a New Englander who served as a private in the 84th Ohio Volunteers during the Civil War. Following the war, Roberts was ordained a deacon and then a priest in the Episcopal Church. His parishes were in Vermont and Massachusetts, and Concord, N.H., where he served St. Paul's Church for 29 years. He was also widely known throughout New Hampshire for his work as president of the New Hampshire Historical Society, as chaplain of the Grand Army of the Republic and as an active member in the Knights Templar.

This hymn's stirring lyrics and majestic tune represent, albeit subtly, the common 19th-century assumption of Manifest Destiny: God will lead us from the war and pestilence of our earlier captivity to the freedom and light of peace.

**"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"** by Isaac Watts *The United Methodist Hymnal*, No. 117

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) is often called the "Father of English hymnody"—that is, hymns on a wider range of topics rather than metrical versions of the psalms in the English language. Before him, congregational song focused almost exclusively on singing strict metrical versions of the psalms. An example of this may be found in "All people that on earth do dwell" (*UM Hymnal*, No. 75), a paraphrase of Psalm 100. Following the Scripture closely was of the utmost importance. Metrical psalms, a product of the Reformed tradition, generally could neither add to nor delete anything from the psalm as found in the Bible. The result was that some rather awkward phrasings were tolerated in order to meet the strict demands of poetic meter.

Watts took a more liberal approach to the psalter and provided us with hymns on topics and Scriptures beyond the confines of the Book of Psalms. The antithesis between God and humanity is the primary message of Psalm 90 and Watts' paraphrase. J.R. Watson observed, "This is one of Watts's greatest hymns on the human condition, setting the shortness of life and the littleness of human beings against the timeless greatness of God.... who has been our help [in the past] and hope [in the future]."

**"Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine"** by Charles Wesley *The United Methodist Hymnal*, No. 606

The Wesleys used hymns to highlight specific occasions and theological concepts. Charles Wesley's "Come, Let Us Use the Grace Divine" has regularly been used for the annual Covenant Renewal Service, in both England and the United States, usually taking place on the first Sunday of the year. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* includes a copy of that service (pp. 288-94). Though this is a natural use for this hymn, there is no direct evidence that this was its intended use by the Wesleys.

A signature hymn of the Wesleys, it has appeared in virtually all nineteenth- and twentieth-century Methodist hymnals. Except for very minor changes in a few phrases for the sake of improving prosody, the hymn comes to us virtually intact from its original publication.

The hymn was based on Jeremiah 50:5, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." (KJV) Scripture so permeated the lives of the Wesleys that their hymns contain many allusions to, and sometimes direct quotations from, the Bible. The first stanza is a direct quotation of key words from this passage. Lines from the final stanza: *To each covenant the blood apply ~ Which takes our sins away, ~ And register our names on high ~ and keep us to that day.*

This covenant is one of individuals made within a Christian community. It is a solemn promise that we will "no more our God forsake" and "never will throw off the fear of God who hears our vow." (Stanza 2) The final line of stanza two petitions God to "come down and meet us now" if God is pleased with our promise. Such language goes against the grain of many in popular culture where allegiances seem to be few and fleeting.

The full articles on each of these hymns can be found in the UMC's Content Library under ["History of Hymns"](#)

## JANUARY'S ADULT BIBLE STUDY CLASS

### CONTINUE TO READ LESSONS WEEKLY

January 3: **"John Calls for Repentance"**

January 10: **"Jesus Announces Good News"**

January 17: **"Hope Because of Christ"**

January 24: **"Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love in Christ"**

January 31: **"The Outcome of it All"**

**"VIRTUAL SUNDAY SCHOOL"** is now available on our [WEBSITE](#)



**IN LIEU OF POINSETTIAS** was a great success! The church raised **\$1,150.00** for Meals on Wheels and the worship team didn't have to water poinsettias or clean up the mess. That is a win/win in our book and we hope to keep the tradition going in the coming years. Thank you to everyone who made donations. The list of names has been added to the

end of the Christmas Eve Service and posted to our Facebook page.

## Christmas Mission Projects:



**CHRISTMAS AT JAMES CROSSING** was made possible thanks to Court Street and Marsh Memorial members who donated funds to buy toys and watches for 60 kids at James Crossing and 20 pairs of sneakers for kids at Head Start of Lynchburg. A big **THANK YOU** to the members and especially to Shelley Burleigh, pastor Bill, B.B. Shavers and the United Methodist Men at Marsh for shopping and delivering the presents.

**THANK YOU** from R.S. Payne Elementary School for supporting our children! The Missions Committee provided Christmas for 6 kids from R.S. Payne. Each child received: **two outfits, tennis shoes, two toys and a book**. A big **THANK YOU** to the members who came and wrapped the gifts last Thursday. The gifts were delivered Friday morning and the staff there was as excited as the kids will be on Christmas morning. They said Court Street UMC is a blessing to this community!

## \*Birthdays and Anniversaries\*

| January Birthdays               | January Anniversaries                                                             | February Birthdays                    |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Eddie Letchford      January 01 | Brenda & Andy Whitehead    Jan 04                                                 | Lauren Hudnall Knapp    February 02   |
| David Hudnall        January 03 | Cheryl & Milton West        Jan 25                                                | Mary Tyree                February 02 |
| Doris Lee Spriggs    January 06 |                                                                                   | Kenneth Bagshaw        February 13    |
| Bobby Brown         January 08  | <b>February Anniversaries</b>                                                     | Lewis Averett             February 15 |
| Patsy Wilkinson     January 13  | Kathy & Robert Draper      Feb 09                                                 | Dottie Diuguid            February 17 |
| William Eric Sweeney January 17 | Robin & Irby Hudson        Feb 12                                                 | Deanna Hester            February 17  |
| Eric Johnson         January 19 | GiGi and John Sweeney    Feb 21                                                   | Sarah Leazer Johnson    February 18   |
| Patti Montgomery    January 19  |                                                                                   | Reiman Shober            February 22  |
| Shelley Burleigh     January 20 |                                                                                   | Brenda Whitehead        February 22   |
|                                 |  | James Blankenship      February 23    |
|                                 |                                                                                   | Bill Burleigh             February 24 |
|                                 |                                                                                   | Bobbi Hurst               February 24 |
|                                 |                                                                                   | John Spencer             February 24  |

### PRAYER CONCERNS

#### All Men and Women serving in the Military

Travis Dean Burleigh – 7425 Snowy Owl St., N. Las Vegas, NV 89084  
son of Shelley and Rev. Bill Burleigh

#### SICK (Church members\*)

- \*Noel Draper - 501 VES Road Drinkard 619, Lynchburg, VA 24503
- Susan Dwyer – sister of Rev. Bill Burleigh
- \*Christopher Lilly – 1705 Rivermont Ave. Apt 8, Lynchburg, VA 24503
- \*Chis Logan - 5325 Hickory Hill Drive, Lynchburg, VA 24503
- \*Phil Ripley – 60 Jill Alison Circle, Ormond Beach, FL 32176
- \*Alicia Speer – 1815 Rivermont Ave #68, Lynchburg, VA 24503
- \*Robert Tyree – 1404 Brookville Lane, Lynchburg, VA 24502  
son of \*Mary Tyree, brother of \*Debbie Chaffin
- \* Church members



**ADDRESS CHANGES:**  
**Nada Sweeney**  
**C/O Runk & Pratt at Liberty Ridge**  
**30 Monica Blvd. Apt. 237**  
**Lynchburg, VA 24502**

#### Update on Capital Campaign:

|                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Campaign Goal                | \$300,000       |
| Promised as of 12/27/20      | \$248,981       |
| Balance needed to reach goal | \$51,019        |
| Received to Date             | \$211,066       |
| Received since last update   | \$50.00         |
| <b>Elevator fund</b>         | <b>\$10,328</b> |

### Gifts to the church

To the General Fund in Memory of:

**Flo Traywick** by:  
Kathy Mason, Charles Thaxton

**Eleanor Pillow** by:  
Charles Thaxton



Court Street UMC  
621 Court Street  
Lynchburg Va. 24504



In worship, praise and ministry, we respond to God's call by reaching out to all people with light, hope, and a vision of God's love.

COURT STREET UMC WEBSITE: [www.courtstreetmethodist.com](http://www.courtstreetmethodist.com)

EMAIL: [621courtstumc@gmail.com](mailto:621courtstumc@gmail.com)

PHONE: 434-845-3427

Please contact the church office at:

621courtstumc@gmail.com or (434) 845-3427 on or before Wednesdays to have events and notices posted on the church website.

