

| FINDING NEW RHYTHMS OF LIFE | A NEW NORMAL

Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, saying, I am with you, says the Lord. Haggai 1:13

Announcement

Aug 16 (Sun) HOME Worship Service

Food Collection for *Mission Teens*

Drop-off Location/Hour: Union Grove UMC / 9am-4pm, Aug 15 (Sat)

Aug 19 (Wed) WG Meeting for Reopening

7 pm @ Willow Grove Lake

Sep 13 (Sun) Church Re-Open! (Outdoor Worship Service

Time / Place: 9:30 am @ UG Parking Lot

Aug 18 (Tue) Johnny Hymer's Birthday

Opening Hymn (UMH 407)

Close to Thee (<https://youtu.be/TDfkDIHF1yw>)

Call to Worship

What joy we feel when we are called together
to celebrate God's love.

God's love flows through our lives!

This is what it means to be the body of Christ!
this is what it means to be faithful witnesses to God.

Let us rejoice on this day!

Lord, we thank you for the blessings you pour on us. AMEN.

Hymn of Praise (UMH 377)

It Is Well with My Soul (<https://youtu.be/6X25DaBMxxs>)

Morning Prayer

God of infinite mercy and love, we come before you this day, knowing that we have not always been faithful to what you would have us do. We have too often turned our backs on those in need, choosing not to hear their cries. Forgive us, O Lord. We know that you do not want us to behave in this way. Your love and mercy, so generously showered over us, should be a beacon to guide our own actions. We make no excuses, for none would suffice. We ask your forgiveness and blessing, turning us again around and placing us on the path of compassion and peace. This prayer we offer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Psalter Reading

Psalms 106 _ UMH 829

Scripture Reading

Esther 3:1-15; 4:14

Message

A NEW NORMAL _ "Finding New Guidance of Life"

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/thegroveschurches/>)

Website (<https://groveschurches.org/>)

Affirmation of Faith

The Apostles' Creed _ UMH 881

Offering

*Offering (CHECK) by mail to:

UGUMC _ Krissi Reed (50 Burt St, Bridgeton NJ 08302)

WGUMC _ Cheryl Fox (1940 Coles Mill Rd, Franklinville NJ 08322)

**Offering by ONLINE:

<http://www.gnjumc.org/onlinegiving> Or <http://groveschurches.org>

UGUMC Church number: 9068 (Norma)

WGUMC Church number: 9071 (Pittsgrove)

Closing Song

Way Maker (https://youtu.be/iJCV_2H9xD0)

Benediction

[PRAYER REQUEST] _ Let us pray together.

1. For all the congregation of Groves Ministries.

Lord, surround us with Your divine hedge of protection. Encompass us round about with Your strength and Your might. May You shelter us, that those who love Your name may exult in You.

2. For our nation and the world.

Lord, we pray for our nation and the whole world during the pandemic. Grant Your peace, Your comfort, and Your healing. Be with us, Lord. Amen.

A NEW NORMA

“By the time Esther opens, many Jews had returned from the Exile to Palestine to reestablish the institutions of Judaism (Ezra 1—6). The first wave of repatriates numbered about 50,000. Most of the Jews in exile did not return, even though their law (Deut. 28) and their prophets (Isa. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; 51:6) encouraged them to do so. They preferred the comfort and convenience of life, as they had come to know it outside the Promised Land, to the discomfort and privation involved in obeying God. Esther and Mordecai were among those who chose not to return. In 1893 the Babylonian expedition of the University of Pennsylvania discovered some extra-biblical documents that show how wealthy and influential some of the Jews who remained in Babylon were. The events of Esther fit chronologically between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra”.

As queen, Esther wisely took advantage of her new normal and, with God’s guidance, used it to save the Jewish people. From her story, we can see how God guides, protects, and selects people for specific tasks. The threat came from Haman, King Xerxes’s deputy. Haman was prideful and filled with racial hatred. He disliked the fact that Mordecai wouldn’t bow to him, so Haman wanted him and all of his people killed (3:1–6). When the threat to the Jewish people came to Mordecai’s ears, he petitioned Esther to ask the king to remove the threat (4:12–17). In the midst of an authoritarian regime with a capricious king, Esther was probably afraid. However, Mordecai challenges her to live out her calling in the place where she has been put. The climax of the story is found in his words in 4:14: “Or if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this. (New Revised Standard Version)”

Though the Jewish people were facing a mortal threat, Esther did not rush to ask King Xerxes for their protection. Before she approached him, she asked her people to enter into prayer and fasting, and she and her attendants did the same (4:16). She also used wisdom in how she approached the king. When we find ourselves in an undesirable situation by choice or by chance, we should draw on the same source of guidance Esther did: God.

God is in the details of our lives. Psalm 37:23 says, “Our steps are made firm by the Lord, when he delights in our way.” We can trust that God knows where we are and what we need—and how we can be of service—even when our situation is unfamiliar to us.

[Some questions to think about...]

- What is one thing that stood out to you from this week’s message?
- How might God use uncomfortable situations and life changes to help us be of service to him and others?
- In the recent weeks or months, for what or whom have you needed to be brave?