



## WOODBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Rev. John A. Thomason, Pastor

# The Life of the Church

by Pastor John  
October 21, 2020

Dear Church Family,

Thanksgiving is more than a month away, but I have many things to be grateful for as we approach the end of October.

**Laity Sunday** -- I'm still living in the afterglow of last Sunday's service for two reasons. First, all of our worship leaders were laypersons, who inspired me with their accounts of a flourishing lay ministry at WUMC. The pandemic has altered our ways of serving God, one another, and our community, but it has not shut us down! To the contrary, it has made us more persistent in our labors and more innovative than ever before. Thanks to our praise team of *Matt Bodwell*, *Rod Carnes*, and *Kate Keeler* for their powerful witness through music; and to Lay Leader *Mark Davis*, Prayer Ministry chair *Carolyn Shay*, and Adult Ministries chair *Bud Behlman* for reminding us that God is still at work in our church and that we, God's co-workers, have been faithful and fruitful during trying times. My second source of afterglow was occasioned by a coincidence on the calendar: Laity Sunday falls (ironically!) during Clergy Appreciation Month in the United Methodist Church. You surprised me on October 18 with a lovely gift and words of gratitude. The gift – a pewter candle stand – will be a keepsake I will always cherish from my time in Woodbury among people who truly are the light of the world.

**Life-long learning** – In the face of multiple public crises which are unprecedented in my lifetime, this “old dog” has needed to learn some “new tricks”! Over the past two weeks I've participated in two online webinars that sought to help pastors understand these crises and lead effectively through them. In my next two sermons, I will share with you something of what I learned. The first sermon (October 25) will focus on how Christians can both speak the truth and foster reconciliation during a time of division and polarization in our country. The second sermon (November 1) will seek to suggest how we as individuals and the Church as a whole can “survive and thrive” during a season of change and uncertainty.

**Youth witness** – Again, I want to express my gratitude to the young people in our church who created message signs in support of essential workers and victims of racial injustice. The signs have borne witness to the social passion of this next generation of church leaders. Over the past few weeks, the signs have shown considerable wear and tear and, by consensus of those who oversee church property, they have been removed. This was not done to discourage future expressions of Christian conviction. Recognizing that others may be prompted to take a stand in a visible way, new procedures are being put into place to guide

the placement of message signs on the church lawn. If you are moved to create and post a sign, please contact me, Lay Leader *Mark Davis*, or Trustee chair *Theron Kissinger*.

**Confirmation** – Speaking of signs, one welcome sign that our church’s ministry is continuing unabated is that a Confirmation class will begin on Sunday, November 1. Four outstanding young people – *Cody* and *Zachary Cordova*, *James Levario*, and *Matthew Shupenis* – will start out on their journey to become professing Christians and church members. Thanks to the co-chairs of our Children and Youth Ministry Team, *Catherine Mason* and *Meg Temple*, for their willingness to co-lead the class with me. Our sessions will be conducted by Zoom, be spread out over seven months, and culminate with a Confirmation service on Pentecost Sunday, May 23.

**Bible Study Fellowship** – After a long but necessary hiatus, mid-week adult studies resumed on Tuesday, October 20. The response was encouraging: seven people attended in-person in Fellowship Hall (masked and socially distanced, of course!), and three people joined us from their homes by Zoom. We are studying John Ortberg’s book, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat*. The book is an extended reflection on Matthew 14:25-23, the story of Jesus walking on water toward the disciples, who are weathering a storm in their boat, and Peter’s own adventure of “water-walking.” Ortberg challenges Christians to face their fears and take risks of “extreme discipleship,” trusting in God’s power to sustain and save. The class has just begun and will continue for five more Tuesday nights (6:30 – 8:00 PM). Books are still available at the church for a cost of \$11 each. If you are looking for personal connection and spiritual nurture during these isolated times, why not venture out and join this discussion. Remember, “if you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat”!

Grace and peace,  
*John*