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Food for Thought

By Senior Pastor Bill Jones

When I offer the Welcome at the beginning of each Sunday worship service, I always welcome our “guests,” meaning visitors, especially first-time visitors. It is an expression of our hospitality. Saddleback Church in California is famous for its hospitality; the church welcomes strangers as guests instead of as visitors. “The term ‘visitor’ implies that they’re not here to stay,” writes pastor Rick Warren in his book *The Purpose-Driven Church*. “The term ‘guest’ implies that this is someone for whom you do everything you can to make them feel comfortable.” For a guest, we do everything. For a visitor, not so much. At WUMC we also offer our ‘guests’ a Welcome gift in the Atrium following worship, so that they know they are more than visitors, they are our guests who we would like to get to know better. It is by design that the first step in our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ is to “welcome our neighbors,” or should I say, “welcome our guests”?

In the resurrection story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus in the gospel of Luke (24:13-35), he appears to his disciples first as a stranger, then as a guest, then as host, offering critical guidance to any of us who want to do a better job of welcoming and including people in the life of the church. When two disciples are traveling to the village of Emmaus on Easter afternoon, the risen Jesus comes near and walks with them. But their eyes are kept from recognizing him. Jesus asks about the events they’re discussing, and one of them says, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” Jesus is initially depicted as a stranger, giving his disciples the challenge of showing hospitality. They practice *philoxenia*, which literally means “love of the stranger.” *Philoxenia* is one of the Greek words used in the New Testament for hospitality. This approach stands in stark contrast to the attitude so prevalent in society today – *xenophobia*, “fear of the stranger.”

What would it mean for us to practice *philoxenia* in congregational life? We do it every time we speak to strangers in the Atrium after worship, instead of chatting only with our friends. We do it every time we make an effort to get to know a person from a different race, culture, nationality or sexual orientation. This is *philoxenia* – love of the stranger. When we practice it, we discover that strangers really aren’t so strange. Fortunately, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus rise to this challenge. As they come near the village that is their destination, Jesus walks ahead as if he is going on. But the disciples urge him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So Jesus goes in to stay with them, and he becomes their guest. They welcome and include him in their lives, and invite him to stay with them. Jesus wants us to take good care of the guests who come to us. He challenges us to feed the hungry and welcome outcasts as he did throughout his ministry. Since we, the members of the church, are the physical body of Christ in the world today, we’re supposed to be his hands and continue his work. We show his presence in the world every time we practice hospitality in his name, whether we’re feeding the hungry through our Community Kitchen, or open our doors to participants in Alcoholics Anonymous, or welcoming a guest to a service of worship. Guests are important to Jesus, which is why he played that role on the road to Emmaus. He wanted to challenge his followers to see him as a guest and take good care of him.

Jesus, the stranger, becomes a guest of the disciples when he accepts their invitation to stay. But then he quickly changes roles. When he’s sitting at the table with them, he becomes their host – he takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to them. Then their eyes are opened and they recognize him, and he vanishes from their sight. The disciples discover that, when they welcome a stranger, they welcome the Lord. “It is easier to make a habit of hospitality when we remember how much Jesus is present in the practice,” write Christine Pohl and Pamela Buck in the study guide for *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. We can see Jesus in strangers and guests, and we can act as Jesus when we play the role of host. That’s food for thought!
The UMC and Homosexuality – An Update

May 9 & 16 at 7:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

The 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church inserted language about homosexuality into the United Methodist Book of Discipline. The General Conference is the church’s decision-making body. The Book of Discipline is the official UM book of order, faith, and practice. Until 1972, the Discipline had been silent about homosexuality. Since 1972, the United Methodist Church has been openly wrestling with language, theology, Biblical interpretation, and other issues related to sexuality and especially homosexuality. As a denomination, we are not of one accord in our thinking, beliefs, or practice concerning a wide range of LGBTQIA concerns. In 2016, our UM Council of Bishops appointed a geographically and theologically diverse group of clergy and laity to explore how we can faithfully be in ministry as the church, even as our members hold different perspectives on these issues.

The Commission on a Way Forward is tasked with helping the UMC find a way past its current impasse on issues related to sexuality, particularly in relation to the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ persons. The Commission has regularly issued updates on its work, and all United Methodists are encouraged to learn about the work of the Commission and to keep the Commission and the whole church in prayer.

Williamsburg UMC will have a two-part update on the Commission’s work and the likely next steps for the UMC, Wednesday evenings, May 9 and 16, from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Beginning in early April, a resource guide will be available at Connection Corner and on the church Website:  [http://www.williamsburgumc.org/connect/whats-happening](http://www.williamsburgumc.org/connect/whats-happening) for those who would like to learn more or prepare for the May 9 and 16 gatherings. In addition, also at Connection Corner, there will be a box to collect questions people have about these issues and the Commission’s work.

There will be no Senior Pastor’s Bible Study on May 9 and 16, but the ReCharge dinner will take place as usual, with the meal served continuously from 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. and the update beginning at 7:00 p.m. You may, of course, come to the Update, the ReCharge Dinner, or both! Questions? Contact Rev Helen Casey-Rutland (229-1771 Ext 357).

UMCOR Mission Challenge is Almost Here

The time is approaching for our yearly UMCOR mission challenge as we prepare health kits to help replenish the UMCOR warehouse relief supplies. In 2017 we sent over 1,500 total kits to the UMCOR warehouse in Baldwin, LA – 1,029 of those were health kits.

In the aftermath of the hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and surrounding areas, many requests have been sent out from the UMCOR warehouses to help replenish their drastically depleted supply of health kits and cleaning buckets.

This year, 2018, UMCOR is changing the distribution of aid to international areas of need. UMCOR will no longer be shipping internationally because they can provide aid more quickly and more efficiently through the distribution of grants.

UMCOR will continue to provide Hygiene (health) kits, School kits, and Cleaning (flood buckets) kits to areas in the United States following floods, hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, and other areas of need.

Our Global Outreach team is challenging us to provide 1,000 health kits to send to Conference in June. We will begin the first of May collecting money and kit items during the month, ending with a major packing event on June 2 in the Fellowship Hall. The whole congregation is encouraged to participate in this rewarding mission.

Details will be coming in the May Messenger. You may also call members of the UMCOR Kit Team: Peggy Hook, Terri Morgan, Barb Hamson.

Your Global Outreach
Williamsburg United Methodist Women
April 2018 – UMW Circle Meetings

CLARKE/HERITAGE CIRCLE
Tuesday, April 3 at 9:45 a.m. in Room 309. The program speaker will be Ms. Elizabeth Amerling from Latisha’s House.

JEAN CRAIG CIRCLE
Tuesday, April 3 at 1:30 p.m. in the Brookdale Activities Room. Join us as we explore how the Spirit is our seal of faithfulness. We know that God is reliable, steadfast and true.

SUSANNA WESLEY CIRCLE
Wednesday, April 4 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 309. Program speaker will be Max Blalock, W & M Campus Minister, along with students from the Wesley Foundation.

OLIVE CASEY CIRCLE
Monday, April 9 at 9:30 a.m. in Room 174. We will be putting UMCOR kits together.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE
Tuesday, April 10 at 10:30 a.m. in the church den. The program will be provided by the Puerto Rican Mission Team.

CAROL SCOTT CIRCLE
Tuesday, April 10 at 1:00 p.m. in the church den. The Rev. Meghan Roth Clayton, Associate Pastor, will be our speaker.

SISTERS-IN-FAITH CIRCLE
Tuesday, April 10 at 7:00 p.m. in Room 309. The Rev. Jeanne Forrest, Pastoral Care Specialist, will provide the program.

WILLIAMSBURG LANDING CIRCLE
Tuesday, April 17 at 10:30 a.m. in the Williamsburg Landing Main Building in the auditorium (on the kitchen side).

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER
York River District Unit Presidents & Executive Committee Meeting
April 7

WUMW Board Meeting
April 23 at 7:00 p.m. in Room 309

UWMW Sunday
April 29

UMW News

WUMW Sunday
Please plan to join us for our annual WUMW Sunday on April 29. We are proud to welcome Chaplain Lynn Litchfield as our guest pastor for a service focused on Hope and Grace.

Join the WUMW Scavenger Hunt
The WUMW can use your help! We are trying to locate annual WUMW yearbooks lost from our archives. Search your secret hiding places; ask your mother; scavenge your grandma’s attic – we’re missing years 1924-1946, 1948-1952, 1954-1974, 1977-1978, 2008 and 2012. Please donate by dropping them off at the church office.
UMW Book Club

The April meeting of the UMW Book Club will be held Monday, April 9, at the home of Karen McPherson, (3296 Reade’s Way, near Jamestown High School). We will be discussing a book of choice from the Social Action category of the UMW Reading Program. All are welcome.

For more information, contact Carol Brinkley (258-0617) or cpbrinkley@aol.com.
Beginning at 5:30 p.m., and serving continuously until 6:30 p.m., enjoy a delicious dinner and good conversation with others. Our meals are expertly prepared by a professional chef and yet inexpensive: $6/adult, $3/child (ages 3-12) with a $20.00 family maximum. After dinner, participate in our activities or simply enjoy the rest of your evening.

Please make a reservation for dinner by completing a dinner form at Connection Corner, in the pew racks, or calling the church office. Reservations are due into the church office by Tuesday noon before the Wednesday dinner. Questions, contact Cindy Banek (229-1771 Ext 258).

Menu for April

April 4
Chicken Pot Pie Casserole, Biscuit, & Dessert
Vegetarian Option

For menu options for April 11, April 18, & April 25, please check upcoming weekly announcements or the church’s website http://www.williamsburgumc.org/connect/whats-happening.

After Dinner Activities

Senior Pastor’s Midweek Bible Study
Making Sense of the Hard Sayings of Jesus
Leader: Rev. Bill Jones

Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall & Thursday mornings at 10:30 a.m. in Room 171
Begins April 11

For many the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth may seem familiar and well-charted. What’s hard to understand about “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life”? (John 3:16) It’s a favorite Bible verse, quoted by many, printed on a sign and held up in the air at athletic games. If we look closely at the Bible, however, the terrain often turns out to be far more precarious than we realize. Some of the sayings of Jesus are puzzling, others are troubling. What, for example, are we to do with talk of hating parents or cutting off one’s hand or foot? Naturally, we prefer to avoid such remarks. Yet when we steer clear of the hard sayings of Jesus, something of the genius and passion of Jesus is lost to us. And when we dutifully read, but in the process seek to dull the cutting edge of these sayings, we are left with a domesticated Jesus who may be easier to live with but who can no longer claim new life in the kingdom of God. The prophetic voice of Christ so often falls silent.

In this Bible study I propose that we try and make sense of some of the most challenging words of Jesus. Our goal will be to rediscover and interpret responsibly for our day the hard sayings of Jesus. I invite you to join me in this conversation beginning April 11 on Wednesday evenings or Thursday mornings.
The Faithful Aging Conference attempts to address opportunities related to an aging congregation and meeting the needs of older members, inside and outside the walls of our faith communities. The conference is supported by a range of sponsors including the Virginia Conference Older Adult Council. A request for .5 CEU for clergy and certified professionals has been submitted to the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries.

The registration deadline is April 6, 2018. Cost is $40/individual which includes lunch, refreshment breaks, and all conference materials. Adults 65+ can register for $30/person. Groups of 3 or more individuals from the same church or organization can register for $25/person. Limited scholarship funds, sponsored by Pinnacle Living, are available for Virginia Conference United Methodist Church congregational teams. For more information contact Martha Stokes (804-474-8718). To register online, visit www.lynhurb.edu/beard.

Presented by the Beard Center on Aging at Lynchburg College & Pinnacle Living

Caregiver Support Group

(sponsored by the Alzheimer’s Association)

Build a support system with people who understand. This Caregiver Support Group is led by trained facilitators, Kay Gardner and Donna Fitzgerald. It offers a safe place for family and friends of persons with dementia to:

- exchange practical information on caregiving challenges and solutions
- talk through issues and ways of coping
- share feelings, needs, and concerns
- learn about community resources

The group now meets from 11:00 a.m. -12:15 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month, in the Church Den. (The group previously met on the third Wednesday of each month). The next meeting will be Thursday, April 12 at 11:00 a.m.

Respite care for a loved one is available; however, registration is required in advance by contacting Carolyn Yowell, Respite Director (229-1771 Ext 354) or cyowell@williamsburgumc.org.
Do you have an article for the Newsletter?

If you would like to submit an article for publication in the Messenger, the deadline for submittals is the 15th of the month. Articles submitted should be typed or neatly printed, limited to a 1/2 page in length and are subject to editing for grammar, spelling and content. Please submit by e-mail to Lianne Koch at lkoch@williamsburgumc.org. Questions? Please e-mail Lianne or call (229-1771 Ext 250).

Have you checked out our Website?

If you ever have a moment, stop by our website to see what’s going on at our church. The address is www.williamsburgumc.org. Find out about all the ministries and other activities that you or your family may be interested in joining!! We have something for everyone!!

If you have any questions about something you see on our website, contact the church office (229-1771).

Our Trip to Honduras

Contrary to what many of our peers may believe, giving our college spring break to serve in a dusty, remote village in Honduras without air conditioning is not a sacrifice. Granted we usually end up sacrificing some portion of our perfect health throughout the week (or a tiny bit of our sanity while sitting in the back of a bumpy van on a dirt road for hours on end). Nevertheless, no sacrifice amounts to the sacrifice God made for us, and it is always a pleasure to serve in God’s Glory, no matter where it may be.

After leaving the windy tundra that decided to blow through Williamsburg at the beginning of March, it took us two treacherous days to make it down to the remote village of Limón, Honduras. Since we were the youngest and most "active" members of the team, we two college students were the first to be elected to ride in the back of the van. When the clinic opened on Sunday, despite our whole bodies were aching from the ride down, we were ready to help people. It had been 4 months since the Carolina Honduras Health Foundation had been able to send a medical team down to Limón due to the heavy rainy season.

With such a huge demand for care, we worked extremely long days. In the few days we were there, our team saw 946 medical patients, the pharmacy filled 3165 prescriptions, and the dentist pulled 290 teeth. Whenever you are in Limón, there is always a slight sense of brokenness in the air. At the same time, however, there is always a more resounding feel of community, love, and faith within the environment where we are working. That is why it is never a sacrifice to spend spring break working alongside some of the most gracious and talented people we know, serving in the Lord’s Glory to bring medical care to people who not only need it but truly deserve it.

- Blessings, Sydney Cole & Juliette Sim

The team would like to thank Dr. Steven Shield who facilitated pharmaceutical orders and donated numerous inhalers, the Sisters in Faith who donated over the counter medications and reading glasses, and the choir who also donated reading glasses. Also, many thanks to the Friendship Circle for their donations and help in packing medications and the numerous congregation members who made financial contributions. And finally, a big thank you to Terri Morgan for leading the team.

Your Global Outreach Team
Shredded nerves?
Not quite...

We’ve all got them, piled in a corner at home somewhere, quietly multiplying. Boxes of documents we’ll “shred at some point”. Friends, the time is nigh! April 28, between 9:00 a.m. and noon at church our youth groups will be hosting one last fundraiser for both of this summer’s youth mission trips (albeit with an emphasis on the England trip.

Once again we’ll partner with Eggleston Services who will collect all the shredding, lock it into secure bins and take it to their facility to be shredded in confidence. For more on their services please visit https://www.egglestonservices.org/document-shredding/. Not only do they provide a secure service but they also provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities, so all round a win-win.

I’d also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who came out to the banquet evening in February (after the March edition had gone to press). I think we served around 100 meals (including team members) and raised over $2,500 while enjoying good food, great conversation, live music, a cameo appearance by The Washing Laddies and a presentation on the mission trip to England. We are almost there with preparations for the trip, please keep us in your prayers. (I’m sure there’ll be a few nerves as we get closer, but hopefully no shredded ones!)

Please pray too for the group that will be going to Romney, WV in early July this summer. We have 8 students confirmed and up to 1 student places available as well as an opportunity for an adult female leader to participate. If you are wondering if this might be for you, please do contact me for a no-obligation conversation.

Andy Glascott, WUMC Youth Director

Local Outreach News

Kairos Retreat April 19-22, 2018
Bring Hope and God’s Word to Those who are Incarcerated.

The spring Kairos Retreat at Greensville Correctional Center will be April 10-22. Lyman Hubbard will represent WUMC on the Greensville Team. During the long weekend 40 inmates will learn of God’s love and mercy. Our congregation is asked to support the weekend with:

Our prayers
You can sign up for a 30-minute prayer slot during the retreat by googling Kairos Active Prayer Vigil Sign-up Sheets; select Greensville Correctional Center Men’s Kairos Inside S-2 #K-71 19-22 April.

Our placemats
Dozens were lovingly made by our congregation during the Thanksgiving Morning Ministry in November. The pictures and Scriptures on the placemats contribute interest and inspiration to retreat meal times.

Our homemade cookies
Our cookies are the most popular part of every retreat. They signify caring. We are asked to provide dozens and dozens of homemade cookies. Recipes and packaging instructions can be found on the desk in the Reception Center beginning Sunday, March 25.

The cookie pick-up deadline will be noon, April 18.

A Handful of “Thank Yous”

From FISH:
"All of us at FISH join in this message of thanks to all the members of your church who so willingly continue to share their blessings with others in need."
— Gene Bruss, President

From Community of Faith Mission:
"We want to thank Williamsburg United Methodist Church for being a shelter host site. You opened your doors and hearts and provided generous care to those who are homeless in Williamsburg. You are a gift to our shelter program."
— Sue Xander, Secretary, COFM Board of Directors

From WJCC Public Schools:
"We received your generous donation to WJCC Public School’s ISAEP (GED) Program. Your support and commitment to student success is truly appreciated."
— Olwen E. Herron, Superintendent

Confidential
Library News

You’ll find selections in every category . . . Education for Mission, Leadership Development, Nurturing for Community, Social Action and Spiritual Growth . . . and ones for all ages including two for children: THE AMAZING AGE OF JOHN ROY LYNCH, the first African-American Congressman and ONE WELL, THE STORY OF WATER ON EARTH, an especially relevant book as we celebrate Earth Day later this month. Look for these new books on display and on the shelves immediately to the right as you enter the library.

In our children’s room, Earth Day will be a month long celebration. Take a peek into A HOUSE IS A HOUSE FOR ME, explore THE CURIOUS GARDEN, consider how EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY, and discover WHERE DOES GARBAGE GO? and how RECYCLE! A HANDBOOK FOR KIDS can make a difference.

"Whenever you read a good book, somewhere in the world a door opens to allow in more light.”
– Vera Nazarian

From the Council of Bishops:

Bishop Ough, thousands of United Methodists to join in rally against racism

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As the nation marks the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., United Methodists will unite with members of the National Council of Churches (NCC) in Washington, D.C., April 3-5, for the Truth and Racial Justice Initiative.

The events begin with a briefing on alleviating racism and injustice in the areas of criminal justice, economic justice, the media, health care, voting, civil and human rights, environmental justice, education and immigration. Led by the General Board of Church and Society, the briefing will be held April 3, from 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., at the United Methodist Building at 100 Maryland Ave., NE, in Washington, D.C.

Bishop Bruce Ough, president of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, will kick off the ACT NOW to End Racism event on April 3 with a prayer rally to Awaken, Confront and Transform, at the United Methodist Building at 2:00 p.m. Leaders from Baltimore-Washington Conference, Virginia Conference and others will also be in attendance.

A Rally to End Racism will be held April 4 on the National Mall. The day begins with a silent prayer walk from the MLK Memorial to the Mall at 7:00 a.m. An interfaith worship service is on the Mall at 8:00 a.m. and the rally and call to commitment will be held from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

NCC leaders expect thousands of people from across the nation to attend the rally. Among the speakers are Bishop Vashti McKenzie, Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Jennifer Harvey, Bishop Darin Moore, the Rev. Freddie Haynes, Danny Glover, Esther Lopez, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, DeRay McKesson, Bishop Michael Curry, Phil Lee, Bishop Teresa Jefferson-Snorton, the Rev. Jim Wallis, Lou Gossett Jr., Rabbi David Saperstein, Christie Duncan-Tessmer, and many others.

April 5 is a National Day of Advocacy and Action. That morning, the United Methodist Building will be open so that United Methodists can have conversations and network with leaders from the General Board of Church at Society and the General Commission on Religion and Race, and the Council of Bishops at the United Methodist Building. The NCC will lead efforts to lobby legislators on Capitol Hill.

For more information, visit: www.Rally2EndRacism.org.
RESURRECTION (EASTER) SUNDAY

As we enter the new month of April, we find that Easter Sunday is the very first day! What a way to conclude a bleak, wintry month and start a NEW spring month. Hopefully, Easter Sunday and the reminder of the resurrection of Jesus Christ will start a NEW THING in each of our lives. Let us spend time with God in prayer so that we may know His will in our lives and we can be His light to everyone we meet.

An Easter Prayer-

Dear God,

Thank you that you make all things new. Thank you for the victory and power in your Name. Thank you that you hold the keys over death, that by your might, Jesus was raised from the grave, paving the way for us to have NEW LIFE with you.

We confess our need for you . . . fresh new . . . again. We ask that you renew our hearts, minds, and lives for the days ahead.

Shine your light in us, through us, and over us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purpose. Set your way before us. May we reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing.

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.

To God be the glory on this Resurrection Day, and forever.

Amen

(portions of prayer by Debbie McDaniel - crosswalk.com)

For more information about our Prayer Ministry, contact Cindy Banek (229–1771 Ext 258) or cbanek@williamsburgumc.org.

Thank You

Words cannot express the extent of our gratitude to you, the people of Williamsburg UMC, for your many expressions of sympathy and support in these last few weeks, as we have grieved the deaths of Randy’s father in January and his mother six weeks later. Thank you for your prayers, cards, kind words, and understanding. The reception on March 11 was lovely, and it was wonderful to be able to speak to so many of you at that time. All of us go through times of grief in life, and it helps to be surrounded by people who care. During this time in our lives, we have felt supported and loved by this community of faith, and for that we are profoundly grateful.

Randy and Helen Casey-Rutland

ENDOWMENT NOTES

Writing a will? Ask your attorney and your family about including Williamsburg United Methodist Church as part of your estate plan. Your heirs may financially benefit because of tax savings, but they will always benefit by knowing of your commitment to provide enduring support for the ministry and mission of our church. Thank You!

condolences

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those who have passed away during the month of March:

Jim Smith, husband of Donna Smith
Early Childhood Music School News

Register Now for ECMS!

ECMS Registration is open for the 2018 — 2019 year. Children should be 2 months – 7+ years by September 30. Multiple levels of group piano and guitar for adults are also available.

ECMS Registration is open for the Five-day Summer Session, July 9 – 13, including “Introduction to Keyboard” for 6- and 7-year-olds and Keyboard 1 review.

For more information or to register, log onto ecms.williamsburgumc.org or contact Anthony Williams (229-1771 Ext 108) or mranthony.ecms@gmail.com.