

# St. John's Focus

August 2020



“SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM;  
MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.” – Genesis 1:27



## Free Will

by Rev. Darren Walker

Puppets fascinate me. It is amazing how lifelike bits of cloth and plastic can be made to appear in the hands of a skilled performer. For many children, Kermit the Frog is as real a person as you or me. Edgar Bergen and Jeff Dunham have built careers around bringing to life their “imaginary friends.” Puppets have been used to tell stories for centuries. They have helped the sick to heal and those without voice to speak. They have told truth to power in ways that did not get anyone killed or imprisoned. These wood and cloth creations can be just as cunning, tricky, clever or deceitful as the people who bring them to life. What they cannot do is think or feel for themselves.

If one tells you “I love you,” obviously, that’s not true. Someone else has made the puppet say that. No matter how life-like a puppet appears, unlike Pinocchio, it can never “become a real boy.” It does not matter if the puppet is a simple paper sack or the most advanced animatronics robot with computer simulated control to just say “I love you,” God took matters a step further when God made us. We have Free Will. We get to choose to love God or not. We get to choose if we will do what pleases God or not. As you know, there are a lot of people for a lot of reasons who have decided they do not love God and do not want to please God. Sometimes their choices result in bad consequences for themselves and others, choices that end up harming total strangers. As a result, sometimes bad things happen to good people. This is not the only reason but it is one of the main ones.

As simple as this thought is, it is good for to remember we have a choice, a God-given choice. We get to decide to love God and seek to do God’s Will. No one can make us do this. No one else can take this away from us. Celebrate the freedom God has given you by choosing to share the Love of God with someone today

Grace and Peace,

*Darren Walker*

## August Calendar of Events

- **Sundays: Sunday school classes meeting via Google Meet or Zoom**
- **Sunday, August 2: Drive-In Communion Service 9:00 AM**
- **Monday, August 24: Single Board Meeting via Google Meet**
- **Wednesdays: Fellowship Groups meeting via Google Meet or Zoom**

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## Spotlight on Our Trustees, Their Projects

### Part 2 - A Short Exposé & Horizon House Garage

by Dorothy Newcombe

Dear Trustees, there remains much our congregation should know about each of you and the many projects you undertake, but as this must be our bye-bye article for now it must be prefaced with this short exposé.

Having listened intently to your individual stories over the last few weeks, you possess one clear characteristic in common. You're all a bunch of finger pointers. When asked about your personal involvement in a particular project, each of you pointed fingers at all the rest, and it was like hearing an echo because you said the exact same thing - *"Okay, so maybe I helped a little bit on this project, but it was really him (or her) or all of them that actually did most of the work!"*

The truth is out now, folks. Everybody knows.

#### Horizon House Garage

Storage space is short on glamour but long on practical desirability. Annual events such as Harvest Fest and outreach programs such as Church Under the Bridge require a multiplicity of supplies which in turn demand safe haven whilst awaiting the next event. Ideally, this space would be conveniently located, easily accessible, soft on our monthly budget and ultimately - oh, dream come true - stand as a long term financial asset to St John's. The decision to build a garage at Horizon House was an inspired idea as this location is truly ideal. It will provide storage for years to come, but if we ever sell the property this garage improves overall property value.

With his background in construction, Trustee Ricky Young served as chief project overseer. He chose an architect to design our ideal space, plans were submitted to various contractors for bids, and BOOM - we immediately slammed into our first, all too frequently encountered road block. Budget. We shrank the space, wiggled a few details, resubmitted to our favorite contractor and work began.



Well, maybe it wasn't quite that simple. Since we are located in Old Town Georgetown, numerous HARC requirements and city permits first had to be met, exhaustive work for Ricky as he provided multiple reports, secured all permits, and was present during repeated inspections. Rains delayed the first attempts to pour a foundation, but from that point onward construction was uneventful provided you overlook delivery of an incorrect siding, a handicap sign concreted into the sidewalk which had to be sawed off later, a light switch installed behind a door and other minor details of the sort. Ricky, Charley Cherry and Johnnie Kovar dealt with most of this.

When the contractor moved out, worker bees swarmed in. Charley and Rita Cherry insulated and paneled the interior, painted the ceiling, then found, delivered and assembled umpteen shelving units. Charley and Dean May installed a garage door opener. Finally, Dean and Darren May, Jim Leach, Doug Davis, and likely some others, moved our storable items from various locations into their lovely new home.

Ultimately, what St John's acquired is a top notch storage unit, insulated, with an attic and a 30 year roof. Directly behind the garage door is a 20'X20' storage space filled with shelving. Through a door to the back is a 10'X20' climate controlled space for items which could melt or mildew up front. The attic, once floored, may provide additional storage later.

Our team of trustees along with their helpers work hard for us always, with dedication and love, and the constant goal of providing whatever is best and most needed for our church community as a whole. We are blessed.

Our current Trustee roster: Ricky Young, Mary Lou Wells, Woody Thompson, Bob Radford, and Charley Cherry - chairman.



## Unprecedented

by JoAnne Gaytan, Nursery Manager & Children's Coordinator

Recently, I've heard the word *unprecedented* in the news a lot. "Unprecedented" illness, quarantines, church closings, social distancing and mask orders, to name just a few of these situations. St. John's is definitely experiencing some new hurdles, such as continuing ministries and worshipping outside of a church building, reaching and teaching children we cannot see or talk to, dealing with strained finances of a closed church building and also finding money to start an online ministry. Oh, and at the same time, learning how to even DO an online ministry.

I had the humorous thought that if you went back six months in time, and heard the journalists use the word "unprecedented" to describe something, you'd think they didn't know what it meant or that they were inclined to huge exaggeration. (I will offer no commentary on that point!) But to them and their audience, each instance WAS unprecedented. The word really just means never having been seen or experienced before.

Then, I had another humorous thought, as I tend to do. It reminded me of the movie *The Princess Bride* when Inigo Montoya responds to Vizzini's repetitive use of the word "inconceivable." He says, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

In reality, Vizzini had the word's meaning correct, but he was using his own point of view and not necessarily reality, to judge whether something was conceivable or not. In some ways, we do the same with "unprecedented." We know what the word means, but we also have our narrow experience's view of what is "precedented." Most of us can't envision another time where an illness or threat of one caused the ruin of businesses, hampered societies, and closed church buildings.

But what we do know, is the church has been around for 2 millennia. It has seen a LOT of "unprecedented." And with God's help, the "people" of the church have rallied together many times to overcome difficulties. This year, St. John's UMC has managed to find new ways to worship God and reach our congregation. I have no doubt our faithful little church will continue doing so until this *unprecedented* season has passed.



## Back to School

by Kathryn Price, Director of Family Ministry

This is the time of year when parents, teachers and kids are gearing up for a new school year. Well, that may not happen for some people. Parents (and some grandparents) may be starting to wonder if they will be teaching their children at home indefinitely. Homeschoolers already know what to do, but the rest of us may need a few tips to feel confident helping the kids learn at home, so here are a few:

1. Create a learning space. Set aside an area of your house for a "classroom". When your kids are in that space, school is in session.
2. Make a schedule and keep to it. Your school will probably help with this, but it will be on the parents to supervise it.
3. Reduce distractions. Phones, television, and other devices can wait until after "school".
4. Of course, work closely with your children's teachers and school. They are the experts and always have your child's best interest at heart.

Of course, all the above could apply to Sunday School as well. Your children's spiritual education and growth is also important. Here at St. John's, Kathryn and JoAnne are working to keep children connected to learning about Jesus and the Bible. If you need help being substitute Sunday School teachers, just let them know.

# The Loneliness Epidemic

by YouthMinistry.com

At Springtide™ Research Institute we've spent the past year researching the consequences of epidemic loneliness among young people.

The findings are astonishing, heartbreaking, and hopeful... Our newest report, *Belonging: Reconnecting America's Loneliest Generation*, documents these findings and offers a research-based pathway forward.

We know, as you do, that young people are increasingly disconnected from the institutional ties that have historically provided a stable web of relationships. For many, this is most obvious—and most poignantly and bitterly felt—in the context of a culture experiencing declining church attendance.

Our research largely confirms these trends, but crucially extends the findings by surveying kids as young as 13 years old. We were heartbroken to uncover stories of young people almost entirely disconnected from caring institutions and, critically, from trusted adults. Among our most salient—and alarming—findings, we learned the following:

- Nearly 1 in 3 young people have only 1 or 0 “trusted adults” in their lives
- Almost 40% of 13-to-25-year-olds report that they often have nobody to talk to.
- 1 in 3 young people feel alone much of the time.

We expected to find that attendance at religious gatherings—worship services, Bible studies, small groups, or other activities—would ward off these feelings of loneliness. Instead, we discovered that even for those who are connected to religious organizations in some way, these feelings persist. Indeed, our data shows no difference between the sense of loneliness among young people who attend religious services and those who do not. In fact, one-fifth (20%) of young people who attend a religious service at least once a week still report feeling completely alone.

But our passion is to discover what *does* help a young person feel connected and cared for. *Belonging* found that 62% of young people with 0 trusted adult relationships feel completely alone. But, incredibly, for young people with five or more trusted adult relationships, only 9% feel alone.

The data makes our heartfelt response clear: ***We need to increase the number of trusted adult relationships in young peoples' lives.***

But what do meaningful connections, trusted adults, and caring relationships look and feel like? How do we go about becoming a force for good in a young person's life in this way? In *Belonging* we outline a three-step, data-driven process that cultivates the experience of belonging for young people. We call this the **Belongingness Process**:

1. **I am Noticed**
2. **I am Named**
3. **I am Known**

This Noticed, Named, Known framework offers a simple, intentional model for forming relationships of meaning and belonging.

## ***Noticed***

Many teenagers confirm that they feel unseen and invisible in their day-to-day lives. In other words, young people often feel like they don't matter. The simple, straightforward act of acknowledging their presence is powerful. When you acknowledge them, you're doing a small thing that has a big impact.

## ***Named***

Building on the foundation of *Noticing*, the *Naming* step involves more than simply knowing a young person's name (though that is important). A name is an indication of a person's identity, which is multifaceted: What are their likes and dislikes? What are their struggles and triumphs? What do they care about? In a recorded

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conversation about the “Future of Religion,” Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says community is the place a person is *known by name* and *missed when they're gone*. It's almost impossible to miss someone who isn't “named” within a community in this substantial way.

### **Known**

In this step, a young person is not a passive attendee in a group, but a full participant. Things would not be the same if they were gone. And the key to making a young person feel truly and fully known is to accept them without judgment. This doesn't mean you can't hold them accountable, but it does mean making sure they know they can't be swiftly or suddenly rejected if they misstep. They are integral to the group or relationship, and they know it.

Whether these steps seem familiar or novel, now is the time to go back to the basics—back to relationships—to address the epidemic loneliness impacting today's youngest generation.

This is a critical time for faith leaders, youth pastors, and volunteers to do what is at the heart of their faith: to reach out to the needy and broken-hearted in our midst and invite them into life-giving, Jesus-centered community. Relationships with trusted adults—with *you*—can make all the difference in the lives of young people. It just takes an intentional process of building trust. It means making sure young people are noticed, named, and known by you and those at your organization.



## Seasons

*by David Pencil, Director of Music Ministries*

The earth grew green with blooming life.  
My heart was free and joyful.  
And through my work and service grew  
a pure love, overflowing.  
Our nations rose in one accord  
to right the wrongs that lingered.  
A budding peace and fruitfulness  
spread wide to all the people.

The earth's full bloom had come at last.  
I rested from my labor.  
In comfort I enjoyed the fruits  
of peace and satisfaction.  
Our nations' long prosperity  
allowed us all to slumber.  
There was no need for fervency.  
No worry for tomorrow.

The earth's green hues began to fade.  
I found disquiet brewing.  
All was not well within my heart,  
and strife grew in my family.  
Our nations' bonds began to fray.  
The people grew uneasy.  
Injustice, like a cancer, spread  
and choked the lives of many.

The earth's life withered in the cold.  
I found myself despairing.  
All that I'd gained had now been lost,  
and hope was but an ember.  
Our nations fought. Divisions formed,  
as hate and fear took over.  
There was no peace or equity.  
The souls of men were barren.

The earth will flower once again,  
as season leads to season.  
But for my heart and life to mend  
There must be effort given.  
We must forgive and work to heal,  
to put the needs of others  
before our rights and privileges.  
That's how we will move forward.

## Communicating the Good News

by Michelle Cousineau, Communications Coordinator & Executive Secretary

Communications has changed a lot since Covid-19 has come to our shores. Before the virus hit, we could meet in person and communicate with you face-to-face and use our website and social media platforms to supplement our message and reach out to our community. However, that has all changed and we are relying heavily on our website, social media platforms, e-mails and texts to communicate with you and the community.

My learning curve has been remarkably high. I told my husband that the curve has become a cliff and I am hanging off that cliff by my fingertips most days. I have had to learn to engage more thoughtfully through our Facebook and Instagram accounts. I have had to use the website as a video streaming tool along with learning the ins and outs of how to create a YouTube video. Oh, and I am now a videographer too! I hope you are all enjoying the Sunday videos. On top of all that, I am also learning new software at super speed. Like I said, most days I am hanging off a cliff.

I bring this up because I need your help to learn something too. I need you to learn how to share information through Facebook, Instagram, or whatever social media platform you use. I need you to share our website with all your friends and their friends. We have a unique opportunity to be the hands and feet of God in a virtual world. We are tasked with reaching out to each other socially while maintaining a physical distance from each other. So, here is how we are going to reach our hurting and broken world together.

First, share our website with people. Start with the Sunday service videos. Invite people to watch the service on our website or our YouTube page. I always place both of those links in the newsletters and in the e-mail, I send out each Sunday morning when I let you know the videos are ready. This is easy and can allow outside guests to view who we are on a Sunday morning as they sip their coffee.

Second, if you are on Facebook or Instagram or YouTube, share our pages with your friends and their friends. This is extremely important because it allows us to reach our community and be a calming influence within the community. If you have not seen our pages yet, let me know and I will hook you up. We also have a page for our Awakening service on Facebook that I would love to share with people.

Lastly, show God's love wherever you go. This is a scary time for everyone so be a calming presence in your circle of influence and show them how being a part of this church family is keeping you calm, centered, and focused on the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ which is still our mission. I am finding that peace by serving you and remembering what God tells me in Jeremiah 17:7-8, "*But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be planted by the water that send out it roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.*"

If you have pictures of your every day life, celebrations, or get-togethers, send them to Michelle at [commsec@stjohnsumc.cc](mailto:commsec@stjohnsumc.cc)



## Honor God with the Gift of Giving

*by Christine Studebaker, Office Manager & Membership Secretary*

St. John's UMC has been one of the few churches in Georgetown to offer a food pantry service over the years. Our food pantry was established back in 2008 and Orville Tanner has been our "shining star" volunteer who shops and replenishes our pantry every month. For years we have received many referrals for people in need from the Caring Place and community churches. Due to COVID, it has been difficult to replenish our food supplies (we do not want to put Orville and Betty at any risk). We discovered that the best way to help people who come to us in need during this time was to offer \$25 Walmart gift cards. In this way, folks are able to use them for groceries, prescriptions or gas. We also offer HEB gift cards on occasion, as well. The funds available for this critical ministry have come from very generous donations to our Benevolent Fund.

During these unique times we have had more "first time" visitors requesting assistance than we have had in a long time. Virginia who has 5 in her household, Jerry who has 2, Shantelle who has 3 in her household and Mrs. Jefferson who has 2 are just a few of the names of people we have helped in our community during this pandemic. St. John's has assisted 37 households with a total of 60 individuals from the beginning. These people come from Georgetown, Jarrell, Pflugerville and St. Paul's UMC. They have all suffered serious

financial setbacks. Mostly they have been affected by falling behind in rent or utilities due to fewer working hours which leaves them strapped for grocery money. I know we have all either read or heard stories on the news about folks who are trying to survive during these times. It can be heartbreaking.

These "first time visitors" have been so appreciative of these gift cards, and many have commented, along with a smile on their face, that they could make \$25 stretch quite a bit! I remember times when anything extra would help go a long way and I know that many of you looking back or looking at your current situation feel the same way. So, even though the church is operating in a whole different manner, as we continue through this difficult time, it has been a genuine joy for our staff, on behalf of St. John's UMC, to offer these gift cards as financial relief and symbols of hope and comfort from our hearts to theirs. Thank you, dear church members, for your amazing generosity.

If you know of someone in need or need assistance for yourself and family, please contact Christine in the office or at [officemanager@stjohnsumc.cc](mailto:officemanager@stjohnsumc.cc).

**Proverbs 14: 31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.**

## Digital Backpack Fundraiser!

This is the time of year when we would be collecting school supplies for the children in the district. Things are going to be a bit different this year. Our collection will be monetary and go directly to GISD so they can purchase the equipment and curriculum they need to help the kids who are learning, whether remote or in-person. We want to make sure that all of the kids have the necessary supplies they need to succeed in a very different learning environment. If you would like to donate to this fund, please mark your checks "Digital Backpack" and we will apply it where it needs to go.

In addition to our children throughout the school system, some of our own in the family need our help. We are asking for old computers, laptops, or tablets that you are no longer using. These items will go to our youth and our homebound folks. To make a donation, contact the front office to let them know you are coming at (512) 863-5886.

## Prayer Team Note

by Martha Arizpe, Prayer Team Chairperson

When I was a grade school student, every report card included a grade for “effort”. I do not think kids are graded on that anymore, which is a shame. Putting forth effort teaches one to keep going, to finish a task, to set goals, and to compromise when necessary for the common good. I am thinking of effort now because this month, Hubby and I will celebrate 35 years of marriage. Hubby's brother and wife have their 50th this month, and my brother and spouse celebrate their 39th. So, this month, three couples in our family have a grand total of 124 years of marriage, which represents not only a boatload of blessings, but an incalculable amount of effort on the part of six people. I am not bragging – I am “in the know”, so I understand we have all had our struggles – but I am just so proud of us. I know that all of you have faced struggles, too. But since this is my article, I am giving Caesar, Suzy, Ken, Pam, Joe, and Martha an A+ in effort. Which I will do shortly after I get up off my knees, in humble gratitude to The One who has made these 124 years possible. Dear Lord, may we always honor Your gift with our effort.

Blessings,

Martha Arizpe



## House of Prayer

by Carolyn Henry, Congregational Care Coordinator

I recently read a devotional by Max Lucado from his book “God is With You Every Day”. In it he asks, “Did Jesus declare: My house shall be called a house of study? Fellowship? Music? A house of exposition? A house of activities? No, but he did say, “My house will be called a house of prayer”

(Mark 11:17 NIV)

Every Sunday morning at 11 a.m. (except for the Sundays we have communion service in the parking lot) Pastor Darren opens the sanctuary for 30 minutes. This is time for prayer. There is no sermon, no choir, no taking up of offering, just a small smattering of folks from our church who feel the call to come in and to pray. They all wear masks, they sit very far apart (since there are so few that is not a problem) and they pray. The scene is very quiet – and very peaceful. The

sanctuary is beautiful in the new color scheme that our Trustees selected, the stained-glass windows sparkle with sunlight. If you haven’t been in the sanctuary since March, it can even be a bit overwhelming. Martha Arizpe said she was so moved by it the first time she came that she burst into tears.

During these 30 minute time periods, our church truly becomes a “house of prayer”. I am moved by these moments and leave refreshed and much more peaceful. And I believe – God hears these prayers of the people. Yes, you can pray at home just as easily, but there’s something special about going into the sanctuary again on Sunday mornings. Come, let us go into the House of Prayer – St. John’s United Methodist Church!

# Administrative News

## JUNE 2020 FINANCIALS

2020 Income \$264,665

2020 Expense \$271,348

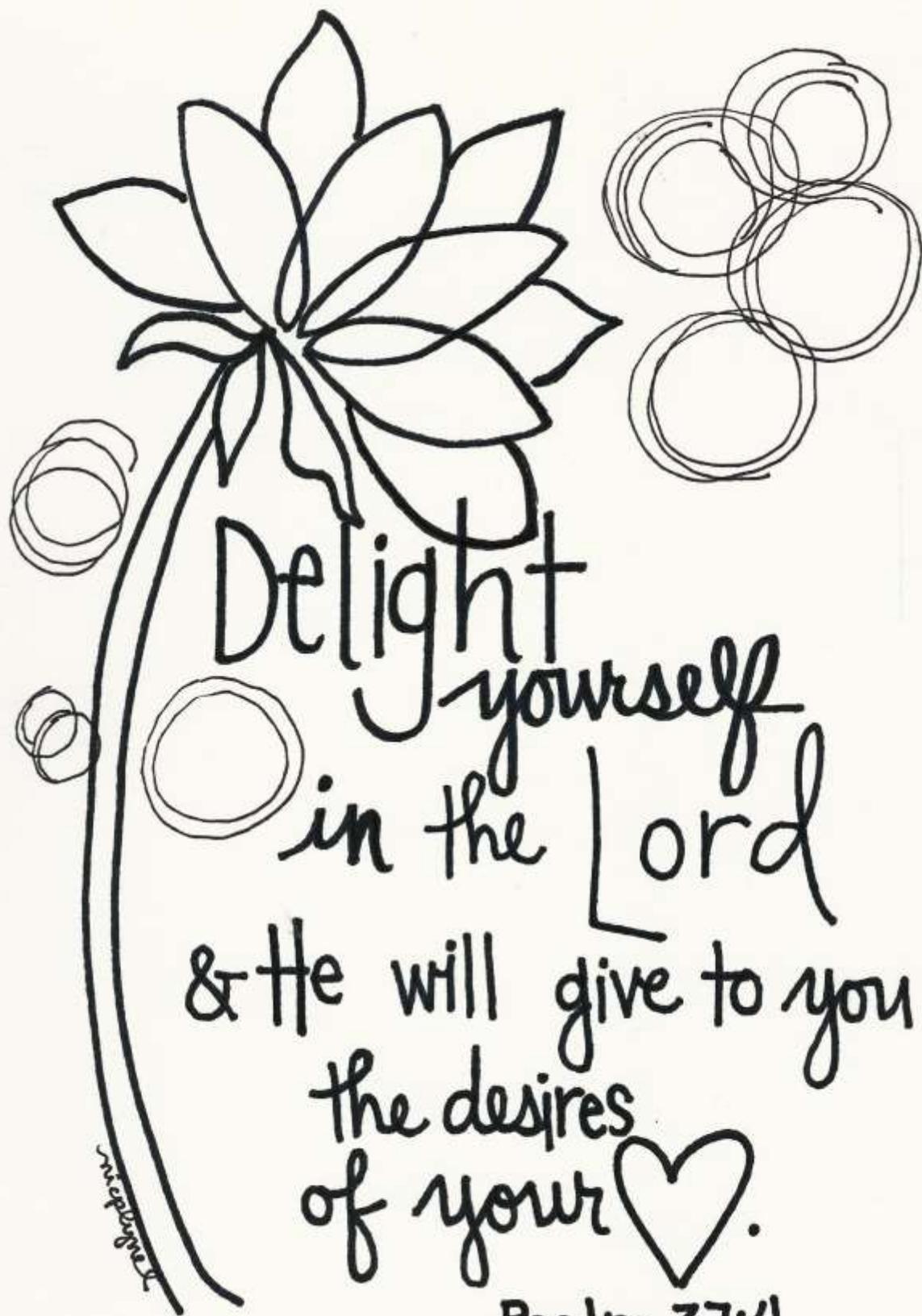
**Net (\$6,683)**



Even though we can't meet in person, we are still meeting online. Please be sure to get your attendance numbers to Christine for all your virtual and in person meetings. Send to [officemanager@stjohnsumc.cc](mailto:officemanager@stjohnsumc.cc)

Join us in the back parking lot and tune your radio to 88.9 FM





Delight  
yourself  
in the Lord  
& He will give to you  
the desires  
of your .

Psalm 37:4

*micapone*

## ST. JOHN'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

St. John's has been a part of the Georgetown Community for over 140 years.

We started as a group of Swedish immigrants who joined together in their homes to study, worship and pray and built our first church building in 1882. At that time, we were known as the Swedish Methodist Episcopal Brushy Church (Svenska Metodistkyrkan at Brushy).

The original church stood at the intersection of Westinghouse Road and FM 1460. Our church cemetery is still at this location.

In 1906 we moved to town, to our present home at 311 E. University Avenue, and in 1938 we changed our name to St. John's Methodist Church.

In 1968, when the Methodist Church joined with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, St. John's became St. John's United Methodist Church.

Come join us and share in our rich history and heritage of celebrating God's love.



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