

The Methodist Greeter

JULY 2020



United Methodist Church
Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors

Our mission is to develop and strengthen disciples of Jesus Christ, building a community that transforms the world."

Pastor's Corner

Pastor Terry B. Hall

Bible Readings For the Month

July 5

Gen 24:34-38, 42-49,
58-67

Ps 45:10-17

Matt 11:16-19, 25-30

July 12

Gen 25:19-34

Ps 119:105-112

Matt 13:1-9, 18-23

July 19

Gen 28:10-19a

Ps 139:1-12, 23-24

Matt 13:24-30, 36-43

July 26

Gen 29:15-28

Ps 105:1-11, 45b

Matt 13:31-33, 44-52

We Are Called For Just Such Times As These

We know that the gift of prophecy has never been an easy one to bear; just look at Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Jonah! None of them were noted for expressing glee or pleasure when called into that role and some tried to convince God they were not up to the job. While we might think it would be wondrous to hear God's still, quiet voice with clarity, that is a sure sign that we are thinking only of the joy of being in such a tangible relationship with the One-Who-Cannot-Be-Completely-Known, an indicator that we consider the connection to be *only* personal and therefore private. But the breathed-out word is, indeed, a calling to the necessarily public action of speaking truth to power. As we see again and again, The Word is never less likely to be truly heard, nor the one who shares it in more immediate danger, than when it finds its way into the halls of established structures of human authority. Although most of the world has given up the literal stoning of God-speakers, prophets are no more welcome here and now than they were in ancient Jerusalem.

But, truth be told (word play intended), as followers of Jesus the Christ, every one of us is called to be prophets, *and is prepared for that role*. From the earliest stories it contains, the Bible teaches the centrality of truth-telling as a basis of human community as well as a defining characteristic of Immanuel, God-with-us, in whose image we are created. Jeremiah, speaking around 600 years before the birth of Jesus, shared the next step in the still-unfolding relationship between us and our Creator:

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I shall be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to

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(Pastor's Corner Continued)

each other, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." Jer 31:33b-34

We have always struggled here in America, in the United Methodist Church, and within our own congregations and lives, to truly hear the Divine Voice when it shouts to us about the injustice and affront of racism. Right now that Voice is neither still nor small, as huge crowds pour into the streets and onto the internet to proclaim what ought to be obvious: Black Lives Matter! Are we listening? Do we have the courage, or at least the willingness, to hear these voices with our ears, hearts and souls? I trust that we do, because I trust in the strengthening Spirit and Presence within and around us that ensures we will both recognize and treasure Truth when we encounter it. But honestly, even as we trust God's repeated promise to forgive and set aside our sin, we need to participate in that process by first admitting to our Redeemer, ourselves and the world that we are desperately in need of forgiveness AND repentance. Likewise, our sin is most easily set aside when we commit to taking the necessary steps to stop adding to it.

Ours is an overwhelmingly white denomination – 93% according to one of our Bishops – having disrespected the Black members of some of our earliest “mega-churches” to the extent they marched out the doors of their churches to form new denominations based on Wesleyan structures and theology in the early 1820s, within 3 decades of John Wesley's death. I think it is safe to guess that the members of those congregations in Philadelphia and NYC did not understand themselves to be racist, and very likely thought of themselves as what we now call “progressive” because they welcomed Blacks into the community and life of their church ... until they tried to come to the communion rail. Sadly, while the separations may fall in different places, and it is clear we (me and you) are nice people who certainly don't hate people of color, things haven't changed much, if at all, in this regard. As a result, we have been (and are) not only *in* the world, but *of* the world in our quiet, underlying belief that Whites and Blacks differ enough in our basic design and capacities that such a separation is natural and best for all involved. How easily we accept and encourage the justification that this is a 'no harm, no foul' situations and 'just the way things are.' And because our congregation is, in actual fact, a warm and welcoming one that is gracious toward pretty much anyone and everyone who walks through our doors, we have little cause to ponder questions like, “How would it feel to be the only members of ... (fill in any of a number of identity group names) while trying to worship the God I believe to have created us all and declared us to be “very good?”

But as the title of this message states, I believe we are both called and equipped to be leaders in the effort to set things right between and among us. The calling is part and parcel of what has drawn us into the intentional parts of this journey, and we're equipped by the same Holy Spirit that works within us through our baptisms. We pledged (or others pledged on our behalf) 'to reject the evil powers of this world and repent of our sin, while accepting the freedom **and power** (emphasis added) God gives us to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms (and places) they present themselves.' As with all gifts and tools, this empowerment is merely theoretical, promised but unproven, until we recognize it is needed and step up to put it to use. Few of us are natural leaders, but all of us can lead, and in the matters dominating our news right now there is no 'free' space where we can be while others 'exercise their God-given rights' to leave their faces uncovered in public and ignore instructions to keep larger distances between us or are killed by neighbors and police (or find a noose in the NASCAR garage before participating in a prominent race as the only Black driver in the sport) on the basis of superficial distinctions like skin color or identity. Our faith stories, especially the gospels, shine the bright light of Truth on shadowy justifications, revealing that inaction is complicity, blindness to our sin evidences the hold it has on us, and believing these issues are either 'none of my business' or between each person and God acknowledges

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that we either don't know or don't trust Jesus' teachings and promise to be with us always.

I see myself as a prime example of the difficulties most White people have in even understanding the term 'racist' and know I, for one, need help to look more honestly at my life. Likewise, in regard to the challenges of living through a pandemic, I need practice when it comes to recognizing when I am failing to really see others as humans *like me*, and getting interested in what their goals, hopes and dreams are, especially when they pose a threat to me in a variety of ways. I am finding a book recommended by our Bishop – **White Fragility**, by Robin DiAngelo – to be very helpful and plan to offer a study of it during this summer. If you are ready to grow in your self-understanding and take the chance that you might lose some comforting justifications while responding to Wesley's call to 'move on toward perfection,' I hope you will order a copy of the book and start reading now. Once again, I encourage us all to maintain our resolve to do all we can to avoid infecting others with this virus, that cares not whether they are family members, friends, co-workers or complete strangers in the store. And may we persistently lift one another up in our prayers and through phone calls, cards, emails and other forms, using our unexpected time to strengthen one another. Let's be slow to judge others but still willing to speak out to those whose actions put others at risk and are clearly extending the more limiting stages of restrictions through their defiance of those restrictions. And let's finally accept that racism is both a fact and a problem in America, and that we are part of the problem until we learn how to see our role and then change it, so Black and Brown mothers and fathers can see their children participate fully in all the freedoms and privileges our nation offers without fear for their safety and very lives. God is calling and ready to equip us. May we respond lovingly to that call!

Pastor Terry

Pastor Terry's Weekly Video Message

Pastor Terry is now recording a short weekly message to the congregation, which will be posted by 5 pm on Wednesdays on our YouTube channel (MVFUMC WA). It will also be posted on FB, but will be easiest to find on YouTube. We hope you will check it out!

Financial Report

May 2020

	Income	Expense
Regular Account	\$46,538.21	\$23,207.03
Special Account	\$ 7,421.46	\$ 911.50
Memorials	\$ -0-	\$ -0-

As you can see we took in more than we spent this month due to your continued support and receiving funds from a PPP loan. These loans were available through the Small Business Administration to help with payroll during the COVID-19 time and potentially will be forgiven. We are working on this paperwork now.

We were able to pay all of our bills and apportionments this month.

During this time while we are not gathering together, there are a couple of ways that you can continue to support the ministry of our church. Our mailbox at the church will be checked each day so you can mail a check to the church or you can go on-line to our website www.mvfumc.org and click on the button "online Giving" at the top of our homepage. This will take you to a secure webpage hosted by Vanco Payments the company that handles all of our credit card and online giving. **Thank you for your continued support!**

Council Corner

The past few months have been challenging for all of us as we learn new ways to “develop and strengthen disciples of Christ, building a community that transforms the world” in this time of physical distance from one another. Your Church Council has continued to meet via zoom as we not only cope with the present, but actively build for the future.

In March we gathered virtually with David Beckett to look again at the single board governance model we adopted four years ago. We looked at how this model is working well for us, and where there is still confusion. With Dave’s help, we came to a better understanding of the role of the council in setting the vision, goals, priorities and policies of the church. We saw that this is different from managing the day to day work of the church. We began to see how the pastor, staff, and congregation members work together to move us forward in our mission.

One of our goals for this year has been to develop and strengthen leadership skills in both active and potential leaders in our church. To this end, 15 people, including our council members, are currently enrolled in “Outward Mindset Online”. This course is a more in depth study of the principles outlined in the Anatomy of Peace study that many of you participated in earlier. It is our hope that through this study, we will be able to build a closer community as we relate to one another with acceptance and grace. As leaders, we hope to grow in our ability to both encourage and guide our church as we follow the way of life that Christ demonstrated.

As we look at the continuing challenges of living through a pandemic, we realize that it is important to continue to worship together. Pastor Terry has been working very hard to learn the technology needed to present meaningful worship online. This has taken a great deal of his time and has been very frustrating for both himself and the congregation when glitches in the technology have interfered with a great final product. Beginning this week, the council has approved the hiring of a video technician to edit and upload our worship service each week. Pastor Terry will continue to plan the service and gather the various video segments needed. For the next few weeks, our video tech will be our own Matthew Repplier, who has done this kind of work in the past. Hopefully, he will help us define what is needed ongoing, and help train the person(s) who will continue as he leaves for his new job in Spokane at the end of July. We believe you will be excited to see the product of this collaboration beginning next Sunday.

We are happy to report that while our building has been closed, work has been done to make it more functional when we return. We now have greatly improved lighting in Sprague Hall, thanks to the work of Chris Flores and Jess del Bosque. Our kitchen update is now complete and meets all Health Department requirements. This will again allow us to hold the many events involving food that we Methodists have traditionally enjoyed. Jess del Bosque has spent many hours on this project, negotiating with the Health Department, researching resources, and doing the actual installation work. His efforts have produced a very functional, beautiful kitchen and allowed the project to cost considerably less than originally budgeted. Thank you, thank you Jess!

We all look forward to a time when we can meet together again. Unfortunately, this looks to be a very slow process. Our Bishop has developed a plan entitled *Reimagining Life Together*. In this plan, each church must develop a plan for meeting the requirements of each of the four phases proposed. As Bishop Stanovsky opens the way to advance to the next phase, each church’s plan must be approved by the district superintendent before the church may proceed. The Bishop has recently opened the way to move to phase two, which allows up to 10 people in the church for producing online worship resources or limited meetings and services. Physical distancing, masks, and sanitation of high touch surfaces is still required. Our church now has a team meeting regularly via zoom to formulate our plans for moving ahead. Watch the church emails for any changes in church building use. For now, the church remains closed to all but staff and a few designated people producing worship resources.

Even as we feel the isolation the pandemic has imposed upon us, the Council continues to be grateful for the many ways that our church continues to live out its mission. We value the opportunity to share worship experiences online. We value the continued prayers for individuals, the church and our troubled world. We value the caring expressed in phone calls, mask-making, celebration parades, contributions to community needs such as Family

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Promise and the Hispanic Ministry, cards sent and many other quiet efforts. We value the contact possible through zoom meetings and events. Most of all, we value this community that is Mount Vernon First UMC. As we continue to move through this difficult time, we are blessed to be children of God in this place.

July Church Council Meeting

Your church council has scheduled a meeting for Saturday, July 18, 2020 from 9am to 1pm. Agenda is Looking Around and Looking Ahead. Let your council members know what you may want/need/desire/pray for when looking around and ahead. Your council members are Clay Cook, Scott Thomas, Shauna Flores, Lynnette Gerhard, Chris Satterlund, Carolyn Gregg, Pastor Terry Hall and Mary Downing. **Please pray for us.**

What's Happening In The Building?

While we all know "church" is happening outside the building in so many ways, it's important to remind everyone that our building remains CLOSED as directed by our Bishop, along with all other churches in our conference.

We have strict UMC guidelines with regard to building use - including who is allowed in the building and for what purpose in each of the four UMC phases of reopening ... which are more restrictive from the state of Washington reopening phases and are based on Wesley's principle of *Do No Harm*. The safety of our staff, our church family, and our larger community will guide our reopening process. We must adhere to required protocols from our conference and local and state public health departments. As such:

The building is CLOSED to everyone but staff – including those members with keys to the building - and staff is working in the building on reduced schedules to limit our exposure to each other.

MASKS ARE REQUIRED BY ALL WHO ENTER THE BUILDING – no exceptions.

Only the front doors may be used for entrance/exit and per Skagit County Health requirements, a SIGN IN/OUT SHEET MUST BE COMPLETED, INCLUDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT YOU HAVE READ AND AGREE TO HEALTH SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE POSTED. THOSE ANSWERING YES TO ANY QUESTION ARE NOT PERMITTED IN THE BUILDING AND ARE ADVISED TO CONTACT THEIR MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL. Anyone and everyone who enters is required to follow the safety guidelines and mask up, keep social distance, and limit their time in the building There can be no exceptions. Anyone not abiding by these requirements will not be allowed continued access to the building until we reopen later this fall.

Volunteers working outside the building are welcome to come in and use the restrooms. Members wishing to drop off/pick up packages/supplies/mail should call the office to make arrangements in advance.

We are working hard to keep our staff and their families, and our church family safe during this pandemic. For questions regarding our safety protocols, please contact the office either by email at office@mvfumc.org or 360/424-3628. You may also reach Pastor Terry at 360/255-1779 or terrybhall59@gmail.com.

Trustees Report

The Trustees are glad to report that the Kitchen Remodel is complete. Dishwasher soap and sanitizer dispenser has been added to the dishwasher. A new commercial refrigerator as required by the health department is in place. The original sinks now have a splash guard in place down the middle of the two sinks to keep contamination to a minimum per health regulations. A new hand washing sink has been added, again because of health requirements, to the north of the two original sinks on the west side of the kitchen. Sprague Hall has new LED wrap around lights which required renting a lift for installation. In the coming month, we will try and get the health department to come to inspect the work done so that hopefully we will again be able to use the kitchen. The funds for the kitchen work was provided by the Church Council from the Endowment fund. The lights in Sprague Hall were provided by a generous donation and the lift was paid for by the maintenance fund.

Everyone Loves A Parade!

On Sunday, June 14th we came together for a drive-by parade here at the church to celebrate high school graduates Shauna Flores (SWHS) and Megan Perez (MVHS). Over 20 cars gathered on the Sprague Hall side of the church and then drove around to the front doors where both graduates were waiting with their families. Horns, bubbles, noisemakers, balloons, and congratulations signs along with virtual hugs and high-fives greeted each family as we made our way past the doors – twice! To each of these young women - “go now in peace...may the love of God surround you, everywhere, everywhere you may go.”



New Book On UMW Library Shelves

One of the 2020 Reading Program titles is “When Others Shuddered: eight women who refused to give up” by Jamie Janosz. This book is from the Education for Mission category of the Reading Program. The author “profiles eight women called to serve God and who, in doing so, changed the world. They lived at the turn-of-the-century. They were single and married, black and white, wealthy and poor, beautiful and plain, mothers and childless. Yet, each felt called to make a difference and to do something—to meet a pressing need in her world. Their stories inspire us to follow God’s calling in our own lives”.

One of the women profiled was Fanny Crosby. Fanny was blinded at six weeks by medical maltreatment. Despite her blindness, she had an “optimistic attitude” and was blessed with the gift of a poet. She was intelligent and craved learning as much as possible. At age fifteen, she left home to attend the New York Institution for the Blind. After seven years at the school, she became a teacher at the institution. In later years she began to compose hymns. Her most famous hymn was “Blessed Assurance” with music by Phoebe Palmer Knapp. [from OCLC World Cat summary]

SAVE THE DATE! JULY 13 BIRTHDAY PARADE

Barbara Jackson's birthday is coming up on Monday, July 13th and we're planning to hold one of our now-famous Birthday Parades to celebrate! Similar to the graduation parade, please line up in your vehicles in the parking lot behind Sprague Hall at 9:45a.m. At 10:00a.m. we'll drive around to the main front doors where Birthday Queen Barbara and her daughter Kyp will be waiting for us! As with all of our parades, this is a no-contact event. In accordance with the state mandate - **masks are required, even outdoors**.



FAMILY PROMISE DONATION DRIVE

One month ago, we asked our church family to prayerfully consider a special offering to support Family Promise of Skagit Valley during the month of June. The inability to have the families in this program rotate between participating churches due to COVID-19, and the increased need in our community has placed enormous financial constraints on the group. With deep gratitude for your prayers and for those who were able to send in donations, we are so pleased to report that a check for \$1,750 is being sent this week. Thank you for your generosity and for holding this group of families, and Family Promise employees and volunteers in your prayers.

We were also able to send off a check to the Neighbors in Need Food Bank for \$600.00 in June. Thank you for supporting these organizations that are helping people in our community each and every day!

Hello Church!

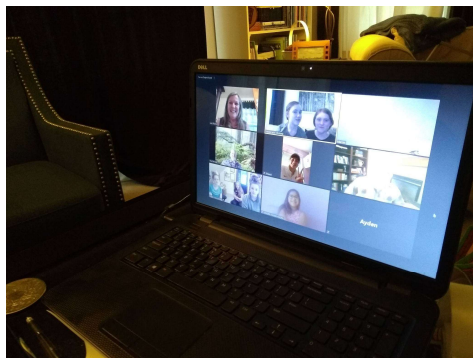
I am writing to thank everyone for the graduation parade and the card from the church. The parade was very fun and I loved seeing everyone there. I am sad that I couldn't speak to everyone afterwards because I was in the middle of orientation for WSU. I also want to thank you all for everything that you have done for me. I have always felt support in this church. I attribute not having a fear of speaking in public to all of you. I always knew that I had a place where I could speak my mind and not be judged. You all have done so much for me. I love this church family and I will be sad to be away while I am in college. Thank you for everything that you have done while I was growing up. I know that kids running up and down the aisles can be distracting, but also if I say so myself, very adorable. I am extremely sad that we couldn't finish the confirmation class this year. I know we have a very promising batch of youth group kids who will appreciate your support as much as I have.

-Shauna

~Editor's note... Congratulations to Shauna Flores who received a scholarship for \$1,500.00 from the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church!

Zoom Youth Group

Ever wonder what "Zoom Youth Group" looks like? Check out the photo below! For the last few weeks we have gathered with the youth group from Mount Vernon Presbyterian church and will hopefully have some youth from St. Paul's Episcopal church joining us soon. We are looking to change our meeting times for the summer months. We will be meeting on the first and third Sunday of the month from 7pm to 8pm on Zoom. If you know a young person in 6th – 12th grade that might be looking for some fun this summer, please contact Lori in the church office.





July Birthdays

July 1 Owen Smith
 July 2 Emma Eliason
 July 4 Marian Lopez
 July 5 Wes Larocque
 July 7 Charlotte Ambrose
 Ben Walker
 Buffy Williams
 July 8 Dave Edwards
 July 9 Chloe Walker
 July 10 Al Sward
 July 11 Barbara del Bosque
 July 12 Janeie Belisle
 July 13 Janielle Coghill
 Barbara Jackson
 July 15 Ashleigh Jacobson
 July 17 John Gresbrink
 July 22 Terry Hall
 July 23 Sue Fisher
 July 26 Dan Gerhard
 July 27 Joe Ambrose
 July 28 Chuck Diver

July Anniversaries

July 19 Billy & Virginia Skaggs
 July 24 Leonard & Jill Eliason
 July 26 Dan & Lynnette Gerhard
 July 27 Wes & Lisa Larocque
 July 30 Dan & Marti Wall
 July 31 Jim & Nancy Finkbeiner

