



The Ambassador

April 2022

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From the Pastor

My friend Michael Isaacs, the pastor of First Presbyterian Church here in Middletown, invited me to speak at one of their Lenten lunches this past week. The assignment was to answer a question: “If you met eight year-old John, what part of your adult faith might they be stunned by?” I didn’t prepare all that much, ad-libbed my way through it, but the question has stayed with me. So here it is, my revised version, what I might say to my 8 year old self. I call myself Jonathan – this was my nickname as a child.

“Jonathan, I remember how you used to pray when you were alone. You would kneel at the foot of your bed and look up at a corner of the ceiling. You were always trying to find the face of Jesus. And every so often you sort of found his face and heard his voice. You were a very devout kid as kids go.

But I don’t want to brag on you too much, Jonathan. You’re also going to have some bad habits you won’t be able to shake. One of them will be spiritual pride. You’ll tend to think of yourself as being a bit closer to God than other folks, and that will lead, at times, to complacency. And I must tell you that eventually your childhood faith won’t be enough. You’ll realize you have the kind of faith that rises and falls like a boat on the ocean. Sometimes, during a storm, your faith will get battered and perhaps even bust up.

But there is another kind of faith, an underneath faith that is very difficult to describe. It’s been with you all along, like the calm waters just a few feet below the crashing waves, like the “peace that passeth understanding” that both Jesus and Paul talk about. It feels like something eternal and transcendent, but is also terribly mysterious. You’ll get a better idea of what I’m talking about when you have an operation on your heart. You will be afraid, but you’ll also get a strange sense that Jesus is still with

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Worship With Us

Online & In Person
Worship @10:30 am
Sunday School @ 9

In Person & Online
Bible Studies
@ 10 am Wednesdays and
@ 6 pm Thursdays

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you. And while that deep down faith in him doesn't take away all your fear, after a while you won't mind that so much. You'll still look for Jesus, you'll never stop trying to find him, but you'll also have a feeling every so often that he's already found you, and abides within you whether or not you're fully aware of him."

Friends, this is my story, but I daresay it's also everybody's story one way or another.

...

In a week or so we will be recalling Jesus's trial, crucifixion and then his death on the cross. After all that, of course, his re-emergence from the tomb. We will imagine we are there, do our best to picture that most important event in our mind's eye. This is a necessary part of being a Christian. But friends, we also serve a living savior. Something happened on the cross, something happened on that third day, but also, something is still happening. It's not past tense, it isn't just a childhood memory. He's alive, and lives in us and all creation even though at times he seems far away. Whether we are 8 or 80 we must remember this.

Peace

John Wagner

Holy Week at First UMC

Maundy Thursday, April 14 -- 7 pm service in the sanctuary and online at ***Worship on the Web***.

Good Friday, April 15 -- 7 pm in person community service at Faith United Church

Saturday, April 16 -- 12:00 - 2:00 pm Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Sunday, April 17

8:00 - 9:00 am - Come and Go Communion in the Sanctuary

9:00 am -- Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall

10:30 am -- Traditional worship in the Sanctuary and online at

Worship on the Web



Music and Worship Notes by Mary Ellen Clinard

The Ways We Worship in 2022

Dare I say it? The pandemic is mostly behind us now barring any new variants or emergencies. Once we were scrambling to figure out how to effectively continue to worship together, then we found a steady rhythm, and now we find ourselves in a whole new world! We have come out of this experience with new skills and a realization that our “temporary” ways of pandemic worship actually have greater benefits and broader possibilities than we ever imagined!

In a worldwide survey conducted by *re:worship*, a Canadian blog for worship planners and leaders, almost 70% of congregations reported positive/very positive responses to online worship. The majority of churches who had not been online pre-COVID, were planning to continue an online worship presence into the future.

So—God is doing a new thing with us! We must begin to look at ways to engage both our online and in-person congregations for worship.

In your bulletin (available in person AND online!!), you may have noticed a new statistic listed. This will help us understand that all our worshippers are not in the sanctuary on Sunday morning. A recent example is March 20:

In person	106
Vimeo (livestreaming and video)	68
Facebook	41
TOTAL	214

These numbers reflect how many “hits” or devices that connected to our worship service on Sunday and through the following week. As you look at these numbers each week, we want to remember that these aren’t only numbers, but real PEOPLE and families. These are people who have maybe “accidentally” found us on the website, or are unable to come to church that morning, are part of our church family in another country, or are even worshipping with us later in the week. We need to seek out ways to connect them all to our church community.

We can’t always see the names of the people worshipping remotely, but we are able to see statistics on how many devices are worshipping. Typically we multiply that number by 1.7 to account for the possibility that more than one person is worshipping per device..a couple or family worshipping together, for example, on their computer or TV or phone. Every one of you probably knows someone that watches our service online each week.

As we launch into this “new thing”, we will be looking at ways to better connect with those who are worshipping remotely and exploring techniques to make the experience more interactive for them while not diluting or compromising our in-person worship experience. Be in prayer for ways that you can help your church move in this new direction!

A Note from our New Associate Pastor, Daniel Cardenas

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” Acts 13:2

“Set apart for me ...”

What is this text telling us?

First, God calls upon us to do his work in the world and to let our hands and feet become an extension of His mercy and His glory for the sake of the Gospel. God wants everybody to participate in His Kingdom by giving, doing and praying. We are to be agents of a change that will reach the darkest parts of our society. God often speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, and in this passage from Acts the Holy Spirit chose Barnabas and Saul (soon to be renamed “Paul”) to be the voice of justice, love and righteousness.

Secondly, this passage is teaching us to be prepared to do God’s will. Paul and Barnabas were ready because they had studied the Roman world, but beyond that, they were always in close communion with God and had been working steadily in the newly formed church. The text says *“they were worshiping the Lord and fasting.”* These guys did not stay on the shore - they swam out into deep waters. This way they maintained a close relationship with Jesus.

The result was that God created a chance for them to participate fully in His work and His Kingdom – a Kingdom where everybody has a purpose. None of us has an excuse. We must stop resisting God’s calling. We must work together, step by step, doing our best to fulfill the will of God for our lives and become agents of His great love.

But that is still not enough. We need to seek His face, pray for the His Kingdom to come, read His Holy Word and ask for advice from fellow Christians in order to reach our community, our neighbors and our families. We need good intentions, but we also need to be as ready as Paul and Barnabas.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9

God bless you,

Daniel Cardenas



Pastors John Wagner, Herman Emmert and Daniel Cardenas when Daniel was a student intern at our church in 2017. He is now the newest member of our staff. He and his wife Anahi arrived on March 15 from Mexico.



2022 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

CLARK-JONES TRIO

Celtic Music is not just for St. Patrick's Day! Come and enjoy a "wee bit o' spring" with this celtic/folk trio.

Friday, April 1

@ Noon

First UMC - Middletown

Free Admission

masks encouraged, not required



United Women in Faith



United Methodist Women or United Women in Faith—We will answer to either! We have a new name and a new logo, but our mission remains the same—Love in Action. Here at First, we have three circles which comprise our unit. The Hope Circle and the Elizabeth Circle meet on the third Sat of each month. Hope Circle meets at the Bob Evans at 9 am and Elizabeth Circle meets at the church at 10 am. The ladies of the Mary-Deborah Circle don't meet as often but are still active. If you're not already involved but want to know more, ask any leader or join us at a Sat. meeting. You'll be welcomed! Here are the leading ladies (if you will) for our unit. Feel free to ask them (or any other UMW lady you know) questions.

President—Tammy White

Vice President—Debbie Taylor

Treasurer—Susan Beagle

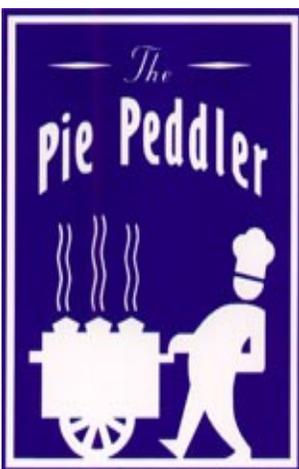
Secretary—Barb Orth

PR—Barb Hoffman

Membership/Spiritual Growth—Karen Cooper

Hope Circle—Mary Ellen Clinard

Elizabeth Circle—Pam Fugett



The UMW is conducting a fundraiser to replace our flower sale. Yes, you can still get \$25 Berns Gift Cards from any member, but Berns is no longer offering plants/flowers for fundraising. SOOOOO, everybody loves pie, right?! Well, everybody knows somebody who loves pie. We have partnered with The Pie Peddler to offer several kinds of pie. The pies are made from scratch, fresh baked, and never frozen. **All the details are on the order form on the back page.** Fill it out and return it, along with your payment, to any UMW member. Pick Mom's favorite flavor and treat her for Mother's Day! **All orders must be received by Sunday April 24. The pies will be available for pick up on Sat. May 7 and Sun. May 8.**

Mission Moment

An update from Dr. Les and Debbie Dornon, missionaries to Nepal working in the Tansen Hospital



We are so happy that our covid isolation ward is empty – and that we have had no positive test results for the last 3 – 5 days! We are thankful that people continue to receive vaccinations and that they feel free again to come to the hospital for many issues which were neglected over the past couple of years.

However – there are still lingering problems following the pandemic and the lockdown.

Recently, a young man named Dil came to our hospital. He was in his mid-30s with a wife and son. He had a good job as a security guard until he came down with Covid. On top of that, he was also a diabetic. Dil lost his job, and his wife also lost hers due to her husband being Covid+. As the days and weeks went by, even though Dil recovered from Covid, the family became more and more destitute and lost their place to stay in town.

They had to move back to the village, but there were problems as there wasn't enough land for the sons to divide to live on. In the midst of this, Dil's diabetes was not cared for, and he got a bad infection in his foot. Eventually, he was brought to Tansen hospital, and he ended up losing 2 toes and being treated for a bad infection.

While at the hospital, Dil and his family were prayed for and encouraged. They were very thankful for the care they received, and also for the charity* given so that they didn't have to go into more debt as they couldn't afford to pay for his treatment.

Eventually, Dil was released back to the village, but one night, he had trouble breathing. His wife phoned to the hospital in a panic, and was told to bring him to the ER. However – in the night, she was unable to get anyone to carry him down to the main road where they would have had to try to get a vehicle up to Tansen. He didn't survive.

Life remains hard in the hills around Tansen. We can only speculate that his Covid infection somehow damaged his lungs, and he just wasn't strong enough to be able to continue breathing. His wife again phoned to our pastoral care staff at the hospital to express her thanks for the love and care received from Tansen hospital. We pray that the seeds planted in her and her son will someday bear fruit.

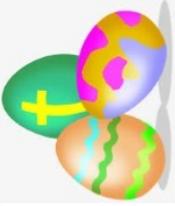
*This is money that comes from overseas to help the poorest patients get treatment at our hospital. We are so thankful for many of you who have contributed. There is an advance number through Global Ministries – 13421A Tansen Mission Hospital.

Want more stories and photos? Check out our blog at
dornonnepalmission.wordpress.com.



April 2022



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Dates to remember in May: May 1—Native American Ministries Sunday May 7—UMW Pie Pick up May 8—Mother's Day May 30—Memorial Day OFFICE CLOSED</p>					<p>1 First Friday Concert: -Clark-Jones Trio</p>	<p>2 Sharyn Edelen 6 Dave Balsmeyer 12 JC Shew 13 Betty Risner 15 Anita Shew 16 Sandy Yaple 20 Elois Duff 25 Sue Moore 25 Debbie Taylor 26 Don Beasley 29 Bob Duffey</p>
<p>3 COMMUNION SUNDAY 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship</p>	<p>4 8:30 am Breakfast Club</p>	<p>5 2 pm Pantry</p>	<p>6 10 am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrl</p>	<p>7 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study</p>	<p>8 10 am UMW Brd. Mtg.</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>10 PALM SUNDAY 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship</p>	<p>11 8:30 am Breakfast Club</p>	<p>12 1 pm SPRC meeting 2 pm Pantry</p>	<p>13 10 am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir</p>	<p>14 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study 7 pm Maundy Thursday Service</p>	<p>15 GOOD FRIDAY OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p>16 9 am Hope Circle - Bob Evans 9 am Elizabeth Circle 12 Easter Egg Hunt</p>
<p>17 EASTER SUNDAY 8 am Communion 9 am Breakfast n the Fellowship Hall 10:30 am Worship</p>	<p>18 8:30 am Breakfast Club</p>	<p>19 2 pm Pantry 5:30 pm Finance Mtg 6:00 pm Council</p>	<p>20 10 am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir</p>	<p>21 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study</p>	<p>22 AMBASSADOR articles due</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>24 9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship</p>	<p>25 8:30 am Breakfast Club</p>	<p>26 2 pm Pantry 6:30 pm Trustees Mtg</p>	<p>27 10 am Son Reflectors Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir</p>	<p>28 6 pm Sonshine Bible Study</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>

UMW Pie Peddler Order Form

Order Deadline: Sunday April 24, 2022

Pies Available for pick up May 7th and May 8th

Pies are made from scratch, fresh baked, never frozen, and ready to eat!

Pies are 9" in diameter. Pick up will be here at the church.

\$10.00 Fruit /Cream Pies

Apple _____ Dutch Apple # _____ Cherry # _____ Blueberry # _____

Chocolate Cream # _____ Coconut Cream # _____ Lemon Meringue # _____

Total Fruit/Cream Pies _____ x \$10.00 \$ _____

\$11.00 Pecan Pie # _____

Total Pecan Pies _____ x \$11.00 \$ _____

TOTAL DUE: \$ _____

Payment must accompany order. If you are mailing your order, please make sure it will be received before the deadline above. Please make checks payable to UMW.

Name _____

Phone# _____

THANK YOU!

MIDDLETOWN
first church
a united methodist community
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