



From Pastor Mike

During this discernment process, I have been frustrated by all the misinformation out there about the future of the United Methodist Church after the General Conference meets in 2024. To hear one side tell it, the UMC will become a church full of drag queens with pastors who do not believe in the resurrection or the virgin birth. These outside voices want to divide us into conservative and progressive factions and make us choose sides.

We have no idea what will happen at the next General Conference. There is no crystal ball. Anyone who tells you otherwise is just guessing or trying to deceive you.

Life is messy and church life is no different. With thousands of UMC churches and pastors in the USA, it is easy to find a dozen provocative situations and blast them to the world as if the actions of a few are standard behaviors of the people called United Methodists. Follow that up by dangling the carrot of disaffiliation and you will find a receptive audience.

I trust you to wade through the information and figure it out for yourselves. You have proven to be more than capable of that, and I am thankful for how this body of Christ has handled the process to this point.

I believe the results of the straw poll taken on Sunday, February 19 show that we are not of one mind on the question of disaffiliation. Pro-disaffiliation votes were 55%. A church-wide vote of professing members will require a minimum of 66.67% of the total votes.

Despite my appeal to stop this process and acknowledge that we are not of one mind and begin the healing process, church leadership voted at its February 23rd meeting to move forward with a Church Conference (*date to be determined*) for an official vote. I pray that we will continue to behave in a manner that is appropriate for people who are called by Christ to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... [and] Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 13:30-31)

Now I have a request for you. It will take 30 minutes of your time. Can you do that?

Please watch our Bishop, Sue Hauptert-Johnson, give a frank assessment of the disaffiliation process in this video <https://youtu.be/ti8qwVJ-hZo>. She breaks this down in a way that is easy for everyone to follow. She addresses some of the predictions the WCA shares in its town hall meetings. And she stands up to the denomination's most vocal critics.

The UMC has its share of problems and dysfunction. No denomination is perfect. All congregations have challenges. But I do believe that the UMC is a place where people can try to live and work together despite our different theological leanings if we are willing.

As cliché as it sounds, I really do believe we can do a lot more together than we can apart.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mike*



Don't
Forget to
SPRING
FORWARD
on
Saturday,
March 12th

The church, a body, one and whole,
With many parts and one main goal:
To spread the love of Christ abroad,
And heal the world with hand and rod.

We are the hands and feet of Him,
Whose light shines bright and never dim,
Together we can do great things,
And to the world, Christ's love we bring.

We lift each other up in prayer,
And show each other love and care,
We bear each other's burdens too,
And help each other make it through.

Though times are tough and trials may come,
We stand together, not as some,
But as a body, strong and sure,
With Christ as our foundation pure.

So let us be the hands and feet,
Of Christ our Lord, so kind and sweet,
And work together, heart and soul,
To make His love our only goal.

(If curious, please ask Cindy Sheets how this poem was created.)

Upcoming Events at New Hope UMC

March 2023

- Monday, March 6th at 6:30pm ~ Circle of Hope
Tuesday, March 7th at 6:30pm ~ Sisters of Faith
Monday, March 13th at 6:30pm ~ Circle of Love
Thursday, March 16th at 6:30pm ~ Circle of Hope will serve meal to the United Methodist Men
Thursday, March 23rd at 6:30pm ~ Church Council Meeting
Friday, April 7 at 7:00pm ~ Community Good Friday Service at Mt. Horeb



Skunk on the Table

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson throws the 'Skunk On The Table' and talks about disaffiliation in Virginia. Skunk on the Table is a video, podcast and article series focused on sharing simple and clear topics of interest to the conference and denomination.

Please use the following link if you would like to view this video from the VAUMC on Youtube.

<https://youtu.be/ti8qwVJ-hZo>



The following are the minutes from the **FEBRUARY** meeting of the Church Council.

The minutes are available to help the entire church family *stay in the know* about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

Church Council Meeting Minutes - February 23, 2022

Present: Kevin Armstrong, Becky Breeding, Bianca Brensinger, Mitch Brensinger, Samantha Brensinger, Andy Breeding, Alicia Copeland, Robin Craun, Cindy Deavers, Phyllis Fretwell, Wanda Harding, Linda Howdyshell, Nathan Kutz, Bill Lalla, Kim Maugans, Pastor Mike, Bruce Rogers, Cindy Sheets, Jennifer Strother, Jim Strother, Dallas VanLear, Pam VanLear, and Karen Whitmer.

The meeting was called to order by chairperson Dallas Van Lear. And Jennifer Strother read a devotion from Where He Leads Me.

The minutes from the January meeting were accepted as distributed.

Finance Report: *(Kevin Armstrong reported)*

- Kevin stated that we still need a volunteer to do the church audit. And then Mitch Brensinger said that he would do it.
- We made an apportionment payment last month. So far we have taken in about \$18,000 this year.
- Kevin proposed that we paid the full amount that we owe in District Apportionments for 2023, that amount is \$2,640. And then we will see what we have in the coming months to pay for any conference apportionments.

Treasurer: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- As of February 21st, we have \$24,995 in the bank, and payroll has not been taken out for February yet.

- The bills have been paid to date. We received no additional gas bill. The normal expenses have been paid for February: electric, water, etc. Asbury UMC, pays half of the parsonage's gas bill.

Financial Secretary: *(Robin Craun reported)*

- Nothing new to report at this time.

Trustees: *(Mitch Brensinger reported)*

- They will meet again in March.
- They are working on finding a new gas company for the church.

Pastor Mike: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- There will be no Lenten Bible Study for this year, but Mike will probably have some type of bible study after Easter.
- Mike thanked everyone for all the donations of medicines and all the prayers while they were on their trip to Cuba.
- Jennifer thanked Mike for the moving Ash Wednesday Service.

Worship Committee: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- Mike will be working to get this committee reassembled, hopefully by the end of March.

Spiritual Nurture: *(Samantha Brensinger reported)*

- They are getting ready for Easter. They will plan to have an Easter Egg Hunt for the younger kids and a Scavenger Hunt for the older kids again this year.

Evangelism: *(Nathan Kutz reported)*

- Thanked everyone for all of their donations over the months.
- In March they will be collecting toothpaste, macaroni and deodorant.
- As of the date of this meeting the donation count is as follows:
 - 134 pop tarts
 - 136 nutri grain bars
 - 12 packs of mini donuts
 - 25 pairs of socks
 - 30 cans of soup

Missions: *(Kim Maugans reported)*

- There are no upcoming mission trips planned at this time.

United Methodist Men: *(Bill Lalla reported)*

- The UMM met on February 16th, with 13 members present. They thanked Wanda and Joetta for their meal.
- They are planning some form of HOTS for November. This will be a scaled-down version of some kind. More details are to follow. It will still be on the second Saturday in November, and The Dunns will be here during that time to perform.
- 9 of the UMM, came together to help Austine move her mother into her home.
- The Fat Tuesday's Pancake Supper served 56 people, and raised \$357 in donations. Along with some additional money that they had, the UMM will give all of that money to the Verona Food Pantry.
- The UMM will serve an Easter Sunrise Breakfast with Dallas taking the lead.

United Methodist Women: *(Wanda Harding reported)*

- The Circle of Hope and the Circle of Love met on Monday, February 6th at 6:30pm, with guest speaker Larry Wills, from WRE - Weekday Religious Education. This organization is supported financially by New Hope UMC. A full report will be available in the next Hilltopper newsletter. Of note, there are 2 schools supported in our community, with 80% of children participating in WRE. Of these, 60% of these families are not involved in any church. Through WRE, children, and their families are being served and educated in God's love.

Staff Parish Relations: *(Andy Breeding reported)*

- Nothing new to report at this time.

Membership: *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

- Membership status has been verified for professing members.
- It was stated that there are between 320-330 official members.
- There are 4 members of our church, who became members on December 24, 2006, under Rev. Gunsalus, but were not documented at the time. These four members will need to be added to the verified professing members list.
- Karen Whitmer has hard copies of all recent and pertinent membership data.
- There will be further effort to get all of this membership data on some type of user friendly database in the future.

Lay Leader: *(Jennifer Strother reported)*

- Jennifer has not yet received any information on any upcoming laity training.
- She stated that she would like to see us work to get the members back who haven't come back since Covid. How we could help them to come back to New Hope UMC.

Communications: *(Cindy Sheets reported)*

- Nothing new to report at this time.

Youth: *(Bianca Brensinger reported)*

- The youth will start selling Peanut Butter Easter Eggs in the coming weeks. This Sunday, Bianca will make an announcement with additional information.

Continued Business:

- The Straw Poll results were 55% / 45%. We are a divided church, with a slight majority wanting to disaffiliate.
- What we need to do after the Straw Poll: Jennifer Strother notified the District Superintendent, D.S. Victor Gomez, and he sent us the next steps.

Jennifer read the following information from the D.S:

- We will need to provide the names of our Trustees and the name of our Attorney to the D.S.
- D.S. Gomez sent us our Taylor Disaffiliation Number (TDN). This number is just a bare minimum to give us an idea of the cost of leaving the United Methodist Church. This number does not include: (1). Any grants that we will need to pay back, (2). We will need to pay for the cost of the UMC's attorney fees, and the costs for our own attorney fees, (3). And we will need to pay for the housing and salary of any appointed clergy - through their appointed period.
- New Hope UMC's Taylor Disaffiliation Number is: \$134,158.
- This TDN is locked in for 12 months, once we decide and let the D.S. know that we are moving forward with disaffiliating.
- This amount will need to be paid by the end of 2023.
- We will need to have all deeds and records available.
- We could stop or pause the disaffiliation process at any time.
- As of now, 2023 is when this process sunsets.

- To officially disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, we would need to have a final vote with a result of 66% + 1 vote, of professing members, who are present on the day of the vote.

- Much discussion was had by the group present. Questions were asked and answered. Statements were made. Opinions were shared.
 - After about an hour, Kim Maugans made a motion for the church council to move forward with deciding on whether or not to hold a final vote (of professing members) for disaffiliating from the United Methodist Church. Mitch seconded the motion.

 - Chairperson Dallas VanLear, stated and summarized what the council was to vote on for clarification, and the vote was held by only members of the church council. The motion passed 11-4.

- Therefore, we will move forward with a final vote, of professing members, to decide whether or not to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. The date for this final vote will be determined at the next church council meeting in March.

Dallas Van Lear ended the meeting by thanking us for coming. Kim Maugans prayed and the meeting ended at 8:06pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Cynthia Sheets
Recording Secretary

*The next church council meeting will be
Thursday, March 23, 2023*



Collections for March

We need your help!

WHAT: Donations of Macaroni, Toothpaste, & Deodorant



WHEN: The entire month of March

WHERE: Place donations in the marked tubs in the Narthex.

WHO: Helping people in our local communities, through

local agencies, such as: the Verona Food Pantry, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, the Valley Mission, and Open Doors Shelter in Harrisonburg.

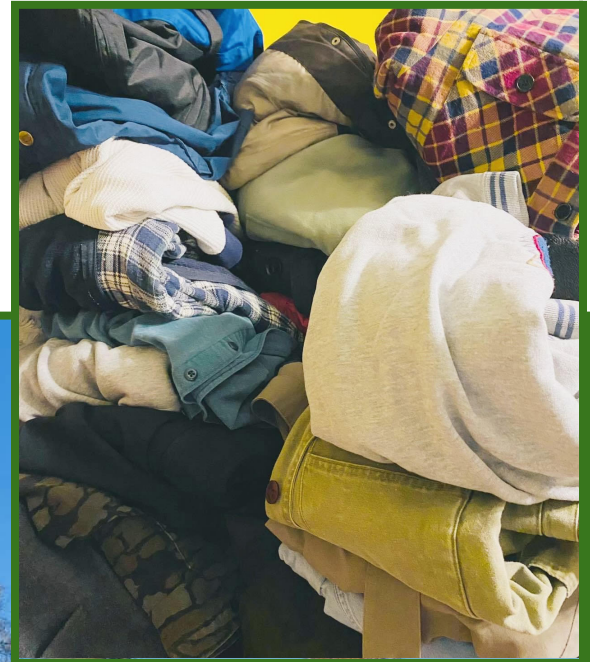


WHY: To help others in need in New Hope, and the surrounding areas.

QUESTIONS: Contact Cheryl and Nathan Kutz.



Donations From Past Months



WEEKDAY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (WRE)



On Monday, February 6, 2023, the circles of Hope and Love met in the social hall with guest speaker, Larry Wills from the Northern Augusta County region for WRE.

Mr. Wills indicated WRE is serving its 92nd year in Northern Augusta County involving schools of Clymore and Cassell. There are approximately 1000 students participating in the program (80% of children) for grades k-5. These are children and their parents who do not attend church regularly.

The expenses last year exceeded the received donations however due to previous years they are financially stable. Each year the graduating 5th graders who have participated

in the program receive their own bibles (approximately 200 given each year) which the Houff Foundation has generously purchased. Cost from early years of \$6 is now \$18 per bible. The entire budget (currently \$82,000) which supports teacher salaries, bus drivers, substitutes, and supplies is from donations and fundraisers. Two years due to covid pandemic the spring concerts have been canceled. This year concerts are scheduled for April 16 at Ft. Defiance and April 20 at Cassell. These concerts have generated \$3,000 to \$4,000 income. Please mark your calendars now. Last year the Mustang Club raised and donated \$6,000 for WRE. Currently there are 28 churches contributing.

A representative is requested from each church for 2 meetings a year at Verona UMC (April 2 at 7 pm and September 25 at 7 pm). Also the Faithful Men fundraiser concert is scheduled at Verona UMC for the third Sunday in October (Oct 15) which last year raised \$4,500 for WRE. Again mark your calendars now.

We are in need of WRE representative for New Hope UMC.

Calendar Dates for 2023 for WRE

April 2nd at 7pm - WRE representative meeting at Verona UMC

April 16th - Ft. Defiance Children's Concert

April 20th - Cassell Children's Concert

September 25th at 7pm - WRE representative meeting at Verona UMC

October 15th - Faithful Men concert at Verona UMC (fundraiser for WRE)

Larry Wills Email: ljnew@aol.com.

Weekday Religious Education

P.O. Box 782 Verona, Va 24482



03-06-2015

I'VE HAD A FULL LIFE ... YOU MIGHT WANT TO GIVE ME ANOTHER GO-AROUND

St. Patrick Day Funnies

Why did the leprechaun go outside?

To sit on his paddy-o

What type of bow cannot be tied?

A rainbow

What do you call a fake Irish diamond?

A shamrock

When is an Irish Potato not an Irish Potato?

When it's a French Fry

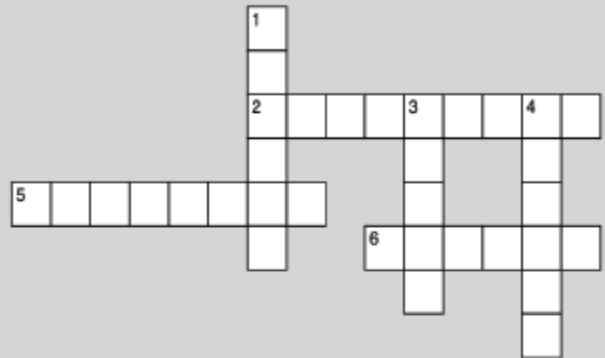
Why do people wear shamrocks on St. Patrick's Day?

Because real rocks are too heavy

How old are leprechauns?

So old that they can remember when rainbows were black and white

CrossWORD



Abram Inherits Canaan

Genesis 13

Across

- 2) One of the things Abram was rich in.
- 5) Abram's and Lot's had strife between them.
- 6) The plain that Lot chose.

Down

- 1) "And there Abram ____ on the name of the Lord."
- 3) Lot pitched his tent to
- 4) Where Abram dwelt.

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New Hope United Methodist Church – United Methodist Men (UMM)

Minutes from the meeting on February 16, 2023

The meeting was conducted by President Bill Lalla. There were 13 members present: Mitch Brensinger, Darryl Deavers, Jarman Fretwell, Kenny Fretwell, Jeff Hitt, Corey Johnson, Bill Lalla, Kim Maugans, Bruce Rogers, Jim Strothers, Dallas Vanlear, Jack Walker and Lewis Whitmer. Devotions were provided by Kim Maugans. The meal was prepared and served by Wanda Harding, with assistance from JoEtta Walker.



PROGRAM: There was no scheduled program.

MINUTES: The minutes for the last scheduled meeting on January 19, 2023 were presented by Bruce Rogers. There being no questions, the minutes were approved as submitted.

TREASURER'S REPORT: The Treasurer's Report was given by Kenny Fretwell. It included a monthly report for February 2023. It includes all expenses and revenue since our last meeting. A copy of his report is part of these minutes.

Checking: \$ 5,272.46 + Savings: \$ 2,224.60 = **Total: \$ 7,497.06**

OLD BUSINESS:

- The Revenue Committee of Kim Maugans, Bill Lalla and Darryl Deavers has met and discussed the possibility of having some form of HOTS in the Fall of 2023. The Committee discussed how we might scale back the HOTS supper from previous years. Possibly deleting ham and reducing what we serve. Current price for oysters from Bevans is \$100/gallon. This is only a guide to what future oyster prices might be in the Fall. Suggestions for the Committee to consider should be presented directly to a member of the Committee. HOTS can only be considered if we have the support of the entire church. A motion was made (Kim Maugans/Mitch Brensinger) and approved to continue with the planning process to have HOTS on November 11, 2023. The Committee will continue with planning for that date.
- The Budget Committee has not met.
- UMM is sponsoring a Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper on Tuesday, February 21, 2023.
- UMM is sponsoring a Sunrise Service Breakfast on Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023, immediately following the Sunrise Service conducted by Pastor Mike.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Austine Belsky asked UMM to assist with relocating her mother to Austine's home on February 18.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned after a prayer by Bill Lalla.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 16, Dallas VanLear has devotions.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by Bruce Rogers, Secretary.

Change

I remember being told many times throughout my life that the only constant is change. This has definitely played out more times than I can count throughout my life. Change is something we all experience at some time or another in our lives. Change can be hard. Change can be good. Change can lead us in directions that we never thought we would take. Change can make us better. Change can make us humble. Change can determine our next direction. Change can break us. Change can build us back up. Change can cause worry. Change can cause stress. Change transforms us. However, no matter what the change is we face we must trust God through it all.

I never thought I would be where I am today, at least not at this stage in my life. I never thought I would be an adjunct professor at a local university, supervising future teachers helping to mold and shape them to have a fulfilling career like I did in the classroom. I never thought I would go through a divorce experience. I never thought I would deal with bouts of depression when all my life I've been positive and happy. I never thought I would find someone to love my broken self with baggage and now I'm happily married experiencing love that I never knew existed. I always thought I was destined for two kids and now here I am with the third blessing in my life to complete our family. I never thought I would be part of a donation ministry that has provided hundreds of pounds of food and supplies to local shelters for those in times of desperate need. I never thought I would ever get to the point in my life where I needed God more than anything...on my knees asking him to let go and take it all because I knew he was the only one that could get me through some of the difficulties and changes I was facing.

We all face change...I'm sure if you reflect back on your life you too have experienced a lot of change. How did you feel facing it? Going through it? On the other side of it?

"Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast



well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him." (John 4:5-7, 9-26, 28-30 KJV)

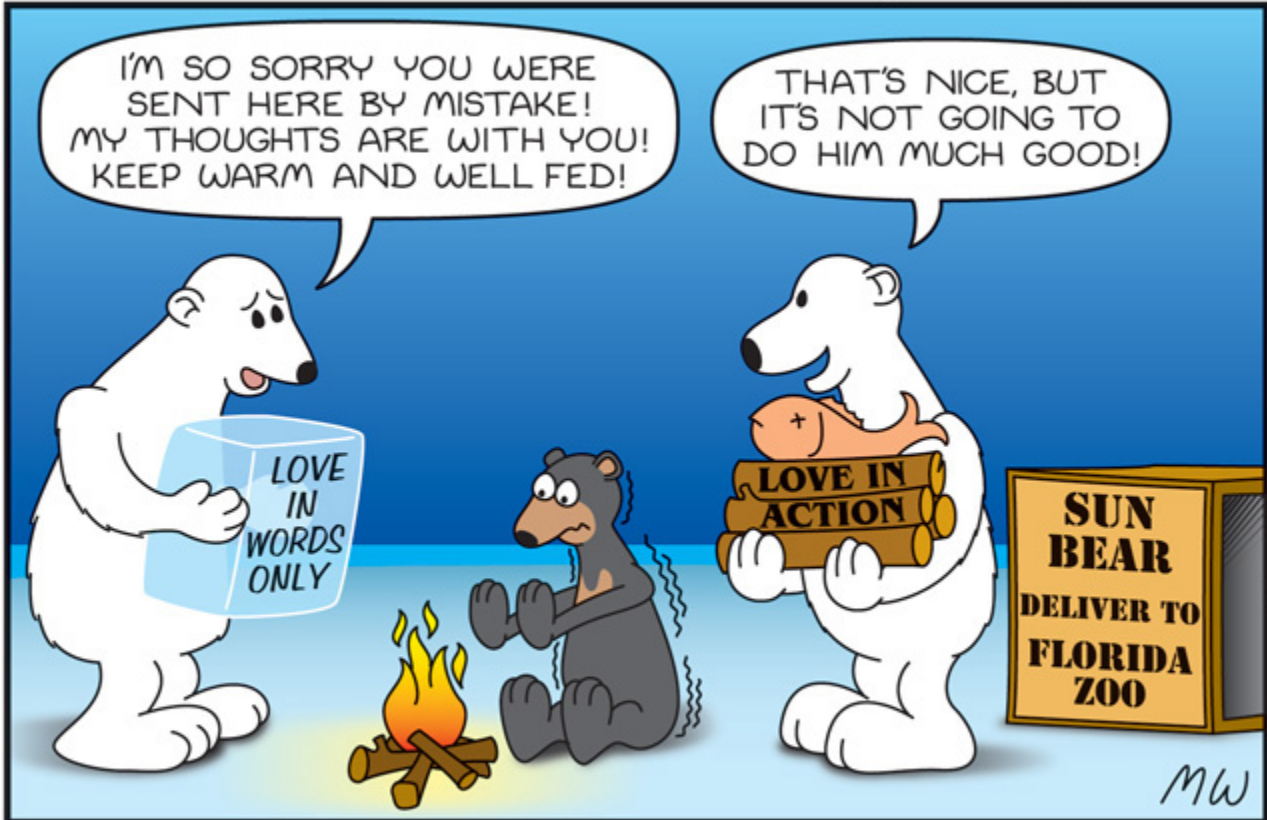
The story of the woman at the well shows change in someone who was viewed as tainted. She didn't feel worthy to even hold her head up. She was ashamed. Yet here was Jesus willing to see her for who she was. After she encountered him at the well, she was a changed woman. She transformed into an evangelist showing others the way to the Lord for the rest of her life.

Just like the woman of Samaria, I believe all the changes in my life led me to who I am today. To whom I'm supposed to be in God's story line. Looking back I'm thankful for all of those changes no matter how difficult and heart wrenching they were at the time. Without them I would not have been able to transform, to grow, to live this amazing life I am. I trusted God in the process through all the changes. He saw me through, he led me, he guided me, he caught me, he held me, and he loved me through it all. God will do the same for you through any and all changes you face. Trust him, lean on him. Let go and let God. Amen.

Thank you and we pray that all of you are blessed, Cheryl & Nathan Kutz

POLAR BEARS

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



www.joyfultoons.com © 2014 Michael D. Waters

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. - 1 JOHN 3:18 NIV

If you would like to add an article or announcement to the Hilltopper, please contact us! Call/Text: (540) 280-1860 or NewHopeUMC.Virginia@gmail.com

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