

The Hilltopper



July 2021

From Pastor Mike

Happy Fourth of July everyone!

I hope you will get a chance to celebrate Independence Day with picnics and fireworks (after attending or watching our Sunday worship service on July 4th). If you are reading this after July 4th, I hope you were able to do all those things. This July 4th feels a little more “normal” this year.

Of course, that begs the question, “What is normal?” This is a question that I have been pondering for a while.

Does normal even exist? Is the “norm” the same for everyone?

These are just some of the questions that I think about from time to time. We want our lives never to change, we always want to be happy, we all want life to be relatively easy, but the truth is, it probably is not. Many times, in life we often find ourselves in a “new” normal.

Like when it comes to my life, Susan and I have been married for almost 37 years. We have raised two wonderful girls. Over that time, we have watched them grow into smart young women. Our oldest daughter, Michelle, teaches art at Langley High School in Fairfax County. Our youngest daughter, Rachel, is a special education teacher at Massaponax High School in Spotsylvania County.

For the first two decades of their lives, they were part of our normal daily routine, and now they are not. One of the unexpected blessings when Susan and I served churches in King George County from 2012-19 was that we lived close enough to our daughters to see them regularly. Yes, I still think about both daily, and we text each other most days but that normal has changed.

Rachel and Michelle recently came to visit us for the first time since the pandemic shut things down. It was wonderful to have them in church with us on the last Sunday in June. After they left Susan and I must have said to each other several times, “It sure is quiet in the house without the girls.” It was great spending time with them and remembering the joy and hard work of raising them into the fine young people they have become. But now we are back to the new normal.

Susan and I have also experienced the death of our fathers during the pandemic. It is a new normal getting used to life without them in the world. I miss being able to pick up the phone or drive the two hours to visit my dad.

“Normal” is always changing – sometimes slow, sometimes fast, sometimes unexpected.

When it comes to “normal” this is a problem for me because I really don’t know what “normal” is because something happens every day of my life that changes the norm. Like when Covid-19 hit, we were asked to quarantine, giving us a new “normal.”

Now, as a church, we are working to find a “new” normal. We are working hard to reestablish what has been lost since March 2020. The first step was to adjust our face masking policy to align with the latest CDC recommendations. Bibles and hymnals are also back in the pews. This week a group met to walk through our plan to begin serving Holy Communion again. We are working on VBS with safety measures. Sunday school for adults and children is under review. And we continue to pray that a COVID variant does not cause a spike in infections and hospitalizations.

I still really do not know what normal is. And honestly, yes, I would love to hold my children in my arms again like when they were babies. I cherish every memory I have of their milestones in life. And when our daughters pulled out of the driveway after their visit, I was wishing they were closer by so I could see them more often. But that is the way life is and we are always adapting to those changes.

Defining normal for me is difficult, and I know that many of you struggled with all the disruptions and struggles during this time of COVID. Even though we have been worshiping in person and online for a year now, we do not truly know what “normal” will look like but one thing I do know is that it will not be the same.

My prayer is that we will come away from the challenges of the pandemic as a stronger body of Christ. So, let us remember Paul’s words to “keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9).

Yours in Christ.

Pastor Mike



Plan now to join us for United Methodist Men’s Sunday on July 11th.

The men of the church will conduct the service, including a musical presentation by the Men's Chorus.

Everyone is invited to attend this special service!





The following are the minutes from the **JUNE** meeting of the Church Council. The minutes are available for you to help the entire church family Stay In The Know about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

Church Council Meeting Minutes - June 24, 2021

Present: Kevin Armstrong, Alicia Copeland, Robin Craun, Cindy Deavers, Wanda Harding, Nathan Kutz, Pastor Mike, Bruce Rogers, Cindy Sheets, Jennifer Strother, Dallas VanLear and Karen Whitmer.

The meeting was called to order by chairman Dallas VanLear, with devotions and prayer read by Bruce Rogers.

The minutes from the May meeting were accepted as distributed.

Finance Report: *(Kevin Armstrong)*

~ Kevin thanked Wanda and Karen W. for continuing to do the counting of the tithes and offerings during this past 18 months.

~ Kevin needs the 2022 budgets from each committee chairperson by August 1st.

~ There has been a slight dip in our tithes and donations, but this usually occurs during the summertime.

~ Kevin recommends that we make our apportionments as usual.

Treasurer's Report: *(Cindy Deavers)*

~ The premium on the insurance for the property and liability on the church increased \$455 over last year's premium cost. But, the worker's comp went down to \$32. We have not received the new policy documents at this point. The renewal date is July 1, 2021. The Trustees may want to contact our Weaver's Insurance agent for more information. (We have been with Weaver's Insurance for 3 years.)

~ The apportionments are being paid monthly at the recommended amount. However, everything that is being sent for Priority #2 is being applied to Priority #1, until Priority #1 is paid at 100%. Then after that, everything will be applied to Priority #2.

~ We are good on the bills and making payroll as usual this month.

Trustees: *(Pastor Mike)*

~ The Trustees meet on Thursday, July 8, 2021.

Pastor's Report: *(Pastor Mike)*

~ The Healthy Church Team (PRG) meets on Wednesday, June 30th at 6:30pm. We are in discussions on how to safely move forward with reopening Sunday School and children's ministry.

The Children's ministries will be the most difficult to reinstate, because the kids have not had a chance to get vaccinated yet. We probably won't have Children's Sunday School back until at least August or September at the earliest, because this will be the most difficult area to restart.

~ We will be working on a plan to bring back Holy Communion on July 4th, 2021 - the first time since the pandemic shut us down in March 2020.

Worship: *(Alicia Copeland)*

~ Austine will be back on Sunday, July 11th, 2021 as our pianist.

Spiritual Nurturing: *(Report from Samantha Brensinger)*

~ We have been working on VBS and we have 4 chairs to help organize and points of contact.

Martha Fretwell – point of contact for volunteers. I know she has asked many already and I am excited to hear of all those who are willing to volunteer their time and talents.

Sandy Wyrick – She is helping put together recreational games, along with overall organization of VBS.

Jennifer Strother- Jennifer has been asked to put the story for VBS together this year. We will not be using a guided VBS this year but decided to pull on talent we have at New Hope to create our shortened version.

Samantha Brensinger- Helping organize all areas of VBS, registration of the participants, and monitoring safety and regulations for COVID.

We have the dates set, there is a google form set for online registrations and paper registration forms will be available soon. We were originally going to have Smiley's ice cream truck come on Sunday for the picnic after the service, but they were not available so Martha through a church member found another ice cream truck that will be here for the kids to pick ice cream from.

Working on putting a list together for items we will need for VBS, food, decorations, or materials that everyone can review and if they would like to donate.

We are also asking for school supplies for the packs we will be giving out on Sunday at the Picnic, that list will also be available soon.

Youth: *(Report from Bianca Brensinger)*

~ We were wondering if we could possibly take the youth bowling in Staunton or Harrisonburg. As restrictions start to lift, we want to get the youth back together and a day at the bowling alley might be a fun way to start to bring them back together as a group and rebuild some lost connections. We would looking to do this after VBS as we are hoping some of the youth will also be involved in either being a participant or volunteer for one or all 3 days.

Evangelism: *(Nathan Kutz)*

~ Working on creating *Welcome Baskets*, to send to people and reconnect with them, letting them know that we are here and that we care.

~ Cindy Deavers stated that there is \$250 in the Evangelism Fund and there is also \$300 in the Gifts and Memorial Fund designated for Evangelism.

United Methodist Men: *(Bruce Rogers)*

~ The UMM had a Work Morning recently, and got alot of outside work around the church completed.

~ July 11th is United Methodist Men's Sunday, the Men's Chorus will sing accompanied by Brain Stout; and they will hold practice on July 4th after the service and on July 11th before the service. Helen Morse is working with them to help them prepare.

United Methodist Women: *(Wanda Harding)*

~ On August 15th, at the Rockingham County Fair there will be a reopening of Christian Music Night, tickets are \$20.

Lay Leader: *(Jennifer Strother)*

~ Thanked those who filled in for her while she was guest preaching at other churches over the past few weeks.

~ There are 7 packs of hot dog buns donated for the Vacation Bible School picnic for the UMM to use.

~ Praise in the Park restarts in Gypsy Hill Park.

~ Looking forward to Sunday School reopening asap, the GIFT class will more than likely restart with the theme of Spiritual Gifts.

~ Dale Rankin will go and pick up the items that we have purchased from Basic UMC, and the hockey table and other items will be put in the old social hall downstairs.

Communication: *(Kevin Armstrong)*

~ Kevin needs a network tester to further troubleshoot our technical issues. Bruce suggested that Jeff Hite might be able to help in this issue, as he may have the equipment and knowledge needed to help us. Kevin thinks it is a hardware problem that should be able to be easily fixed.

Unfinished Business:

~ Robin says that she has tithes and offerings counters for all Sundays covered except for the third Sundays of the month. She would also like to have an additional 2-3 people who may be interested in filling in on days that the regular counters are not available. It usually takes about 20 minutes to complete this ministry, and if anyone is interested in helping, please see Robin for more details.

~ Bruce thanked Cindy Sheets for her work on the Hilltopper.

~ Karen thanked all the doctors and nurses and for all that they do.

~ It was stated that 5 churches in our district have closed over this past year; most of whose attendance was under 10 people.

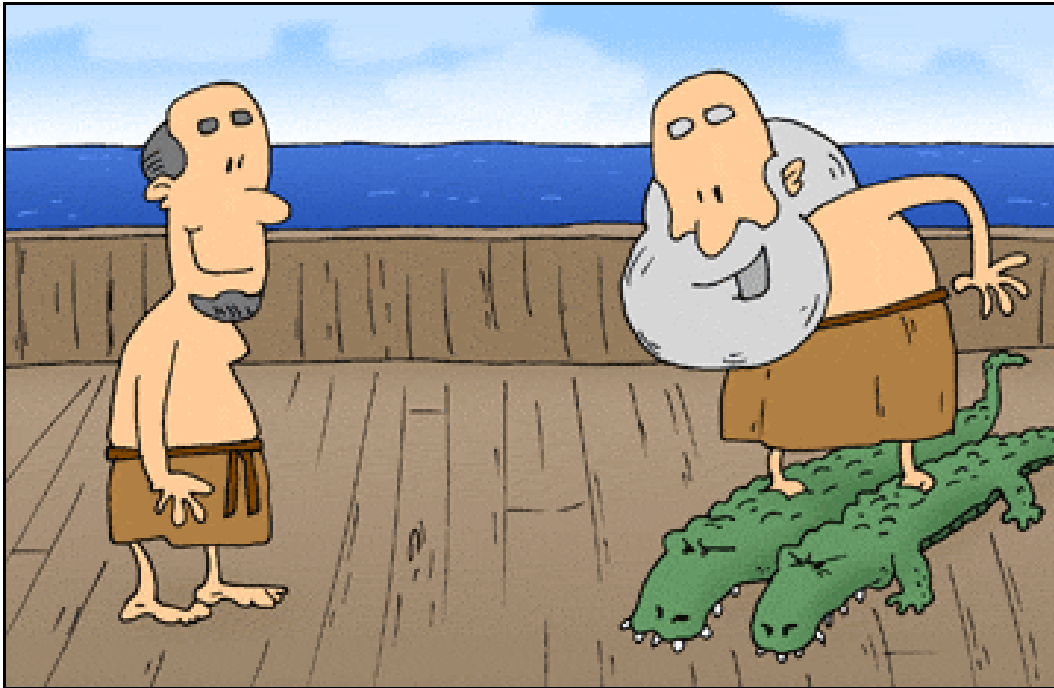
Dallas thanked everyone for their efforts over the past year. Pastor Mike sent us off with a prayer. The meeting ended at 7:14pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cynthia Sheets

Recording Secretary

The next Church Council Meeting will be on Thursday, July 22, 2021 at 6:30pm.



Thanks to Dad or Sheryl Hengeveld

07-09-2007

YOU'RE RIGHT ... THESE CROCS REALLY ARE COMFORTABLE

Why aren't there any knock-knock jokes about America?

Because

Freedom

Rings!

What do you call an American drawing?

Yankee doodle!

What did Polly the parrot want for the 4th of July?

A fire-cracker.

What do you get when you cross a dinosaur with fireworks?

Dino-mite!





Birthdays & Anniversaries


1 - Kyle VanLear

3 - Stephanie Kerley

4 - C.J. Botkin
- Suzanne Lank
- Irene Morrison

7 - Ava Funk

8 - David Shiflett
- Jeffrey Walker



9 - Barbara Greene
- William Harding
- David Layman
 Charles & Phyllis Fretwell

10 - Clara Breeding


12 - Louise McCray
- Nathan Selmon
- Natasha Ritchie
- Tuck Rogers

13 - Debbie Arnold

15 - Dakota Canipe
- Hilda Painter

15 -  Hunter & Martha Black
 Jerry & Susan Coffman

16 - Andrew Viers
- Jase Harding

17 - Theresa Humphries
 John & Helen Morse

20 - Heather Arndt

22 - Helen Stogdale

23 - Timothy Howdysshell
- Margie Selmon

26 - Cathy Lewis

27 - Becky Breeding

28 - Earl Wilberger

29 - Arlene Crist

31 - Julia Arndt
- Nancy Howdysshell

Pride and Humility

“He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14 ESV)

You know as I read this scripture this morning, I felt like Jesus was talking to me. I have felt convicted of pride here recently. I broke my foot a week and a half ago, and it has been an incredibly humbling experience. Firsthand, the Lord has shown me I have depended on myself for way too long. Proverbs 3 says “the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.” I have seen my own lack of patience, and a need in myself for so much more humility. In watching the wonderful care my wife has given me, I have learned that a lot of pride can make an ungrateful attitude. As I repent of my pride, I hope I am more like the above tax collector and not the Pharisee.

What first caught my attention was that Jesus was speaking to people who trusted in themselves and weren't what they should be to other people. The Pharisee to me is the perfect example of the modern

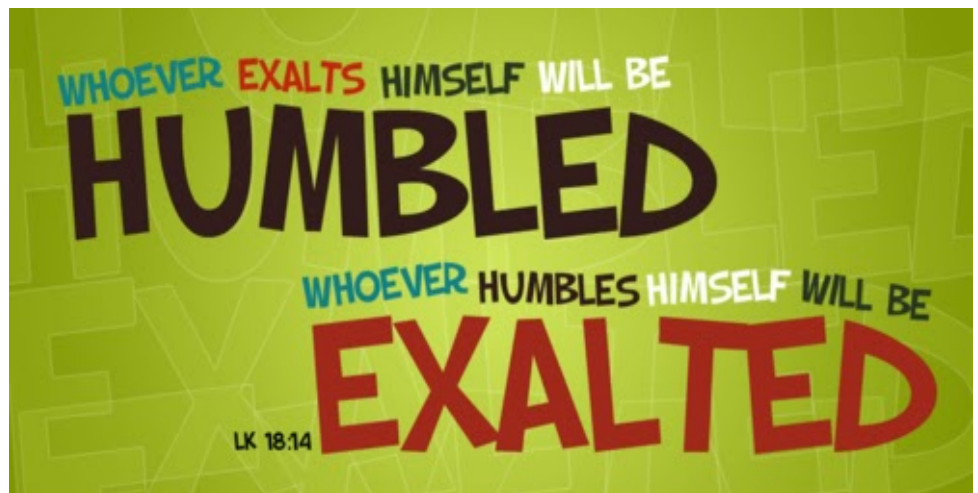
self righteous Christian today. You know, the ones who think there are wings on their back. And are also quick to point out faults of others, but don't see their own. Yes I've been one many times. In my efforts to do what I should as a child of God, many times I put so much into my work as a Christian, it makes me depend on myself and not depend on God for my salvation and for all of my needs. Maybe you know what I'm talking about? Then there is the tax collector. By his own words he calls himself a sinner. He doesn't even feel good enough to look to heaven. He knows who and what he is, and is brutally honest. And without the grace and mercy of Almighty God he is completely lost and on his way to hell. And because of his honesty and humility Jesus said he was justified. The Pharisee who thought he was perfect.. missed the mark and therefore was not justified in the eyes of God.

Human pride is one of our greatest weaknesses. The Bible says there is nobody who is good, not one. Back in the 1700's George Whitefield said that, “getting to heaven by your works is like building a ladder to the moon out of sand.” Jesus had no issue with the Holy works of the Pharisee, in fact Jesus himself said you know a tree by its fruit. But to have pride in your works is to exalt yourself rather than to exalt God. I think we all need to have moments where we remember that we ourselves came to Jesus Christ like the tax collector. And if anyone who claims to be a Christian hasn't, I recommend you do. Humility and self admission of our sin to God and accepting Jesus, his son produces the Christ like life we all need.

I hope this has been a blessing to you, I pray we all put our eyes on Jesus. “Then the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace.” If you don't know Jesus Christ I encourage you to follow in the footsteps of the tax collector.

Thank you and we pray that all of you are blessed,

Nathan & Cheryl Kutz ~ *Real Life Heavenly Hands*



Kids' Corner - The Tower of Babel

By: Sharla Guenther



The Tower of Babel

Today's story is about pride. Pride is when you think you're better than someone else. The problem with this, is that God hates pride. When we think we are better than others we also start to think we don't need God and that we can handle things on our own.

The thing is, we ALWAYS need God. He made us so that we would need Him. He wants us to depend on Him and ask Him for help. If we think that we have everything figured out and that we know it all, then we're really going our own way and turning away from God.

Just think about the last time you disobeyed your parents or you weren't nice to a friend. You put

your thoughts and feelings first and didn't care about how the other person felt. That is pride.

In this story you'll see how God handles pride and how badly he wants to stop it from happening. It all started with a King named Nimrod.

Everything was going great. Everyone in the whole world spoke the same language. Some of the people ended up living in a place called Babylonia.

Then King Nimrod decided he wanted to be famous. He wanted everyone to know him and how great he was. He convinced the people that lived in Babylonia that, they too could be great if they built a tower that went all the way to heaven.

So the people went to work making bricks for the Tower of Babel. It was hard work but the people wanted everyone to know that they made the tower that reached heaven, so they just worked that much harder.

The people also convinced themselves that by building the tower that would stay united. Since they already spoke the same language, now they would be building the tower together. Their pride had taken over and all they were thinking about was that they'd be known in all the world for building the biggest and best tower ever.

God could see what was happening all along, but decided to come down to earth and see the tower the people were building. God could tell the people's hearts were more focused on themselves and the tower than on him. He was very disappointed and angry with them.

God said, "I see that the people think they can do anything because they all speak the same language. They have already begun to turn away from me and soon there won't be anything good left, all they'll do is sin. I will mix up their language so they won't understand each other, this way they won't be able to work together to sin against me."

After God said this the people could no longer understand each other. It seemed like they were *babbling* and making funny noises. All the people suddenly spoke different languages, some spoke French, some Spanish, others Chinese, plus many other languages. They were very confused.

This was the beginning of the languages. Imagine what would've happened if the people didn't try to build the tower in the first place and they focused on God instead. Maybe we would all speak the same language today.

From there the Lord scattered the people all over the whole earth.

It's interesting because when the people starting building the tower of Babel, Babel meant "gateway to God" but after God mixed up their language it meant "confusion". Even the word babble that we use today is said to come from that day when everyone was babbling with confusion.

So you can see how much God hates pride. The people could've done amazing things for God when they all spoke the same language, and they could've been unified that way. Instead they decided to do something silly and build a big tower just so other people would notice them and call them great.

The opposite of pride is humility, or to be humble. The way you can be humble is by realizing that EVERYONE (poor people, people with disabilities, people of different races, etc.) is special. Each of us might be good at some things, but you can be sure that each person is special at something that you're not.

If you want to be humble remember to listen to your parents and those in authority, be kind to others instead of putting them down, and read your Bible and pray. By doing these things you're not just focusing on yourself.

After all pride just causes a lot of trouble!



Sermons by Phone

Hear Pastor Mike's
Weekly Sermon

1-877-369-1437



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

New Hope United Methodist Church - Pastor Mike Reaves

55 Round Hill School Road; Fort Defiance, VA 24437

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 86, New Hope, VA 24469

Church Phone: (540) 363-5940 / Parsonage Phone: (540) 363-5612

Pastor Mike Reaves' Phone: (757) 653-8537 / Pastor Email: michaelreaves@vaumc.org

NewHopeUMC.online

Facebook & Instagram: @MyNewHopeUMC