

New Hope United Methodist Church's Monthly Newsletter

The Hilltopper



August 2022

From Pastor Mike

"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." – John 14:8 (NIV)

Susan and I just returned home after attending our youngest daughter's wedding at an old farmhouse about six miles southwest of Culpeper, VA. My daughter, Rachel, met her husband, Zach, through mutual friends when she was a freshman at the University of Mary Washington. After eight years together, they were engaged in February 2020. Of course, a month later COVID shut everything down which made wedding planning almost impossible.

Rachel and Zach compliment each other. Where one partner may struggle, the other is often strong. They work together well and support each other despite their differences. However, they will both admit that planning and organizing a wedding was out of their comfort zones. After two years, they just wanted to be married.

In April, Rachel approached Susan and me with an idea – can the families pull off a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) wedding this summer? Rachel dreaded the idea of spending a year or more planning a wedding with lots of moving parts. They wanted to rent a house in the country and have a very intimate wedding with immediate family only. Other family and friends would be invited to watch by ZOOM.

While I was overjoyed by their desire to be married, I will admit this was not "my" vision of what Rachel's wedding would be like. I imagined a day with our extended families and friends coming together and having a big celebration. I had to let that go, get on board, and be there for Rachel and Zach on their special day.

Too often we feel real or imagined social pressure and nowhere is that more apparent in the wedding industry. I will admit I felt some of that pressure, but it was self-imposed. I was worried about what other people would think. It was tempting to butt in and make a special request, but I resisted because it was not my wedding day.

Of course, it was a wonderful wedding.

Susan officiated. I escorted Rachel to the altar which my oldest daughter, Michelle, created for the occasion. Rachel was a beautiful bride. Zach was a nervous but beaming groom. Eight of us came together in that charming old farmhouse and we were joined by about seventy people online. After Zach and Rachel had their first kiss as husband and wife, they danced for the camera. After that, a few online guests had toasts prepared to share with the bride and groom. A few of us in the farmhouse offered words for the bride and groom and then we thanked our online guests and said goodbye.

When Susan and I returned home I said, "Well, they did it. Rachel and Zach are now married." It was enough because it was what Rachel and Zach wanted. It was enough because God was present in the joining together of these two.

Sometimes it is just that simple. We do not need to make it more complicated.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mike*

Vacation Bible School 2022





The following are the minutes from the **JULY** 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 - July 28, 2022

Present: Samatha Brensinger, Alicia Copeland, Wanda Harding, Mike Reaves, Bruce Rogers, Cindy Sheets and Dallas VanLear

The meeting was called to order by chairperson Dallas Van Lear. He read devotions and prayed.

The minutes from the June meeting were accepted as distributed.

Finance Report: *(report from Kevin Armstrong)*

- There will be a Finance Budget meeting on Thursday, August 11th at 6:30pm. Everyone should have their budget proposals in by then. Nothing else out of the way to report on for finance, status quo for now.

Pastor's Report: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- Information about upcoming Confirmation Classes is in the Narthex. The classes will start on September 11th with an orientation Luncheon after worship. The Confirmation classes will be during our regular Sunday School classes on Sundays. The training will be for 10 weeks, and Confirmation Sunday is on Sunday, November 20th. The group will also be doing some volunteering at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank during this time.

- The Nominations Committee will start meeting in August. Mike is in hopes of having three classes to determine a number of positions that will need to be filed for next year; including the Lay Leader, chairperson of the Church Council and the chairperson of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, as well as a few other openings.
- Mike has no schedule information yet for our upcoming Charge Conference this year.

Worship: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- We will be planning to do something special for our All Saint's Day and Veteran's Day Sundays. We will also be participating in World Communion Sunday. And we will also take part in the Community Thanksgiving Service again this year.

Spiritual Nurture: *(Samantha Brensinger reported)*

- Vacation Bible School starts tomorrow (July 29th) We wanted to extend a big Thank You to the Youth: including Carly Howdyshell, Riley Shiflett, and Bianca and Wayne Brensinger, for taking on leadership roles in VBS this year.

United Methodist Men: *(Bruce Rogers reported)*

- The UMM did not meet in July. They will be doing the grilling for VBS on Sunday, July 31st, with plans for 50 people to attend.

United Methodist Women: *(Wanda Harding reported)*

- There will be a meeting for all women of the church who participate in any Circle group to attend in the social hall on August 15th at 7:00pm. The meeting will focus on how they should complete their remaining commitments for the fiscal year that ends on September 30th. Also, they will discuss what they want to do as a group, and whether or not to leave the district conference, and just focus strictly on more local community issues and community outreach projects.

Staff/Parish Relations: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- They may not be able to meet in August to hit their budget deadline.

Membership: *(report from Karen Whitmer)*

- New members: ~ Katie Harding Toole by letter of transfer from Elizabeth NC UMC
~ James W. Strother, Jr. by letter of transfer from Basic UMC, Waynesboro, VA

Youth: *(Samantha Brensinger reported)*

- The youth donated \$200 to VBS for supplies and \$100 for school supplies
- 50's Drive-In has been announced for Saturday, September 17th.

Communications: *(Cindy Sheets reported)*

- Cindy S. stated that we will be needing more printer cartridges for our HP Laserjet printer. The cartridges cost on average about \$100 each, and we need four of them. After some discussion, Dallas made a motion for us to purchase the cartridges up to \$500. Samantha and Mike seconded it and it was passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business:

- VBS Final Set-up starts at 12:00pm on Friday, July 29th. We will be having a VBS picnic with ice cream after worship on Sunday, July 31st. And we will give out school supplies to the kids as well.

Open Question

- Bruce stated that he was unaware that the districts had been combined.

Mike -

Mike stated in reference to the church's possible disaffiliation, Mike stated that the leaders of the church need to figure out what our next steps will be.

If we are thinking of possible disaffiliation, then we need to meet with the district superintendent and he can tell us the costs that we will have in order to do this.

- We will have to pay out the current year and one additional year of apportionments.
- We will be asked to continue to contribute to the Pastor's Retirement Fund each year, which will probably be around \$1,000 per year.
- We will have to pay all legal fees, which will probably be around \$1,000-\$1,500.

Do we want to disaffiliate or remain with the United Methodist Church?

- We need to decide based on our church's long-term goals. If we disaffiliate, we will need to have a two-thirds vote, and then the annual conference will approve it.

Whatever we decide to do, someone will be upset.

- We also don't have to go with the GMC - Global Methodist Church. We could decide to go independent.

Mike suggests that we look at all the resources provided. And to be in earnest prayer about it.

The deadline to complete the process is the end of 2023, but that time could potentially be extended.

Mike stated that we don't have to be in a hurry, but we do need to start thinking about it.

Mike suggested that we have a meeting of key church leaders to start an effective, open dialogue about the positives and negatives of all of our options.

Mike stated that we need to work to do the least amount of damage as possible and to pray that we will be in a healthy situation at the end of it all.

Dallas Van Lear ended the meeting by thanking us for coming. Mike prayed and the meeting ended at 7:23pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Cynthia Sheets
Recording Secretary



Two upcoming Fall Bike Events that New Hope UMC will help with...

**Valley Veterans Ride for Heroes
Saturday, September 10th.**

and

**Fall Foliage - Bike the Valley
Saturday, October 15th.**

***Plan to join us for fun,
fellowship, outreach, and
meeting new friends!***

***Hey Daddy-O,
Don't Be A Wet Rag!***

**Plan now to join us
for our 50's Drive-In
at New Hope UMC!**

**Burn rubber and make
your way down here on
Saturday, September 17
for some 1950's style
eats and treats!**



***You'll have it made in the shade!
And all profits will go towards youth mission projects!***

Confirmation Class at New Hope UMC Coming September 2022



Be Confirmed in your Faith

Confirmation is a program for students in grades 6 -12 who wish to be confirmed in the United Methodist Church. The program is designed to study the beliefs of the United Methodist Church as well as to dive deep into what it means to be a Christian. Upon completion, students will have the opportunity to stand before the congregation and proclaim their faith and their commitment to New Hope UMC.

What does Confirmation look like?

At New Hope UMC, confirmands will meet once a week from September through November for 8 weeks. We will meet on Sunday mornings during Sunday School. The class is taught by Pastor Mike to help the students understand and grasp the key elements of their faith as Christians, as well as basic United Methodist theology.

When is Confirmation?

Confirmation will begin on Sunday, September 10, 2022, with a meeting of all confirmation students and their families after worship. Our first class will be held on Sunday, September 17 during the Sunday School hour. Confirmation Sunday will be November 19th, 2022.

What is Confirmation?

Although confirmation is not a sacrament in The United Methodist Church, it is an important marker along our spiritual journeys. At baptism, we are initiated into the new covenant in Jesus Christ and membership in the Church, Christ's body in the world. For many, this happens when they are very young.

We recognize children are members of their families, but no one expects them to clean their rooms or empty the dishwasher until much later. In the same way, "baptized infants are members of the Church—the family of faith—but are not yet capable of sharing everything involved in membership."

Confirmation is an opportunity to respond to the grace of God available to us, as acknowledged in baptism, and to promise to live as a person of faith. "What God offers us must be accepted in repentance and faith...confirmation and reaffirmation are our responses of commitment, a profession of faith, and rededication."

Register Now!

Parents should encourage their children to register for Confirmation Class. Registration forms will be available at the information table in the Narthex. The deadline to register is August 28, 2022.

AFTER EDEN

by Dan Lietha



Adam named his wife Eve meaning, "mother of all living." He later learned the name Eve fit her because she actually was the "opposite of morning" as well.

and sat across from him. Jesus peered at the old man and asked,

"What was it you did for a living?"

The old man replied, "I was a carpenter."

Jesus remembered his own earthly existence and leaned forward. "Did you have any family?" he asked.

"Yes, I had a son, but I lost him."

Jesus leaned forward some more. "You lost your son? Can you tell me about him?"

"Well, he had holes in his hands and feet."

Jesus leaned forward even more and whispered, "Father?"

The old man leaned forward and whispered, "Pinocchio?"

Just for Laughs

St. Peter stood at the Pearly Gates, waiting for the incoming. He saw Jesus walking by and caught his attention. "Jesus, could you mind the gate while I go do an errand?"

"Sure," replied Jesus. "What do I have to do?"

"Just find out about the people who arrive. Ask about their background, their family, and their lives. Then decide if they deserve entry into Heaven."

"Sounds easy enough. OK."

So Jesus waited at the gates while St. Peter went off on his errand.

The first person to approach the gates was a wrinkled old man. Jesus summoned him to the examination table

CHURCH OF THE COVERED DISH by Thom Tapp



"Pastor, you've got to do something about Henry! Either he can't carry a tune or he's singing in tongues!"

Opportunities Knock

Have you ever felt like an opportunity never came or that you missed one? Have you been searching for one? Recently, Nathan and I were coming home from Baltimore after enjoying a weekend getaway with our family and he started telling me how he felt such a calling to do more of God's work, but didn't know where or how to begin. "I just don't feel like I have the opportunity to do what I want to do," he told me. The very next morning he received a text from our pastor asking him if he would like to preach a sermon for our church. I looked at him and said, "See...there's the opportunity you have been looking for."

A few weeks after this we ran into a missionary at a store on our way to visit his family in Christiansburg. Nathan listens to his podcasts where he preaches and tells of his testimony. They were talking about some of the mission work this man had done and how Nathan would be preaching his first sermon soon. They even made plans to stay in touch and share how they are spreading God's word. After meeting him Nathan felt so inspired and we realized how everything had to be timed perfectly for this opportunity to happen.

Sitting here a few days out from Nathan's first sermon and writing our 15th newsletter and I can definitely say I'm beyond proud of us, but especially him. I can also say that there were many times when both of us doubted that we would be here with these opportunities and having them do so well. For Nathan, it has been him not feeling adequate enough and him questioning, "Why has God chosen me?" For me, it has been a fear of failure and having confidence in myself to put myself out there. "What if no one wants to read our newsletter?" "What if my book(s) won't get published?" As many of you may not know, I've always wanted to write children's books, but always saw it as just a dream. I wrote one in my late teens and I'm finally wanting to submit it and see if it will get published. The reason why now is because I have more time to devote to writing and this opportunity has opened up because of God and how he has presented this when the timing was just right. Just like our newsletter, Nathan's sermon, meeting the missionary...the opportunities we have been wanting, and the timing of them are all in God's hands and his timing is always perfect. We give all our glory to him for allowing these opportunities to knock and continue to pray for future opportunities with expanding our ministry.

"So then, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Galatians 6:10 ESV. This scripture reminds us to use opportunities from him for the good because we never know when one small opportunity of time that is given to us by him will brighten someone's day, get them through a tough time, or possibly even lead them to Christ.

Opportunities for us...for you to see and spread God's love and work in our world today are everywhere, sometimes even daily. It may be a smile for someone you pass, a conversation with someone who is having a not-so-great day like the one I had with a lady in Richmond a week ago. Her day was so bad she told me throwing her credit card in the trash can by the pump was the icing on the cake. I too had had a rough morning that day and could totally relate, but after sharing our days we both left with "A hope tomorrow is better for you" farewell and a smile on our faces.


"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." Proverbs 16:3 ESV. We know opportunities knock at just the right moment and when they do be ready for them because they are not by chance. They are God driven and given. There's always an opportunity to serve the Lord, be on the lookout for opportunities because where he leads, we will follow.

*Thank you and we pray that all of you are blessed,
Cheryl & Nathan ~ Real Life Heavenly Hands*



1 - Justin Duncan
- Taylor Meier

2 -  Winton & Ava Funk

3 - Lewis Whitmer
-  Tim & Amye Bergman

5 - Michael Harner

7 - John Dejong
- Susan Mehler

8 - Kent Darrah
- Charles Powers

9 - Monique Houser

10 - Amy Corbin
- Catherine Taylor

11 - Robert Carr
- Carolyn Fretwell
- Weston Powell

12 - Greg Killough
- Savannah Ritchie

13 - Mary Taylor
- Linda Wheatley



14 - Mike Stout

15 - Judith Howard
- Adam Shiflett

16 - Chelsea Bosserman

17 - Hunter Black, Jr.
- Rose Sadano

18 - Vanessa Harner

19 -  Lester & Amy Herman
-  Glenwood & Kerry Fretwell

20 - Stoney Caricofe

22 - Randall Hinebaugh

23 -  George & Mary Taylor

26 - Julia Miller

27 - Karen Maugans

30 - Paul Abbe
- Casey Houser
- Laura Lewis

Kids' Corner - The Sower and the Seed

By: Sharla Guenther

(Parents please feel free to print this page for your kids to color while you read them the story.)



While Jesus was with his disciples and went around teaching to all the crowds who came to hear him, He often spoke in parables. A parable isn't a true story, it's a story that Jesus made up to teach a lesson.

Have you ever heard of the story of Goldie Locks and the Three Bears? How about the Three Little Pigs? These stories are easy to remember, just like a parable. Jesus told them so the people would remember them.

The difference between children's stories and parables is that children's stories are too make-believe, bears don't talk and live in houses, and neither do pigs. But while the stories Jesus told weren't real stories, they were about real-life things. They were for adults and didn't have cartoons or make-believe characters

Even though you are young, you can learn these stories too. They show us how to act towards others, how to please God, and they teach us things about what Heaven is like and how we can live with him someday.

After Jesus told a parable he would explain what it meant, but he only told people that were his real friends and really wanted to know him better.

An example of a longer parable is the one about the farmer, it goes something like this:

Jesus had gone out and sat by the lake by himself. Soon such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat near the shore and people stood on the land to hear him. Then he began telling them parables:

A farmer went out to plant his garden. As he was throwing the seed on the ground some fell on the hard path nearby and the birds came and ate them.

The next seeds fell near some rocks the farmer had in a pile nearby. There was not much dirt around the rocks so the seeds started to sprout and grow the next day. When seeds aren't planted in the dirt they don't grow roots that help them stay strong and wet, which help them grow properly.

So in the afternoon when the sun was very hot the little plants that started to grow among the rocks withered away and died because they had no roots in the ground.

As the farmer continued to throw seeds onto the ground some of the seeds fell among the weeds and thorns that he hadn't pulled out. The thorns grew faster and taller than the seeds, so the seeds couldn't get enough sunlight and were choked out by the thorns.

Finally, some seeds fell on the good soil that the farmer had worked on and dug holes for the seed to go into. Those seeds made plants and those plants produced lots and lots of vegetables.

After Jesus told the parable the disciples asked what it meant. He knew that they would really listen and wanted to get to know him better so He told them what it meant. It goes something like this:

Just like when you're listening to your Sunday School teacher, your parents, or pastor. They are trying to tell you more about God and about how to get to Heaven someday. When they talk to you about these things they are planting a pretend seed in your mind. The seed is a story about Jesus and as you learn more the seed grows and gets bigger and you eventually will know lots about God and be able to tell others about Him.

If you hear them talking about Jesus but don't understand, you need to ask questions. If you don't ask, you will forget what you learned and it will be like the seeds that fell on the path that were eaten by the birds. You will forget and the seed will be gone from your mind and it won't grow.

Sometimes you might learn something about God and you will be excited about it but you don't learn more. It helps to read Bible stories and pray and go to church if you can. If you don't do any of these things you won't have a good friendship with God.

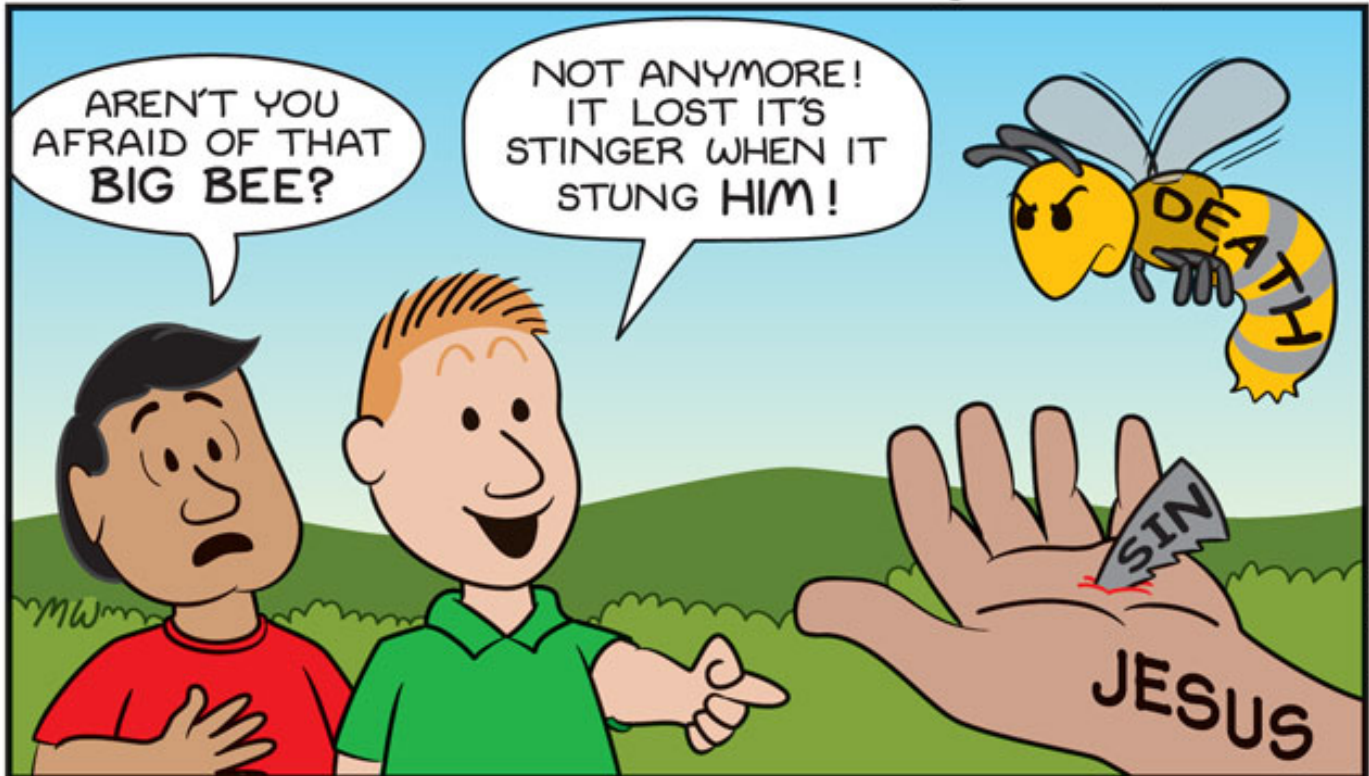
So if you don't learn more about God the pretend seed in your mind won't grow and it will be like the seed that fell on the rocks. It grew only for a short time and then it died.

The next seed is the one that was choked out by the thorns. This can happen when you hear a lesson about God and then you start to worry about all kinds of things. You might worry about your parents, your friends, or if you have all the coolest stuff. By worrying you will choke out the pretend seed in your mind. Pray to God instead of worrying!

The last seed is the best, it fell on good ground. If you learn from what you hear in Sunday School and church, the seed in your mind will grow. You will be able to tell others about how great God is and God will be a good friend. Instead of growing a garden, you will be helping others know God and making Heaven grow with more people to live there.

STINGER

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1 CORINTHIANS 15:55-57 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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