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### *From Pastor Mike*

They say hindsight is 20/20 which means it is easier to analyze and evaluate situations when we are looking back on them in the past, than when we are in the present moment. The word "hindsight" refers to looking back or reflecting on things in the past and "20/20" refers to perfect vision.

By the time you read this the year 2020 will be in our rearview mirror – it will be hindsight. However, I doubt enough time has passed for us to fully process and appreciate the past year as we look ahead to 2021. As people of faith, we can say that despite the disappointments, the frustrations, and all these things we lost in the past year, God has been and will continue to be with us.

Perhaps now we need to look forward at where we are headed. John 10:27 says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." We need to begin to listen and make the decisions that conform to the will of God. Listening to His voice is the foresight we need. In Jeremiah 29, the Lord said, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." We will know where we are going when we listen and obey God's voice which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Simple to say but not always easy to put into practice.

While God can come to us at any time and any place, it is often helpful to prepare our hearts to be receptive to the Holy Spirit stirring within us. Throughout his ministry, John Wesley taught about the means of grace – things we do regularly to put ourselves in a place where we are open to receiving the grace of God. Those practices include individual and communal works of piety and works of mercy, like private devotions, sharing in the sacraments, visiting the sick, and standing up for justice. We cannot control when or where God will speak to us – it often seems to happen unexpectedly – but we can put ourselves in a place where we will be ready to hear when it happens.

This is important. Our focus as Christians is to work on ourselves – to strengthen our own relationship with God. We need to avoid the drama of getting drawn into every argument about politics, theology, the pandemic, etc. The past year was full of drama and many times we have been quick to dive right into it. There is a better way.

The Rev. Shane Bishop is the Senior Pastor at Christ United Methodist Church in Fairview Heights, IL. I recommend his book, "Love God, Love People, Don't Do Dumb Crap" (2017). Bishop recently wrote a Facebook post suggesting we need to cut down on drama in 2021. He offers these 5 drama-reducing suggestions.

- 1) Offer people the benefit of the doubt.
- 2) Be quick to apologize when you get cross threaded.
- 3) Do not put energy into things you cannot change.
- 4) Focus on improving yourself; not improving others.
- 5) Lean into healthy habits.

I am not much on New Years' resolutions but striving for less drama in 2021 might be worth considering. Let us embrace the Golden Rule and treat others as we wish to be treated. You want to be respected? Show respect. You want to be heard? Listen to others. This is foundational and seems like a reasonable place to begin because it involves us changing our own attitudes and behaviors.

Wherever the new year takes us, remember we travel the road together knowing that God is with us and goes on ahead of us.

Yours in Christ.

*Pastor Mike*



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**We are also on YouTube and Instagram!**



# United Methodist Men

Minutes from the meeting on November 19, 2020

President: Dallas VanLeer conducted the meeting. There were 7 members present. Dallas VanLeer, Pastor Mike Reaves, Mitch Brensinger, Darryl Deavers, Corey Johnson Kim Maugans and Bruce Rogers. Devotions were provided by Dallas VanLeer.

**PROGRAM:** There was no program presented.

**MINUTES:** The minutes for the last scheduled meeting on September 23, 2020 were read and approved as submitted.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** There was no Treasurer's Report given at the meeting, but Kenny Fretwell provided the following information at a later date. His report is dated December 15, 2020 and includes all expenses and revenue since our last meeting. A copy of his report is part of these minutes.



Checking	\$ 355.97
Savings	<u>\$ 3,212.34</u>
Total	\$ 3,568.31

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

- UMM supported Trunk or Treat for the children of New Hope UMC and the local community. A total of 75 bags of goodies were given out during the Drive Thru Event.
- At the September meeting Dallas expressed his desire to step down as President of UMM. He created a Nominating Committee (Mitch Brensinger/Corey Johnson/Bruce Rogers – Chmn) to develop recommendations for a slate of Officers to serve a two year term beginning in 2021. The Committee presented the following list of candidates for consideration: President – Kim Maugans, Vice-President – Corey Johnson, Treasurer – Kenny Fretwell, Secretary – Bruce Rogers. A motion (Bruce Rogers/Dallas VanLeer) was made to accept the recommendations of the Committee. The motion was approved. The new officers will begin on January 1, 2021.
- REMINDER – Until further notice, UMM will meet at 6:30 pm on the Third Thursday of every other month. The next meeting is at 6:30 pm on Thursday, January 21, 2021.
- All meetings are conducted following COVID 19 Guidelines for wearing masks, social distancing, limited numbers and responsible actions.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

- UMM has agreed to purchase the hams needed to make ham sandwiches to be sold as a fund raiser. The sale will be conducted by the UMM with support from others in the church. All monies received will be donated to the Verona Community Food Pantry. (A total of \$1,000 was collected and donated to the VCFP.)
- The new officers were congratulated and welcomed to their new positions.
- Dallas VanLeer was thanked for his leadership and dedication to the UMM during a very difficult year, 2020. He has continued to keep UMM together and focused on our goal to assist others through Christian Love and Fellowship.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned after a prayer by Pastor Mike.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by Bruce Rogers, Secretary.

**NEXT MEETING:** January 21, 2021 at 6:30 pm.



The following are the minutes from the **DECEMBER** 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 - December 3, 2020**

Present: Pastor Mike, Dallas VanLear, Cindy Sheets, Kevin Armstrong, Karen Whitmer, Wanda Harding, Jennifer Strother, Larry & Nadine Hinebaugh, Cindy Deavers and Robin Craun.

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

The minutes from the October meeting were accepted as distributed.

### **Finance Report:** *(Kevin Armstrong)*

~ We are 92.3% of the way through the year. We are at a 72% in-take for the year (\$136,000). We have spent 75% of the budget this year so far (\$144,000).

~ We have a 1 month reprieve for paying the apportionments to the district, because they received money from the Paycheck Protection Program. With that said, we currently still owe the district \$1,685 in apportionments for the year.

~ We are holding at having a 3-4 month operating cost.

~ Kevin made a motion to bring the district apportionments up to date and pay them \$1,685; and also pay 2 months of apportionments to the conference which is \$3,638. Dallas seconded it and it was passed by all.

~ It was also agreed that we pay the Verona Food Pantry \$500, that we have budgeted, by the end of the end.

~ It was reported that \$1,200 was raised from the Ham Roll Fundraiser and that money will also go to the Verona Food Pantry via the United Methodist Men.

## **Treasurer's Report:** *(Cindy Deavers)*

~ The apportionments agreed upon in the last meeting have been paid. And all giving was caught up for November.

~ For the Weekday Religious Education Program: There was a mistake made and 2 checks were sent out to this program for \$2,500 each, instead of just one. It was agreed upon that we will just contact the WRE Program and explain to them that one check will be our donation for the year of 2020; and the second check will be our donation for the year 2021.

## **Trustees Report:** *(Larry Hinebaugh)*

~ The new church sign will be installed soon. The total cost will be \$350. Additional costs will be paid for by an anonymous person.

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

~ Our Bible Study ended and averaged 13 people each week. The Advent Bible Study currently is averaging 7 people.

~ Pastor Mike upgraded the Comcast internet service; which will give us 3 times the speed and power than we currently have - from 10 upload speeds to 30. The cost is about \$58 more each month, and Pastor Mike will pay for the difference. Also the initial installation was \$100.

~ The Commonwealth Attorney's Restitution hearing for the destruction of the church sign will be on December 15th. We will have no say in how much we can ask for, the judge will decide if money restitution is appropriate and if so, the judge will also decide how much to charge.

~ In-Person Worship: Some churches have stopped in-person worship services. We are clear through Christmas to continue how we have been operating. After Christmas, things may change based on our number of cases of Covid-19 in our area; and based on what the Governor and the Bishop decide.

~ Christmas Eve Service: Two-four churches in our area want to come together to do a pre-recorded Christmas Eve Service. Details will be worked out with the appropriate people.

- Poinsettias: There will be 8 small and 3 large poinsettias for decorations in the church. They will be available to purchase after December 20th.

## **United Methodist Men Report:** *(Dallas VanLear)*

- ~ The UMM agreed to pay for the ham that was used for the Ham Roll Fundraiser.
- ~ The UMM elected new officers: Kim Maugans will be the new UMM President
- ~ They will be meeting again on the third Thursday in January, no meal will be served.

## **United Methodist Women Report:** *(Wanda Harding)*

- ~ The UMW collected \$1,011 for the Verona Food Pantry
- ~ Circle of Hope meets at 7:00pm on Monday in the social hall.
- ~ Circle of Love meets at 7:00pm on Tuesday
- ~ Emma's Ride Project: Is there a car dealer or a non-profit that might want to try to help us with this project?
  - There will be more snowman ornaments made for donations to Emma's Ride - available by December 12th. See Jennifer Strother if interested or come by the church to get them.

## **Staff/Parish Relations Report:** *(Pastor Mike)*

- ~ Will meet again within the next month. There needs to be a decision made by January 15th as to whether we want Pastor Mike to stay for another term.

## **Membership Report:** *(Karen Whitmer)*

- ~ We 'lost our sister' Mary Sheets on November 15th.

## **Lay Leader Report:** *(Jennifer Strother)*

- ~ There were limited classes given on Lay Leadership last month and there will be more in the future; either virtually or in-person with social-distancing, that's to be determined.

## **Communications Report:** *(Cindy Sheets)*

~ We have given FaceBook ample time and it doesn't seem as though that they will be reinstating our church's page; so we will work to get a new one up and running so that we can all stay in contact.

## **Unfinished Business:**

~ Robin reported that she will have new tithing envelopes ready and in the Narthex by the end of the year. If everyone could come pick their envelopes up or make arrangements for someone to get the envelopes to them. If the envelopes are not picked up, we will have to pay to mail them and that could get costly.

- Also, Robin reported that all tax statements will be sent out by the end of January 2021; so if you have not received yours yet, please be patient.

~ Dallas thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for all of their work behind the scenes.

~ Pastor Mike and the whole committee thanked Dallas for his leadership this year.

Pastor Mike closed us with prayer and the meeting ended at: 7:23pm.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Cynthia Sheets  
Recording Secretary

**The next Church Council Meeting will be on Thursday, January 28, 2021 at 6:30pm.**



# Happy NEW Year!



(See Genesis 3)

12-30-2013

REMEMBER THAT NEW YEAR RESOLUTION YOU  
MADE TO TRY NEW THINGS?

**Why should you stand on just your left foot during the New Year's Eve countdown?**

*So you start the New Year on the right foot.*

**What does a caterpillar do on January 1st?**

Turns over a new leaf.

**Did you hear about the guy who started fixing breakfast at midnight on Dec. 31st?**

He wanted to make a New Year's toast!

## New Year's Dream

Jenna was taking an afternoon nap on New Year's Eve before the festivities. After she woke up, she confided to Dave, her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a diamond ring for a New Year's present. What do you think it all means?"

"Aha, you'll know tonight," answered Dave .

At midnight, as the New Year was chiming, Dave approached Jenna and handed her small package. Delighted and excited she opened it quickly. There in her hand rested a funny book entitled "*The Meaning Of Dreams.*"



## **Let Go Of The Past** - Larry Pasley - Alexandria, LA

The passenger tapped the cab driver on the shoulder to ask him something. The driver screamed, lost control of the car, nearly hit a bus, went up on the sidewalk, and stopped inches from a department store window. For a second everything went quiet in the cab, then the driver said, "Look mister, don't ever do that again. You scared me half to death!" The passenger apologized and said he didn't realize that a little tap could scare him so much. The driver replied, "You're right. I'm sorry. Really, it's not your fault. Today is my first day as a cab driver. I've been driving a hearse for 25 years."

The cabbie allowed his past experiences to cause him to take his eye off of the road and his goal of getting his passenger to his destination.

Sometimes we allow our past to affect our present and future goals and destinations also. The apostle Paul told the Philippian brethren: "Not that have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

When we find our past affecting our lives in a negative way, we need to learn how to forget those things.

We especially need to forget those things which keep us from focusing on our goal of heaven.

When we have people in our lives who are causing us to take our eyes off of our goal of heaven, we need to forget them.

When our guilt from former sins, which have been forgiven, causes us to take our eyes off of our goal of heaven, we need to forget them.



When temptations to sin lead us astray from our goal of heaven, we need to forget them.

We need not to allow anything in our past to take our focus off of heaven.

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).

## **Use the New Year to Get Closer to God** - Charles Box - Alabama

This world is not my home. I want to go to heaven. Use this New Year to get closer to God and closer to heaven. I want to go to heaven because it is a place of beauty and splendor. Our hope is, "Laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5). Heaven is a, "City which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Imagine being in a place where, "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" are its temple (Revelation 21:22).



**BIRTHDAYS** and  
**ANNIVERSARIES**

**3** - Sam Arnold  
- Dana Breeding  
- Jack Walker

**4** - Michelle Chittum  
- Brooke Darrah

**5** - Dave Critzer  
- Bucky Darrah  
- Shirley Western

**6** - Gary Campbell  
- Michael Herman  
- Phyllis Jarvis

**7** - Kristin Walker Kniss

**9** - Barbara Arndt  
- Jacob Schreckhise

**10** - Vinda Shaver

**11** - Jackie Wilberger

**12** - Phyllis Fretwell

**13** - Amanda Corbett

**14** - Will Bergman


**17** - Mildred Hartman  
- Candice Kincaid  
- Jason Shiflett

**18** - Crystal Abbe  
- Lynn Shaver

**19** - Kathy Campbell  
- Gina Davis

**20** - Michael Breeding  
- Laura Jenner

**21** - Kenny Fretwell

**22** - Heather Abbe Fitcham  
-  Bob & Jean Critzer

**23** - Linda McKibbin

**24** - William Critzer

**25** - Christian Deavers  
- Richard Ritchie

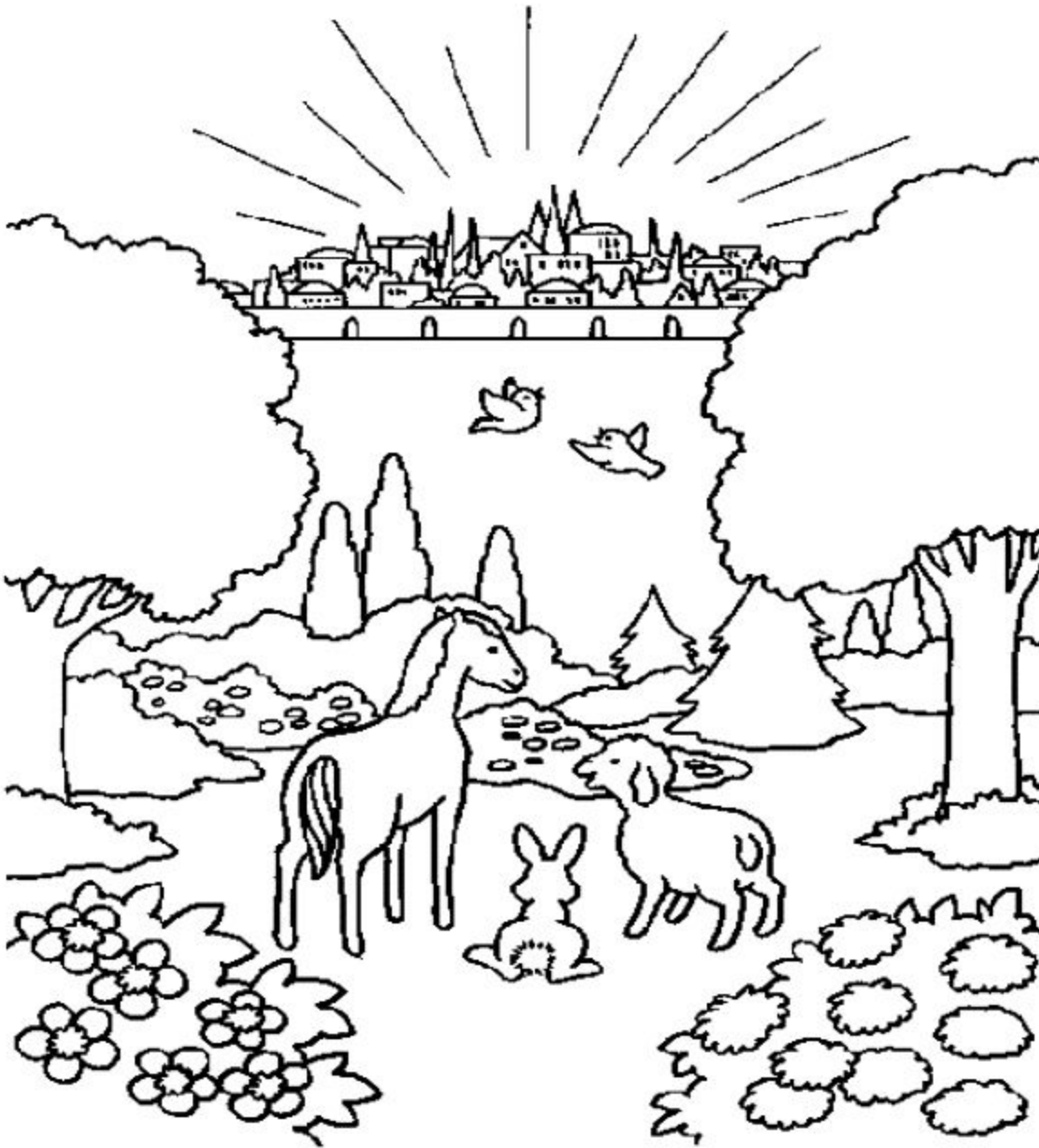
**26** - Jeremy McLaughlin

**28** - Gary Lewis

**31** - Denise Duncan

# Kids' Corner - Heaven

*By: Sharla Guenther*



Have you ever wondered about heaven? Where is it? What it's like? Who lives there? The Bible talks a bit about heaven and God has given us some hints about what it will be like. However, a lot of it is still a mystery to us because God is still preparing a place for us. At least that's what Jesus told his disciples before he went up to heaven.

He said he was preparing a place for us with many rooms or mansions. Which makes me think that if God created the world and everything in and around it in six days, how amazing will heaven be if he's taking longer than that? If you can think of a beautiful mountain, waterfall or even the prettiest flower you've ever seen

and think of a place even more amazing than that, I think that's what heaven will be like.

God can use whatever he wants gold, diamonds and amazing things we haven't even seen on earth. Maybe that's why the Bible doesn't give us a complete description of heaven because we wouldn't even be able to understand how amazing and beautiful it really is.

We can talk more about what heaven is like later. First we should talk about how we can get to heaven and what are some ways we can prepare to go there. Don't worry you don't need to pack a suitcase. In fact, God specifically says that we shouldn't spend all our time on earth trying to collect a bunch of things because we can't take any of it with us.

It might seem strange that we won't need any of our things like our favorite doll or toy truck or even a change of underwear!! God will give us everything we need plus much more. We won't even be bored in heaven because God knows what we need and he's getting it all ready for us.

We still haven't answered the question about how we get to heaven. Actually one of Jesus' disciples named Thomas asked Jesus: We don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? (John 14:5) Jesus answered: I am the way, the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me. This might sound like strange directions but what Jesus was saying is that if you believe the Bible and believe that Jesus died and rose again for you, then you believe in the truth and He will bring you to Heaven.

Not only that, the words God tells us in the Bible will help us in life right now and are like a map that will lead us on the right path and then eventually to Heaven. For example Jesus says that by helping others by feeding them if they're hungry, visiting the sick, giving clothes to those who don't have much, and even by visiting people in jail or who have done things that are wrong. When we do these things it's like we're doing it for Him. (Matthew 25:31-46)

By helping others now, God will give us a reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:12) One of these rewards is a crown. The Bible says that the Lord will reward each person a crown of righteousness when we get there. Imagine your very own crown!

The best part of all is what heaven will be like. Most of this is written in the last two chapters of the Bible. It says that God will wipe every tear from our eyes and there will be no more death, sadness, crying or pain. Everything will be made new again! You won't be able to get hurt anymore and there won't be any fighting or hitting or crying EVER! That sounds pretty neat.

It also says that there won't be a church or temple there because the Lord God Almighty and Jesus are the church. Instead of going to church to learn and worship God we just can go right to Him.

The city of heaven won't need a sun, moon or lights because God's glory will give light to everything. Plus there will be no night time there (I think that means no more naptime or sleeping)! It gets better! Nothing bad will ever enter heaven either.

The Bible tells us a little about what it will look like. It talks in Revelation about the city walls and how they are decorated with precious stones. The wall will be made of pure gold and then 12 different kinds of beautiful stones will cover and decorate it. Some of these stones we don't even know about on earth and other stones we wear in rings and necklaces and are worth a lot of money.

There will be twelve gates and each one will be made of one humungous peal bigger than you! On top of that, the streets will be made of gold! I can't even imagine how amazing it will be. No dirt or dust just shiny beautiful streets and walls filled with different colored stones reflecting the light from God.

The only tricky part before we get to heaven is how we move from this world to this amazing place. If we believe God, that He died and rose again, need his forgiveness and try to live the way God wants; then God writes our name in the book of life. (Philippians 4:3) Everyone who believes and accepts Jesus will go to heaven and live forever there.

Then there are two ways we can move to heaven. The first way is if we die and the second way is when Jesus comes again while we're alive on earth. The thought of death can be scary (for grown-ups too) BUT, if we keep reminding ourselves how great heaven is maybe it wouldn't have to be so scary.

That second way we can go to Heaven is called the second coming. When God decides it's time for everyone who believes in Him to come to heaven he is going to come get us. It says in the Bible that nobody will ever know when this will be and he will come and we'll all know and see Jesus. There will be angels and trumpets and it'll be very exciting for all those who believe.

As you can see, heaven is going to be a big party and a fabulous place to be with God who made us and wants to reward us. God loves us even more than our parents and promises to take the best care of us. He hasn't forgot us either, he says three times in the last chapter of the Bible that Jesus is coming soon and to keep doing what is right and holy.

Heaven is a wonderful place!

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## **Sermons By Phone**

**Hear Pastor Mike's  
Weekly Sermon**

**1-877-369-1437**



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