

# The Hilltopper



March 2021

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## *From Pastor Mike*

***But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. – Psalm 56:3 (NLT)***

Just over a year ago, Susan and I were planning to move her father to the Legacy in Staunton. We put a deposit on an apartment, had it ready for moving day, and we were excited to have her dad live close to us. However, his health declined, and he was admitted to a hospital near his home in Maryland. It became apparent he would need a higher level of long-term care than the Legacy provided. Susan and her brothers found a facility in Maryland that could give him the care he needed.

On Monday, March 9, 2020 – the day Mr. Schneider was to be released from the hospital – he passed away. Two days earlier on Saturday, March 7, the first case of COVID-19 in Virginia was confirmed in a soldier stationed at Fort Belvoir. On Friday, March 13, Bishop Lewis sent a letter instructing all United Methodist Churches in Virginia to cancel in-person worship for March 15 and March 22. Before the end of the month, Augusta County had its first confirmed case of COVID-19.

Cindy Sheets and I met early that first pandemic Sunday – March 15 – and we recorded a worship service. Then we waited for the video to upload which took about an hour. Some Sundays the service would not upload on the first try, if at all. The quality was OK, not great. For the next few weeks, it was just the two of us trying to figure this out. Eventually, Alicia rejoined us, then Austine and Jennifer.

On July 5, with the help of the newly created Healthy Church Team, we returned to in-person worship with the safety protocols handed down by the Bishop's Office. We figured out how to livestream and eventually we solved our sound issues. We have had Zoom check-ins; online Bible studies; on-line meetings. By the fall, we moved to limited in-person gatherings. We never stopped being in ministry, but we had to adjust and adapt.

Of the nearly 29 million Americans infected with COVID-19 in the past year, over 514,000 have died. All of us know people who were infected and most of us know at least one person whose life was cut short by this new virus. We must share our grief and loss as a people and remember and celebrate the lives of those who have died during the pandemic. And not just those who died from COVID-19 but others who also died alone in hospital beds.

It has been a year where we have been stretched beyond our comfort zones. But there are signs of encouragement as more and more folks are getting vaccinated and infections and deaths are declining. While it is too soon to tell when we might return to some level of "normal" we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. But we are all exhausted and it cannot come soon enough.

Until then, let us lean on each other for strength. Let us continue to trust in God whenever we are afraid or discouraged.

Yours in Christ.

*Pastor Mike*



The following are the minutes from the **FEBRUARY** 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 - February 25, 2021**

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

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

### **There is a correction to the January 2021 meeting minutes:**

**The United Methodist Men normally have \$6,000-\$7,000 going into the new year to help support missions and projects that they do throughout the year. But, because of Covid-19 and not being able to hold the Ham, Oyster and Turkey Supper (H.O.T.S.) fundraiser in November, the United Methodist Men currently have \$3,500 to go towards their mission work for 2021.**

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

- ~ Thanked Wanda and Karen for their continuing efforts to count the tithes and offerings each week.
- ~ There is an additional \$10,775 that we have that is not recorded on the current statement.
- ~ Corey Johnson will perform an internal audit for the church.
- ~ We will continue to pay the agreed upon apportionments for February, as we are still in a financially sound place to do this comfortably.

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

- ~ All bills have been paid for February.
- ~ Apportionments have been paid for January.
- ~ Members of the Financial Committee stated that we are in a comfortable place financially in order to be able to pay the full amount of our apportionments for February - in the amount of \$2,639.

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

- ~ They plan to start painting in March or April when it gets a little warmer.
- ~ The Parsonage Audit will be due in June, the form to fill out will be sent in March or April.
- ~ Dodson Exterminators will come back to our church soon to spray for pests.

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

- ~ There will be no Lenten Bible study this year, but devotional Lenten books are available.
- ~ There will be a Bible Study starting in April. And Jennifer is currently leading a chronically bible study.
- ~ Due to a number of factors affected by Covid-19, the General Conference has been postponed to August 2022 in Minneapolis.
- ~ There have been some minor updates to the Technical Assistance Manual (Guidelines for dealing with worshipping in the age of Covid-19).
  - We can now have bulletins, tithing envelopes, and visitor cards back in the pews.
  - If we go outdoors, we can sing without masks.
  - Ministers can preach without masks, only if outdoors and 25 feet away from the congregation.

## **Worship:** *(Pastor Mike)*

- ~ Working on trying to get the committee reassembled, we still need a leader for this group.
- ~ Alicia wants to get the Bell Choir together, with participants in the congregation while still sitting in the pews.

## **Spiritual Nurture:** *(Jennifer Strothers)*

- ~ Valentine's Day bags, with activities, snacks and goodies were sent out to all of the children of the church and surrounding community. They are planning on something similar for Easter.

## **Evangelism:** *(Pastor Mike)*

~ Pastor Mike is in talks to get someone to lead this ministry.

## **United Methodist Men Report:** *(Bruce Rogers)*

~ The UMM meets every third Thursday of the month. Their next meeting will be March 18th.

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

~ The theme for 2021 is "Knitted Together for God's Good Work"

~ For the past several months, they have been sponsoring the 'Emma's Ride' Project which has brought together individuals, agencies and organizations in donating to assist a local family in getting a much needed handicap van.

~ The UMW has not met in 2021, and there are no plans to meet in the near future.

~ The Circle of Hope will be meeting on Monday, March 1st at 7:00pm in the social hall. And the Circle of Love will be meeting on Tuesday, March 8th at 7:00pm in the social hall. All ladies are invited for an uplifting program. They will also be working on a project to assist with providing goodie bags for the children and youth for Easter.

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

~ We will need to get a temporary replacement for Austine for Sunday morning piano. Austine will be out approximately 6 weeks starting around the middle of May through the end of June.

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

~ Lay Training is happening via Zoom on March 20th. There are three different classes you can take. Please see Jennifer Strother if interested.

## **Communications:** *(Pastor Mike)*

~ The new modem is now responding to the wireless network. But, we will need another access point in the sanctuary because of the new modem.

## **Unfinished Business:** *(Dallas)*

- ~ We talked about and agreed to the apportionments for February.
- ~ We took care of getting the bank letter for Wanda to take to Dupont Credit Union.

## **New Business:**

- ~ Easter Sunrise Service on April 3rd, will be outdoor barring any bad weather issues. We will not have our usual breakfast afterwards.
- ~ Easter Lilies and Tulips will be provided in the Sanctuary, to add a more festive atmosphere to help everyone celebrate the special day.

Dallas closed the meeting and 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, March 25, 2021 at 6:30pm.***

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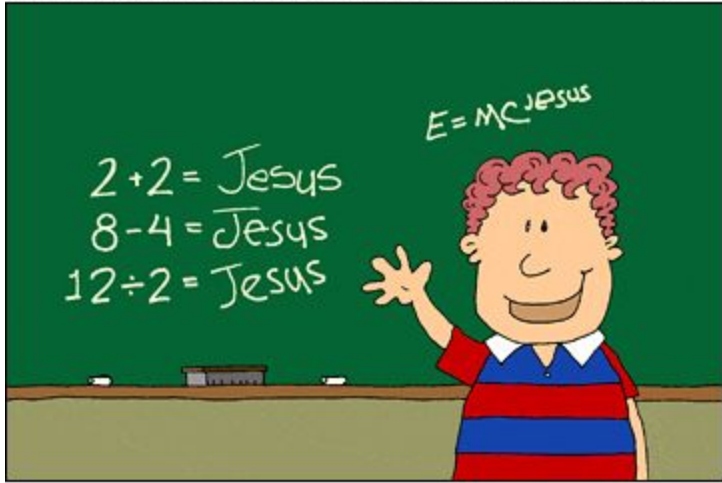
***Sermons By Phone***

**Hear Pastor Mike's  
Weekly Sermon**

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# Have a Laugh!

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Thanks to Gert-Jan van Heugten 06-16-2008

IN BIBLE CLASS WE LEARNED THAT JESUS IS THE ANSWER

**What time of day was Adam created?**

*Just a little before Eve.*

**What kind of man was Boaz before he married Ruth?**

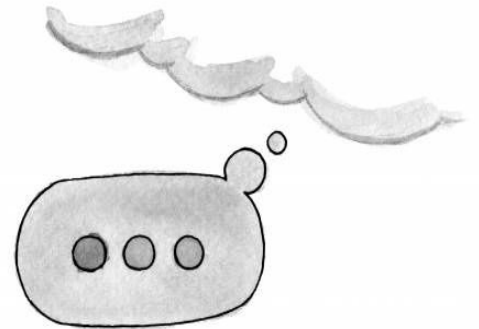
*Absolutely Ruthless.*

**Why did the unemployed man get excited when reading the bible?**

*He thought he saw a Job!*

## The Early Service or the Late Service?

In the foyer of a church, a young boy was looking at a plaque with the names of men and women who had died in various wars. He asked the pastor, "Who are these people?" The pastor said, "Those are members from our church who died in service." The boy asked, "The early service or the late service?"



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# *What If Jesus Had Returned Yesterday?* *By Milton Smith*



The title of this article is a question of no little importance. And when we reflect upon Jesus' own words that "many" will choose to walk the way of eternal destruction and that "few" will ultimately make it to the gates of Heaven (cf. Matthew 7:13-14), this question becomes even richer in significance. While our busy schedules might often prevent us from doing so, we should actually reflect upon His return every day! Could it be that the Lord has chosen tomorrow as the day of His return? If that be the case, in what condition will you find yourself to be in the day after tomorrow? Only the wise will bother to seriously ponder this thought.

We all need to live every day as if we actually had access to information that told us that Jesus' return was imminent; that it could occur at any moment "in the twinkling of an eye." But it is most interesting to consider the fact that in a very real way, that is actually true. We know that Jesus promised us that He would return, and we know that we are closer to that day than any day that has yet dawned upon this earth; but we also know that this very day could be that day!

The world is nearly 2000 years closer to His return than it was during His earthly walk when He often spoke of that fateful day involving His impending return. "Watch" was the word of caution that Jesus often used when He spoke of that inevitable day of His assured return. Later today, we will close out another day on earth (Lord willing!). Each of us will then welcome the dawning of a new day. May we all be living our lives as if we knew for a guaranteed fact that tomorrow would be that final day of mankind's existence in this rapidly passing world.


"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13).



# Birthdays & Anniversaries

1 - Chloe Breeding

2 - Derek Deavers

3  - Lynn & David Dively

5 - Christy Riner Powell  
- Chris Bosserman  
- John Michael DeJong

 Mitch & Samatha Brensinger

8 - John Morse  
- Steve Meier  
- Tina Bosserman

10 - Janice Bell  
- Peggy Caricofe

11 - Emerson Gunsalus

12 - Fred Arndt  
- Emily Critzer  
- Katelyn & Lily McLaughlin

13 - Blake McKibbin  
- Tanya Keys  
- Mary Ann Marks  
- Sandra Puffenberger

 - Vanessa & Berkeley Harner

14 - Noah Hong

15 - Wayne Brensinger

 - Nora & Charles Darrah

16 - Landon Powell  
- Chelsea Steele

17 - Amanda Barr  
- Erica Miller  
- Ricky Morris

18 - Blake Fretwell  
- Shane McCray  
- Ethan Herman

19 - Kevin Armstrong  
- Randy Craig

22 - Lucy Black  
- Nicholas Bergman

24 - Dolly Harner

25 - Helen Morse

26 - Hailey Hong  
- Roxann Canipe  
- Roger Layman

27 - Doug Gunsalus

28 - Gail Armstrong  
- Joshua Corbin

29 - Glenwood Fretwell  
- Tyler Fretwell  
- Josh Massie

30 - Michelle Booth





Minutes from the meeting on January 21, 2021

President Kim Maugans conducted the meeting. There were 8 members present. Dallas VanLeer, Pastor Mike Reaves, Mitch Brensinger, Darryl Deavers, Corey Johnson, Kim Maugans, Kenny Fretwell and Bruce Rogers.

Devotions were provided by Bruce Rogers.

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

**MINUTES:** The minutes for the last scheduled meeting on November 19, 2020 were read and approved as submitted.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** The Treasurer's Report was given by Kenny Fretwell and is dated December 31, 2020. It includes all expenses and revenue since our last meeting. A copy of his report is part of these minutes.

Checking	\$ 356.01
Savings	\$ 3,213.15
Total	\$ 3,569.16

A Budget Committee (Kenny Fretwell, Kim Maugans, Corey Johnson, Darryl Deavers) was created to develop a budget for 2021. The proposed budget will be presented at the UMM meeting on March 18.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- There was no old business.
- 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, March 18, 2021.

- All meetings are conducted following COVID 19 Guidelines for wearing masks, social distancing, limited numbers and responsible actions.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Funds for UMM are limited in 2021 due to HOTS being canceled. There was a discussion about how we will continue to assist other groups and individuals and what we can do with limited funds. What good can come from this group? Kim challenged us to think about how we can still make an impact for others.
- Dallas VanLeer advised the UMM needed help to support their Emma's Ride Project. A motion (Dallas/Corey) was made and approved to support a take-out spaghetti supper on February 13 to raise funds for Emma's Ride. UMM will help with the supper and provide \$200 toward expenses.
- Kenny Fretwell advised we need to renew our UMM General Commission to the UMM Charter Group. After a discussion about the merits of membership in this group, a motion (Kim/Dallas) was made and approved for us to continue our membership. Kenny Fretwell will file for renewal.
- Kenny Fretwell advised we need to conduct an annual audit of the Treasurer's Books. Mitch Brensinger volunteered to work with Kenny to conduct the audit and prepare a report to the Finance Committee.

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: March 18, 2021 at 6:30 pm.**

DEVOTIONS for Next Meeting: Kim Maugans

# Kids' Corner - Unmerciful Servant

By: LeAnne Guenther



This is a parable or a story Jesus told to teach a lesson to us. The parable of the unmerciful servant is...wait a minute! What does unmerciful mean?

To have mercy is to have compassion on people that are miserable or to show love to people that are unhappy. So the unmerciful servant didn't show any love or care towards someone who needed it.

Make sure you listen right to the end to find out who this unmerciful servant is...you might be surprised.

This whole parable begins because of a question Peter asks Jesus. The question went something like this: "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or friend when he does something mean to me? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered him, "I tell you, seven times is not enough but forgive

them as many as seventy seven times." Then Jesus began the parable to explain.

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted all his servants to pay him back. These servants had borrowed money from the king and the king wanted it back today.

As he was going down a list of servants who needed to give him money he came to one that owed him millions of dollars. Does anyone know how much a million dollars is? It's lots of money probably

enough to buy 2 really nice houses or one big fancy castle...

I'm surprised the king even borrowed that much money to one person! I think the servant was surprised to because he didn't have the money to pay the king back.

So the king decided that the servant and his wife and children should all be sold to pay for the money they owed him. This would mean that they would be sold to someone who would make them all slaves (even the kids).

The servant knew this would be terrible so he fell on his knees and begged the king, "Be patient with me and I will pay back everything."

The king had MERCY on him and told him he didn't have to pay it back and let him go. Wow! He didn't make him pay anything back and he let him go!

You won't believe what happens next! The servant left the king and decided to get his servant to pay him back for the money he owed him.

When he found his servant who only owed him a few dollars he grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me! he yelled.

Then his servant did the same thing that he had just done. He fell on his knees and begged, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back."

But he said, "No way!" Instead, he had the man thrown into jail until he could pay the money back.

People heard what had happened and told the king about the unmerciful servant. So the king called the servant in. "You wicked servant, he said, "I canceled all that you owed me because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your servant just as I had on you?"

The king immediately threw the servant into jail to be tortured, until he should pay back all the money he borrowed.

Jesus ended the story with this final statement. "This is how your heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother with all your heart".

Do you remember the question Peter asked Jesus at the beginning? How many times should you forgive your brother if he does something wrong to you?

God wants us to keep on forgiving and to have mercy on others. He forgives us all the time for small and big things so why wouldn't we forgive others just the same. It's not always easy but it's what God wants us to do!

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