



Beacon

August 2020

... guiding our walk

A Word from Pastor John

Holy Spirit-guided Bible Study during this Time of Social-distancing

We all miss being together in worship and other gatherings where we can connect face-to-face (albeit, masked and from a safe distance). We had all hoped that by now, we would be back worshipping together, but alas, because we can't seem to get all our citizens to follow the guidelines from the CDC, we are not anywhere close to the end of this crisis.

Even so, as you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, we are gingerly moving toward some in-person gatherings. In addition to our Thursday "Come and Go Prayer Time" in the sanctuary, we are offering a monthly "Picnic in the Park" and "Prayer in the Park." In addition, we will soon be offering the option of in-person outdoor worship (without singing). Of course, we will continue the virtual online Facebook Live service as we are currently doing. Please find the articles in this newsletter that give you all the details.

We are also offering small groups and meetings on Zoom. These include the Pastor's Bible Study and Pastor's Book Club (see details in this newsletter). The Bible Study and the Book Club both "meet" at 10 a.m., on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, respectively. All are welcome! Contact me at john.gillum@bellsouth.net for info. However, I know the majority of us will not participate in these online or in-person options. For many of us, we are on our own if we are to continue our spiritual growth. I hope you have some kind of devotional-time each day where you read some scripture and have a time of prayer (Upper Rooms are available to you outside the church office door). But if you are like me, you may not be as disciplined in doing "devotions" as you know you should be. Often that is because we don't know how to engage scripture in ways that can help us hear God speak into our lives and hearts – so we don't bother.

That is why, in this month's article, I'd like to offer you **two simple approaches to reading and reflecting on scripture in a way that you "hear" God speak and inspire you**. One is called "Lectio Divina" and the other is called "SOAP." These devotional techniques can work with any passage of scripture of your choosing. You might choose to work through a book of the Bible, like Psalms; or the life of a Biblical character, like Abraham (Book of Genesis); or through a section of teachings, like Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7); or the parables of Jesus. Whatever you choose, select a paragraph or unit of the scriptures to reflect on. Your reflections will be internal as you listen to God and respond with prayer. They may also be written down in the form of a journal so you can return to your insights at a future time (I do better if I write out my thoughts). Once you have decided what scriptures you wish to reflect on, use one of these methods:

Lectio Divina (Latin for "Divine Reading")

Lectio Divina is a form of contemplative prayer that grows out of reflections on a passage of scripture – not to examine, dissect, or study it, but to listen for the Holy Spirit to speak to your spirit and give you insight and inspiration – to discern what God wants to teach you through the text. This kind of Biblical reflection requires you to enter into a

time “set apart” so your mind is clear and your heart is open to “listen.” As Jesus said in John 14:26 - “*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who (Abba) will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.*”

Some say this method of scripture reflection is based on Luke 11:9 (paraphrased): “*Seek in READING (lectio) and you will find in MEDITATION (meditatio), knock in PRAYER (oratio), and it will be opened to you in CONTEMPLATION (contemplatio).*”

Step 1: Come into the Presence of God and Call upon the Spirit. Find a calm and comfortable place where you will not be disturbed. Spend a few minutes “centering” yourself, releasing your anxieties to the Lord, consciously opening your heart to God, and inviting the Holy Spirit to speak into your life. Give yourself several minutes. Don’t rush. Once you feel at peace and your spirit is open, move to the next step.

Step 2: Lectio. S-l-o-w-l-y read the passage you have chosen. Read it as though you are hearing it read to you. Read it silently. Pause for periods of reflection. Then read it aloud slowly – then again, experimenting by reading it with different emphases and inflections.

Step 3: Meditatio. Mull over the text. Internalize the words. Listen for the phrase(s) or word(s) that seem to jump off the page. Turn them over and over in your mind. Reflect on why these words catch your attention, what they bring to mind, and what they mean for you this particular day. Jot down the meaningful word(s), noting associations, reactions, feelings, or challenges.

Step 4: Oratio. Turn your meditation from dialogue with yourself into a dialogue with God – a prayer. Share with God in all honesty your reflections, questions, or feelings. Offer your thanksgiving, confession, petitions, or intercessions as they arise within your soul during your dialogue with God. Don’t rush. Listen for God’s response and inner-nudging. Record your insights and inspirations.

Step 5: Contemplatio. Now rest your mental activity and trust yourself completely to God’s love and care. Relax in God’s presence. Pick a phrase from the text to which you can return again and again as you keep your attention focused on God. Allow this prayer-phase to sustain your connection to God throughout the rest of the day. After a few minutes of “practicing the presence of God” in this way, you might close with the Lord’s Prayer, a song, or a final moment of grateful silence.

Step 6: Capture in your in your journal, your meditation, prayer, and the new insights and possibilities God gave you. Consider one token or small act you can offer today in grateful response to God’s life-giving word to you during this special encounter with him through the scripture.

SOAP

SOAP is similar to Lectio Divina in a number of ways. It is an acronym that stands for four movements of Biblical reflection: S = Scripture; O = Observation; A = Application; P = Prayer.

This method really requires keeping a notebook or journal, as you record each part of your reflections (a “Life Journal” can be ordered that is designed for this – it can be ordered for \$7 plus shipping at <https://www.liferesources.cc/spiral-life-journal/> - or I can show you how to set up your own notebook).

If you have a “Life Journal,” there is a daily reading plan you can follow (typically a chapter in the Old Testament and a chapter in the New Testament, and maybe a Psalm). From the daily readings you select a small portion (3-5 verses?) to focus your reflection on.

S = Scripture. In your Life Journal or notebook, copy down word-for-word the verses that “float to the top” from all your readings and are speaking you to that day. I underline words or phrases that get my attention the most.

O = Observation. What do you observe about the verses? What questions do they raise? What do you find odd or challenging? Is there anything that is an “ah-ha!” insight – something that you hadn’t noticed or thought about before? How might you summarize what the text is saying? Write down your observations in a few sentences.

A = Application. Obviously, there is a reason that this particular text “floated to the top” today, and certain words and phrases spoke to you. Is there something going on in your life that might explain this connection? If you were to take seriously what you hear God saying to you through this text, what would you have to do, or how would your attitude have to change? Can you resolve to respond to this insight in some tangible way as you live your life today?

P = Prayer. In light of what the Holy Spirit is teaching you, write out a prayer, committing to God what you are planning to do in response.

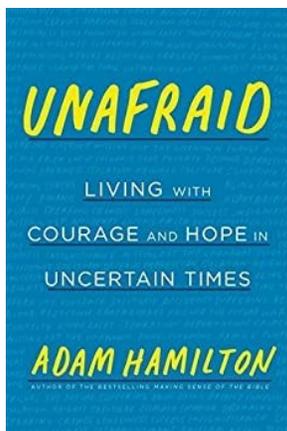
My friends, these are just two forms of devotional scripture study I practice and find helpful. I hope that, during these days we are separated from one another, we might use this time to draw ever closer to God. I promise that, if you will practice one of these devotional methods, you WILL draw closer to God. And, isn’t that the goal of the Christian life?

I love being your pastor,

John

BIBLE STUDY, SMALL GROUPS & BOOK CLUBS

- Pastor’s Bible Study on Acts resumes Tuesday, August 4 Via Zoom 10 a.m.



New Pastor's Book Club.

First Zoom Session, Wednesday, August 5, 10 a.m.

You are invited to join Pastor John's "Pastor's Book Club" as we are beginning to read together, **Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times** by Adam Hamilton.

You are asked to secure your own copy by ordering the book online.

Let Pastor John know if you would like to join the book club and he will send you the link and the discussion questions.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

As we begin to start gathering together in person the worship committee wants to ask you to covenant with one another to act in certain ways to ensure we are doing everything in our power to keep each other safe. We must work together towards this endeavor if we are to be successful. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was he responded with love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. This covenant is a way we can do both. Loving our neighbor is a form of loving God.

Here are the ways we are asking you to actively love your neighbor when you choose to return to in-person worship:

1. If you are sick, or even think you are sick, stay home.
2. Please take your temperature before coming to worship. If you are running a fever, stay home.
3. Wear a mask or face shield.
4. Practice physically distancing while present for the service. This means no handshakes or hugs. Yes it will be hard. Yes it will seem weird. Be reassured that it is only temporary. We will be able to embrace each other again soon.
5. If you become sick with COVID-19 after attending a service, contact the office and let us know. This is important to help us prevent an outbreak here. You can remain anonymous.

Christianity is not a solitary faith. We are called to be in community. In these days of COVID-19, the way we gather as community has changed. We do these things to show our love for one another. We do these things so we can all be present when our worship and fellowship life can return to its fullness. We do these things to show our love for God.

Here are the details of the outdoor worship service scheduled to begin on August 9.

Worship will be outside behind the Fellowship Hall in the fenced in area. Please enter through the gate on Main Street or Louisiana Ave.

1. The service starts at 9:00am
2. Chairs will be preset. Please do not move the chairs.
3. There will not be any singing. Other music will be limited based on the limitations of being outside.
4. There will be no after service coffee hour.
5. In case of rain, the service will be cancelled.
6. RSVP by Wednesday, August 5.

Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that there is a season for everything. We are currently in the season of change and refraining from certain activities. We are in a time of fasting from some of the things we love the most and that bring us the most joy. But be assured of God's faithfulness that this will only last for a season. We will again be in a season of healing, embracing and singing.

FINANCE
DIANN FLANIGAN, CHAIR

Below is our financial snapshot for May and June.

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>May 2020</u> Actual	Budget
Church Offering	\$ 20,227.05	\$ 18,558.67
Church Use	\$ 0.00	\$ 116.67
Div & Interest (Qtrly)	\$ 0.00	\$ 625.00
Thrift Shop	<u>\$ 216.00</u>	<u>\$ 8,333.33</u>
 Total Income	 <u>\$ 20,443.05</u>	 <u>\$ 27,633.67</u>

EXPENSES

Total Expenses	<u>\$ 23,394.83</u>	<u>\$ 27,634.01</u>
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<u>INCOME</u>	<u>June 2020</u> Actual	Budget
Church Offering	\$ 16,115.93	\$ 18,558.67
Church Use	\$ 0.00	\$ 116.67
Div & Interest (Qtrly)	\$ 2,272.86	\$ 625.00
Thrift Shop	<u>\$ 878.75</u>	<u>\$ 8,333.33</u>
 Total Income	 <u>\$ 19,267.54</u>	 <u>\$ 27,633.67</u>

EXPENSES

Total Expenses	<u>\$ 23,394.83</u>	<u>\$ 27,634.01</u>
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As you can see, our Church Offering is down from prior months, but at the same time our expenses are down, as our campus is a lot less active at this time. Once again, even though our Thrift Shop was closed and still is, there were a few items sold by "word of mouth." With your continued support, we will come out at the end of this pandemic in good financial shape! Thank you, thank you!

Please continue to pray for our healthcare providers, those on our prayer list, each other, and practice social distancing. Please pray for our SUMC leaders, District leaders and our Conference leaders as they make difficult decisions over the next few weeks.

Remember God is always walking in front of, beside and behind us. Thank you God!

Diann Flanigan, Finance Committee Chairperson



Food Farmacist is first UMW Presenter

Hello all,

Praying you are all well and safe.

I am excited to be working with Megan that we can Zoom our first United Methodist Women's meeting on **September 11th at 10:00 a.m.** I would like to offer this program to the entire church also. If you do not have zoom on your computer, please contact Megan for assistance. Please see below the topics that will be addressed.

Blessings Ginger

TITLE: *Live Healthy and Let Food Be Your Medicine*

For people who want to be healthy, happy, and energetic.

SPECIAL GUEST: Tracey Powers, *Live A Healthy Happy Energetic Life!*

Are you ready to stop feeling sick and tired?

Join Tracey Powers to discover how you can maximize, minimize, and prioritize the "what" to have energy to be productive, manage your stress, and get restorative sleep.

In this *a-ha* packed session you will learn:

- The culprits keeping you sick!
- The shocking deception in processed foods the government doesn't want you to know or believe!
- The 4 simple changes you can make to improve your health!

And most importantly, how to have your health back in your control!

You deserve to live the life you want; full of energy, healthier, and happier!

Be an active participant in your children's and grandchildren's lives!

If you need the Zoom link, contact Sharon at the church office and she will Email the Zoom information.

S.johnson@sebastianumc.com

Thursday Prayer Time At SUMC



Do you sometimes struggle with intentional prayer? You get your Bible, perhaps a journal and cup of coffee, the pray list from church and sit down to pray. If you are like me, soon I remember the dishwasher needs emptied or I need to get bills paid and cards written before the mail is here, or I am thinking about the recent news about Covid and/or concerns I have about family. Before I know it, I put my journal down and promise myself to sit down for intentional prayer "when I can concentrate better."

Well, I am here to invite you to a program where your personal, intentional prayer and meditation is available to you right in our very own sanctuary. I have been so blessed by the Thursday morning prayer time in the sanctuary. There is soft music playing, the altar set out for communion, seating so social distancing is practiced and prayer prompts on the screen if you want to use them.

Bring your journal if you want, close your eyes if you want and communicate with your God. You can just sit in silence in our beautiful sanctuary and bathe in the spirit of Peace. Stay for 15 minutes or 2 hours, come and go as you please. Every Thursday, 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Wear a mask!!

Diann Flanigan

New Sermon Series, Beginning August 2



Beginning Sunday, August 2nd, Pastor John will begin preaching a sermon series featuring a look at each of the twelve men Jesus called to follow

The Thrift Shop Task Force Team will have a zoom meeting on August 5th to discuss the re-opening of the Thrift Shop.

Thrift Shop volunteers have been working behind the scenes to clean, sort and be ready to open.

The beginning of September is our goal opening date, and this will also depend on being able to protect our volunteers from COVID-19 exposure, as well as how safe our wonderful volunteer workers feel about returning to work at the Thrift Shop.

Just an update

Your Thrift Shop Task Force



Happy August Anniversary

Tom & Diann Flanigan	August 15
John & Margit Hollifield	August 21
George & Carol Decker	August 27
Wayne & Ann Marie Van House	August 29

Happy August Birthday

Dot Judah	August 9
Dave Barry	August 10
Al Conniff	August 13
John Fox	August 16
Vic Grabis	August 18
Megan Mash	August 18
Janice Ertel	August 21
Linda Ott	August 25
Peggy Dejonge	August 26
Janice Marx	August 25
Joyce Marr	August 29
Barbara Farrington	August 31



Thursday
Come & Go Prayer
In the Sanctuary
 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.



MASKS REQUIRED
& STANDARD COVID - 19
PRACTICES FOLLOWED



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Pastor John Gill
Pastor's cell 321-794-0010
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Church Office: 772-589-5230
Thrift Shop Direct Line: 772-388-0405
sebastianumc@bellsouth.net



Do unto others as we would have them do to us....with kindness, and goodness, and Love,
These messages so clearly heard from our Heavenly God above...
In the Scriptures... it states so clearly... 'the greatest of these is Love'!
'Love thy neighbor as yourself'... Though we may disagree, it's important to see that the difference is to be...
We are unique... like different colored leaves...swinging in the breeze...
We are Blessed to be you and me!