
FEBRUARY 2021
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The Messenger

St. John's United Church of Christ



Message from the Pastor

Dear Friends,

A song came to mind recently; perhaps you'll remember it, one by Carole King. There's a verse in refrain that goes:

“Been so long, I can't
remember when
I've been to Canaan
And I want to go back again
Been so long, I'm living till then
'Cause I've been to Canaan and I
I won't rest until I go back again”

Message from the Pastor

Ms. King was a favorite songster of mine in the 1970's. Turns out she wrote many songs in the 1960's as well, but I really want to go back to a couple of songs written many, many centuries earlier. One of them is attributed to Moses and the Israelite community he led out of captivity, found at Exodus 15:1-18. Here's a bit: *"You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established."*

They're singing their story of rescue and deliverance, their understanding that God had called them out of Egypt and to a promised land called Canaan. Yes, it is the same place and story that inspired Carole King. And yes, I believe, it is the same feeling expressed in her words "I've been to Canaan and I want to go back again." That's the feeling, but it's not a longing for place. It's an expression of the breathtaking experience of intimate, loving relationship with God. It's a testimony to the real and felt indwelling of God-with-us, Emmanuel. And this is a fundamental part of the faith tradition we share with the songwriter and song-singers, our faith foundation if you will.

The time of transit from Egypt to Canaan is often looked upon as an interim period in our modern tradition. You may (will) hear me refer to it again during this period we share now. Because interim periods occur throughout the history of faith communities, the people of faith of Israel remembered God's promise in their hymnal; from Psalms 105:8-11:

"He is mindful of his covenant forever,
of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance.'"

I trust God is with us now, in these unsettled times, and I encourage you to keep the faith along with me, Carole King, and the people of faith for all of time.

Peace always,

Pastor Tom

February Devotional

Luke 1:79

“to shine on those living in darkness
and
in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

This scripture is from the description of Zechariah’s Song where he announces the name of the son of his old age, John the Baptist. Gabriel came to him to tell him his wife was pregnant with the child that would “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17)

It’s a wonderful old story. Zechariah was a temple priest who had been praying to have a child for a very long time when finally he gets word that his prayers will be answered. Of course, he doesn’t believe it. He and his wife are old. For years he had been praying to have a child. Finally his prayer was answered and he didn’t believe it. As a result of his disbelieving Gabriel, he was struck mute until the naming ceremony at the temple. Once he recognized the name the child was to be given, he could once again speak. His praise of God is eloquent and his prophecy of what John would be was joyful.

I cannot imagine what I’d think if someone told me that I would be the one who would shine on those living in darkness. And I would be the one who would help guide feet to the path of peace. I’ll just bet I wouldn’t believe it. It’s pretty hard to swallow isn’t it? What would it even mean?

The first question I’d ask is, who lives in the dark in our world? In our country? Those jobless, homeless, hopeless, and voiceless, I suppose live in the dark. How can I shine a light for them and how can I guide their feet to the path of peace?

Jesus was pretty clear about it. In Mark 12:31, he said “Love your neighbor as yourself”. Such a simple concept . . . but so very hard to do.

February Devotional

We've spent the last few years looking through lowered eyes at most of our "neighbors". If they didn't think just like us they might be suspect. It's been especially bad this last year when we just can't get out safely to visit our family and friends, much less have casual conversation with strangers. Our world view has gotten smaller and more frightening.

The truth is that we are Jesus' envoys here, we are the envoys of "the light of the world" as John 8:12 puts it. And we are the peacemakers, as Matthew 5:9 reminds us. It's up to each of us to open our hearts to each other and help each other stand in the light. It's up to each of us to try to be peacemakers.

It takes all of us, not just collectively but individually, to do our part. Each of us has to show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness. When each of us sees ourselves as envoys of Jesus in the world then we can all sing together, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."

Dreama Terrill

Congregational Life & Care

Congregational Life and Care met in January and continues to make contact with members through our phone tree. If you have a change in residence, address, phone number, or any other information you would like the church to have, please email Melissa at office@stjohnsrichmond.org.

We also send birthday cards to our members. If for some reason you have not been receiving one, please contact Betsy Bighinatti at 804-502-1007.

The Church is preparing for Lent, and there is other information in *The Messenger* relating to this. In preparation for that, we will be celebrating on Sunday, February 14, at our Zoom fellowship, Valentine's Day, and Shrove Tuesday. Shrove Tuesday is traditionally marked by feasting and celebration which precedes the Lenten season. It will be a celebration of hearts, beads and masks. Please plan to show off your attire. Our Sanctuary will be decorated for the occasion.

Hopefully as the spring comes, we might learn if our Richmond Squirrels are going to have a season and allow fans in the stadium. If they do, we will plan to attend as a group as in the past. Hopefully, perhaps in late summer, we might be able to have a church picnic. Please stay safe.

Our next meeting is scheduled for February 21st after church.

Guest Preacher:

February 2021

February 28, 2021 - Scott Siefert

Scott is a member of St. John's United Church of Christ and a Member-in Discernment in the Potomac Association. He recently relocated to St Paul, MN after living in the Richmond area for over 20 years. He is currently doing a pastoral internship at St. Mark's United Church of Christ in Bloomington, MN. He earned a Masters of Divinity degree from Union Presbyterian Seminary and has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of Maine. Although distanced from us in Minnesota, Scott continues to lead our engaging Wednesday night Bible Study remotely. In February we will be tackling the challenging final book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

February Mission of the Month: Health Brigade

In June of 2016 one of the pillars of the Richmond health community changed its name after 50 years. Formerly known as Fan Free Clinic, this iconic health care provider opened as a small community clinic in 1970 patterned after San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury's neighborhood free clinic. It was an attempt by Richmonder's to reflect to the community the halcyonic time in US history of the late 60's and early 70's. The idea was in peace all people should have access to health care. Fan Free was early responders to the world's AIDS pandemic, championed women's access to oral contraceptives, and opened its doors first welcoming the transgender population before they had become more mainstream. They also expanded their free mental health services well before headlines about mass shootings became unfortunately commonplace.

Now known as Health Brigade, they continue their 50 year history of using an integrated person-centered care model, offering coordinated services for a healthy mind, body and spirit because "we believe that EVERYONE, especially those least served, deserve quality care".

St. John's has supported Health Brigade in the past and once again, in February, we will be highlighting it as our Mission of the Month. Remember Health Brigade has a 50 year history of serving 'the least of these' in our community. As Christians we too are called to do just that.

Please give generously to Health Brigade this month to help, in love and service, to continue to minister to the needs of the Richmond community.



February Announcements

Do you need food, or know someone who does?

As the pandemic continues, and people may be quarantined or feel unsafe going to the store, some of us may need help in maintaining food security, or know others who do. As you know, we are blessed with many terrific cooks at St. John's, and many have offered to provide meals to those who may need assistance. If you are having trouble getting to the store, would like to have some freshly-made food delivered, or know someone in need, please contact Jeff Jacobs at jwjacobs9@gmail.com or (202) 361-9887. Likewise, if you are able to be "on-call" to respond to a need for food, and have not already let Jeff know, please contact him to know of your availability.

CWS Richmond 2020 CROP Walk Update

Wonderful news! As of January 21, 2021, the total funds raised for the 2020 Richmond *virtual* CROP Walk were \$28, 102.42. Thank you to all who joined the St. John's UCC Team and to those who sponsored us. We hope to be able to soon report just how much our St. John's team raised for this 70 +year-old global and local mission to address hunger. Preliminary plans for the 2021 Walk are focused on November 7th or 14th for a Walk date. Stay tuned....

Ashes and Ash Wednesday Service on February 17th

In preparation for Ash Wednesday, which is February 17th, small containers of consecrated palm ashes will be available for pick-up at the back door of the church beginning on Friday, February 12th. In addition, on Wednesday the 17th, Pastor Tom will be in front of the church distributing ashes from noon until 3 pm, if you'd like to drive by and pick them up. If you are unable to pick up ashes at church, but would like to have them delivered to you, please contact Betsy Bighinatti (at Grandude42@aol.com or (804) 502-1007) or Jeff Jacobs (at jwjacobs9@gmail.com or (202) 361-9887).

Pastor Tom will conduct an Ash Wednesday service by Zoom at 6:30 p.m. on February 17th, involving use of the previously distributed ashes. Details will be included in the upcoming e-Blasts, but please plan to use the usual Sunday worship service Zoom login.

February Announcements

Lenten Worship

The Worship and Music Committee has been working with Pastor Tom Gerstenlauer in planning worship for the season of Lent. Mark your calendars for Ash Wednesday, February 17th and please read your Eblasts and other communications from St. John's because we have a special observance of Ash Wednesday planned.

We are also planning a Palm/Passion Sunday service for March 28th that will include a scripted dramatic reading of the Passion story from the Gospel of Mark. If you would like to have a part in this Passion narrative or volunteer to be part of the musical accompaniment to this narrative or volunteer to be part of the musical accompaniment to this story, please contact Beverly Lindsey at revbevlindey@gmail.com or (804) 275-7165.

Pastor Tom is imagining a special Zoom observance of Maundy Thursday for this year. Stay tuned in and turned on to further information about our Lenten journey together.

In Sympathy

We extend our condolences to the family and friends of Laura Donart, Chris Hagan's mother, who died on January 19th at age 96, in Boise, Idaho. May she know the peace and love of God's perpetual light.

We extend our condolences to the family and friends of Melody Walden, sister of Virginia Clark, who died on Sunday after a long illness at the age of 56. May she know the peace and love of God's blessing.

Wednesday Bible Study

All are invited to attend our Wednesday Night Bible Study from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Zoom. Join other members of our beloved community to study the Word. All our invited and affirmed. It is hard to get out and be with others in this time of pandemic and this is a great way to get with others in a time of study and fellowship. You will be welcomed.

Beginning on February 3rd all are invited to begin a study on the Book of Revelation. We will be using the Kerygma Study Guide: *The Book of Revelation: Visions for the Church in Crisis*. Kerygma says, "Studying Revelation in context clarifies its message to an early church facing severe crisis. Its relevance for today is not in prophetic visions, but in its affirmation of victory and hope."

We would love to have you in our group. If you have any questions on the study, please contact Scott Siefert at (804) 350-0826, or email him at sesiefert@gmail.com. We will be putting in a group order on the guides to save on shipping. Please contact Scott or Jeff Jacobs if you would like to place your order.

Note: There will be no Bible Study on Ash Wednesday.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83862586668?
pwd=eUxGQjlrCtsbzVteHc2RHhYTjFJdz09#success](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83862586668?pwd=eUxGQjlrCtsbzVteHc2RHhYTjFJdz09#success)

Meeting ID: 838 6258 6668

Passcode: 003903

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,83862586668#,,,,,0#,,003903# US (Germantown)

+13126266799,,83862586668#,,,,,0#,,003903# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

We welcome anyone dialing in on the phone who wants to be recognized to introduce themselves since we can only see phone numbers on the screen.

February 2020 Calendar

Sunday, February 7th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship with Communion by Zoom

Sunday, February 7th, 4:00 p.m. - Anti-racism Vigil in front of St. John's

Monday, February 8th, 6:30 p.m. - Church Council Zoom meeting

Wednesday, February 10th, 2 p.m. - Worship and Music Committee meeting by Zoom

Wednesday, February 10th, 7 p.m. - Bible Study by Zoom

Sunday, February 14th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship by Zoom

Sunday, February 14th, after Worship, Birthday/Valentine's Day/Mardi Gras celebration

Sunday, February 14th, 4:00 p.m. - Anti-racism Vigil in front of St. John's

Wednesday, February 17th, 2 p.m. - Worship and Music Committee meeting by Zoom

Wednesday, February 17th, 6:30 p.m. - Ash Wednesday observance (pick up ashes beforehand)

Sunday, February 21st, 10:00 a.m. - Worship by Zoom

Sunday, February 21st, 11:15 a.m. - Congregational Life & Care Committee and Missions & Outreach Committee Zoom meetings after worship

Sunday, February 21st, 4:00 p.m. - Anti-racism Vigil in front of St. John's

Wednesday, February 24th, 2 p.m. - Worship and Music Committee meeting by Zoom

Wednesday, February 24th, 7 p.m. - Bible Study by Zoom

Sunday, February 28th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship by Zoom

Sunday, February 28th, 4:00 p.m. - Anti-racism Vigil in front of St. John's

February Birthdays

February 7 - Griffin Allen
February 10 - Kristina Gilbert
February 11 - Danny Trent
February 12 - Brent Trefsgar
February 17 - Helena DeLigt
February 18 - Linda Stiegler
February 21 - Bryan Totty
February 23 - Virginia Clark
February 24 - Bud Higgins
February 24 - Theresa Pollock
February 25 - Shirley Townsend
February 26 - Cheryl Goode
February 27 - Bettie Staton



St. John's United Church of Christ

St. John's United Church of Christ is a diverse community forming a united congregation, seeking to grow our faith, share it with others, and serve God's people wherever the need is present. We are living God's love and all are invited!!!

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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