
JULY 2020, VOLUME 33.7

The Messenger

St. John's United Church of Christ



Message from Dreama Terrill, the Church Council President

In 2004, the UCC started a radical ad campaign called the “Stillspeaking” campaign. The understanding is this: we believe that God didn’t stop talking to God’s followers when the last testament was written in the early years after Christ’s ministry, but continues to speak and lead us with a powerful voice today. The logo for that campaign was a black comma on a red background, signifying that we should never put a period where God puts a comma. One of the tag lines was “Our faith is 2000 years old, our thinking is not.” In fact, we here at St. John’s use another one of those tag lines every single Sunday: “No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.”

I love that tag line. I think we at St. John’s all love it. When I hear it I feel like I’m coming home, because it speaks volumes about how we feel and how we strive to live our lives.

Seeing one of those UCC television ads was the reason I came to St. John’s. It’s called the “Bouncer Ad”. It’s on our St. John’s website now because it is still a powerful message of the extravagant welcome the UCC, and specifically our St. John’s congregation, extends to the community.

Continued

A Message from the Church Council President

And while God calls us into community and wants us to extravagantly welcome anyone who shows up, it's not the only thing we as Followers of the Way are supposed to do.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says "19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus doesn't say huddle inside a building. He directs us to go out into our community, to share the Good News of our faith, to do justice, and to minister to the less fortunate.

In the book of Acts, Luke describes Pentecost like this: Acts 2:2-4 *And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

God's Holy Spirit dragged them out of their "safe space" and blew them bodily out into the streets to begin the work Jesus told them to do. "Go, witness, and teach."

My friends, it is my belief that St. John's is at a Pentecost moment, along with every other church in our nation. The pandemic has kept us closeted, shaken with fear, and our eyes have been opened to the devastation of our society around us. It has reminded us that if we are silent we are complicit to the ravages of a society in which not everyone counts equally. Our voice in the public square is vital to our calling as a church to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus saw value in what was called at the time "the least of these" and called them back into community. Let St. John's here and now continue to commit to the idea of community and justice for all. Let our voices be heard in the public square, let the signs of our commitment be our lives.

God's Holy Spirit is blowing us out into the streets, my friends. I know that it's scary, especially during the current pandemic, but God is with us. Let us allow that Spirit to blow us out into the streets and into the loving witness for God that Jesus calls us to be.

Congregational Life and Care

We want everyone to know how much they are valued in our beloved community of St. John's. The Reverend Beverly Lindsey is available for Pastoral Care. You can reach her by using her home telephone number (804) 275-7165 or email her at revbevlinsey@gmail.com. Please reach out to her, myself or any member of the committee, or the church office if you are in need of support whether it is spiritual, emotional, or physical.

These are difficult times. We have the pandemic which continues to keep us more isolated. We have the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic which causes many of us to have feelings of insecurity and instability. We continue to fight against systematic racism and societal inequities that have been with us for hundreds of years but are clearly still right with us today. This causes more anxiety and soul searching to live in ways where we try to live into the greatest commandment call to love God with all of our hearts, soul, and mind and our neighbors as we love ourselves. I think in these tough times we sometimes need a special reminder to love ourselves when we have these feelings caused by isolation, insecurity, instability, social justice, and inequity.

We continue to be in a time of transition here at St. John's. I want to thank everyone that was able to attend the listening session on the departure of Rev. Higgins that was hosted by our Associate Conference Minister, Marvin Silver. Wounds can heal over time but it requires hard work to deal with feelings of grief and all of the different stages that come with that process.

We miss spending time with each other in our beautiful sanctuary and look forward to a time when we gather again. Right now we still are hopeful to open the church for regular onsite services after Labor Day and we will be looking at appropriate events to celebrate. Please let us know of ideas you may have for us to be in community. I long for the time when we will be together and be able to be physically together.

We want to hear from you. Please reach out and let us know how you are and how we can be a blessing for each other. Our collective hug tanks are empty and need to be refilled.

Blessings with grace and peace,

Scott Siefert
Chair of Congregational Life and Care
sesiefert@gmail.com;
804.350.0826.

July Devotion

Job 38 1-8

38 And now, finally, GOD answered Job from the eye of a violent storm. He said:

2-6 "Why do you confuse the issue?

Why do you talk without knowing what you're talking about?

Pull yourself together, Job!

Up on your feet! Stand tall!

I have some questions for you,

and I want some straight answers.

Where were you when I created the earth?

Tell me, since you know so much!

Who decided on its size? Certainly you'll know that!

Who came up with the blueprints and measurements?

How was its foundation poured,

and who set the cornerstone,...."

There's a real tongue lashing going on here, isn't there?

The Old Testament story of Job is what we have come to call parables --in the New Testament. It's part of the oral tradition that Solomon's scribes went around the countryside gathering up. Scholars think it was originally written down in about the 6th or 7th century BCE. It's one of those "sitting around the campfire" stories when the question of "Where did we come from" comes up.

Briefly, Job is doing pretty well; he's got a family, he's got what passed for riches in that time, he is what is described as "pious", very religious, keeping all the commandments, being a good neighbor, and following the ritual laws of the time. But for some reason, we aren't told why, God allows Lucifer to test him. In that test he loses everything -- family, home, crops, flocks, and finally his health. But Job stands firm for God.

Enter Job's "friends". They see him there by the side of the road, suffering, and decide "Man, old Job must have done something wrong, otherwise God wouldn't be testing him."

With all of their accusations, he begins to doubt himself. After all, don't we think "if others think that way it must be right"?

Continued

July Devotion

Consider, if we see some person stopped alongside the road with the police all around, maybe they are in handcuffs with several officers looming over that person, don't we immediately assume that person did something wrong? Don't we judge them instead of assuming they are innocent? We may want to say it's human nature, but is it really? Or is it our society causing us to think that way?

Maybe we see someone in the grocery store using their EBT card (former known as food stamps) and immediately judge what's in their basket because there must be something wrong with them if they need to use food stamps. And if they are using food stamps, they have no right to be buying steak or have a cell phone like that, do they?

As hard as it may be to overcome, as often as we say we aren't doing it, our society is judgmental. When someone holds up a sign that says "BLACK LIVES MATTER," almost immediately someone responds "ALL RIGHTS MATTER," and of course they do. But as long as any part of our society is treated less favorably than another part of our society, then obviously not all lives matter. Pointing out the aspects of our society where one group doesn't matter as much as another isn't saying that we don't all matter. What we are saying is either Everyone Counts, or No One Counts.

Maybe I should have chosen Matthew 7:1-5 - Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Just as Job's "friends" made him feel like he had done something dreadfully wrong with all their judgment, we can make others feel hopeless, or helpless, or worthless when we assume we know what is going on in their lives. I really don't want a tongue lashing from GOD, and I doubt that any of us would.

Prayer

Dear God, please help me get over the tendency to judge others for being different than me. Please help me to be reminded that how I treat others is how others will treat me. Help my words to be kind when speaking about anyone I don't know and always remind me that I don't know what battles they may be fighting today just to breathe.

Guest Pastors in July

While church is closed to limit the spread of COVID-19, we will be gathering for worship remotely. Participation can be done by telephone, computer, or smartphone using Zoom.

We are blessed to have the following guest pastors leading worship during the month of July:

The Rev. Beverly Lancaster Lindsey and Scott Siefert - July 5th

The Rev. Beverly Lancaster Lindsey is a retired United Church of Christ pastor. She served as Pastor of the Congregational & Baptist Church of Chester, NH (UCC & ABC) for 20 years. Her ministry there included chaplaincy to the town of Chester and a small college in the town. While in New Hampshire, she enjoyed doing annual rites of Blessings of the Animals and Blessings of the Motorcycles. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Music from Salem College, Winston-Salem, NC and her Masters of Divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School. She has served as Moderator for two Associations within the UCC and chaired a Pastoral Search Committee as a laywoman. Prior to entering seminary, she had a 17-year career in banking with a specialty in consumer lending. She and her husband, Charles and their cats, Sassy and Jill, moved to Richmond to be close to family. Beverly's favorite go to happy place is sitting on a dock in Lake Champlain, VT reading a good mystery novel.

Scott Siefert grew up in the hills of Western Pennsylvania and has lived in Richmond for over 20 years. He has a degree in Business Administration from the University of Maine and recently received a Master's of Divinity from Union Presbyterian Seminary. He is a Member in Discernment in the United Church of Christ Potomac Association. He is an active member here at St John's and currently is Vice President of Church Council.

Guest Pastors in July

Billy Poarch - July 12th

Billy has resided in Virginia his entire life moving from Suffolk to Richmond to attend UR where he graduated in 1982 with a degree in Business Administration. Appointed as the first CEO of Area Congregations Together in Service (ACTS), an interfaith organization working to prevent homelessness in the Greater Richmond Area in 2011 after serving in the Commissioner's office of VA Dept of Social Service as a gubernatorial appointee during the Kaine Administration. Volunteer experience has included Museum District Association Board of Directors, ROSMY development committee; and St. John's United Church of Christ where he served on Church Council as president and led the church through the Open and Affirming process.

Daniel Martin - July 19th

Daniel Martin lives in Richmond, VA with his family. He is serving on church council for St. John's and is currently the Director of Digital Outreach for the church.

The Rev. Dr. Valerie Carter - July 26th

The Rev. Dr Valerie Carter Smith will be joining us this week and giving the sermon. She is the Executive Director of the Women's Missionary Union of Virginia. She received her Masters of Divinity Degree at Virginia Union and her Doctorate in Ministry from the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond.

July Mission of the Month: Diversity Richmond & Side by Side



DIVERSITY
RICHMOND

To the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer+ community, their families, friends and allies, Diversity Richmond is a catalyst, a voice, a place and a resource that enriches and champions our diverse community, because we aspire for a vibrant, inclusive Richmond where inequality does not exist.

Diversity, Richmond, is a St. John's mission of the month for July, 2020. Diversity Richmond envisions a community where LGBTQ+ citizens are treated with respect and dignity, and their unique gifts are championed and celebrated. Its services include providing space and support for art and events, forums for reflection and communication, grants to promote LGBTQ+ programs, and a media voice for the LGBTQ+ community



For more than twenty five years, Side by Side has provided a safe place for the LGBTQ+ youth in Virginia to define themselves, belong to a community, and be themselves. They offer support groups for local youth ages 11-20. Programs include mental health counseling and training for schools, faith communities ,and youth in Virginia.

Wednesday Bible Study

All are invited to attend our Wednesday Night Bible Study sessions from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Zoom. We are exhibiting a powerful spirit and energy as our beloved community is coming together to study the Word. Just like our worship all our invited and affirmed (even if you weren't able to attend previous sessions).

Our focus on the Gospel of Matthew. It is the featured Gospel this year in the Revised Common Lectionary and is considered one of the most important and influential books in the Bible. It tells the story of Jesus' birth, life, and death, and resurrection. It is the "teaching" gospel as it addresses some of the most foundational Christian themes including righteousness, justice, and forgiveness.

If you have any questions please contact Scott Siefert at (804) 350-0826, or email him at sesiefert@gmail.com.

Join Zoom Meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84267837476?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84267837476?pwd=LOUxWjN5cHVjandOYXdkLOdoU0t5dz09)

[pwd=LOUxWjN5cHVjandOYXdkLOdoU0t5dz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84267837476?pwd=LOUxWjN5cHVjandOYXdkLOdoU0t5dz09)

Or telephone +1 301 715 8592

Meeting ID: 842 6783 7476

Password: 690409

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.

July Announcements

Church Council Officers Elected

At its regular monthly meeting in June, the Church Council elected the following officers to serve until May 31, 2021:

President: Dreama Terrill (DreamaTerrill@yahoo.com; (804) 218-5530)

Vice President: Scott Siefert (sesiefert@gmail.com; (804) 350-0826)

Treasurer: Betsy Bighinatti (grandude42@aol.com; (804) 502-1007)

Secretary: Jeff Jacobs (jwjacobs9@gmail.com; (202) 361-9887)

The officers and all newly-elected members of Church Council, Trustees, Endowment Board and Audit Committee will be formally installed during the worship service on Sunday, July 12th.

All are reminded that meetings of the Church Council are open to all church members and friends. The next regular meeting will be held by Zoom on Monday, July 13th, at 6:30 pm. The Zoom information follows:

Time: July 13, 2020; 6:30 PM Eastern Time

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8446524667>

Telephone: +1 (301) 715-8592

Meeting ID: 844 652 4667#

Interim Pastor Search Committee Appointed

Members of an Interim Pastor Search Committee have been appointed to work with the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC to identify and evaluate candidates for that position. The members are: Rev. Beverly Lindsey (Chair), Gary Beasley, Elisabeth Burnette, Daniel Martin and Terrie Pendleton. We hold them in our prayers for success in fulfilling this important task. The first committee meeting will be on Monday, July 13th, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

July Announcements

Listening Session Regarding Pastor Linda's Departure

On Sunday, June 28th, approximately 30 members and friends of St. John's participated in a listening session regarding Pastor Linda's departure moderated by UCC Central Atlantic Conference Associated Minister Rev. Marvin Silver.

Participants had an opportunity to express their feelings about Pastor Linda's departure as well as their feelings and hopes for St. John's future. If anyone was unable to participate, or would like to discuss this matter further, please feel free to reach out to any Church Council members or officers.

Finance Update

As the first half of the year has just ended, financial reports indicate that both expenses and income have been somewhat reduced as we have been out of the building during the pandemic. Nonetheless, construction and maintenance activities have continued, and cleaning and disinfection efforts will be ongoing in anticipation of being able to resume church services in the sanctuary by this fall. Mid-year financial statements will be sent out in the next several weeks, and all are encouraged to continue their donations for the support of church ministries. As a reminder, checks may still be sent to the church at 503 Stuart Circle, Richmond, VA 23220, and online giving options are available through the church website at <https://bit.ly/stjohnsdonations>. Donations may be made both for general church support and for church missions, which this month are Side by Side, a local organization that provides support for LGBTQ youth, and Diversity Richmond, which provides support (including meeting space, programming, food and shelter for the homeless) for the local LGBTQ community. If you have any questions about church finances or online donations, please feel free to contact Stewardship Chair Jeff Jacobs at jwjacobs9@gmail.com or (202) 361-9887.

July Announcements

Pastoral Care

While we are undertaking our search for an Interim Pastor, Rev. Beverly Lindsey is available for pastoral care. You can reach her at (804) 275-7165.

Do you need food?

During the pandemic, many people are having difficulty getting to the store or preparing food due to health concerns or illness. If you need food, or know someone who does, please contact Scott Siefert at sesiefert@gmail.com or (804) 350-0826.

Renovations Update

While we have been largely out of the church building, work has continued on a number of renovations. When you return to worship in the sanctuary, you will find 14 parking spaces reserved for St. John's along the alleyway between the church and the adjacent apartment building (where the parking lot used to be), and 26 reserved spaces (marked "CH") accessible from the alley under the apartment building. Work on restoring air conditioning and heating to the sanctuary and fellowship hall is almost completed. The elevator has been upgraded, and a new chairlift has been installed on the stairs leading from the back parking area to the parlor. The front doors facing Stuart Circle are being repaired and refinished. New, energy-efficient lighting is being installed throughout the church. And other improvements will be announced next month.

July 2020 Calendar

Wednesday, July 1st, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, July 1st, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, July 2nd, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, July 5th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

Wednesday, July 8th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, July 8th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, July 9th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, July 12th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

Monday, July 13th, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. - Interim Pastor Search Committee Meeting

Monday, July 13th, 6:30 p.m. - Church Council Meeting

Wednesday, July 15th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, July 15th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, July 16th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, July 19th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

Wednesday, July 22nd, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, July 22nd, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, July 23rd, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

Sunday, July 26th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship

July Birthdays

July 2nd - Richard Bighinatti

July 2nd - Bill Watson

July 4th - Lynda Merry

July 6th - Camie Allen

July 7th - Erin Burnette

July 10th - Sal Anselmo

July 10th - Wyndham Anderson

July 20th - Will Atkinson

July 21st - Lynn Snyder

July 29th - Arthur Dewey



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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