

The Connection Point

February 2024 - Vol. 2, No. 2



On Saturday, January 20th, Fellowship hosted a women’s retreat in conjunction with Vista Ridge United Methodist Church in Lewisville. We had over 70 women register for the retreat, a 40% increase from last year! During the retreat, we heard from Sarah Roberts, an Ordained Deacon in the Methodist church, who spoke about finding joy in the everyday and seemingly mundane things around us. In addition, six different speakers presented small group sessions to choose from, including sessions on parenting skills, digital photography, area resources on aging, SoulCore (a form of yoga), Enneagrams, and the difference between joy and happiness, as well as an extra optional session on self-defense led by Pastor Bill. The women attending the event also donated new bras and underwear to support Denton County Friends of the Family.

This year’s women’s retreat was a great success! Please mark your calendars for next year’s retreat, which will be held on Saturday, January 25, 2025.

What’s Inside:



O Wondrous Sight!

O Vision Fair

by Scott Scheetz

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Upcoming Events:



Mardi Gras Celebration

February 13, 2024

5 pm - Legends’ Hall



Ash Wednesday

Organ Recital and Worship

Service

February 14, 2024

6:30 pm - Sanctuary

A Note from Pastor Bill

Have you ever struggled and overthought something to the point that you simply didn't know what to do next? Yes, that's me in this present moment. To be honest, I am a couple of days late in submitting this newsletter article. Why? I've written it more than once. I've totally changed the entire article more than once. I have erased the entire article and started fresh more than once. There is so much in our world that demands a pastoral voice, not one of complicity, but one of awakening. What should I say? Perhaps I am struggling with some writer's block. Perhaps, I feel so overwhelmed with the world that after 20 years of ministry, I feel that I join so many pastors in feeling ineffective. Do you ever feel this way?

In my personal devotionals, I mix scripture with prayer. I love praying hymns and Psalms. I also love the perspective of others, such as poetry. This morning in my devotional time, I read one of my favorite poems from one of my favorite poets - Mary Oliver, called The Summer Day.

*Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean—
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up
and down—
who is gazing around with her enormous and
complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly
washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the
fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.*



*Tell me, what else should I
have done?
Doesn't everything die at
last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to
do
with your one wild and precious life?*
—Mary Oliver

I love the way Mary Oliver mixes nature with faith in her subtle and provoking way. It seems to snap me back to reality when I get lost in my own head and challenges me to see life through another's eyes. Perhaps a lesson for us all in ministry - to see the world through another's eyes.

We have had so very much that is continually thrown at us - floods caused from burst water pipes, a growing hostile and violent world, and fear seems to surround us. I find such comfort in reflecting on a wonder that is a grasshopper as related to the mystery of prayer. It reminds me of the great complexity of God and yet the subtle confidence that we rest in the hands of a loving and grace-filled God.

As we approach Lent and an election cycle in our country, we will be bombarded with so much misinformation that we will feel utterly lost. As we continue to see violence erupt in our world and the disregard for another's humanity, we may feel utterly lost. Clinging to our faith seems like an impossibility at times. Sharing our faith with others is certainly a luxury we are too fearful to maintain. Perhaps this is a primary reason the Christian church is in a state of decline. Perhaps for many they feel the Christian church no longer makes a difference in individual and collective lives. What a shame!

Do we give up? Do we lose our voice? We seem to fall into predictable patterns that the original disciples found themselves in. These tumultuous times remind me of the following scripture from Mark 4: 37-40

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he [Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And waking up, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Be silent! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

As we move into the season of Lent, journey with Jesus, and continue to move throughout the year, let's not forget our voice. Let's remember to rise above the chaos and extremism. Let's remember who we are and whose we are! We are beloved children of God! We are Jesus' disciples! Jesus speaks to the chaos in our lives and in our world through us - "Peace, be still!"

Let's challenge ourselves to be MORE in 2024! More Christian. More Jesus-like. More loving. More caring. More filled with grace. More! Let's ponder how we live

into that final verse that Mary Oliver wrote - "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Yes, life is precious and seems to pass by so quickly. What will your answer be?

Let's fill this church! Let's fill our pews! In the midst of such world chaos, let's find our voice! Let's remind ourselves how to invite others to experience the amazing and loving community of faith we share. We can do this! We are family! We are Fellowship!

Grace and peace,
Pastor Bill

Music Ministry

The month of February has one of my favorite Sundays in the liturgical calendar; Transfiguration Sunday. This Sunday falls on the last Sunday before Lent, serving as a transition between the Epiphany season and Lent. It celebrates the story of Christ's transfiguration on a mountain top as found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In Matthew 16, we find that Jesus and his disciples have just entered Caesarea of Phillipi. People were asking who he was. Some thought he was Elijah or one of the other prophets. Jesus then spent time teaching and foretelling His death and resurrection to the disciples.

After six days, Jesus, along with Peter, James, and John, climb a mountain, [*most likely Mount Hermon just outside of Caesarea of Phillipi, but fifth-century custom identifies the mountain as Mount Tabor in lower Galilee, upon which now rests the Church of the Transfiguration, a space shared by Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions.*] When they reach the top, a bright light surrounds Jesus and his clothing becomes dazzling white. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appear and begin to talk with Jesus. Peter says to Jesus: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."



*Mosaic at Church of the Transfiguration,
Mount Tabor, Israel*



While they are up on the mountain, the voice of God announces "This is my Son, the Beloved; with Him I am well pleased; listen to Him!" The disciples fall to the ground and are overcome with fear. Jesus says, "Get up and do not be afraid". When they look up, Moses and Elijah have vanished. This event is known as the Transfiguration of Christ as Christ's glory and divinity was revealed to the three disciples.

My favorite hymn for this Sunday is "O Wondrous Sight! O Vision Fair" (*original Latin title: Coelestis Forman gloria*), and is found in our hymnal as No. 258. This hymn dates back to the late 1400s from the *Sarum Breviary* used by the Salisbury Cathedral prior to the introduction of the first *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549. The text for this hymn was translated into English by John Mason Neale in 1851, however his original translation is not what is commonly used, nor is what is found in our hymnal. The translation in our hymnal is from *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1861, which used only part of Neale's translation, and combined it with other English translations. Our hymnal incorrectly cites this as only Neale's translation.

*O wondrous sight! O vision fair
of glory that the church shall share,
which Christ upon the mountain shows,
where brighter than the sun he glows!*

*From age to age the tale declares
how with the three disciples there
where Moses and Elijah meet,
the Lord holds converse high and sweet.*

*The law and prophets there have place,
two chosen witnesses of grace;
the Father's voice from out the cloud
proclaims his only Son aloud.*

*With shining face and bright array,
Christ deigns to manifest that day*

*what glory shall be theirs above
who joy in God with perfect love.*

*And faithful hearts are raised on high
by this great vision's mystery;
for which in joyful strains we raise
the voice of prayer, the hymn of praise.*

With hymn texts of this age, it is difficult to know what music would have been sung to as typically only the words are written down. Usually there would be a book of words (a hymnal), and a tune book. Oftentimes texts would be sung to well known tunes of the time. The meter and rhythm of the text would be paired and sung to a tune that matched.

In more modern hymnals, this beautiful text is typically paired with the tune DEO GRACIAS, also known as AGINCOURT. This tune is an English ballad melody originating from the early 1400s and was used in celebrating the victory of an English king. As the text and tune date from a similar era, there is the possibility that they could have been paired together at some point centuries ago.

There are two interesting things that come from this pairing. The first is from the tune's origin as a song of celebration for a king. This combination is well suited for representing the disciples awe and wonder as Christ's divinity and glory were revealed to them. Secondly, this musical pairing with a martial tune of a king's victory in battle beautifully foreshadows what is to come. The story of Christ's transfiguration ends with Jesus talking to his disciples about prophecies of Elijah rising from the dead [*who was said to return before the Messiah - Malachi 4*]. He tells them "*How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? (Mark 9:12)*". Shortly after this, "*Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51). The time was near when Christ would be crucified, and then rise from the dead gaining victory over death.



*Transfiguration by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino
Oil tempera on wood, 1516-1520*

This hymn text not only retells the transfiguration story, but it invites us to take part in it. The fourth stanza states that the glory of Christ will someday be for all "*who joy in God with perfect love.*" We are invited in the final stanza that all faithful hearts should raise a joyful hymn of praise.

Soli Deo gloria
- Scott Scheetz

Children's Ministry

A New Year, New Opportunities...

Let's make this year about connection! For Fellowship Moms, we will have a few more coffee chats, and a fun Favorite Things Party. There will be many wonderful ways for Ark Kids to connect including "An Evening of Kindness", Wednesday Night Activities, The Eggstravaganza and VBS. Let's make 2024 a year of CONNECTION!

A Night of Kindness

Make sure to mark your calendar for "A Night of Kindness" on Tuesday Feb. 13th. A meal will be served and Ms. Betsy will set up stations for kids to do various kindness projects such as: Kindness Rock Painting, Kindness Valentines Cards for the nursing home and Kindness Bird Feeders for our feathered friends. We hope you can join us for this special night.

Wednesday Nights @ Fellowship



*Drama team rehearsing for their performance
"The Prodigal Son"*

Wednesday nights at Fellowship are back! Since the children's choir is not currently meeting, I am adapting the schedule for children's activities to meet the needs of families who would like to attend adult



programming. Dinner is served starting at 5pm. The new start time for the Kid's Class is 6PM and we will end at 7pm. Preschool through 5th graders are invited to meet at the classroom behind the stage for games, activities, crafts and fun. From 6-6:30 we will do a large group activity and then from 6:30-7pm our drama ministry team (Grades 4-5) will meet with Miss Betsy on one side of the room and other children (Preschool-5th graders who are not on the drama ministry team can do crafts with Ms. Ann at our "Crafty Corner" of the room. Please reach out with questions about the schedule for Wednesday nights.

Thinking of the Clements Family



Making flowers and cards for Jaylee

On Wed, Jan 17, our time together was spent praying for the Clements family and making a special gift for Jaylee who had surgery in New York that day. It was wonderful to show our love to a family that means so much to us.

Prayer Buddies!

Prayer buddy mail delivery day is the third Sunday of every month. There is a permanent bulletin board for our program where buddies can pick up their letters.

Urgent 9am Sunday School Preschool Teacher Needed!

Ms. Ann has graciously filled for the 2023-2024 school year as we search for a regular preschool teacher for our littlest Sunday School class. THANK YOU MS. ANN FOR YOUR CONSISTENT PRESENCE. This said, we urgently need a 9am preschool Sunday School teacher. All curriculum and materials are provided. Thank you for praying about whether you can serve in this area. Email betsy@fumctc.com for more details.

Easter Eggstravaganza

Mark your calendar! The 2024 Easter Eggstravaganza will take place again this year on Sunday March 24 immediately following the 11am service. The youth will serve breakfast burritos from 12-12:30 and the egg hunt will begin at 12:30. We will be collecting plastic stuffed easter eggs in the coming weeks for the event and to make a donation of eggs to economically disadvantaged families in Dallas.

VBS Needs YOU!

We are so excited about VBS this year (June 3-6, 2024) and with your help it will be the best year ever. Our theme is "Start the Party". You can sign up to volunteer at the table in the Narthex between services or email [betsy@fumctc](mailto:betsy@fumctc.com) to sign up to help.

A Note from Pastor Bob

Last month I wrote about the “wall of separation” between church and state. The context was our concern about the rise of our friends the Christian Nationalists. They normally point out that much of what governs our use of religion is being misinterpreted in the discussions in our society/country. The wall issue isn’t stated by the Constitution, so we should ignore that as a guiding principle in our time.

One of their other arguments that is that the founders were all Christians so [duh] obviously our Constitution is a statement of Christian beliefs. So, what can we know about the founders’ personal religious beliefs?

A fair analysis will show that founders reflected religious diversity in their proffered writings about their personal beliefs. Some were Christians, some were Unitarians, some were Deists and others are hard to categorize. But despite what their personal beliefs might have been, key founders agreed that the separation of church and state was the best policy for our new nation and its diverse population.

Quite clearly the founders’ beliefs about religion and about God do not prove or even illuminate the principles on which they worked to provide the structure of the Constitution. Personal theistic beliefs do not assume control over other ideas generated by our minds. They quite apparently would find some of

our religious liberty questions in our time intriguing. But there is no evidence that it follows that someone’s religious belief overrides the freedom of religious thought guaranteed in the clauses we have in the Constitution. The Bill of Rights lists our guaranteed liberties. The first article offers citizens both freedom of and freedom from religion.

Think about it. We have several thousand different religious denominations in this country. If the founders’ intended there to be only a “one way” approach, wouldn’t that be specifically allowed by law? And, as far as I can tell, no one has distilled a universally determination of who God is, much less, what God might want from us. Our Scriptures reveal the Holy Other. I don’t need anyone else to tell me who and what I need to believe, and the founders’ didn’t either. I do know there are an awful lot of people who want to tell me that they know...but thanks, I will seek my own relationship with the Holy Other and other disciples can seek their own way, too.

God bless and keep you!
YIC, Bob



Upcoming Wednesday Night Dinners

Come for food and Fellowship in Legends Hall every Wednesday Night during the school year. Dinner is served from 5:00-6:30.

February 7 - Soup Night

Hosted by our Creative Christian Women

Tuesday, February 13 - Mardi Gras Celebration

No dinner on Wednesday, February 14th - 6:30 pm Ash Wednesday Service

February 21 - Sloppy Joe & Sides Potluck

Come bring your sloppy joe sandwiches and sides, and share it with others!

February 28

Hosted by our local Boy Scout troops

March 6 - Soup & Salad Potluck

Come bring your favorite soups & salads, and share it with others!

March 13 - Spring Break - **NO WEDNESDAY ACTIVITIES EXCEPT SANCTUARY CHOIR REHEARSAL**

March 20

Hosted by our Safety Team

March 27 - Finger Food & Appetizer Potluck

Come bring your favorite finger foods and appetizers, and share it with others!

Missions Opportunities



Please contact Karen, our office administrator (karen@fumctc.com | 817.430.1500) for information or ways to connect and serve

Snack Sack Donations

Food donations for children at Lakeview and Medlin schools. Please contact Ginger Dennie for more info at ginger@fumctc.com

Desserts for the Roanoke Senior Center

FUMC has partnered with the Roanoke Senior Center and provides desserts the 2nd & 5th Wednesday of each month. If you would like to partake, please donate desserts to the Roanoke Senior Center by 10:45 am on the 2nd & 5th Wednesday of each month.

Roanoke Food Pantry Donations

This partnership helps those in need right here in our own community. Please see the back page for this month's needs.

Pop Tabs for the Ronald McDonald House

The pop tabs go to help fund the Ronald McDonald House in Dallas. This 13 bedroom house provides housing for traveling families who have a sick child being treated at a nearby hospital. Pop tabs are being collected on the Missions Bookcase in the narthex.



How you can help serve our community needs!
Purchase any of the items below:

CANNED FRUIT

**OATMEAL
(INDIVIDUAL PACKS)**

**MARUCHAN RAMEN NOODLE SOUP
(CUP OF SOUP)**

CRACKERS

Bring them to church and place them in the labeled bins in the narthex. Deliveries will be made to the Roanoke Food Pantry throughout the week.

Thank you for your generosity!

Recurring Weekly Events:

Sunday

- 9:00 am Modern Worship
- 10:00 am Sunday School for all ages
- 11:00 am Traditional Worship
- 4:00-6:00 pm Middle School Youth Group
- 5:30-6:45 pm Adult Bible Study
- 6:00-8:00 pm High School Youth Group

Monday

- 10:00 am Creative Christian Women

Tuesday

- 6:45 am Men's Bible Study (at Dove Creek Cafe)
- 8:30 am Men's Bible Study (at Dove Creek Cafe)
- 7:00 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal

Wednesday (August -May)

- 5:00-6:30 pm Wednesday Night Dinner
- 5:30-6:15 pm Children's Bible Study
- 6:00-7:00 pm Adult Bible Study
- 6:15-7:00 pm Children's Drama Team
- 7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal