



THE NEW DOVER HERALD

January 2021

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A Ministry Newsletter of New Dover United Methodist Church

CHUCK'S CHURCH CHAT

"Come in," she said, "I'll give you shelter from the storm"
-Bob Dylan

Saints,

Grace to you and peace as we enter a brand-new year, leaving 2020 behind. And all of God's people shout *"AMEN!!!!"*

I'm penning this "chat" on December 16th so it's eight days before Christmas Eve and the anticipation, not to mention the work that needs to be completed over the next week, is a bit daunting to say the least. Hopefully by the time you read this everything at the church went reasonably well and you and your family had a moving and meaningful Christmas.

And speaking of anticipation, it is also the morning of the day that the big nor'easter is expected to come up from the southwest and dump a foot and a half of snow on Edison, so as they say, *"these are interesting times!"*

There is an expression "the calm in the eye of the storm." It has to do with the strange phenomenon that occurs in the very center of a hurricane where, despite the catastrophic winds swirling around the "eye," the center itself is calm and peaceful. As the hurricane passes directly over, you would first experience high winds and rain (storm), followed by a period of tranquil sunshine (calm), followed by another devastating round of high winds and rain (storm).

Given the timeline of the COVID19 pandemic, I actually feel like we're living in the *exact opposite of that weather condition*. I think we're actually in the *"the storm in the eye of the calm!"* You see, after we passed through the "high winds and rain" of the spring and summer, there was actually a time in late summer and early fall when things felt like they were getting back to normal (calm), but then the pandemic struck again and the number of sick and dying went back up (storm), even surpassing the earlier surge. This is the "storm in the eye" we are currently enduring. But now, thanks to some incredible scientific breakthroughs, we know it is only a matter of time before the vaccinations and continued social distancing will put an end to the pandemic, so we eagerly anticipate the calm that will most definitely arrive sometime over the next few months.

Saints, what we need to do now is maintain patience and remain sheltered until the rain stops, and the winds decrease, and the sun comes out once more. As tough as it is to stay hunkered down, given all we've been through it makes no sense to risk the health of our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and selves when the end of the pandemic/storm is in sight, does it? This is truly the time when the two great pillars of our spiritual lives come together: **faith** and **wisdom**.

Faith that the Savior who calmed the storms on the Sea of Galilee will rise and calm this storm as well. Wisdom to heed the advice of those whom God has blessed with the gifts in the science of healing.



For New Dover, 2020 has been, in the words of Charles Dickens, *“the best of times...the worst of times.”* We’ve mourned what we’ve missed, but we’ve celebrated what we’ve achieved in the face of overwhelming odds! Let’s make it our New Year’s resolution to put the “worst of times” behind us and take the “best of times” forward into the year ahead!

I close with the words of a very stormy Psalm 29:

***“The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.***

***The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty...
The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.***

***May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!***

Have a happy, blessed New Year!

Chuck



KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS



Boyce Family

Judy Tymitz

Family of Tom Crouse

Pat & Brian & Family

Parkhill Family

Manny & Nora De La Paz

Debbie Ladym

Robert Engel

Cancer patients

Robin & Carolyn DeCicco

Tonya Burleigh

Service men & women

Veterans

Homeless, unemployed

& uninsured

All affected by Covid-19

and their families

Children with Autism

All Elderly of NDUMC

Paul Nolan

Mildred Roberts

Pray for all those affected by Natural Disasters, those suffering with addictions, those suffering from depression, Victims of terrorism & violence, all national leaders, and all those serving at New Dover UMC.

All doctors, nurses, EMT, teachers, grocery store workers, janitors, and all other frontline workers. Thank you and God Bless.

Little Privileges

James M. Barrie

Happiness is the art of finding joy and satisfaction in the little privileges of life: a quiet hour in the sun instead of a far-away journey, a little outing in the nearby woods instead of long trips away, an hour with a friend instead of an extended visit with relatives, a few pages of a book instead of hours of reading at a time, a flash of sunset, a single beautiful flower, a passing smile, a kindly word, a little gift bestowed anonymously, a little thoughtfulness here and there as the days slip by.

Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.

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SERMON OF THE MONTH

“Truth That Takes On Power”

Preached on Sunday, December 6, 2020

I Kings 21:15-24

Luke 1:46-53

And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

This passage from the Gospel of Luke is one of the traditional scripture passages read during Advent because it foreshadows the life to be lived by the child yet to be born in Bethlehem. On the surface it’s innocent enough- a poetically moving description of the joy Mary feels in her heart, as the child “*conceived by the Holy Spirit,*” moves within her. But Saints, if we really listen to the words, it is one of the most powerful calls to action in all the Bible! Nothing less than a summons to revolution!

In his commentary on Mary’s “Magnificat,” the Episcopal priest, scholar, and champion of the social gospel, Walter Russell Bowie wrote: “...*the reason for (Mary’s) rejoicing was not in that which she herself would do, but in that which might be done by him who was to be born of her.*” That “*It was of a salvation that the great ones of earth would not welcome.*” He said “*There was dynamite within it,*” and that “*The Christian gospel, when it is true to itself, must always have in it the explosive power from which some will shrink in fear.*” A “*fire,*” that “*once kindled, nothing else matters,*” but, “*unless it is kindled, nothing matters.*”

This morning we lit the 2nd candle of the Advent wreath. It symbolizes both peace and preparation, but how can we best prepare our hearts to receive the child to be born in Bethlehem? Well, if we take Mary’s song seriously, maybe we should use the flame of this candle to kindle the fire contained in her words? Not a fire of sentimentality and passivity, but a match lighting the fuse to the dynamite that will yield “...*the explosive power from which some will shrink in fear.*” An explosion that will “...*scatter the proud in the thoughts of their hearts...*

bring down the mighty from their thrones...and sent the rich away empty.

Now does that sound passive and sentimental to you? That’s a light to the fuse for sure, is it not? But it’s also a light that will kindle a world very different than that which Jesus confronted. It’s a light that would “...*offer God’s mercy to those who fear him from generation to generation...that will lift up the lowly...and fill the hungry with good things.*

Mary’s song praises a child who will literally turn the world upside down, who will lead a revolution whose source and strength arises from the unconditional love and inexorable justice of God. But the revolution of which she sings will not be confined to his brief lifetime walking the earth; it will be carried forward by all who dare to set fire to the dynamite that is his message, by all who refuse to bow down before the powers of this world, by all who, in the words of Herman Melville, “...*give no quarter to the truth...and destroy all sin though they pluck it out from under the*

robes of senators and judges...who acknowledge no law or lord, but the Lord their God, and are only a patriot to heaven. ”!” By all who dare preach truth to power.

Saints, this is the dynamite hidden in plain sight within the words of Mary’s ode to her as yet unborn son. The child to be born in Bethlehem will become that man who will dare boldly preach God’s truth to those who hold power. He will go head to head with the religious and political leaders of his time. Why? Because that’s what he was born to do. And it will cost him his life.

But as insurgent as his life and message were, Jesus was far from the first to challenge those who put their own lust for wealth and power over God’s call to live lives of compassion and justice. The path Jesus walked was tread numerous times over Israel’s long history by prophets called to speak God’s truth to power. True that no one spoke that truth more radically than Jesus, but he was far from the first to promote justice in the face of tyranny. And Saints, because we dare walk in his footsteps, Jesus would not be the last!

The Bible is chock-full of stories of those who dared take on the powerful, is it not? All the prophets who, in the name of the Yahweh, had the backbone to deliver God’s word of truth to those who abused the political power they held in the land! Moses to Pharaoh. Nathan to David.

John the Baptist to King Herod. Just to name a few. And then there’s the prophet Elijah who confronted Ahab, the King of Israel 900 years before Christ.

That story from I Kings perfectly illustrates how potent one person’s voice can be, even if all the authority they possess comes from their faith! Ahab was doing all he could to strengthen and consolidate his political power. One of the ways he tried to do this was by acquiring royal lands because land meant wealth and wealth meant power! But for centuries, according to the laws of the Torah, Israel’s land was equitably distributed among families and it was the responsibility of each generation to pass the property to the next generation coming up. So when Ahab approached a man named Naboth with an offer to buy his land, Naboth, a man of faith, wouldn’t even consider selling, telling the king, *“The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance.”* Now Ahab knew that it was perfectly legal for Naboth to refuse to sell his family’s inheritance to him and so he sulked to his wife Jezebel, “Naboth won’t let me buy his land!” But Jezebel, who was not an Israelite, rather a Canaanite, could care less about the God of Israel or the laws of the Torah, so she shamed Ahab saying, *“Do you now govern Israel?”* Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful, she said, I will give you the vineyard of Naboth...” And to make a long story that’s exactly what she did, spreading fake news in the king’s name that Naboth had *“...cursed God and the king,”* which carried a penalty of death.

To make a long story short, that lie got Naboth stoned to death and Ahab took over his land.

And that could have been the end of the story- abuse of the king’s political power wins out over God’s law, but then.... along comes a prophet!

Beginning in verse 17 we read, *“Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying: ‘Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules in Samaria; he is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. You shall say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: Have you killed, and also taken possession?’ You shall say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood.’”* Whoa!!! How’d you like to be the one God asked to deliver **that** news to the King? But sometimes that’s precisely what’s necessary when a ruler abuses his or her political power, especially at the expense of the powerless.

J.P.M. Walsh, in his book *The Mighty from Their Thrones*, writes that when it comes to God and politics, the prophet’s role is to provide critical insight and rein in the ruler’s tendency to claim ultimacy for his or her decisions and dictates. But *“More than insight,”* Walsh writes, *“what the prophet announces is God’s ‘word,’ an authoritative declaration of God’s sovereignty.”* In other words, a prophet is to make sure our political leaders don’t get, as my Grandpop used to say, *“Too big for their britches!”* That no political ruler is bigger than God!

That the word of a political leader never supposes greater authority than the Word of God. In other words, if a king or a queen or a prime minister or a president thinks that he or she can get away

with ignoring or breaking God's laws, well the prophet's role is to let them know they've been warned! And you see, that can make things very uncomfortable for some rulers; they don't like being told what to do by anybody- even by God! But the Bible is clear- get back in line or bad things are going to happen, in Ahab and Jezebel's case, you know, *dogs licking their blood!*

Bottom line, a prophet role is to speak truth to power!

Now false prophets on the other hand, well they don't speak truth to power; they ignore the word and will of God and tell the powerful just what they want to hear! When that happens, Walsh says, the word of the ruler becomes irrefutable. Walsh says that *"it would be worth keeping (that type of) prophet on the payroll to have such a source of validation. If only the prophet can be made to behave, the king's will would be Yahweh's will."* Prophet's are called to be critics who keep the rulers in line, not sycophants who suck up to person in power by telling them everything they want to hear! Not that we'd ever have that happen in this country, right?!

So the first action in Mary's song is all about bringing down those political leaders who fail to lead by a godly standard. And that leads us to the second powerful part of Mary's song: the lifting up of those who are the most vulnerable. What Mary's song does is connect the two.

In other words, when the political leaders rule as God calls on them to rule- with justice and compassion, the vulnerable are shown mercy, the poor are lifted up, and the hungry are fed with good things! So a nation under such leadership takes care of its citizens; makes sure there's enough to go around; keeps the wealthy from hoarding a nation's riches; makes sure those who are sick have adequate health care; and welcomes the stranger to its borders.

On the other hand, when political leaders rule in ways that are opposed to God's laws, the opposite is true. Its citizens struggle to make ends meet; the top one percent are able to hoard the vast majority of the nation's wealth; the cost of medicine and hospital stays makes it impossible for the vulnerable to get the health care they need; and immigrants seeking asylum and a better way of life for their families are denigrated and denied entry at the border.

What Mary's song and Elijah's challenge to Ahab teach us is that when this occurs it is our obligation to preach truth to power. For the good of the nation, but even more important than that, for the building of God's Kingdom. This is the dynamite within Mary's words. And Saints, it is the responsibility of each generation to relight the fuse!



Balance Sheet of Life

The most destructive habit Worry
The greatest joy Giving
The greatest loss Loss of self-respect
The most satisfying work Helping others
The ugliest personality trait Selfishness
The greatest "shot in the arm" Encouragement
The greatest problem to overcome Fear
The most effective sleeping pill Peace of Mind
The most crippling failure disease Excuses
The most powerful force in life Love
The most dangerous act A Gossip
The world's most incredible computer the Brain
The worst thing to be without Hope
The deadliest weapon The Tongue
The two most power-filled words "I Can"
The greatest asset Faith
The most worthless emotion Self-pity
The most beautiful attire Smile!
The most prized possession Integrity
The most powerful channel of communication Prayer
The most contagious spirit Enthusiasm

LIFE ends when you stop DREAMING. HOPE ends when you stop BELIEVING. LOVE ends when you stop CARING. So, please share this BALANCE SHEET OF LIFE. FRIENDSHIP ends when you stop SHARING.

Source is unknown. Shared by our friend, Joann Lettieri, Finance Chair.

January Birthdays

- 1 *Gerry Allarey*
Nissy Bandari
William Markan
Praveena Paul
- 3 *Renil Khristi*
- 5 *Amanda Christian*
- 6 *Liam Dalton*
Julie Gottstein
- 7 *Sean Becker*
- 8 *Alexander Markan*
- 11 *Sue Dalton*
Jameson Ouellette
- 14 *Annapurna Budala*
- 16 *Jesse Harland*
- 17 *Sanjana Dialle*
Michael Greve
- 19 *Janice Wilson*
- 22 *Cindy Bonito*
Tim Roth
- 28 *John Rodriguez*
- 30 *Elmira Higoy*
- 31 *Vicki Aludino*

January Anniversaries

- 18 *Ajith & Sandra DeAlwis*
- 19 *Fredie & Spruha Terence*
- 28 *Poorna & Catherine*
Jeevanandam
- 31 *Bolton & Indira Nyema*



Time Will Tell

Here we are...

Still in the middle of a maelstrom, the enemy flowing along the wind,
insidious in its spread, uprooting our lives to unrecognizable,
death reaping and gathering, all of its victims facing the viral war.

Here we wait...

Still in the midst of chaos, on the rocky cliff of despair,
the stormy sea of anger, the deep dungeon of resentment,
the towering mountain of defiance, the vast desert of loneliness.

Here we stand...

Still in the center of a health care crisis, financial meltdowns,
political fracturing, protests against injustice,
desperate hunger, the deception of those trolling for gain.

Here we stay...

Still looking to ourselves for answers, worrying about the future,
serving money and power, guarding worldly treasures,
calling for peace while acting hateful toward our neighbors.

Yet there is hope...

A baby has been born, a Savior has emerged,
a King has arrived, the Word made flesh,
the Answer to prayer, Love personified.

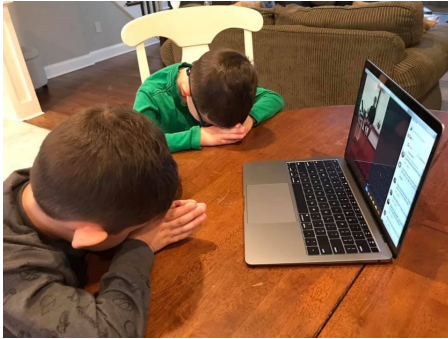
He grows to a man, blessing the best part of us,
hailing us as salt and light, convicting our anger and hate,
dismissing our earthly wealth, easing our worry.

He becomes the sacrifice, predicting betrayal,
accepting men's judgment, enduring agony,
rising in glory, then sending out His disciples.

The question is-will we allow life to drag us through it, or will we let Jesus help us rise above it?

Only time will tell.

Anita Davis, December 1, 2020



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Saints,

On behalf of the entire New Dover United Methodist Church team, thank you for the Christmas card and generous gift each of us received from the congregation this December.

In what has been a challenging year, I'm so proud of the way our staff, leadership, and volunteers have performed, not only maintaining, but actually strengthening our ministry in both mission and nurture!

And of course, none of that would be possible without the dedicated, generous support we received from all of you!

I know I speak for all of us serving at New Dover when I wish each one of you a most happy New Year.

Here's to an incredible 2021!

Your fellow servants in Christ,
Rev Chuck and the NDUMC Staff



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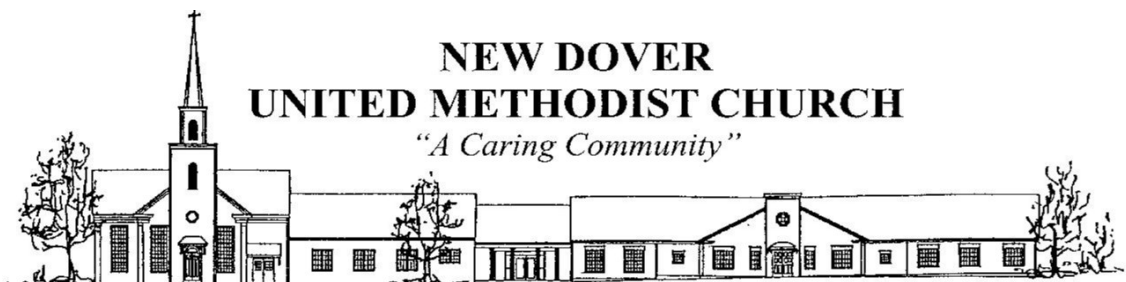
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SCENES AROUND NEW DOVER

