



THE NEW DOVER HERALD

February 2021

Vol. 175

A Ministry Newsletter of New Dover United Methodist Church

CHUCK'S CHURCH CHAT



"Still lie the sheltering snows, undimmed and white;
And reigns the winter's pregnant silence still;
No sign of spring, save that the catkins fill,
And willow stems grow daily red and bright.
These are days when ancients held a rite
Of expiation for the old year's ill,
And prayer to purify the new year's will."

- Helen Hunt Jackson, A Calendar of Sonnet's: February



Saints,

Grace to you and peace in this month of ice and wind and waiting.

I want to start this edition of "the Chat" with a question: In our lifetime has a spring ever been more needed than this year's? Traditionally, February is a time for hunkering down to ride out the last of the winter storms and [cold](#), right? But we're getting awfully tired of hunkering down, aren't we? Heck, we've been hunkering down since the middle of March for crying out loud! "Enough!" we shout to the heavens. We just want to throw off these masks run into the street and hug somebody, anybody! And yet, as the ones who know better will tell us, that's the last thing we ought to do. Hang in there we're told by the physicians and epidemiologist. Better to discipline ourselves for a few months more than risk the lives of our neighbors, health care workers, and family members, and extending the pandemic through the summer into next fall.

As your science-educated pastor I wish I could tell you that we're just about through this, but I know we're not. Even as the first doses of the vaccines are being administered, the number of the infected, hospitalized, and dying is higher than at any previous time. There are numerous reasons for such disappointing numbers, but chief among them is the fact that thousands upon hundreds of thousands of people have either underestimated the severity of the COVID19 virus, or chosen to be willfully ignorant of the advice of the experts, deciding instead to take as gospel the words of self-serving politicians, pundits, and conspiracy theorists. And so the coronavirus, which is unaffiliated with any political party, ideology, or cable news network, just goes its merry way, floating through the air, finding targets aplenty to infect and make millions of baby viruses. It ought to make us both sad and angry at the same time.

That being said, I again want to commend you, our congregation, for the way you have responded to the crisis. I can't imagine any church doing a better job than New Dover. Not only have you heeded the direction of your Church Council when it comes to maintaining safe protocols, but you have responded by taking our mission outreach to unprecedented levels. In its history NDUMC

has never fed more hungry people, sent more supplies to the Dominican Republic, donated more bikes and sewing machines to Pedals for Progress, or harvested more veggies from the Jehovah Jira Garden! It has been a total team effort from our retired members to our youth. And Saints, this happened in the midst of a pandemic! Just imagine how strong our ministry will be once we emerge unhindered???

One more thing- your offerings in the month of December (and really throughout the entire pandemic) was mind-blowing! It tells me that you're grateful for God's presence and blessings in your lives, and that you have faith in the ministry of our church. All I can do is echo Jesus' words from Matthew 25- "*Well done good and faithful servants!*"

So yeah, I'm anticipating the spring! It may not arrive as early as we'd like, but arrive it will. Like our resurrected Lord, it will stir from its dormancy, and break through the frozen ground of our long winter, and grow to produce fruit, the likes of which we've never seen!

Amen and God bless us all!

Chuck

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WORD SEARCH

H	J	D	E	U	T	E	R	O	N	O	M	Y	F	G	J	P
G	K	G	E	W	A	S	D	F	H	U	I	O	P	H	J	O
U	M	J	U	K	M	B	V	F	D	E	S	P	O	I	J	K
H	J	N	U	M	B	E	R	S	I	F	E	X	O	D	U	S
J	H	S	A	S	D	G	H	J	K	C	C	F	G	B	D	W
S	T	O	H	J	U	K	I	O	L	D	O	X	C	V	G	Q
G	R	O	S	E	C	O	N	D	K	I	N	G	S	O	E	A
N	D	H	H	U	D	F	G	H	G	Y	D	E	Q	I	S	S
I	S	F	N	O	C	F	G	J	B	H	S	N	S	L	D	D
K	E	V	M	P	H	I	H	O	N	G	A	E	D	K	C	F
T	R	B	S	E	F	G	T	I	M	F	M	S	F	J	F	H
S	T	F	E	E	R	F	G	I	K	D	U	I	H	H	G	T
R	Y	J	O	S	H	U	A	L	V	K	E	S	H	T	H	H
I	H	K	L	K	I	K	L	O	P	E	L	R	G	J	U	U
F	F	I	R	S	T	S	A	M	U	E	L	L	O	U	Y	R

GENESIS	DEUTERONOMY	FIRST SAMUEL
EXODUS	JOSHUA	SECOND SAMUEL
LEVITICUS	JUDGES	FIRST KINGS
NUMBERS	RUTH	SECOND KINGS

KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS



Boyce Family	Robin & Carolyn DeCicco	and their families
Judy Tymitz	Tonya Burleigh	Children with Autism
Pat & Brian & Family	Victor Vilela	All Elderly of NDUMC
Parkhill Family	Service men & women	Rose DeLand
Manny & Nora De La Paz	Veterans	Paul Coblentz
Debbie Ladym	Homeless, unemployed	Evelyn Millard
Robert Engel	& uninsured	
Cancer patients	All affected by Covid-19	

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.

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Dear Lord...
Floyd W. Tomkins

Dear Lord, grant me Your peace. I don not ask for earthly peace which removes trouble or dulls the senses, but for that holy calm which fails by day or by night, in joy or in sorrow, but ever lifts the soul to rest upon You. You were so peaceful Yourself, dear Christ, in Your life! Haste and worry and anxiety were never Yours, but a blessed cam which told of mastery. May it not be mine also? Speak to me, Lord. Bid the waves, which seem sometimes so big and threatening, to show themselves as under Your loving control. Touch my wearied heart, that it sink not in despair. Make me glad and brave and joyous always in the knowledge that I a Yours. And in all my ways lead me by Your own hand, and keep me in perfect peace. Amen.

SERMON OF THE MONTH

“The Sins of Tribalism”

(Preached Sunday, January 10, 2021, 4 days after the attack on the Capital)

Genesis 1:26-27/Ephesians 2:14-19

This past Wednesday before I left the office to head south to my Mom’s around 1:00, I emailed Trish and Grace the bulletin for today and was halfway into my sermon preparation. I made three phone calls on the way down the turnpike that took a total of an hour, and then I switched on my radio. Like many of you, at first I couldn’t comprehend what I was hearing. By the time I pulled into Mom’s driveway I knew that what I was preparing to preach this week was no longer relevant. I texted Trish- “*Stop the presses!*” and from that point on I struggled to find the words to say to you all this morning.

From reading your posts on Facebook, your emails and text messages, I know that a great many of you were understandably shaken up by the images you never thought you’d see in your lifetime. I know that a great many of you are also shaken up by the rhetoric you never thought you would hear spoken in your lifetime. But what happened this past Wednesday certainly didn’t spring at us out of nowhere. The seeds germinated long before the poison tree bore fruit. The question before us at present is straight-forward: “*Where do we go from here?*” Like many of my sisters and brothers who mount the pulpit I had to wrestle with what might be the proper prophetic response to what we witnessed this week. What does scripture say to us about confronting such a crisis? But before we do anything else, we first should try to understand exactly what it is we’re confronting.

Those of you who know me also know that I don’t shy away from addressing politics from the pulpit whenever political actions go against Jesus’ teaching. That’s because our God is God over every aspect of our lives or God is not God! We don’t tell God “*Hey God, you can rule over my life but leave my politics out of it!*” The other reason is that if we take politics out of the Bible we’d lose over half of its pages! Think about it- dozens of prophets from Moses to John the Baptist were constantly challenging the political leaders of their time whenever their words and actions butted heads with the will of God or broke the covenant God had forged with Israel.

But that said, upon reflection I believe that happened this past Wednesday was not about than politics *per se*. If you heard the speeches leading up to the attack on the capital you’ll know that its instigators were instructing those before them to hunt down Republicans as well as Democrats. But if not politics, what was it that transformed thousands of demonstrators to a riotous mob that violently attacked the very seat of American democracy? I believe it comes down to one word- tribalism.

What happened on Wednesday afternoon in Washington DC was the result of years, if not decades, of America dividing itself into ideological tribes that see one another, not as fellow citizens walking a road together, promoting the vision of our founders, but as mortal enemies fighting tooth and nail to install their own distinct vision of what our nation should become, and to hell with the other side. As such, **the sins of tribalism go against everything Jesus lived and taught us about the Kingdom of God.** And as such **the sins of tribalism fly in the face of Paul when he wrote of Jesus death on a cross, “in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us”** And as such, we need to find a way to overcome the sins of tribalism or we will perish as a nation and make a mockery of our so-called faith.

Before we get into definitions let it be known at the outset that being part of a tribe is most often a good thing, but it depends on the purpose and make-up of the tribe. Whether we’ve thought of it before or not, every one of us participates in any number of tribes throughout our lives. In a world that’s often confusing and frightening, we long for a sense of loyalty to a group or ideology. We like the fraternity of being part of a tribe! It’s affirming and often fun to share things in common with like-thinking people. A simple example would be those who root for certain sports teams. For instance, most of you know I’m of the Eagle tribe living tenuously in a distant land among members of the Giant tribe. Makes me nervous. But hey! At least we share a common enemy- the Cowboy tribe! Other tribes that exist in our culture include churches,

fraternities, sororities, support groups, or service organizations.

Ethnic groups such as Native Americans, or Italian Americans, or Indian Americans are often defined by the history, ancestry, and tenets of their tribe. So on the positive side, being part of a tribe can provide its members with a sense of security, community, and belonging, and there's nothing wrong with that!

In the Bible God gave Abraham a blessing to begin the tribe of Israel. God called on the Israelites to set themselves apart from other nations, bound by divine covenant to share a common holiness and a shared mission. The tribe of Israel was to deliver God's salvation to the rest of the world, but their tribe was not to be an exclusive club- anyone was welcome to join so long as they adhered to the Torah and worshiped Yahweh alone. It's clear that God did not wish to create a homogenous human race! Throughout the pages of scripture the tribal diversity of various groups and clans is often celebrated. Jesus, who healed and fed both Jew and Gentile, invited people from all tribes and nations to enter the Kingdom of God. We of New Dover United Methodist Church are blessed to have such an incredible variety of global tribes represented in our congregation, and we are spiritually richer because of it!

"So Rev," you might be wondering at this point, "*if being part of a tribe can be seen as a blessing from God, how can you say that our division into tribes was the ultimate cause of the attack on the Capital this past week?*" Well, because just as there are healthy and unhealthy religious beliefs, so too can our devotion to a tribe deteriorate into an immoral, exclusionary, and destructive horde mentality.

Healthy tribes maintain a sense of **community**, the Greek word for it in scripture is *koinonia*. Unhealthy tribes devolve into **tribalism**, and the Greek word for it is *fyletismos*. Healthy tribes are open and inviting and live for the greater good of the world around them. Unhealthy tribes are judgmental and exclusionary and exist primarily for the sake of the tribe itself. Indeed, when a tribe "goes rogue" it can destroy the very institutions it was formed to strengthen.

As we speak, the United States is experiencing a form of tribalism that is tearing our nation apart at the seams. What some call patriotism has disintegrated into numerous factions, each championing its own form of tribalism. What has caused these unhealthy tribes to come into existence? One website, gotquestions.org, says that this new form of American tribalism "*is often based on shared offenses.*"

People who believe they are victimized by some element of society rally together to shout at everybody else who are then deemed to be "part of the problem." And because of social media, it's never been easier to find like-minded "victims!" So when every opinion draws support and gathers a tribe of its own, it inevitably leads to conflict, and in the case of this past week, violence.

When is it that a tribe goes wrong, and what are the characteristics of malignant tribalism? In his article, "The Sin of Tribalism," Roger Olson warns us of undeserved pride and superiority based solely on identification with a certain tribe. This creates a temptation to look down on other people for no other reason than they don't belong to "our group." Tribalism appears when a group closes its ranks around an illusion of superiority. Olson states that a tribe inevitably has a strong center, a person who is the group's identity idol, in other words an object of veneration and worship. For this reason, tribalism echoes religion. It has gatherings that mimic worship. Intense devotion to the group and its leader requires expressions of unquestionable, undying loyalty, and excommunication for those who lack unconditional loyalty. This produces feelings of superiority, a rhetoric of exclusion, and demonization of anyone who opposes them.

When it becomes extreme, self-reflection and critical thinking skills become non-existent, but of course, only outsiders can see that. Any insiders who question the tenets of their movement or the words of the almighty leader are disciplined, and if they do not "come around" they are excluded because nothing exceeds the voice of the leader. In other words tribalism often leads to idolatry. Idolatry means that there is a voice whose authority exceeds that of God.

Jesus himself confronted tribalism among the Jewish leaders of his day. Some of them falsely claimed that they were especially favored by God because they were children of Abraham. Many of the Pharisees of Jesus' time had turned their divine superiority and their adherence of the law into a form of tribalism, and so their authority would not be questioned! But Jesus dared to stand before them to challenge the tribes in power. And how did that work out? It led to his own violent death. Such is the threat of tribalism, and it continues to be a threat to Jesus and all he lived for and taught. These days it threatens to crucify his body once again; the body of Christ is the church.

Ryan Huguley, a pastor and host of podcast "In the Room," describes some ways that unhealthy tribalism effects the mission of church. First of all, many tribes within the church are formed around secondary issues, taking a minor thing and making it the main thing, when instead of the building of God's Kingdom we focus

on such issues as who can or can't be ordained or how we're supposed to be baptized. Another thing is when, instead of growing the Church our primary focus is all about growing our tribe. Though we might say our tribe exists for the glory and fame of Jesus' name, it's easy to experience the subtle shift toward existing for the glory and fame of our own tribe, so when our tribes inevitably turn on themselves, much like what's happening in the Methodist Church right now, we distract from the mission Jesus has called us to. When our Christian tribes bicker and divide rather than unify around the life and message of Jesus it confuses the world in which we minister and damages the very heart of the message we're called to proclaim. How can we demonize one another and still claim to be following in Jesus' footsteps? Is it not hypocritical when we preach unconditional love yet aren't charitable toward one another?

So...what can we do about it? Olson says that there are four antidotes to tribalism: Aversion to idolatry; dependence on God's Grace; a mature aversion to illusion, diversion, and conspiracy theories; and a historic awareness of the violence to which tribalism leads.

Above all, we need to turn once again to the scriptures where we discover these three truths capable of overcoming the sins of tribalism, and giving us hope, even in the face of the chaos of this past week.

The first truth is found literally "in the beginning." We read in Genesis 1:27, "***So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.***" Note that the Bible doesn't teach us that *this* person was created in God's image and *that* person isn't, or *this* group is created in God's image and *that* group isn't. No! We are, one and all, created in God's image. Olson calls this sudden realization an absolute miracle- it's truly a snapshot of the *imago dei*! Never forget that the person before you reflects God's glory every bit as much as you do!

The second great truth is, yes, the reality of the Kingdom of God. The unity that Jesus sought by bringing everyone together into this kingdom of unconditional love built on compassion and justice. Whenever we do things that divide us, that push us apart, whenever we build dividing walls between us, we do damage to the message and ministry of Jesus that is still ongoing. We need to find our unity in the realization that Jesus calls on us to build the Kingdom of God ***together***. And we are to further realize that we are not to attempt to bar others from entering the Kingdom. God leaves it up to us to decide whether we ourselves will choose to enter or stay outside, but we cannot keep others out because Jesus would never keep others out.

And the third great truth is this: we find our unity in the body of Christ itself. You know, during Jesus' time and Paul's time there were two warring tribes that make our conflicts seem miniscule in comparison- Jews and Gentiles whom the Bible speaks of throughout its pages. Gentiles did not like Jews at all because they "*think they're better than us,*" and "*holier than thou.*" And Jews didn't like Gentiles because they thought they were dirty, unclean idolaters who didn't respect the one true God. You couldn't find two groups that were further apart. But Paul in Ephesians wrote about how Christ had overcome that. And Paul saw his mission as way to bring together these two warring tribes. And he wrote this:

"For (Jesus) is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it...So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God..."

That is our hope; that is what can bring us together; that is what can move us into the future. Realizing we are made in God's image. Working together to build the Kingdom of God. And having the faith to realize that we are made one in Christ's body. We the church are Christ's body. Many of the people who were there in Washington that day, on one side or the other, proclaimed to be "Christian." Well let's start acting like it. Let's take what happened this week, see it for what it is, see the sins of tribalism within it. And let us prepare ourselves to sing a new song.

In Revelation 5:9 we read this:

"You (Jesus) are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation..."

Saints, there's nothing wrong with being in a tribe, but there's a lot wrong with tribalism. We saw what can happen this past week. Let us move beyond that. Let us sing a new song in the realization that we are all together in Christ Body, that we are all together in building God's Kingdom, and we are all made in God's image. So let us sing a new song!



Finance News

The Finance Committee is continuing to provide financial information. The following provides the income and expenses as of November 2020. The church income includes what is provided to the church in pledge envelopes to current expense and other income sources such as building rentals, flea market and various fundraising activities. Church expenses are shown which include salaries, utilities, conference obligations and other costs to keep the church operating.

New Dover United Methodist Church Operating Fund		
	2020	
	November	Year to Date
Income	\$ 24,679.93	\$ 224,198.81
Expenses	\$ 27,825.62	\$ 270,170.01
Difference	\$ (3,145.69)	\$ (45,971.20)

February Birthdays

- 1 *John Kimball*
- 3 *Alex Benson Budala*
- 4 *Muriel Christie*
- 8 *Evelyn MacKenzie*
- 11 *Christopher Becker*
Granville Christian
- 13 *Mary Ellen Anglin*
- 14 *Jeremy Aludino*
Samantha Nocciolo
- 18 *Brian Rock*
- 19 *Dianne Petersen*
Karissa Tuason
- 20 *Bettina Kingsly*
- 21 *Tony Bonito*
- 23 *Chris Bandari*
Poorna Jeevanandam
- 25 *Wendy Bouchoux*
Bhaarat Joshi
- 26 *Adelyn Terence*
- 27 *Jennifer Gardner*

February Anniversaries

- 2 *Robin & Desdimona Christian*
- 4 *Madhu & Swati Christian*
Jerry & Eydie DiRenzo
- 9 *Regan & Shenn Christie*



MEMBERSHIP CORNER

10 Principles to Keep in Mind Every Day-Rev. Lloyd Pulley

1. Remember that conflicts are inevitable. We need to stop overreacting to contentions and walking on eggshells to overcome them.
2. As Jesus taught us in Matthew 18, keep your issue between you and the other person as much as possible. Instead of airing your complaint to others, go directly to the person.
3. Beware of meddling in others' affairs. You don't have all the facts, so know your limitations. Better to keep your distance and pray over issues that don't involve you.
4. Don't take yourself or others too seriously. Ecclesiastes 7:21-22 says, "Do not give heed to everything that people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you; your heart knows that many times you have yourself cursed others." Be gracious toward others' faults.
5. Overlook more things. We need to work harder to overlook wrongs and ignore some things we hear.
6. Beware of pride. It's more important to be loving than to be right. Such love goes a long way in diffusing conflict.
7. Spare your words. Proverbs 29:11 says "a fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back". There's true wisdom in exercising discernment over our words.
8. Remember that Christians are in a spiritual battle. There's an enemy who wants believers to lose their influence and to be so embroiled in turmoil that they are not effective for God's work.
9. Consider that strife can come from a strength misplaced or overplayed. Know your strengths and learn when to use them rightly.
10. Always come back to the cross, where we learn to forgive others and love our enemies. It is here, and here alone, that we can surrender our need to say our peace and rest in His.



Blessings in Disguise

by Rosie Eun Young Pang, Associate Pastor

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift,
Is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom
there is no variation or shadow due to change”
James 1:17 NRSV

Blessings In Disguise was the theme of our Yuletide, change of the year gift exchange conducted in the Secret Santa (we called it Secret Angel) style. Prior to the short Christmas break, everyone active in Youth And Young Adults group filled out My Favorite Things questionnaire and each person was secretly and randomly chosen by an angel. And every “Angel” was asked to wrap the gifts using only unsoiled re-used, recycled material to “disguise” the appearance of their blessings.



In our January 10, 2021 Youth And Young Adults (YAYA) meet as we gathered to exchange the gifts, the table of blessings didn't look anything like a scene under a Christmas tree. In other words, the intention of the gift exchange was to see with our eyes that the presentation of the gift on the outside does not hinder or change the perfect gift what's on the inside, since each gift was prepared based on My Favorite Things list each recipient completed.

Year 2020 was a perfect year for us to realize that if there is a blessing in any means, that was well disguised. However, when asked, many of the young members shared that they were able to see enough good through the hodgepodge of disfigurations of the past year. And as unpleasant and adamant as it was for me to say to the next generation, I mentioned that even with the vaccine and change of the year, 2021 may continue to be a year of the blessings in disguise. However, that does not change the fact that every perfect gift comes from God of lights in whom there is no variations or hesitance.

Blessings

I hope that as followers of Hope, Joy, Peace and Love and partners in the good works of faith and children of the Light, let us continue to hold on to our generous and faithful God who has your My Favorite Things list at hand. Share with your children and grandchildren, families and friends that blessings sometimes DO come in disguise.

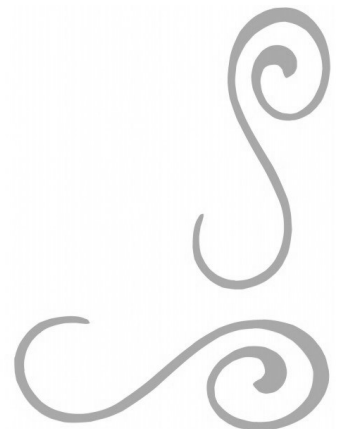
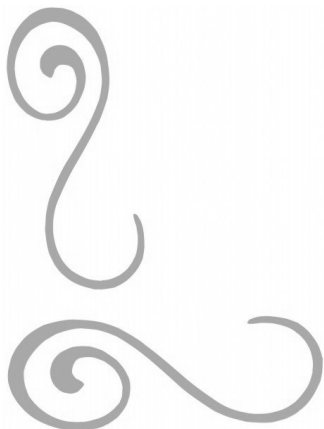
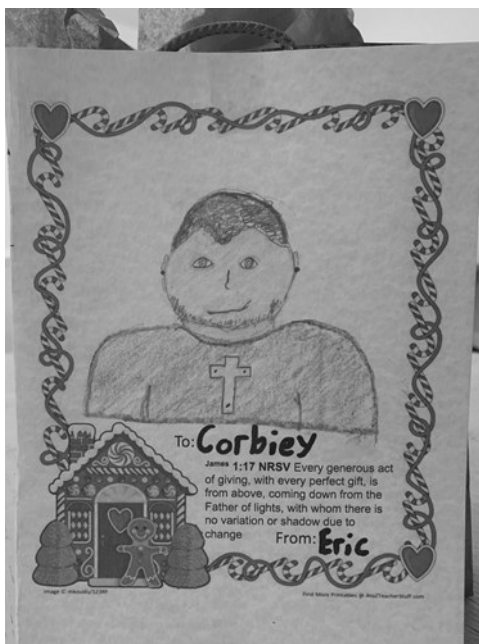
Laura Story in her song "Blessings" sings,

We pray for blessings, we pray for peace
 Comfort for family, protection while we sleep
 We pray for healing, for prosperity
 We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering
 And all the while, You hear each spoken need
 Yet love us way too much to give us lesser things

'Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops
 What if Your healing comes through tears
 What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know You're near
 What if trials of this life are Your mercies in disguise

When friends betray us
 When darkness seems to win
 We know the pain reminds this heart
 That this is not
 This is not our home

It's not our home



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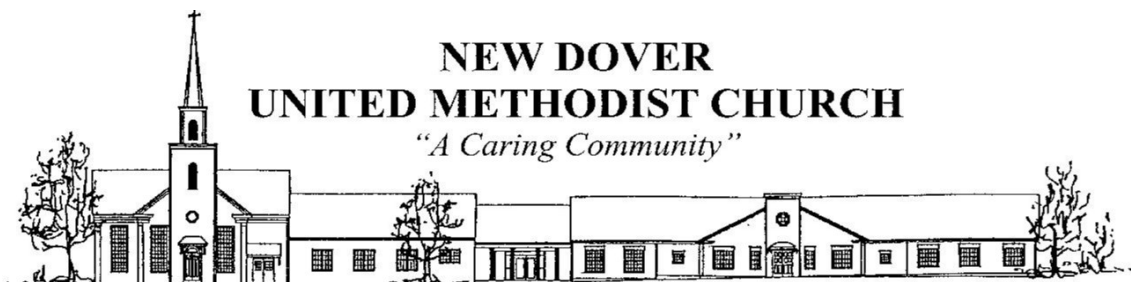
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SCENES AROUND NEW DOVER

