

THE NEW DOVER HERALD

September 2020

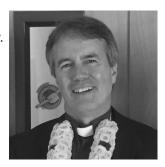
Vol. 170

A Ministry Newsletter of New Dover United Methodist Church

CHUCK'S CHURCH CHAT

"Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world, yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history, yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise...

... There's no question of heroism in all this. It's a matter of common decency. That's an idea which may make some people smile, but the only means of fighting a plague is—
common decency." – Albert Camus, The Plague, 1947



Saints.

Grace to you, peace...

Always it's the same- Trish, our amazing admin, reminds me that it's that time again. No, not "time to make the donuts." Time rather to publish the next "Herald" which means it's also time for another edition of the "Chat," and immediately my head starts spinning and my mind starts wondering and wandering- "What to write? What to write?"

Something uplifting perhaps? Of course! But does that mean I should temporarily turn a blind eye to the ubiquitous pandemic in which we are currently immersed? Is it possible to be both brutally honest and genuinely hopeful in this time of crisis? Confront our fears head on and yet dare prophecy future victory in the midst of the storm, all the while the wind tatters our sails and waves wash over the gunwales?

Well why not?! Authentic faith is never about escapism, and neither is courage. Albert Camus, in his classic novel, <u>The Plague</u> (quoted above), teaches us that pandemics, like wars, challenge us to examine who we are. The story of the Christian church from the very beginning is that of darkness descending upon us one day, riding it out with faith, courage, and wisdom, then emerging stronger than ever once we outlast the storm and the shadows are forced to flee. The scriptures are filled with story after story of just such a plotline, and centuries of history retell that narrative time and again, from the brutal persecution of the early church to the ongoing fight for civil rights.

Problem is for many of us it's hard to believe we'll come out of this okay while the storm is yet raging. What we need is something solid to grasp onto, something more than just words. Something like a break in the clouds, or a sail in the distance, or a Savior waltzing toward us over the waves. And that's precisely what I'd like to offer you now in this time of doubt and despair- reasons to be hopeful that we will one day emerge from this tempest a stronger church than the one that entered it.

Here are some means for hope....

- Our live streaming worship services on Sunday morning are averaging over 450 views a week- that's around three times as many as we get to attend on a typical Sunday! Thanks to Dr. Grace Kim for keeping our music program going strong, Kyle Sanders and other vast musical talent for sharing your gifts, and our parade of liturgists for helping us through worship and representing our laity. And to all of you who tune in each week- keep on sharing our service with your friends- its' 2020 evangelism!
- Our August 1st we held our first live gathering since the pandemic began and we set a record for Saturday night worship attendance! In addition to sharing in Communion, the 82 who made it out were treated to an inspiring "reunion concert" by Acts of Praise and a powerful message from Rev. Dr. Ronald Owens of New Hope Baptist Church in Metuchen. Everyone did a great job wearing our masks and maintaining safe distances.
- And that's why we decided to make Sunday mornings a go starting August 23rd. As long as the weather cooperates, we will be holding Sunday morning services as 9:30 so bring a lawn chair and invite a friend- we have plenty of spots in the front parking lot! If you're wondering if the service is on, we will be posting information each week on our website, Facebook, email, and on our church's answering machine
- Despite the fact that to this point we have lost out on over \$18,000 in rent from our tenants, thanks to your faithful giving we are actually a little ahead of where we were last year in terms of our budget! You all are incredible-

keep up the great work!

- Our Vacation Bible School has seen an increase in attendance each of the past four years, but this year we hit 70 for the first time! Anyone who has seen the highlight video knows the love and hard work that went into our first ever Virtual VBS (if you haven't it's on our website). Thanks to Rhea and her crew for letting our kids and their parents know on no uncertain terms how much we care about them! Now on to Virtual Sunday School- it starts September 20th!!!! Stay tuned- more information will be sent out to all the families.
- Since the pandemic began we have distributed approximately 20,000 meals to our neighbors in need! This includes emergency food baskets, sandwiches and side-dishes from our partnership with Wawa, donations from Stop & Shop, and those of you who have contributed an average of 175 sandwiches per week! I believe I can safely say that this church has never achieved such a successful, long-running crisis food ministry in its history. Thanks to Brian Richards and the dozens of volunteers who have made this happen!
- The Jehovah Jira Garden is producing like never before with an upgraded watering system and more volunteers than I've seen in my tenure here! Its great to get healthy food to our neighbors.
- The Trustees under the leadership of Jeff Rowland have been working nearly non-stop to upgrade our buildings and maintain our grounds throughout the pandemic. The wiring has been completed for our sanctuary audio and video upgrade, so once the equipment comes in we are going to see a new and noticeably improved live streaming of worship! And a big word of thanks to our many volunteers who stepped up to plaster, paint, power wash, and grounds-keep!
- Finally, despite the need to social distance, our new Associate Pastor, "Rosie" Eun Young Pang has really hit the ground running, energizing our youth, honoring our young adults, and taking part in the leadership of the church like she's been here for years. Welcome aboard Rosie!

So there you have it- concrete reasons to have hope for the future! The storm yet rages, so yeah, we still need to hunker down for a spell, but look! Isn't that Jesus coming toward us over the waves!

Keep on keeping the faith,

Rev Chuck

Hello New Dover,

This is Rosie, Rosie Eun Young Pang. First of all, thank you for welcoming me in July and again, thank you for such a wonderful first gathering in August.

Now we're in September and this is the month a lot of "newness" takes place in the ministries of church as well as our families; especially if you are a student or have children starting a new school year. Although we have a very different new school year ahead of us, let us remember that learning can and shall take place regardless of our location.

Jesus taught wherever and whenever. Jesus' disciples learned timelessly and tirelessly. When Jesus' teachings met the awaiting souls, people truly came to "know" God and were changed. In other words, learning is a sacred act.



Blessings to all students and learners as well as teachers, staff of our schools and educators this September. You're about to change and be changed for better. Let us continue to strive to change lives and save lives, too. May Jesus Christ teach you and be with you in virtual, in-person, and hybrid schools!

KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS



Boyce Family Judy Tymitz Tom Crouse

Pat & Brian & Family

Parkhill Family

Debbie Ladym

Robert Engel

Cancer patients

Robin & Carolyn DeCicco Children with Autism

Tonya Burleigh

Service men & women

Veterans

Manny & Nora De La Paz Homeless, unemployed

&uninsured

All affected by Covid-19

and their families Children with Autism All Elderly of NDUMC Paul Nolan

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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What I Live For

George Linnaeus Banks

I live for those who love me, for those who know me true;
For the heaven that smiles above me, and awaits my spirit too;
For the cause that lacks assistance, for the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance, and the good that I can do.



SERMON OF THE MONTH

"Conspiracy Theories are Killing Us" Sermon preached Sunday, August 2, 2020 Matthew 28:11-15

While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, 'You must say, "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep." If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

So....conspiracy theories. More than a few of them are out there today, most we can scoff at like "the Earth is flat," or "the Moon landing was faked," or "Brian Richards is actually Elvis (he is)." But some conspiracy theories are far more serious; they are actually dangerous. In fact they can kill you.

For instance, there's a long-debunked theory out there that vaccines are actually dangerous and are only put out by pharmaceutical companies to make money. Belief in this one creates pockets of infectious disease that put entire communities at risk here and around the world. There are conspiracy theories about global warming, that despite the mountain of factual evidence to support it, it's just a plot by scientists to get research grants, or something like that. This baseless lie was started by fossil fuel companies and their lobbyists to keep us burning lots of gas and coal. Now millions of people around the world are displaced and dying because of this conspiracy theory, and it's only going to get worse.

Other events were more direct like the gunman who shot and killed 11 people and injured six others in a Pittsburgh synagogue in October 2018. He justified his attack by belief in the conspiracy theory that Jewish people were stealthily supporting illegal immigrants. Or remember Pizzagate? In 2016 a conspiracy theory posited that high ranking political officials were involved in a pedophile ring involving several Washington, D.C. area restaurants, inciting one believer to fire an assault weapon inside a pizzeria! He was shocked when he found out there was nothing there.

Now the latest conspiracy theories are all about what we're going through right now-Covid 19. We've all heard the various ones making the rounds: that it's a hoax intended to take down the current president; that it's no more deadly than the flu; that masks are more dangerous than the virus; that Dr. Fauci and Bill Gates concocted it to make a profit on vaccines; and so on...

The question is- how many of the 160,000 deaths in the US alone can be contributed to conspiracy theories and those who fall for them? I would venture to say at least half. And so this is a topic that we as a church ought to talk about.

So, what does the Bible have to say about conspiracy theories? Surprisingly, a lot! We read about the conspiracy theory in Matthew 28 that was invented by the ruling Romans and collaborating Jewish leaders to discredit Jesus' resurrection, to explain the empty tomb. And so they invented a story saying that the soldiers guarding his grave were paid off and that his body was actually stolen by his disciples.

Jesus, by the way, was the target of numerous conspiracy theories during his life. In Mark 3 we read how the Pharisees spread the rumor that Jesus, who had been exorcising demons was himself possessed by Beelzebul, and was actually in league with demons! In Luke 20 the religious leaders were telling crowds that he had no credentials to teach and that he wasn't a real rabbi. In John 10 we hear about the conspiracy theory that Jesus was insane- that he was crazy in the head! And finally remember the rumor that Pilate heard about when he asked Jesus if he was "the king of the Jews?" I don't know of any passage in scripture where Jesus claims that title. That conspiracy theory got him killed.

Now these are far from the first time that conspiracy theories are mentioned in the Bible. In Isaiah 8:11-15 the word "conspiracy" itself is actually used:

For the Lord spoke thus to me while his hand was strong upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: **Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy,** and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over—a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be

And here's one from *Jeremiah* 11:9-11...

And the Lord said to me: Conspiracy exists among the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors of old, who refused to heed my words; they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant that I made with their ancestors. Therefore, thus says the Lord, assuredly I am going to bring disaster upon them that they cannot escape; though they cry out to me, I will not listen to them.

So conspiracy was frequently mentioned in the story of salvation found in the pages of scripture. Heck, go all the way back to our Hebrew scripture lesson from Genesis 3! Do you know who was accused of being the first conspiracy theorist in the Bible? *God!* God was accused of being the first conspiracy theorist by the serpent who said "God told you this; God told you that; God told you this."

Dru Johnson, the director of the Center for Hebraic wrote this in a recent online posting:

"When we go to Genesis 3, I ask my students to read closely what the serpent says. I ask, 'How many of the things he said is a lie?' ...all three things the serpent said were actually true. They do not die that day, they do become like God and know good and evil, and their eyes were open. So the issue wasn't whether the serpent is a liar.

When God comes into the Garden, He calls for the man, and when He finds the man hiding, the first question out of God's mouth is, 'Who told you?' He doesn't say, 'How did you figure it out?' He assumes there had to have been another authoritative voice in the mix who was being heeded. And then that's His only indictment. He says it's 'because you listened to the voice' that this went wrong. That's the only indictment of God in the Garden of Eden. That's the only time he says what went wrong.

The biblical diagnosis, the biblical impulse here, is not that you have to be afraid of someone lying to you. It's that somebody will always be interpreting your world for you. And you have to lean into the wise practices that God has given us as people to discern what is worth listening to and what's not.

So there are always going to be people trying to tell us how we ought to live our lives- what's true and what isn't- and they're going to piece together half-truths in a way that makes their conspiracy theory seemingly plausible. But of course it takes two- it takes a person spouting the theory, and it takes someone to listen, adhere to it and abide by it.

In Ecclesiastes 7:29 we read this: "See, this alone I found, that God made human beings straightforward, but they have devised many schemes." So let's assume the schemers are out there. But who falls for these conspiracy theories? In the midst of researching this sermon I ran into a lot of academic publications that help explain why conspiracy theories are so widespread these days.

A recent article in Scientific American by Melinda Wenner Moyer, in a 2017 survey by the University of Oxford where she stated...

"...more than a quarter of the American population believes there are conspiracies 'behind many things in the world.' [That's about 75 million Americans are prone to believe in conspiracy theories!] New research suggests that events happening worldwide are nurturing underlying emotions that make people more willing to believe in conspiracies."

"In a 2018 study, researchers at the University of Minnesota and Lehigh University found that participants who felt that American values are eroding were more likely than others to agree with conspiratorial statements..."

"In May 2018 the American Psychiatric Association released the results of a national survey suggesting that 39 percent of Americans feel more anxious than they did a year ago, primarily about health, safety, finances, politics and relationships."

"Another 2017 report found that 63 percent of Americans are extremely worried about the future of the nation and that 59 percent consider this the lowest point in U.S. history that they can remember."

So, as empirically measured, anxiety in America is, for various reasons, at a generational high right now, and that can lead certain people to fall victim to conspiratorial thinking. We know conspiracy theories are out there-they always have been-but what makes some people at times believe the world is flat, that the moon landing never happened, that Brian Richards is Elvis (*he is*)?

More seriously, what makes certain people believe this pandemic is a hoax made up by a small group of scientists, lobbyists, and politicians? That if we just get rid of these people or that person everything will be just fine thank you! It's an easy answer, and who doesn't love easy answers? But it's too easy. Because if one doesn't fall for such conspiracy theories the world becomes a place where random things do happen and there are things beyond our control and we don't like that (hello Job 38!).

Right now the bottom line is this- we're afraid and we're confused; we don't know what's going to happen and we want answers so desperately we might believe anything, especially something that promises easy answers, and will let us get our lives back to "normal." But such promises are not to be trusted, they are built out of ignorance, based on half-truths and outright lies, promoted by those who stand to benefit if we believe in their conspiracy theories, and clung to by those of us who are desperate for any way out of this dark place.

Saints, ultimately it is that old enemy of faith- FEAR- that makes us vulnerable to conspiracy theories. People who have faith in God, are self-confident, who are hopeful about the future, tend not to fall for conspiracy theories. On the other hand, those who fall for conspiracy theories are the same type of people likely to join a cult! A "successful" cult leader preys on people who feel they're not finding answers in the expected places, so they propose things that might seem crazy when things are normal, but somehow make sense the more confused and desperate we are.

So what can we do about it? First of all we need to calm down! It's very difficult to make rational decisions when the whole world around us is in chaos, and we're afraid and reaching out in every direction for something to grab onto. We're not thinking rationally then and irrational thought can make us vulnerable to conspiracy theories. Which leads us to....

Second- we need to dust off that brain of ours and engage in some good critical thinking- hit the books-research before you accept something as fact. It's never been easier than it is right now to spread conspiracy theories. They didn't have the Internet at the time of Jesus' resurrection. If they did I guarantee the conspiracy theory about his body being stolen would have been out there and it would have gone viral! That's what's going on now- there are conspiracy theories about everything. Before you buy into one do diligent research, check out peer reviewed publications, check your sources for political bias, rely on actual experts. I remember my Grandmom once told me that if I picked up a hop toad I would get warts. I believed that for years; turns out its not true! Maybe I should have listened to biologists who study amphibians. Look, I loved my Grandmom, I trusted my Garndmom, but she was just wrong about that one!

Third, we need to take personal responsibility for what we believe in. Watch out who you trust! Don't automatically trust anybody out there just because they happen to fall in line with our ideology or politics or perception of the world.! Don't even blindly trust your pastor! Test what I say from the pulpit- go to the scriptures, read the commentaries. Take personal responsibility for what you believe in before we go around throwing out random conspiracy theories that could potentially bring damage to others.

Now, it's a two-way street here- and I want to now address those who elect to spread conspiracy theories. For those who deliberately start or spread false conspiracy theories in order to hold onto political power, influence, or wealth, the Bible has a warning; its found in Proverbs 6:16-19...

There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

- a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil,
- a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family.

Saints, any one of these characteristics could define someone who knowingly spreads conspiracy theories in order to benefit themselves, their movement, their politics, and so on.

I want to close by going back to the conspiracy theory mentioned in Matthew 28. It's a theory that took in a lot of people back then because after all, what makes more sense? That his disciples stole his body, or that he rose from the dead? We believe that he rose from the dead. How then do we take on this conspiracy theory? By talking about the living Christ who is inside us, who is moving us and inspiring us each and every day, and we do that without fear.

This is our answer to that conspiracy theory. His body wasn't stolen because his body wasn't there! Saints, as we put that conspiracy theory to rest let us also endeavor to put all false conspiracy theories to rest. We need to do that now because people are dying. Let us go forth not with fear, but with faith and with hope and with good critical thinking skills that we might know the truth, because as the Bible teaches us "The truth will set us free!"

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Here it is September already and we have missed you all so much. We hope that everyone has stayed well during this difficult time. Hopefully, we will be able to gather again soon, perhaps in November. We will just have to wait and see.

We have decided to donate #200.00 to our church in order to provide COVID19 equipment and other needed supplies when we begin to gather once again. We have also donated \$100.00 to our food pantry to buy needed essentials of food and sandwiches for St. Joseph's Social Service Center in Elizabeth. This will be the start of our Mission projects for 2020 and 2021. Last year we donated \$400.00 toward a new freezer for our kitchen and collected many items for our women veteran's home in Menlo Park. We have not been able to deliver these yet, but hopefully they will be able to accept them soon.

You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,

Dianne Petersen UWM President

SMALL CHURCH GROUPS CAN NOW MEET!

PLEASE ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING CONFERENCE GUIDELINES:

WEAR MASKS AT ALL TIMES
PRACTICE SAFE DISTANCING
(AT LEAST 6 FEET)
NO COFFEE OR REFRESHMENTS (FOR NOW)
CLEAN UP/SANITIZE ALL
AREAS YOU USE

QUESTIONS? CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE 732-381-9478

FINANCIAL NEWS

The Finance Committee is continuing to provide financial information. The following provides the income and expenses as of October 2019. 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			
		June		Year to Date	
Income	\$	18,836.21	\$	121,915.49	
Expenses	\$	(18,684.44)	\$	136,477.98	
Difference	\$	151.77	\$	(16,562.49)	



Do you have an old bike or sewing machine that you aren't using? New Dover UMC can help take it off your hands!!!

Our Annual Pedals for Progress Drive is right around the corner!

Saturday September 12, 2020 - 9:00am to 12noon

New Dover UMC

687 New Dover Road

Edison, NJ

For more information call: Church Office @ (732)381-9478 Paulette Harland @ (732)259-0852



September Birthdays

- 3 Debbie Ladym Danielle Tisch
- 5 Rosemary Raju
- 7 Nancy Rock
- 11 Alethea Poornaselvan
- 12 Hemant Raju
- 13 Scott Fisher
- 14 Edward Carney
- 15 Ava Christian
- 18 John Bonner
- 21 Michael Taylor
- 23 Marsha Quackenbush
- 24 Nílesh Katkar Donna Sucheskí
- 26 Sangita Christian Declan O'Rourke Fredie Terence
- 27 Michael Baidowsky
- 30 Robbin Roth

September Anniversaries

- 4 Ed & Debbie Ladym
- 7 Charles & Diana Bennett
- 8 Elmíra & Cesar Higoy
- 9 C.J. & Sunhee Yoon
- 14 Ed & Phyllis Carney
- 16 Dan & Danielle Mizak
- 24 Scott & Tonya Burleigh
- 25 Michael & Martha Taylor
- 26 John & Jayne Bonner
- 27 Ted & Juel Nelson



For those of you who have not met our new associate pastor, let me introduce you to Eun Young "Rosie" Park Pang. Rosie has a Bachelor in Fine Arts from Centenary College, Hackettstown, NJ and a Master of Divinity from Drew Theological School. Rosie and her husband, Chantha and their son, Chansen live in Union, NJ.

Since July 1st, Rosie is settling in at New Dover. One of her priorities has been getting to know the Youth of New Dover. She has held Zoom meetings with them, and challenged them to get involved in the food ministry. She and Chansen are now regulars on Friday morning helping with our sandwich and food ministry along with the Youth. On August 1st at the outdoor service, the youth gathered (properly distanced and with masks) for the first time since March. They played games, celebrated the 2020 graduates and of course, there was plenty of food.

You can also see Rosie on Sunday mornings during online worship service assisting Rev. Chuck with Moment for Youth, serving as liturgist, preaching and sometime cameraperson. Welcome Rosie, Chantha and Chansen to New Dover UMC!

UNDER CONSIDERATION

Consider...

America the Beautiful used to be Indian land, with bison as numerous as grains of sand; Thousands of miles of glorious space, with nary a thought of a white man's face. Then Europeans invaded, claiming the shores for their own; taking over the space only Indians had known;

The white man spread up and down the coast, and created new colonies of which they could boast. They brought with them the slavery scourge, as a new nation they tried to forge; Africans taken from their land of milk and honey, all in the name of gracious living and money. Black lives treated as property with no mind or soul, forced submission was the white man's goal; He fancied himself higher than his fellow man, to rule this New World was his ultimate plan. Down the course of this road the woman expected to find herself similarly disrespected; Man ruled the household, his word was law; female disobedience an unaccepted faux pas.

Consider...

In the Bible we see the same darkness of soul, imperfect people wanting control; Fear leading them into the open abyss, without concern that their lives were amiss. Or pride, that odious sin with dangers fraught, leading many wayward into entitled thought; Those who had it defending their rights to the death, demeaning others with their very last breath. Now, more demand justice for an end to their bane, for oppression to cease, love and mercy to reign; While closed minds result in closed ears, and hard hearts yield no sympathy or tears.

Consider...

Today we can no longer ignore the tolling bell; the still, small voice that is warning us of hell; We must put on the armor of God and fight, counting on His Word to lead us with light. Love God, love people, make disciples for Christ, live the life born of His sacrifice; Take up the armor and go into the fray, letting the Gospel message lead the way. We can no longer afford to wait by the side, watching others take that roller-coaster ride; For when we meet the Father and Son, we will want to hear, "faithful servant, well-done!"

Anita Davis, August 7, 2020

For New Dover Youth, Young Members & Families August 2020

Zoom Meets

We are continuing to meet via Zoom on Sundays at 4pm. We may change this time (will notify) to accommodate higher number of participation. We're also looking into ways to gather safely at church, outdoors as a youth group. It's more fun and effective that way. Will keep you posted!

IGNITE CONFER-ENCE

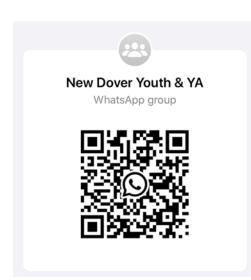
IGNITE HAS MOVED TO JANU-ARY 29-31, 2021

Stay Tuned for More Information This Fall.



Thank you families, for all of your donation of time and goods for our Saturday, August 1 gathering!

"Youth & Young Adults at New Dover sends a Huge Thank You for all of your support and generosity for 8/1 Gathering and 8/29 Car Wash!" Raised fun will go toward our next IGNITE CONFERENCE.





Scan the QR Code and stay in touch; OR, Download WhatsApp (free) from your App Store and add group "New Dover Youth & YA."

Do you need someone to talk about something? Are you going through turbulence in your life or

Need someone to pray with you?

I'm all ears.

Call or Text me-
Rosie Pang, Associate Pastor, 917-453-1233.

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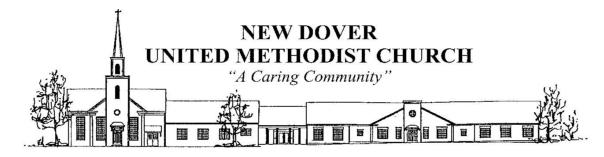
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YOUTH IN ACTION



SUMMER





2 0 2























Church in Action Summer 2020