

THE SEER

NOVEMBER 2020



Notes from the Pastor

To all of you,

If you ever want to know what a pastor does between Sundays, just ask Virginia Greenwald. Every Tuesday morning, for the past 10 months, I called her with my to-do list. We would go over priorities, look ahead, plan and talk about the life of this church. Virginia was a great moderator to work with. Her denominational level experience with the Lutherans and her many years working in churches and non-profits gave her a unique viewpoint on ministry and pastoral responsibility. She, more than anyone, was always in the position of being able to support my work and the work of this congregation. She understands how the ongoing work of evaluating the ministry of a congregation involves more than just the pastor. It also involves evaluating and charting the capacity of a congregation to explore alternatives, encourage and support creative solutions to its problems, be profoundly generous, communicate well, and develop leaders for the future of the church. And most of all, how leadership involves the ability to be honest and forthright in all its dealings with everyone. The capacity to be able to deliver difficult news to people with both compassion and integrity is going to be tantamount for congregations as we move into the third decade of the 21st century.

One of the books Virginia and I read together was Dan Hotchkiss' **GOVERNANCE AND MINISTRY, Rethinking Board Leadership**. Ask to see

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Virginia's copy and you will see that it is bookmarked, underlined and dog-eared. This book is full of salient and important ideas about how to think about the way churches organize themselves. A key point he makes is that when leadership spends no time on goal setting, or visioning then nothing happens, nothing changes. My thirty plus years doing interim ministry tells me that a congregation that can't dream outside of its own current way of doing things will never grow.

This is a quote from that book:

"A passive board that spends most of its time listening to reports, responding to proposals, and arbitrating conflicts rather than envisioning the future, creating long-term goals and policies, and ensuring organizational performance. A committee-centered board has little or no agenda of its own—only the sum of the agendas of its committees. Ironically, this way of spending the board's time often means that the board hardly ever talks about the topics it agrees are most important."

We all did some great dreaming last February and the budget you voted for reflected that vision. It was a vision of a church with a mission about being in touch with nature, about a truck garden, about a youth pastor and Godly Play. That envisioning was created with meetings with parents, with conversations in the kitchen, with emails and phone calls and stewardship and the courage of people to be willing to financially support that dream. COVID and 2020 has thwarted that promise but I know that there is within you the capacity to do that anew. I hope you have those conversations again with Diana.

Churches that will survive into 2022 will have a clear mission statement that lays out what love means in this world. It has been true with those of us who have trained in Stewardship that the churches that are able to pass larger and larger funded budgets are those with a clear mission statement. A mission statement that engages everyone in a congregation where members can relate that to the gospel and explain what it means for the sake of the world, and how it has transformed their lives.

The Dan Hotchkiss book has this to say about the importance of mission:

“And what is the mission? The great management consultant Peter Drucker wrote that the core product of all social-sector organizations is a “changed human being.” A congregation’s mission is its unique answer to the question, Whose lives do we intend to change and in what way? What this means for a particular congregation at a given time is never clear or obvious, and so articulating mission is a continuing task. But a congregation that avoids that task—that simply seeks to please its members or keep doing what it has done in the past—falls short of its true purpose. Growth, expanding budgets, buildings, and such trappings of success matter only if they reflect positive transformation in the lives of people.”

During my time with you, the high point of every week, for me, has been the Wednesday morning Bible Study. This group of women (most often) have been doing a close reading of the text of the Gospel of Luke. I learned something every week from them. I often hear how the gospel works its way in this world through the experience of others, and understand how it rubs up against the assumptions and naïve expectations of a people who have long avoided really reading its pages. In that group, we would talk about the metaphor of seeing the world through the eyeglasses of the “Kingdom of God.” That is a vision of a world imbued with God’s best hopes for us – a world where all are fed, and housed and there is no need for war or rancor. It is a place where justice reigns and hope wears flesh and blood. In that weekly hour was often where I discovered what the mission of the church is – to transform people, to give their eyes over to God and to see what happens when the divine is born among us.

As you move through the season of Thanksgiving and into the Advent of a new pastoral relationship, I hope you will stand not on the past and nostalgia’s pull rather let yourself see that what “was” is gone...there is a future beyond this year that is calling all of us into itself—a future beyond what things were once like, beyond what your parents knew, beyond comfort and coziness, beyond even ourselves...wear, then, the eyeglasses of the Kin(g)dom and taste and see that what you don’t know

(or understand immediately) won't hurt you.

I leave you with the words of Sonya Renee Taylor, author, *THE BODY IS NOT AN APOLOGY*, and Cornel West, Author of *DEMOCRACY MATTERS*

"We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona virus existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature." S.R. Taylor

And,

"I'm a prisoner of hope. I don't believe in optimism or pessimism. I believe in wrestling with despair and trying to generate enough energy to remain Socratic and prophetic in my own life, deeds, and thoughts. But the world is always a mess." C. West

And finally, as Professor West always says, "Hope is not a mood it is a virtue."

Love to all, Pastor Anne.

Council Highlights

October 2020

Note: Meetings take place via Zoom

October

- **The Latest on PPP Loan forgiveness:** The application for forgiveness of the Federal Paycheck Protection Program loan we received has been approved by Exchange Bank and submitted to the SBA (Small Business Administration) for final approval. So confident are we that this will be approved that our Bookkeeper has moved the loan amount from Liabilities to Assets!
- **Financial Secretary**, Rebecca Allington, reported that a few people have been using **Givelify**, the donation app shown on our website (in addition to PayPal). We have received \$360 thus far, a small, but significant sum because it shows that it's being noticed.
- The **Outreach Team** has begun to install **Vote!** signs, personalized by members, on the church property.
- **Outreach Team**, whose focus this year has been housing, has designated the annual 20% of the Missions giving to **Caritas Village**. Half the Christmas Offering will be donated to **Undocufund**, managed through the North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP). (The other half supports UCC ministers in need.)
- **Looking for a great Christmas gift?** Outreach will provide information about how to buy a flock of chicks, a water buffalo, or something in between, from **The Heifer Project**.
- **Stewardship:** Sunday, October 25, is the first Sunday of our Stewardship Season. Letters and Pledge forms will be mailed, and should be in your mailbox soon. A stamped and addressed return envelope is provided to make the pledge sheet easy to mail back.
- **Worship Chair**, Evelyn Smith, reported Pastor Anne's final Sunday service will be on Nov. 22. The Team will be responsible for the Nov. 29 service, which is the First Sunday in Advent.
- Next **Council meeting** is Friday, November 20, at 11:00, via Zoom. If you would like to attend, contact Moderator Virginia Greenwald at dvgreenw@comcast.net

For All Saints Sunday

In celebration of All Saints Day, Connie Allen sent me such a moving tribute to her brother that I wanted to share it with you. For all of us with brothers and people who, when alive, made this world a better place – Pastor Anne

Harold Robert Allen 1932-- 2020



He was a kind man. You might expect me to call him a gentleman. I think of a gentleman as a polite man in finery; a suit, coat, tie, etc. That was not Harold. Harold lived in blue jeans and a T-shirt. Harold was a kind man. So many people today look at you with a "what can I get from you" attitude. Harold looked at people with a "what can I do for you" attitude.

His jeans and T-shirt were clean when Joan sent him to work but they were greasy and dirty when he came home. He was a hard working man of Appalachia, a man born to live an honest life connected close to the earth and the forest.

Harold's first memories were of living on Pistol Fork -- a holler that ran into Crooked Fork, down Steer Creek and eventually into the Little Kanawha River before it became part of the great Ohio River, and eventually the Mississippi River, flowing to New Orleans. Harold was born on a small holler but was always interested in the rest of the world.

Harold was the third child of Straud and Ena Allen. As a toddler, he was the baby with an older sister, Geraldine, and an older brother, Eugene. Eugene was sickly and Harold became the defender and

protector of both Eugene and "Sis." Eugene would spend much of his day turning over rocks in Pistol Fork looking for crawcrabs. When he found one, he would call to Harold that he had found a "cross eyes." Harold never seemed to tire of dropping whatever he was doing and run to catch the "cross eyes" for Eugene.

When Eugene tired of chasing "cross eyes" the two boys would go "fox hunting." There had been a land slide behind the house. Dirt and mud had slid down the hill and piled up behind the house so that the back bedroom window was about even with the ground. Harold would show the family dogs their reflection in the window and a big dog fight would break out between the real dogs and the reflection dogs. Ena would always laugh as she told of the boys "a-whoopin and a-hollerin, eggin the dogs on."

The boys grew up and Eugene was drafted into the Army at the beginning of the Korean War. Eugene needed his protector and Harold volunteered into the Army with the Army's promise that the two brothers could serve together. They went through basic training together. Harold served his time driving truck in Alaska and Eugene was sent to Korea as a military cook.

The crew at the sawmill, the seniors Harold drove on excursions or the children who rode his school bus will all attest that Harold was a kind man.

Harold was a funny man. Harold could tell funny stories about everyone. Maybe some of the stories were made up, I never knew. However, all the stories were fit so perfectly to that person's personality, they made you like that person without ever meeting them.

Harold handled difficult situations with humor. He once said that he had never been insulted. When someone tried to insult him, he would assume the person was joking and begin telling jokes until he realized that person had been serious and he had insulted that person worse than they had tried to insult him. That comes from seeing the good in people without hunting for the bad.

Most important, Harold was a man -- a strong man. He was as comfortable in the kitchen making vegetable soup with tiny meatballs as he was comfortable cutting huge trees for the sawmill or driving the bulldozer. When his children were small, he never missed a night dropping what he was doing and reading a bedtime story to them.

Harold was the kind of man who made everyone he met better. Harold was the kind of man who made this world a better place.

Have you downloaded the Givelify app to your phone and/or computer yet?

It's an easy way to put a little something in the offering plate that **isn't** being passed at church these Sundays. That ingathering is surely needed not only for the ongoing work of the congregation, but to celebrate generosity of the spirit! Each week as we gather around our computers, iPads and phones, I am grateful for the opportunity to worship together. I have my phone near my candle and communion plate. When it comes time for sharing what we are grateful for, I can "tap the app" and support our church. It's really that easy once you've signed up. Whether it's \$1, \$5 or \$10, it's all welcome and to me it completes worship. www.Givelify.com Want to give it a try?

Virginia Greenwald, Moderator

November Family Faith Activity

Psalm 95:2

New Revised Standard Version

² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

And:

“I believe that appreciation is a holy thing.” Fred Rogers

Materials – a Bible.

This activity can easily be done at your table, but to make it seem more special, consider spreading a blanket on the floor for the family to sit around. The blanket connects you just as a table does, but the blanket for younger children will signify something special and different is happening.

When everyone is sitting, have someone read the Bible verse.

Then ask each person to share something that made them feel thankful today. For smaller children, the question might be what made you happy today?

Try to really listen to each other. Maybe even suggest that everyone closes their eyes during this sharing because it is sometimes easier to listen with our eyes closed. Point out how we all have things to be thankful for and sometimes we can even think of many things.

End with a prayer that includes what each person shared.



November Birthdays

11/4 Ed Thompson

11/29 Jean Davis

11/25 Maureen Taber

11/28 Annie Williams

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