

Our Light

www.middleburyumc.org
JUNE-JULY-AUGUST 2014

*Your word is a lamp to my
feet, and a light to my path.*

Psalm 119:105

The MIDDLEBURY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Newsletter

Whether you are a member of the Middlebury congregation, a local resident, or a visitor to our area, you are invited and welcome to attend and participate in all activities and events mentioned in this newsletter.

FAITH

By faith we see a little something that others are not seeing. In our listening we perceive a little something that others are not hearing. Are we crazy or delusional? By faith we exert a tiny effort more than we might otherwise do, to let the world open up in front of our eyes. We see the world as a gift, welcoming and delighting, instead of something to grasp or hold. By faith we make a small gesture to open ourselves up ... to see things from a different point of view. By faith we recognize that our own plans and projects need to open a bit, that we might need to let go of this, or take hold of that. Our mindset needs to be opened to make room for God's loving purposes for us and for everyone.

When skeptics wonder about our faith, or for that matter when we have doubts — it might be because we think we are called to understand the truth of every single thing in the Bible in the same way that we read a newspaper. And if that is what reading the Bible faithfully is about — it is a very strange newspaper! But is it really the case that the stranger the things we are willing to believe the stronger our faith? Or should we be able to discern truth in a variety of different ways from the diverse literature that we find in the Bible?

I believe the central stories of Genesis as true — that is, that God created the world and called it good; that God called Abraham to be a blessing to the nations. Now if you believe that Adam and Eve were real historical people — there is no harm in that for you. But if you believe that the truth of their story is more like a sacred symbolic message, and not a historical account, then you are still reading Genesis by faith. If you let the story open your eyes to God's creative activity in our world; if you read it and recognize in it your story; if you hear God's judgment on sin, and welcome God's gift of life, then you are reading by faith.

When we read Exodus, there is more than one way to read it with faith and openness. The central story of the Hebrew people is that God rescued them from slavery in Egypt with a mighty hand. I don't know whether there were seven plagues, or two or none. But somehow I know that God spared the Hebrews and they left in a hurry. I don't know how exactly they escaped pharaoh's armies when they were at the water's edge, or how they found themselves safely on the other side with nothing but freedom in front of them. But my faith is shaped by that story: the story that God actively takes the side of the oppressed. We celebrate the story of God's power to rescue those who call for help, and liberate those who are in bondage.

Faith is not about trying to undermine our God-given reason. It is a willingness to be open to other forms of truth besides the most obvious. To live by faith is to be willing to look at a wider

array of evidence. And some of that evidence is what we see in the lives of others who have lived faithfully and courageously. It is a willingness to see God at work — even if God's action seems invisible to others. Growing in faith has to do with being open to God's mysterious ways in the world, being ready to receive God's gifts in gratitude. .

Faith is not about magic or hocus-pocus. Faith is walking more boldly and living more confidently even when we feel like our confidence and boldness are about the size of a mustard seed. It is the assurance that God's sovereignty is sweeping the world with love and power, so that human beings, each made in God's image and each one loved dearly, may relax in the knowledge that God is in control, that God is at work in the world.

With Faith from Laurie and Gus

INTERIM MINISTER OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE

On Sunday, May 18, the announcement was made that the Reverend George Klohck will serve in the part-time interim position of Minister of Congregational Care from this date until July 31 or whenever the Reverend Jill C. Robinson is ready to begin her work here.

Given the busy schedules that our coordinating pastors, Gus and Laurie Jordan, have with their work at the college, our coordinating committee decided we should not wait until August to begin this new position. So, we approached George with this concern, and he agreed to serve beginning now.

As announced on Easter Sunday, our Minister of Congregational Care will lead our visitation ministry and conduct weddings and funerals among other things.

George has asked us to make known his contact information to all the people of our church community. He says, "We are all ministers together, caring for each other. Please keep me informed about any circumstances in which we may offer support, e.g., health concerns, life changes coming from a birth or death or move or job change or educational challenge, etc. We can listen and sometimes lend a hand. And, as church and community change, think about ways we can do more to care for friends and neighbors, and talk to me about that."

George also says, "I am especially interested in building a strong faith for these times of change when religious convictions and values are confronted by many conflicting voices. Would you like to talk about that? Let's get together."

George can be reached by calling 989-7363 or via e-mail at mgklohck@comcast.net.

Don Jochum, Lay Leader and Chair of the Coordinating Committee

PENTECOST - THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH

The church is decorated in red for Sunday, June 8. At our morning service we will remember how the church began, and those of us who remember to do it will wear something red symbolizing the “tongues of fire” that came upon the followers of Jesus at Pentecost. The Spirit of God came among the people and into their lives so that fear and despair were driven away and they became a people of hope who loved and empowered each other to spread the good news that God is love for everyone, that no one needs to live in fear even of death. This is counted as the beginning of the Church. [Learn more about it in our bishop’s letter which follows.] As we celebrate this birthday each year, we pray for the coming of the Spirit again – among us – so that we may be faithful and experience the joy and power that they shared. See you on June 8.

OUR BISHOP’S PENTECOST LETTER

June 1, 2014

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

On Sunday, June 8th, 2014, we shall be celebrating the "Pentecost" - the birthday of the Church. When I was a serving as a pastor, it was always one of the highlights of my ministerial journey, and I was always wondering what we could do to celebrate it. I not only had joy in making preparations to celebrate the Pentecost, but I also had fun doing it! I still remember in one of the Trustee meetings, a trustee said, "Suda, are you going use the red balloons again in the sanctuary this year for the Pentecost?" When I answered in the affirmative, he looked at me and said, of course with love, "Don't call us if the balloons get stuck in the ceiling again. You'll need to climb up the ladder yourself and pull it out!" Guess what? It did happen, but this colleague was there with his ladder to help me. I still remember in my home Conference (now Upper New York), when I had to present the District Superintendents report with the ballroom full of red balloons!

This year I am looking forward to being at the Aroostook cluster of the Northern Maine District for the celebration of Pentecost where, I believe, they release butterflies as a mark of celebration. Participants are able to reclaim the multicultural and diverse gifts of the people of God, flying all around with the love of Christ, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit! Celebrations are important to claim who we are, but they are also moments to pause and reflect on who we are.

As we reflect upon the powerful story of the Pentecost in Acts, we read about many powerful moments of the day! One of them is Peter delivering his sermon "standing with the eleven" (Acts 2:14). What an act of unity among the apostles! A powerful and prophetic sermon indeed! What is deeply touching is in Acts 2:37: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?'" What a great response

to the sermon by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Of course this question prompted Peter to make it clear to them...repent, and be baptized in the in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"What should we do?" (Acts 2:37) is a great question to ask as a response to a powerful sermon.

As I reflect on the Pentecost, the celebration of the birthday of the Church, my thinking is:

- What if every Christian community around the world responded to countless sermons preached on countless Sundays, and responded by saying, "What should we do?" Think of the effects, particularly as we see new justice and peace ministries emerging all around the world. I guess that there would be no more war, hunger, or poverty.
- What if all the people in our pews asked this question: "What should we do?" and responded by saying, "We will take time to go to the impoverished areas in our communities, nation and world to bring messages of love and hope in the midst of hopelessness and despair.
- What if every church asked in unison the question: "What should we do?" and responded by committing to open their buildings to be used by non-profit organizations which are doing powerful ministries on behalf of the poor and marginalized in our communities. Look at the possible growth in the areas of promoting literacy, teaching English as a second language, and other worthy causes. These organizations often do not have a place to carry out their ministries or they do not have money to pay expenses for their missions.

May I request all of us to be in prayer for our Annual Conference session so that all we do may glorify our Creator God, deepen our love for Jesus Christ, and enable us to experience the power of the Holy Spirit at every moment during the Annual Conference session and beyond.

In Christ's love, *Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar*



HomeComing Sunday – Good Company and Good Food

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – JUNE 22, 12:15 P.M.

Our next quarterly all-congregation meeting will be held after our Sunday service on June 22. Reports will be heard on what we are doing and what opportunities are before us and members of our coordinating committee will listen to questions and concerns. Lunch will be provided.

Further consideration will be given to the Mission Statement for our church which was presented as a proposal at our last congregational meeting. Here is the proposed mission statement:

To love our neighbor in the Spirit of God's reconciling love.

In this Spirit, we welcome people of all ages, races, national origins, economic abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, family configurations, and mental and physical capacities.

In this Spirit, all ministries and sacraments of the church are available to our members without discrimination.

In this Spirit, and together with our neighbors, we work for social and personal transformation, justice, healing, and peace.

SUMMER SUNDAYS

Every Sunday we gather at 10:45 to share celebrations and concerns. We care for each other, we share news of what is going on in our lives and in our community, and we try to make new friends welcome. At 11:00 we take our places in the sanctuary and begin our worship. On June 15 Don Jochum, our lay leader, will bring the message, and on June 22 George Klohck will lead our worship. George's message will focus on what we truly believe and how we share that faith with others. On most of the remaining summer Sundays Laurie and Gus Jordan lead us. We are all encouraged to come together as often as we can.

OUR FINANCES – GOOD NEWS

Julie Coons, our faithful treasurer, reports that our bills are paid and that even our share in the ministry of the larger church (the world-wide ministry of United Methodists) is already fully supported for this whole year. The service of Laurie and Gus Jordan, who give themselves so generously as our coordinating pastors, is an immense help. We give them a huge thank you. And, our progress is also due to the continuing faithful support of our members. We are people who know that we belong to God who has made us to love each other. We are going to keep up the good work and keep our pledges and offering current in the summer months.

[The Resources Team will meet at Julie Coons' office on Monday, June 9th at 3:30.](#)

SOME SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE

Womensafe is the result of many people caring for women and families who are suffering. The people of Womensafe provide safety and comfort and often enable them to make a fresh start. We Methodists are helping. In many years we have given a special offering on Mother's Day. This year, having missed that date, we are going to do it on Father's Day, June 15. After all, we're counting on fathers and want to help fathers, too.

Peace with Justice Offering - June 17, 2014

\$49,315 was just granted from Peace with Justice Sunday Offering of last year by United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) to 14 projects which witness to God's demand for a faithful, just, disarmed, and secure world. Half of the Special Offering is retained in the annual conference for local projects. The other half is remitted to GBCS for allocation.

Grants went to programs that address diverse issues including immigration, economic empowerment, nutrition, peace, racial justice, death penalty, and leadership development. These programs are as follows:

1. Korean Peace March & Advocacy in Washington, DC based in Belmont, MA enabling Korean United Methodist Churches in US to work with the Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Women in pursuing lasting peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula;
2. Young Adult Program on Economic Social Justice in Mindanao, Philippines Conference will present 3 consultative workshops providing technical and financial assistance to establish livelihood projects including vocational training;
3. Minimum Wage Campaign, Interfaith Worker Justice in Chicago works for social change through education, training and advocacy;
4. Lion and Lamb Festival - a young adult ministries program engaging attendees in issues of spirituality and justice through creative outlets such as art and music in Fort Wayne, IN, Indiana Conference (over 300 attended last year);
5. Kalamazoo Peace Center at West Michigan University Wesley Foundation to educate, empower and mobilize students to bring positive change in the community;
6. Berkshire Farms Forums on Race at First Methodist Church, Pittsfield, MA facilitating public forums to transform community understanding and affirmative action, working with the NAACP;
7. Mobile ESL (English as a second language) in Daraja, TX in partnership with Justice for our Neighbors (JFON) offering courses in the apartment buildings that tend to be first homes for resettled refugees;
8. Redemptive Work , Southwest Texas Conference at Parker Lane UMC, Austin addresses needs of persons who are traditionally unemployable such as recently incarcerated and chronically homeless through one-on-one counseling and job-application services;
9. Austin Region Justice for Our Neighbors is a ministry that provides free or low-cost legal services to persons with immigration issues. The clinic will be conducted at Servant Church, Austin District's newest congregation which meets at Asbury UMC. It has an intentional outreach to young adults in an area which includes a mix of different immigration groups with diverse needs;
10. Life After Death Row, Southwest Texas Conference enables the conference to hold seminar/lunch bringing an exonerated death-row inmate as their guest as speaker and discussion;
11. Increasing Healthy Food Choices: Nutrition, Preparation and Access, North West Texas Conference offers programs in two United Methodist Community Centers, one urban and one rural, where food insecurity is a systemic problem. With courses in English and Spanish in

partnership with congregations, they provide education in a variety of subjects especially around food for those with diabetes, heart diseased and obesity;

12. Branch Out, Florida Conference enables Branch United Methodist Mission's Young Adult Ministry among Haitian and Latinos living below the poverty level to educate and mobilize on behalf of immigration rights and non-violence in the area of Florida City and Homestead;

13. Just Neighbors Ministry, Virginia Conference, Arlington District's New Hope Project helps youth and young adults respond to new immigration policies by helping them to obtain work permits to remain in the country safely and

14. Expanding Leadership Development into Pima County, Arizona through the Pima County Interfaith Civic Organization Opportunities. It provides congregations of different faiths with civic education, leadership training and advocacy with low and middle-income families facing situations where change is needed.

Please consider giving a small contribution to this special offering. When all of our congregations throughout the world support each one of six special offerings each year, many life giving ministries are possible.

Never measure your generosity by what you give, but rather by what you have left.

--- Fulton J. Sheen

OUR NEW CHURCH WEBSITE ADDRESS

<http://umcmiddlebury.org>

--Please note that this is our June-July-August issue of "OurLight" -- Look for our September Issue near the end of August. Happy Summer!!!!

--If you would prefer to get this newsletter by email or wish to be removed from our email or mailing lists please let us know by leaving a message at:

The Church office, 388-2510

or by email, newsletter@umcmiddlebury.org

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



2014

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