



May

a note from
Pastor Joseph

This is not the year I imagined. 2020 vision - it mocks me every time I yearn to offer a hug or gather with you all. It's not that we are not living into this dream of *"Faithfully committing to a longer vision of this congregation connecting, growing and serving at Central for Jesus and with Jesus to be a blessing to our community and generations to come."* In some ways, I believe we are doing this better than ever. You, the people of Central UMC, are wonderful and it has been a privilege to hear your hearts and your responses in this time. It's just that I never thought it would be like this.

The world is not as we thought it would be. It's not the first time nor the last. But we are not unequipped for these times. Our scriptures are full of stories of lament, exile, disappointment – and they are constantly brought up against the light of a faithful God. It truly is amazing. No matter the darkness which gathers or sorrow which lingers, people of faith find ways to praise God,

*I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.
O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. - Psalm 34*

Even when very sky turns to darkness and the world seems to be ending, still we praise our God, *"Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." - Rev 19:5-7*

Though the storms may rise, we know the truth deep in our hearts, He is Risen! No matter how high the waves rise, still we praise God, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit."*

We are socially distancing in the Easter season of resurrection. We are an Easter people in a Good Friday world. We have been through so much, but our story calls us to more. Easter gives way to Pentecost. The empty tomb makes possible the spreading flame. Friends, as we find ourselves unable to gather as we would like, let us remember the blessing of being spread out in this world. It has been great hearing stories of food collection, donations, masks being made and shared, resource rooms starting, intentional connection, and overwhelming acts of hospitality. The flame of the Holy Spirit is spreading. Let us continue to offer the good news of our God through this burning love.

In this lamplighter you will again find space to reflect and dive into scripture. Our staff has provided a devotional for you for each week and more. Grab a pen and notepad and let your heart expand. There will continue to be updates and news shared in our weekly emails and blog posts on richmondcumc.com. Stay tuned as we navigate the ever changing reality to best serve our community. No matter what comes, still we will praise our God!

Yours in Christ, 



Window
Cleaning



Room
Cleaning



House
Cleaning



Soul
Cleaning?

Cleaning. The word has changed. It's utterance once brought up images of the pre-party rush to show everyone yes, I throw a great get-together and of course this is how we always live - just don't look in the closet. This time of year it shows itself in that seasonal burst of energy to clean up from our hibernation. Always, it brought groans from the worst parts of ourselves which argued it was an unnecessary task which would just have to be done again tomorrow.

Now, it's the reason my hands are chapped and raw. It was that first week of social distancing in which we tried to capture that nervous energy. It is that perpetual activity of any place where people still continue to gather. Hypochondriacs wonder why everyone never saw this truth all along. We all are grateful for regular cleaning, it's just hard to grasp how dramatic and rapid the change has been.

The same can be said for the cleaning God always pursues in our own hearts. The author of our souls wishes to write a new story in our lives free from the mess of sin. And unlike the social distancing measures we are learning, his very presence cleanses us, *"let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."* Hebrews 10:22-23. The mess in our lives can pile up for years, but any turn to the cleansing work of Jesus brings about a rapid and dramatic change. Even those closets we stuffed to 'look good' on the surface are brought under the revealing, cleansing word of Jesus. *"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."* John 15:3

Still, walking in the Way, we find we do not always attend to every nook and cranny of our lives. Cobwebs form here, disorder there, maybe even a rug which has been used to hide inconvenient dust up front. This journey calls us to again and again bring the whole of our lives before the gaze of a holy and loving God. What 'Spring cleaning' do you need in this season of your walk with Jesus?

Read Acts 22:16. This verse falls in the middle of Paul's testimony of his life. Have you been cleansed in this way? If not, what is keeping you? If so, what do you remember of that time?

Read Psalm 51. What resonates in these verses with the past year of your life?

Read Psalm 119:57-64. Cleanliness only continues through continuous attention. What are those Spiritual Practices you can dust off or take up for the first time?

Dear God, thank you for again and again offering me the cleansing love of Jesus. Strengthen me to wield the power of the Holy Spirit to maintain this spiritual life you have blessed me with, so that I can join in your redeeming work in this world. Amen.



Many of us have become or changed the ways in which we are a caregiver to loved ones during this pandemic. Our Central caregiver group began meeting a few months ago and started reading and discussing “Ambushed by Grace: Help and Hope on the Caregiving Journey” by Shelly Beach. May this excerpt from the book serve as a nice devotional for you today.

Meditation Scripture:

Brokenness: Psalm 51:1, 6

Commitment: Psalm 37:3-7; Matthew 10:38-39

Attitude: Philippians 2:5-8

Compassion: Psalm 86:15

Meditation and Personal Application Questions:

- How would you apply 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 to your caregiving circumstances?
- How do we as caregivers balance servanthood in our caregiving with the practical realities of life?

In the book *Boundaries*, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend present a number of principles, among them:

- God desires compassion and not sacrifice. Don't take on too many responsibilities.
- It's okay to say no to people. Being Christlike does not mean we must always comply with someone's wishes.
- It's healthy to establish boundaries around our God-given desires and to nourish the dreams and aspirations the Spirit has implanted within us.

Questions:

- In what ways do you feel God may desire to redeem you and change you through caregiving?
- What do you think may be required of you in order for this change to take place?

Prayer:

Most loving Father, in this moment birth in me the desire to be changed in the deep places of my heart that are so difficult for me to see. May your Holy Spirit move in me...Lord, may I be willing to lay down my expectations of fairness and my need to have others come through for me. May I be committed to being conformed to the image of your Son...Heal the broken places in me, and change my heart. Renew a right spirit within me. Give me the vision of myself that you have for me. Thank you for your relentless passion for me and the ways that, even now, your Holy Spirit is moving within my life to change me. Father, make me a minister of your grace and mercy to others. Let me rest in your overwhelming love poured out for me...Thank you for the blessings you lavish over my life and my loved one's life. In the precious name of Jesus, amen.



My family loves to play a game called “SCENE IT”. There are multiple versions of this game, but our favorites are the Disney and Harry Potter versions. The game has trivia questions from cards but also from random movie scenes. When “arguing” over which game to play, these games are always agreed upon by everyone. One of the trivia items on the screen is a blurry photo inside a crystal ball. The photo swirls around and slowly becomes more visible until completely revealed. This particular challenge is always lost by me! However, my daughter-in-law, Kailey, wins this challenge nearly every time. She is incredible at depicting the image long before it shows up. As I was reading Psalm 27 recently, this game and, in particular, Kailey’s amazing ability to focus, came to mind.



Psalm 27:4 says:

One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.



And Psalm 27:8 says:

My heart says of you, “Seek his face! Your face, Lord, I will seek.

The Psalmist is asking the Lord to give him an “uncanny” ability to seek only His face and the things of His Kingdom. The world, and the Psalmist’s enemies, blur the face of God. David is having trouble finding the Lord and His presence amidst all of the chaos. But just as Kailey is able to see the blurred face before it is recognizable, so David proclaims: “Your face, Lord, I will seek”! David finds the face of God amidst all of the swirling doom around him. Wow! How relevant to today! We are surrounded by stories in the media, curve flattening data, false photos on the internet, angry people who have lost their freedoms, lack of necessary grocery items, and on and on. The ability to see God’s face amidst this turmoil seems impossible. And yet, through the blurry images, God appears! Not only does He appear, but He is recognizable and in all of His glory! One catch: we must be looking and seeking His face!

When God calls: “Hey, you....yea, you over there all discouraged and downcast...” “Can you see me?” “Are you seeking my face?” Can you find Him in the blur? Are you really focusing on Him? Is His image clear? I encourage you to take time today, and each new day, to SEEK HIS FACE. He will become more and more recognizable each visit!

Prayer:

God Almighty, may we seek your face daily. Guide us out of the blurry world chaos into a fully focused view of You and your presence in our lives. In those moments when you are hard to see, bring clarity and peace. And, Lord, may we be a clear image of You to others who are having trouble finding You right now! In your powerful name, Amen!



“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:6-7

I'll just admit it: I'm an anxious person. I worry about many things on a daily, weekly and monthly basis: did I pay the internet bill? Did I feed the snake this week? Did I annoy anyone today? My head is all too often dripping with a ceaseless stream of toxic, sludge-y anxiety. I am able to silence these thoughts, though – to halt the chaotic, stressful noise. Can you guess how? Yes – through daily prayer! Each time I pray, I bring absolutely everything to God: all of my worries, doubts and fears as well as more positive things (hopes, dreams, and things which I am grateful for). I put it all out there, and after spending time in deep prayer, I always feel much more relaxed and at peace. I feel my blood pressure slow down, my breathing become deeper, and my muscles loosen. In addition to the physical reaction, I also have a spiritual reaction: my soul relaxes as everything becomes beautifully simple. All the chaos of daily life dissipates, and I am one with the Spirit. I swear that I feel His presence during these times and I am so grateful – grateful beyond words – to have this relationship with God.



The Impact of Music

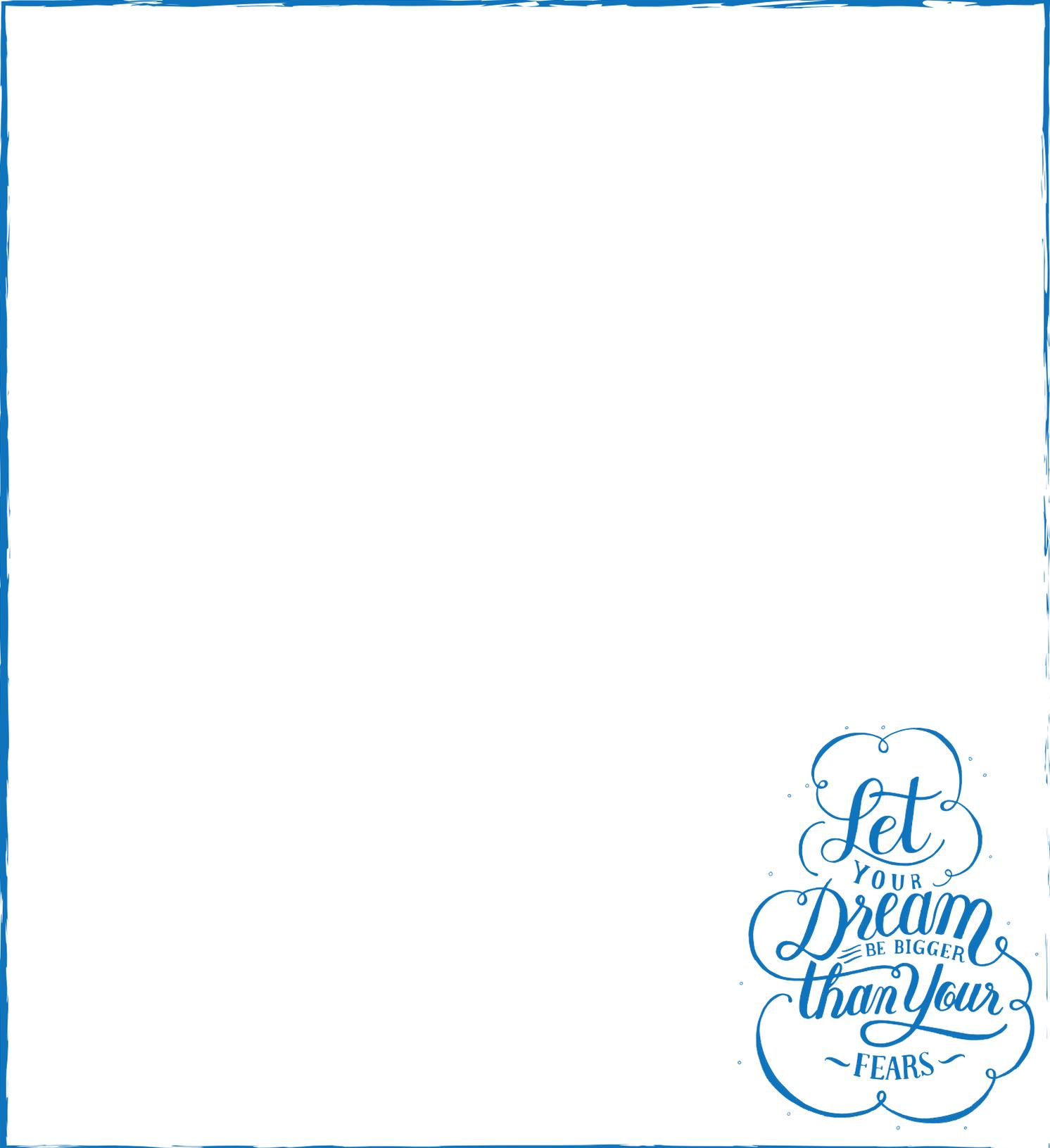
“Where words fail, music speaks.” - Hans Christian Andersen

I often find myself thinking of this quote. Music is just something else, isn't it? It is difficult to put into words the impact it can have on the human psyche. It can cause radical mood shifts: from frenzied laughter to ponderous silence; from overwhelming gloominess to exuberant joy. I can't tell you how many times I've been moved to tears by the overwhelming beauty of Mozart's Requiem Mass (too numerous to count). Another point of fascination is how radically different music can, for different folks, cause similar feelings of spiritual satisfaction. For example, my husband feels total serenity when listening to incredibly noisy death metal complete with distorted guitar, shrieking vocals and the heaviest bass and drums imaginable. My musical cup of tea is quite varied and includes free jazz, bluegrass, hip-hop, classical, hymns, praise music... I really do love all sorts of music. I believe that any genre, no matter how loud or unusual, has the innate ability to soften the chaos and noise of our daily lives and bring us closer to God; to be God Music.

Tell me, what is your God Music?

During this time of “we don’t know” and fears of what could be next, it helps to think of a future where we can confidently say “we don’t fear what’s next.” After this has passed and we are able to meet again and share in our “new normal,” What will that look like?

In the space below, write or draw what you believe your new normal to look like. Spend this time thinking about how your new normal will look, feel, and even smell like. Will it be more time with others? Helping out with different non-profits? Maybe even more time with Scripture?



Let
YOUR
Dream
BE BIGGER
than Your
FEARS



Emergency Resource Room at Central

Emergency - a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action. In many cases, people cannot anticipate and/or prepare to face an emergency situation. Often, it is necessary to rely on others to get through these difficult situations. What do these look like?

Perhaps it is a fire that occurs and destroys many, if not all, of your earthly possessions. It may also present itself as a woman, and her children, who suddenly need to flee an abusive situation with nothing but the clothes on their backs. It may be a family who has opened their home to take in a child through an emergency placement and is challenged to meet the needs of that child. Or perhaps it is a homeless person trying to get back on their feet. It is likely there are additional examples.

In response to addressing these needs, Central United Methodist Church is opening an emergency resource room. Assistance will be provided on a referral/request basis rather than an open-to-community arrangement. Items available through the resource room will include clothing for women, men, and children; small kitchen appliances and utensils; household management items; small furniture items; supplies for babies and children; and more.

How can you help? Donations to establish and maintain the resource room are needed. Anything that meets the needs listed above are being gathered. Items that are clean and in working order. Things that you no longer need, but could be used by others.

For more information, to assist with resource room, or to arrange a donation, feel free to contact Dana Mollenkopf at (765-277-0287 or at papamole@comcast.net).



"For where two or three gather in my name, I will be with them" - Matthew 18:20

The coffee shop is coming along! I cannot wait until our High School students can join me in finishing this space. I was given 3 free "bistro" type table and some chairs to bring more life to our "Central Perk"!

We are continuing to connect with students daily through Instagram and weekly with parents on Facebook. It is still a joy to zoom with them on Sunday nights and enjoy their contagious laughter. Continue to pray for these students as many are grieving some deep losses.

Seniors:

We have three seniors! We are hoping to have each of them present a video that we can broadcast on our live one Sunday in May. If you would like to write a letter or card for our seniors, please contact Sheri at 806-759-0485 for address information.



Musical Livingroom Worship

Madeleine does a Facebook Live Worship Service from her living room every Tuesday at 10:00 am, and Thursday at 2:00 pm. There are Scripture readings, hymns, and contemplative piano music. Please join her for the next one and as always, let her know if there are any hymn or Scripture requests that you would like to see on the next program.

Central UMC Music Dept WORD SEARCH

Try to find the following words.

Q	R	A	L	D	F	K	O	J	M	U	Y	E	U	C	R	Q	L	H	C	A	L	X	G	W	N	F	G	Q	G
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AMAZING GRACE
 CHANCEL CHOIR
 JOYSINGERS
 PIANO
 WESLEY RINGERS

BELL
 HOLY HOLY HOLY
 MELODY
 RING

CARILLON
 HYMN
 ORGAN
 SING

What other words can you find?

Central United Methodist Church

1425 East Main Street

Richmond, IN 47374

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Live Online Gathering Opportunities

Sunday

10:00am: Worship Service on Facebook

5:00pm: Youth Group with Sheri on Zoom

Monday

1:30pm: Bible Connection with Pastor Joseph
on Zoom

Tuesday

10:00am: Musical Worship with Madeleine on
Facebook

Wednesday

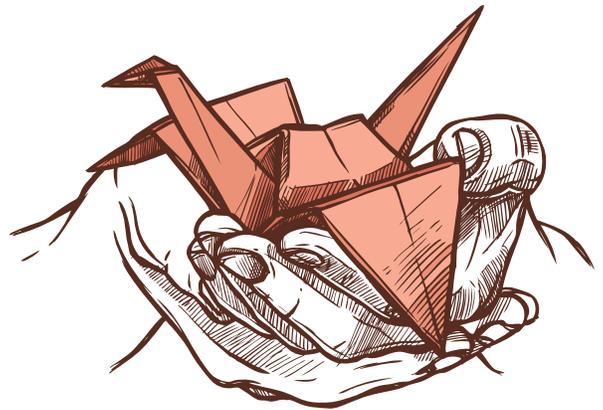
12:00pm: Mid-week Connection on Facebook

1-3pm: Virtual Office Hours on Zoom

Thursday

2:00pm: Musical Worship with Madeleine on
Facebook

8:00pm: Thoughtful Thursday with Pastor Jen
on Facebook



But those who *hope* in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.
- Isaiah 40:31