



JUNE



a note from  
*Pastor Joseph*

Lately, things do not seem the same. This may be the understatement of the year. There is the obvious – stay at home orders, people wearing masks, mass unemployment, and everything coronavirus related. Then there is the contextual – graduations without attendees, virtual services and events, and a new found respect/fear for medical facilities. It's the little thing in our own lives which I believe bring home this reality. To everything there is a season...

At home, we are done with extended learning. Summer has arrived. My kids' response – 'Yay! We will get to go back to school soon!' What? Or when we go out and see someone we care about and they instinctively reach out for a handshake or hug...and we feel a recoil of horror....what a long strange trip it's been. We know everything changes, yet no one could anticipate the noise and confusion of this season. If only we could get a glimpse beyond. Trust in the Lord with all your heart...

And yet we are still here – in the living but not fully knowing. Our experiences vary, but the journey continues. Celebrations mount as we get 'back on track.' Laments continue as we wrestle with a future lived behind masks and 6' apart. For us at Central, we are eagerly looking towards Pentecost. Not only as we remember the Holy Spirit being poured out, but also for a time of gathering again. This will not be our 'homecoming,' as many will be unable to attend (again, we encourage those who are at-risk to stay home in this season until we can freely gather). This will be a time of slowly doing the work of preparing our Sunday worship time to be for ALL people - whenever that day may come. Distance and Masks will abound, yet we will walk in grace (1 Cor 8:9, Rom 14:13) together. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face...

In many ways, I believe our time ahead will hold some of our greatest work. These changes call us forth to wrestle with new ways to share life with others, to love our neighbor, to be friends. We yearn for what will be revealed when we can again freely gather, but we remain here - awaiting, expecting, patient - knowing the truth and love of Jesus and acting & responding with the creativity of a called people. I pray years from now the people of Richmond look back and cannot help but mention the light pouring forth from Central in this time. Only, the cloud of unknowing haunts our next steps as indecision and analysis threatens temporary paralysis. How will we proceed? Fight the good fight of the faith...

Standing here between the absence of the Ascension and the power of Pentecost, we are again the Disciples in the Upper Room wondering what's next. Let us proceed in the same manner - some went to the temple to praise God, some stayed in their 'home' to pray to God - yet all prayed and praised! Friends, we may not be sure of what tomorrow brings, but the Holy Spirit is with us. June will not be the same as May, but it will be very different from every other June we have encountered. Change is here. Let us lean in, walk in the Spirit, and yield its fruit in this season. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Joseph

# LET IT BURN

Read 2 Timothy 1:6-12



## FIRE.



My earliest memories involve a fascination with the light and heat of the flames. My mother could tell you several stories about her concern my fascination at times looked more like the career sparks of an arson. Still today, the coals of most any fire mesmerize me as they dance with the shifting wind. ~ *What engrosses your attention these days?*

## FASCINATING.



Yet these flames contain power beyond our illusory control. I see my kids drawn to the glowing red embers. My delight fades as I wish I could somehow just give them knowledge gained through years of burns and foolish pride...without the pain. I try to share, 'fire eats' - the fuel you feed it and anything else it can grab. The words bring pause, appear solid, but vanish like wisps of smoke as I tend to the next 'ow!' ~ *Which of your actions turn wisdom received into smoke slipping through your fingers?*

## FEAR.



So much of it we don't know, don't respect, so we distance in fear. The glowing beauty cannot be controlled. Dangerous. We think of the house burnt, torn down across the street. The burning candle found the next morning. We wonder at logs doused at bed time appearing as a pile of hot ash in the morning. A need to contain, to steer clear of the fear arises. The open flames become enclosed. The enclosure regulated. The false fire transformed into a simulated screen. Safe - yet we wonder if we are missing something in the wild life of the flame. ~ *Have you given up on something fearfully and wonderfully wild and alive in your life?*

## FIERCE.



In a recent Sunday morning sermon, I shared about holiness being like fire - consuming all, yet revealing, purifying that which was truly there. This holy fire burns forth in scripture through other expressions - passion. ~ *Have you had it burning within lately?*

So much of life today can be safe, calculated, predictably enjoyable. But what substance would be left if brought to the fires of tribulation? Passion endures, drives us onward. Passion fed, like fire, spreads with a fierceness which cannot be contained. Perhaps this is why Paul challenged Timothy to kindle the fire through a revealing holy life - to again lean into the substance of a life set aflame - Jesus and His love. ~ *What spark or glowing ember do you feel God fanning in this season of life?*

*What are we going to do about it?*

Come Holy Spirit, come.

*Dear Lord, take this life and let it be consecrated. Holy. Let me burn brightly for your glory, casting light into the darkness and warmth over the icing loneliness. There is power in your love no matter how wild it may seem. I am yours. Let your Spirit fall.*

Pastor Joseph Seger - Lead Pastor

# A NEW RETURNING TO NORMAL

Read Luke 24:13-43

Last month there was a devotion in the Lamplighter inviting you to journal and/or draw about your new normal. I wanted to take some time to reflect on that myself a bit and have us continue to expand our responses.

At the time this is being written, I'm not sure what our reality will be when it's being read. What phase of reopening will our church, community, and the rest of the world be in? What might have had to close again or had to take a step back? Where are we at in returning to normalcy at work, in our families, and for ourselves?

I think about Jesus' followers after his death and then after they had learned he had risen! He would not remain with them in the same way he had before. There was a new normal that was laid before them.

I'm certain there were things the disciples had learned in the time of his living, through their grief from his dying, and the mix of emotions that they had felt after he had risen. What did they later on regret? What lessons and takeaways did they wish they had carried with them? What did they want to make sure they did differently in their new normal? These are questions that we can be asking ourselves as we move ahead in the days to come.

We can not accurately predict what life will look and feel like in each and every moment that lies in front of us. It won't look exactly like it does today.

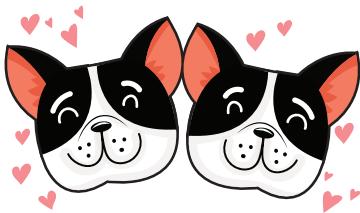
*Carrying with us the confidence of Christ, let's be ready. Let's be hopefully. Let's be grace filled. All of this, in each and every moment that is to come. Amen.*

**Pastor Jen Huff - Associate Pastor**



# Sober Minded

Read I Peter 5:6-11



We have new puppies at our house. Their mother rejected them at about 4 weeks because she had so many puppies! So we basically have 2 newborns at our house. They want constant attention when they are awake. They need to go out every 30 minutes or so when awake, as well. We are all taking shifts because it is all consuming!

As I was reading in 1 Peter, the puppies came to mind. Peter relays God's message to be "alert and of sober mind". Sober minded in scripture means to be focused and persistent. Peter continues by telling the readers that evil is looking for "someone to devour". Just as we must be vigilant and keeping the puppies from chewing cords, shoes, furniture, pillows, etc.; and getting them outside to do their business, so must we be vigilant about our walk with the Lord.

Evil is all around us and threatens to overwhelm our choices, tongues, attitude, beliefs, and general living. Peter tells the early Christians to "resist him, standing firm in the faith". This admonishment occurs after telling them to "be alert and of sober mind". There is no hope of resisting the prevalent evil if we are not solely focused and constantly turning to the Lord in faith. We can't turn to the Lord in faith if we only read about Him or talk to Him once a week. We must turn to Him moment by moment.

Moment by moments seems like an overwhelming request but it doesn't have to be. Spending more time daily in God's word and in prayer leads us to naturally turn to Him the rest of the day. His thoughts become closer to ours, His ways become ways that we want to follow, and His love becomes the love with which we love.

So take that time today to stop and hang out with the Lord. Let His grace wash over you. Let Him "restore you and make your strong, firm and steadfast." He is longing to be the ever present help and guide for your life.

*Lord Jesus, help me to move to a place where being alert in You is consistent. Guide me as I begin to understand the depth of who You are and how you want to transform me. Make me strong, steadfast, firm, and sober minded that I may deflect the fiery darts of the enemy. Amen*

**Sheri Koyles - Youth Minister**



# God's Plan

Read Isaiah 40: 28-31



These recent months of quarantine have not been easy. I struggle with not being able to physically be with friends and family. I miss seeing people at church. At the grocery store, I see nervous people both with masks and without, and everyone is ready to fight about it. At times I get completely drained: physically, spiritually and emotionally. However, when I read Isaiah 40:28-31, it reminds me that I am not alone in feeling this way. In fact, people have been weary, exhausted and nervous since biblical times. We need to remember that God has a plan. God can and will renew our strength and support us when we are frightened and weary. With God's love, we can get through this difficult time. God loves us and is always with us.

*Dear God, please help me to feel your loving presence in these scary times. We love you and ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Madeleine Demetriades - Music Minister



*They will soar on wings like eagles*



Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Can a person be truly thankful in times of suffering? Think back on your past year. Very often there's a mix of uplifting highs and frustrating lows. But perhaps your 2020 is more lows than highs due to the pandemic, losing a loved one, a career or financial setback, a serious health crisis, or a relationship falling apart. Get hit by one or more of these challenges and walking in gratitude is probably not high on your list of priorities – but maybe it can be.

Gratitude is a God-given command for followers of Jesus, but this doesn't mean being thankful for a particular tragedy, suffering, or difficulty. It's about shifting our focus from our current suffering and focusing on God. It's about remembering WHO God is and WHAT He's capable of, no matter how circumstances may appear. It's remembering that when Jesus Christ went to the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, He promised eternal life which means victory over suffering, sin, and even death itself – for those who put their trust in Him.

In other words, all our pains, disappointments, and sufferings are temporary – but our hope through Jesus is eternal.

Are you walking through a season of grief and suffering? Are you struggling to get back up after being hit by one difficulty after another? Take your eyes off the problem and look to God. Ask God for HIS strength and guidance to persevere. Because for the Jesus follower, even when everything that could go wrong does, the hope of Jesus never waivers. Hope and trust in Jesus is the key to being thankful!

A Prayer for Gratitude and Thanksgiving By Debbie McDaniel

*Dear God, Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives, thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you are Able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes. Thank you for your great love and care. Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life. Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough, for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given. Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you afresh. Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy. Amen.*

**Christin Hampton - Office Manager**



# A Brief Analysis of My Top Five Methodist Hymns

## by Madeleine Demetriades, Music Minister

Recently I sat down with the Methodist hymnals and made a list of my absolute favorite hymns (total: 131). I arduously narrowed it down to my top five. The results are below in no particular order.

- #347 Spirit Song (words & music: 1979)
- #364 Because He Lives (words & music: 1971)
- #68 When in Our Music God is Glorified (words: 1971; music: 1904)
- #584 Lord You Give the Great Commission (words: 1978; music: 1941)
- #3189 There is a Higher Throne (words & music: 2003)

I was rather surprised by the results. I had predicted that a majority of my favorites would have been written back when people wore powdered wigs and said “thou” and “forsooth” in common conversation. I can’t get enough of hymns like Holy, Holy, Holy and Christ the Lord is Risen Today, especially when I get to play them on Central’s mighty pipe organ. However, when I really pondered which had the ability to become “ear-worms” for weeks on end; songs I could sing daily and not grow weary of, it was the above list. I believe there are some commonalities within the group: nearly all were composed during the last century. Most are what I would consider harmonically rich and complex. Something interesting I took note of was how a majority exercise what is called tone painting (also known as word or text painting), which is the compositional technique of writing music which reflects the literal meaning of the words. For example in Because He Lives, the refrain, “Because He Lives, I can face tomorrow” includes an ascending scalar passage leading to the word Lives. This brings to mind the image of Christ ascending into Heaven and taking watch over all of Creation. Later in the refrain there is another instance of harmonic ascension: “Because I kno---oo---ow He holds the future”. This instance of tone painting helps me to feel confident and assured that He does hold the future and that we can put our absolute faith in Him. Similarly in There is a Higher Throne, the refrain “Hear Heaven’s voices sing” includes an ascending octave leading toward the word “Heaven” which makes me think of Christ in Heaven and His immense power and love for humanity. Ultimately, my favorites are what they are because they have the unique ability to propel my body, mind, and spirit closer to God, and isn’t that what is most important?

### Some challenges for this month:

- Learn (or brush up on) a musical instrument such as voice, guitar or piano
- Make a list of your Top Five favorite hymns (and why they are important to you) and email it to: [madeleine@richmondcumc.com](mailto:madeleine@richmondcumc.com)
- Try this breathing exercise: inhale 4 seconds, hold 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds
- Take a pen and paper and draw what you think the hymn Amazing Grace would look like
- Do the same for A Mighty Fortress is Our God
- Go on YouTube and find five songs you have never heard before – what did you think?
- Practice singing your favorite hymn in different ways: loudly, softly, short/staccato, and legato/smooth – which version was your favorite?

## **Community Emergency Relief Room**

This is a new Central United Methodist Church mission. The Relief Room, which is located in the area previously used by Boy Scout Troop 114, will be operated on a referral basis rather than being open to the public. The agencies we see working with us include Red Cross, Department of Child Services, Genesis, Refuge of Hope women's shelter, Salvation Army, and perhaps more likely identified as we go along. It is likely members of the church may come forward identifying someone in need. Ways members of Central may become involved in or give support to this mission include financial support, donations and help with the operation of the mission.

Those wishing to contribute financially can submit a check made out to Central United Methodist Church with Community Emergency Relief Room in the memo line. Contributions can also be made on-line. Needed material donations are listed below. If possible, donations should be left outside the Relief Room door. If assistance is needed for larger donations, contact Dana Mollenkopf at 765-277-0287 or [papamole@comcast.net](mailto:papamole@comcast.net). Volunteers will be needed to look through donated items, sort and then properly place items in the room. Material Donations should not need repair. Clean clothes that are grown out, not worn out are appreciated. Things you would need to replace if suddenly you did not have them.

**Clothing:** All sizes of gently worn clothing, shoes, and accessories for ladies, men, children and babies. (We currently have a good supply of small to medium sized women's clothing). Please make sure all items have been recently washed/dry cleaned. Plastic hangers are needed as well.

**Household:** Mildly used bedding, blankets, drapes, curtains, rugs, kitchen towels, bath towels and washcloths and pillows. Pots, pans, cups, glasses, dish ware, silverware, cutlery, small (working) household appliances and tools.

**Toys and Sports Equipment:** Clean, lightly used toys and children's items like stuffed animals, dolls/action figures, board games (complete), and sports equipment.

**Electronic Games/Devices:** Working stereos, radios, DVD players, and small (easily liftable) working TVs.

**Small Furnishings/Appliances:** Easy-to-lift and transport nightstands, headboards, chairs, lamps, small tables, and other light home items.

**Urgent Need Items:** Diapers (various sizes), baby wipes, bottles, swings/baby seats, strollers, sleep sacks, personal hygiene items, new under clothing of all sizes/socks for children, clothing for infants and school aged children, small blankets, phone chargers, school supplies/backpacks, crayons, coloring books and activity books.

*Please, no large furniture and appliances (but let us know if available), infant/child car seats, cribs, mattresses, box springs, perishables, or anything with an expiration date.*

## **UMW Antiques**

Greetings from Creative Hands. We know that we've all been at home sheltering in place and have had time to organize and reorganize and have found antiques and collectibles that you think others would appreciate owning. We will be glad to take your donations of antiques and collectibles for our next Pop-Up for new owners to enjoy while helping UMW support their local charities. When it is safe, bring items to the church office for UMW. Please mark your donations "For UMW Pop-Up." Thank you and we are wishing you well.

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