Pastor’s Ponderings

ADVENT READING PLAN

In the year 2021, I am planning to preach through the Biblical books of Luke and Acts. These texts are believed to have been written by the same author. The Gospel of Luke, naturally, covers the life of Jesus, while Acts focuses on the first century church following the resurrection.

As a reading plan for Advent, you are encouraged to read through Luke and Acts during the month of December. Please consider reading the chapter of each book corresponding with the day of the month. For example: on Dec. 1, read Luke 1 and Acts 1; on Dec. 2, read Luke 2 and Acts 2; etc. Or you may want to read through Luke first and then Acts. With a total of 52 chapters, as long as you read 2 chapters each day there will be more than enough time to finish the reading before the end of December.

Knowing that there are a total of 52 Chapters may give you a clue as to my preaching plan for 2021. YES!!! I am planning to preach one chapter each Sunday, starting with Luke 1 in January and finishing with Acts 28 on the last Sunday in December.

Here is the Zoom information. I will also send a separate email with a “clickable” link & telephone number.

Dates: Nov 29, Dec 6, Dec 13, Dec 20 at 10:15 AM
Meeting Link: https://zoom.us/j/95843922273
Meeting ID: 958 4392 2273
One tap mobile:
+13017158592,,95843922273#
US (Washington D.C)
+13126266799,,95843922273#
US (Chicago)
Dial by your location
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
Meeting ID: 958 4392 2273

In-Person Worship Suspended

Due to the rising COVID-19 infection rate in our surrounding communities, and at the request of Bishop Bickerton, we are suspending in-person worship through the end of 2020.

Everyone is encouraged to worship remotely. A live stream of the 9:30 am service may be accessed through the church website or directly on our UMC Branford YouTube channel (look for the account with the RED doors.

If you wish to participate at a later time a recording of the service will be posted on the church website and the audio recording will be available using the “Dial My Calls” number (959) 202-4862.

Lighting the Advent Wreath:
A Time for Devotion & Fellowship

You are invited to join your church family each Sunday in Advent for a time of devotion and fellowship. Using a Zoom link or telephone number, we will all be able to join together at 10:15am each Sunday morning. We will begin with a short liturgy for lighting the Advent Wreath. While I light the candles in the sanctuary, you are invited to light the appropriate candles on your own wreath at home.

And then, there is fellowship!!! Pour another cup of coffee, and prepare to visit with each other! Once we have concluded the liturgy, I will leave the Zoom meeting open for 20-30 minutes so you may all have conversation time together.

Ministries of Prayer & Care

As we continue to navigate through the changes in ministry in light of the pandemic, I am constantly looking for new ways that we can be the church. In the coming weeks I would like to establish Ministries of Prayer and Care.

Would you be interested in attending a virtual Prayer Meeting? Please contact Pastor Kent by text message or phone call at 845-522-1233 or by email at umcbpastor@gmail.com. We will find a time (or continued on pg. 3
Please note: While social gathering restrictions are in place, no events (besides Sunday worship) are taking place at the church. Committee meetings and some activities are happening online. Please contact your committee chair for more information.

**December Events**

**Wed 12/2, 7pm:** Church Council  
**Wed 12/9, 6:30pm:** L&P Advisory Council  
**Wed 12/16, 7pm:** Faithful Stewards  
**Wed 12/23, 6:30pm:** Staff Parish Relations  
**Thur 12/24, 5pm:** Christmas Eve Virtual Service  
**Fri 12/25, 9:30am:** Christmas Day Virtual Service

**December Birthdays**

1 Carolyn Wiegner  
3 Alea Appleton  
5 Michael Cartwright  
10 Jamie Holcomb  
14 Anna Halten  
16 Cyrus Kapadia, Suzanne Lee  
18 Bob Massage, Linda Noe  
21 Daniel Appleton  
29 Theresa Ahl  
30 Steven Schickler

**December Anniversaries**

17 Cyrus & Shanta Kapadia  
17 Lisa & Steven Schickler

**WEEKLY CALENDAR**

**SUNDAYS:**  
9:30am Worship Service

**MONDAYS:**  
10:10am Monday Morning Quarterbacking: During the quarantine we will be meeting by conference call. Please dial in at (425) 436-6385 using access code 841200#

**TUESDAYS:**  
7-8:30pm Pastor’s Bible Study Group: Meeting online during the quarantine period. Please email Pastor Kent for a Zoom link or telephone number if you would like to join.

**THURSDAYS:**  
10am Pastor’s Bible Study Group: Meeting online during the quarantine period via conference call. Please call (425) 436-6385 and use access code 841200#.

**AA Online Meetings**

For those in need, links to online and voice meetings can be found at:  
https://www.aa-intergroup.org/directory.php

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

The 20th of every month - please send articles to Lori Cartwright at loriahlcart@gmail.com

Missed a Sunday? Unable to attend worship?  
You can catch the weekly sermon video at www.umcbranford.org

**KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH WHAT’S HAPPENING AT UMCB:**

www.facebook.com/umcbranford  
Also check out:  
www.facebook.com/unitedmethodistchurch  
www.facebook.com/umcgeneralconference  
www.facebook.com/NYACUMC

“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”
multiple times) to gather virtually for sharing joys and concerns and praying for the needs of our church, community & the world.

It is essential during this time that we engage in new ways of keeping in touch with one another. If you would be willing to make phone calls as part of a Care Ministry, please contact Pastor Kent by phone or email. Each volunteer will be assigned 3-4 families to keep in touch with on a monthly basis. Volunteers will also share with Pastor Kent any joys or concerns they become aware of. Please know that you are always welcome to contact Pastor Kent directly if you have any needs or information you would like to share.

**Food Pantry Challenge**

Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”
Matthew 14:16

We're well on the way to meeting our goal of collecting 5,000 cans of fruits and vegetables by the end of 2020. By the time this newsletter goes to print we will have exceeded the \textbf{2,700} can mark!!!

Everything collected will be donated to the local food pantries in Branford, Guilford, and North Branford. We are specifically “counting” all the cans of fruits and vegetables that are donated. Place your donations in the green collection bin outside the church's front door. Items are removed daily and stored inside the building for weekly distribution to the food pantries.

Please spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors to join the challenge as we respond to Jesus’ instruction by committing to feed the hungry in our communities.

Please note: financial contributions for the challenge can be made by check. Please write “Food Pantry Challenge” in the memo.

**Christmas Services**

\textbf{Christmas Eve}: 5:00 pm  
\textbf{Christmas Day}: 9:30 am  
Both will be virtual services and can be viewed from our website.

**Ministry While Practicing Social Distancing**

**PASTORAL CARE:** Please know that Pastor Kent is available for Pastoral Care “visits” either by telephone or individual Zoom meetings. If you would like to be in conversation to help process an issue you are dealing with or just to “catch up,” please text or email Pastor Kent to arrange a meeting.

**MEETINGS:** Our committee meetings will be meeting via Zoom. Please go to www.zoom.us and click “Sign Up. It's Free” to create your account.

All committee members will automatically be sent an invitation to their meetings. If you would like to receive an invitation to join a meeting, please contact Pastor Kent ahead of time so you can receive the log-in information.

**FINANCES:** Your weekly offerings may be placed in the Offering Box at the entrance to the sanctuary or mailed to the church office if you are not attending in-person worship. Please consider using our online giving platform by clicking the “Give Now” button on the church website at www.UMCBranford.org

**COMMUNICATION:** The church office is open from 9am-2pm Tuesday through Thursday. In the interest of social distancing, we are asking that you DO NOT visit the church office during those hours. If you must be in the office, please be sure to be wearing a mask. You are welcome to call the church office during these times if there is church information that Brenda can help you with.

**Monday Morning Quarterbacking**

An opportunity to dig deeper into the Sunday Sermon! Pastor Kent shares additional insight into the scriptures and the participants are encouraged to ask questions and share reflections on the material which was preached. Please consider attending on a weekly basis or occasionally as the Spirit moves. During the quarantine, we will be meeting by Conference Call at 10am. Please dial in at 425-436-6385 using access code 841200#.
Small Study Groups

Our Tuesday 7pm and Thursday 10:10am Study Groups continue to meet online. Please email Pastor Kent for a Zoom link or telephone number if you would like to join the Tuesday evening study. The Thursday morning group is meeting via conference call. Please call 425-436-6385 and use access code 841200#

7 Men and 7 Women and the Secret of Their Greatness
by Eric Metaxas

Meet 14 heroic individuals who changed the course of history! Combining his two popular books into one volume, Metaxas explores the qualities that make a person great. Discover the captivating stories of Mother Teresa, martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, abolitionist William Wilberforce, Corrie ten Boom, athlete Jackie Robinson, civil rights figure Rosa Parks, and many others.

After discussing the introductions to both books, we will alternate our readings by studying one of the men, then one of the women, etc.

Learn & Play still has openings!

We offer children ages 6 weeks to 5 years fulfilling age-appropriate childcare and preschool education for families in Branford, Guilford, and other Shoreline communities. The Center’s caring and well-trained staff provides full-day and part-day programs grounded in the Bible and exemplified by the love and teachings of Jesus Christ.

More info: learnandplaychristian.org

HELP US SPREAD THE NEWS! Visit either L&P or the church’s Facebook pages to find the post with the photo above, then share it to your news feed so we go viral!

Food Pantry Needs

Along with our 5000 can goal, we are still collecting food to deliver to the local Food Pantry. Non-perishable items like tuna fish, cereal, rice, peanut butter, jelly, soup, macaroni, and sauce are very much needed, as are personal care items like diaper wipes, soap, and toothpaste.

Donations can be left in the green bin located at the entrance to the church.
Thank you for all your prayers, calls and cards concerning my son Ron and his friends and neighbors affected by the fires in Colorado.

He and a few of his friends and neighbors were blessed and suffered no physical damage from the fires while some others lost everything.

Please continue to pray for all those affected by the multiple fires on the west coast and Colorado and by other natural disasters occurring in the world.

Your sister in Christ,
Mary Chorongy

I would like to send a special thank you and hugs to all the members who came out during mulch week in April to help spread the mulch in the gardens.

Also, thanks to Jim Torello and Jonathan Sygiel for hauling the mulch.

It was just awesome how we braved COVID-19 to get it done.

Ruby

Many thanks to everyone for the beautiful card from UMC Branford that was left on my desk and the generous gift card inside. That was such a pleasant surprise.

I miss seeing everyone but am glad we all are staying safe.

Brenda Prunty

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**A Prayer As I Put On My Mask**

Creator, as I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacrament in the wearing of this cloth. Let it be "an outward sign of an inward grace" - a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbors, as I love myself.

Christ, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully - and full of care - to all those I meet. May this simple piece of cloth be shield and banner, and each breath that it holds, be filled with your love.

In your Name and in that love, I pray. May it be so. Amen.

*Richard Bott, Moderator*

_The United Church of Canada_

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**RMD: An Alternative Giving Method**

In past years, I have reminded those of us age 72+ of the benefits of donating to UMC Branford directly from IRAs as part of the RMD [Required Minimum Distribution]. In 2020 things are different - you are not required to make an RMD, but a contribution may still be made from your IRA. You do not increase your income while making a contribution, and you bypass state tax on the contribution. It’s quick and easy, and you pay less taxes than if you received your RMD and then wrote a check to the church.

As an aside, it’s not too late to do some legacy planning and include UMC Branford in your final requests.

*Thank you to John Beatty for providing this information which may be an opportunity for some members of our congregation.*
**Sewing For God**

On Sunday, Nov. 8, we celebrated the Veterans of the United Methodist Church. Did you know that we currently have 11 Veterans and 3 active service members? They’re listed below. Each of these wonderful people have or should have received their quilt by Thanksgiving. (Please notify Rosemary ASAP if not received).

- BOB ANDERSON
- ROSS RITTER
- LARRY APPLETON
- BRIAN DONNELLY
- BILL BEAGLE
- LEN DUNCAN
- JOHN BEATTY
- CHARLES STEEVES
- SCOTT CARR
- PAUL WEZENSKI
- BILL BEAGLE
- LEN DUNCAN
- JOHN BEATTY
- CHARLES STEEVES
- SCOTT CARR
- PAUL WEZENSKI

The following are currently serving our country

- GLORIA CARR
- AMOS TALBOTT
- AJ GERLACH

A special “Thank You” to Gayle for all her help in helping getting these quilts done by Veterans Day.

December looks to be a cold month, and with COVID-19 still hanging around, Gayle and I will be working on making quilts for our friends at Artis. Our goal was to have 25 by Christmas. Our hearts were in the right place, but our free time is not. So we’ll do the best we can!

Rosemary

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**WOMEN’S MONTHLY LUNCHEON**

Ladies, I’m sorry to say that we are still not able to have our monthly luncheons until further notice. Please know that I am thinking of each of you every month and miss our time together. Stay safe until we meet again.

If you have any questions, please call Rosemary at (203) 589-1620.

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**KEEP SAVING YOUR SODA CAN TABS!**

Thank you to everyone for their continued support. We have now dropped off our 3rd bag of tabs to Ronald McDonald House in New Haven!!

Please continue to collect your tabs and place them in the green bin outside of church. It would be nice to start the New Year with another Ronald McDonald House drop. Every tab makes a difference, just like you do.

Rosemary & Tony

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Hello, Secret Pals!

What a year this has been for all of us. Due to the pandemic, we have not been able to really celebrate our Secret Pals as we would have liked. So, for the 2021 season, we are going to roll over the Secret Pals we currently have. This means you will keep the person you currently have for all of next year. Please note: If you prefer not to participate for 2021, please let me know ASAP so that I can assign your Secret Pal to someone else. I will be in touch with you in January to confirm your participation.

Keep the faith that one day soon we will get together as a group and share hugs and love again.

Rosemary
Our church community has been so very generous with regards to our outreach ministries. There is such a need - today, more than ever - to help our neighbors and those less fortunate. On almost every corner, we see people who are forced to ask for a handout to feed themselves and take care of their families. We would love to put together more Blessing Bags. Last time, our church was able to put together 35 bags to hand out. Once again, we are asking for you to go through your drawers and gather all those travel size toiletries you’ve been hanging on to, thinking you would use some day, - those treasures would make a great addition to a Blessings Bag! (Please, only new unopened items in good condition!) Nothing in your drawers? Your local dollar store has many of the items on the list. There are also many other items on the list (opposite side) that would be a blessing to someone in need! Please prayerfully consider donating.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."
- Matthew 25:40

CHECKLIST FOR BLESSING BAGS
No products that contain any alcohol
Only new or unused items in good condition, please!

NECESSITIES:
· Hand-warmers
· Band-Aids
· Baby wipes
· Wash cloth
· Travel size First Aid kit
· Hand sanitizer
· Face mask

TOILETRIES (travel size work great!):
· Toothbrush
· Toothpaste
· Floss
· Soap
· Deodorant
· Small facial tissue packs
· Shampoo or conditioner
· Comb
· Personal hygiene items for women
· Sunscreen
· Chapstick

NON-PERISHABLE FOODS:
· Instant oatmeal packs
· Granola or energy bars
· Tuna or cracker packs
· Trail mix (no nuts) or raisins
· Fruit or applesauce (with a spoon)
· Gum or hard candy
· Beef jerky sticks
· Single serve coffee packs or tea bags

PERSONAL ITEMS:
· Socks
· Hats
· Inexpensive gloves
· Disposable raincoat

EXTRAS:
· Deck of cards or UNO game
· Prepaid phone or grocery store gift card
· A note of encouragement!