One Verse (or Actually 2)

I want to invite you to join me in memorizing one verse (actually, 2 verses) of scripture which have the potential to give direction to ministry in the coming year 2021. We will conclude each worship service and many other gatherings with these words: *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.* Hebrews 13:15-16 NIV

I will seek out opportunities through the year to share the background of this passage as well as how I believe we are being led in ministry by these words.

I do hope you will join me in memorizing this passage, and it is my intention that we will recite the words and claim their truth together in 2021.

Sermon Series

I am looking forward to preaching through the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts during 2021! Both Biblical texts come from the same author, and studying them straight through will give us a clear picture of how the ministry of the 1st century church flows out of Jesus’ life on earth. We will begin on January 3 with Luke 1 and continue reflecting upon one chapter of Luke each consecutive week. If all goes well, we will finish Luke in the middle of June and then begin Acts.

NEW Sunday Schedule

Beginning January 3rd:
9:30 AM Worship Livestream
10:15 AM Children’s Message on WebEx
10:30 AM (Virtual) Coffee Hour on Zoom
Please contact Pastor Kent if you need help connecting with any of these Sunday morning activities.

(Virtual) Coffee Hour on Zoom

After joining the Sunday Worship livestream, grab a cup of coffee and join with other members and friends of UMC, Branford for a time of fellowship and conversation. Here is the information to join on Zoom. You may click a link … dial a phone number … or go to Zoom and “Join Meeting” by entering the Meeting ID.

Topic: (Virtual) Coffee Hour
Time: Every Sunday @ 10:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Join Zoom Meeting: https://zoom.us/j/99520821843
Meeting ID: 995 2082 1843
One tap mobile
+13017158592,,99520821843# US (Washington D.C)
+13126266799,,99520821843# US (Chicago)
Dial by your location
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
Meeting ID: 995 2082 1843

Digital Ministry Team

I am looking for volunteers to be a part of our new Digital Ministry initiative. It is time to take the next step and be proactive with our efforts to reach beyond the walls of our church building with the message of the Gospel.

We have done well adding a livestream option to our Sunday Service…but there is more we can do. Please let me know if you would like to help plan for the future by enhancing our physical church ministry through means of social media and other digital platforms.

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

*“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”*
January Birthdays

3 Bekah Gerlach
12 Michael Luzzi
16 Bill Beagle
20 Shina Kim
24 Paul Dineen
25 Shanta Kapadia
28 Shirley Gilkerson, Lydia Wezenski
31 Haley Mazzucco

January Anniversaries

13 Guy & Mary Marszalek
24 Bob & Conny Umile

January Events

Sat 1/2, 6pm: Community Dinner
Wed 1/6, 7pm: Trustees
Tues 1/12, 5:30pm: Diaper Distribution
Wed 1/13, 6:30pm: Learn & Play Advisory Council
Wed 1/20, 7pm: Faithful Stewards
Wed 1/27, 7pm: Finance Committee
Fri 1/29, 6pm: Community Dinner

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAYS:
9:30am Worship Livedstream
10:15am Children’s Message on WebEx
10:30am Virtual Coffee Hour

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#.

SATURDAYS:
7pm AA meeting

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

“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”
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 10:10 am. Please dial in at 425-436-6385 using access code 841200#.
Our God is faithful and our community is generous!! Thanks to the contributions of our members and neighbors, the Food Pantry Challenge is complete! We started on August 2nd with a vision to collect 5,000 cans of fruits and vegetables, following a challenge issued by Pastor Kent after preaching on Jesus’s Feeding of the 5,000.

As of December 30th, the vision became reality. Final distributions to the three area Food Pantries will take place next week. At that point Branford, North Branford, and Guilford will each have received 1,667 cans of fruits and vegetables - a total of 5,001 cans. Meanwhile, each food pantry also received deliveries of other non-perishable items. It was certainly a God-sized vision, which was met through the faithful generosity of many people in our community.

Our mascot "Peary" wants everyone to know how much we appreciate their generosity!

When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” Jesus said to them, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” But they said to him, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.” Then he said, “Bring them here to me,” and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

Matthew 14: 15-21
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.

Food Pantry Needs

We continue to collect 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.

We had so much fun celebrating the birth of Jesus all throughout the month! Here are some highlights from December that we’d like to share with you.

Happy Holidays from Learn & Play!

Learn & Play still has openings for the Winter/Spring semesters! 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
Pastor Kent invites anyone who's interested to join him on the 2nd Tuesday of every month to help with Diaper Bank distribution at the Community Dining Room in Branford. Volunteers distribute diapers to registered recipients from 5:30-6:30 PM. He would love to have company!!

Learn more about the Diaper Bank at:  
https://www.thediaperbank.org

---

New Address!

Ginny Busca  
70 Hillside Ave Apt 510  
Branford, CT 06405

---

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.

---

I am very grateful for your thoughtfulness and generosity! Thank you for the Christmas Bonus as well as the gift cards I received at Thanksgiving and Christmas. This has been a challenging year, but your care for me and my family has made it enjoyable and productive. Through many changes, we continue to serve the Lord together. I consider it a blessing to fulfill my calling as your Pastor.

Pastor Kent

Thank you everyone for the Christmas bonus and gift card. Of course, I enjoyed the homemade cookies, candy, cards and other goodies as well. You all are so kind to think of me. Warmest regards.

Brenda Prunty

---

Community Dinner

Saturday, January 2, 6pm &  
Friday, January 29, 6pm

Because the 4th Friday fell on Christmas Day, the December Community Dinner was moved ahead to Jan. 2. So this month, we’ll have two Community Dinners!

Please pull into the church parking lot and into one of the spaces for curbside pickup. Avolunteers will bring out dinner(s) to you wrapped up and ready for travel.
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.

Rosemary

KEEP SAVING YOUR SODA CAN TABS!

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!

We made 3 drops in 2020. Let’s aim for 4 or more in 2021! Thank to everyone for your generous support.

Rosemary & Tony

Secret Pals 2021

HAPPY NEW YEAR to everyone. Please remember that you will be keeping the same person for 2021. 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.

May true happiness, longevity and good fortune be with you this New Year and always.

Happy New Year!

CaptionCall provides a no-cost solution with a home phone and mobile CaptionCall app for iPhone.

With the current “safe at home” orders, it is important for anyone with hearing loss to stay in contact with family and friends, and have reliable access to emergency services. CaptionCall ensures accurate communication and the ability to save important captioned calls (i.e. doctor appointments, lab results, names, phone numbers, addresses).

There is no cost for the installation of the phone or the ongoing captioning service. The program is made possible by the American with Disabilities Act and is 100% funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

To learn more about CaptionCall or to request your own no-cost captioning phone, call/text/email David Wells at (203) 871-7393 or gdavid3@yahoo.com.