



The Midweek

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Christmas Eve and Learning Adaptability

There are all sorts of words and phrases that have become part of our vernacular in 2020: COVID-19, Coronavirus, Novel virus, unprecedented, and out of an abundance of caution are just a few. We've not only had to learn new words and phrases, but new practices as well: wearing masks, social distancing, and washing our hands to various twenty-second tunes. As a church, we have had to learn to become quicker on our feet when it comes to ministry and mission. In a word, we have had to become adaptable.

Christmas Eve is just two weeks away. The staff at Avenue have been making plans for our Christmas Eve Worship Service since August. We believe that in this time of pandemic that it would be important for believers to gather and to celebrate one of our high holy days. Because it is 2020, we are having to practice adaptability.

Yesterday, the staff made a change to our published Christmas Eve Schedule. Weather permitting, we are moving our December 23rd Christmas Eve services outside. We will have a Traditional Service at 5:00 p.m. and a Contemporary Service at 7:00 p.m. in the yard along Front St. You can bring your own chair, a blanket, a mask, and some hot chocolate. This will enable those who are uncomfortable gathering indoors to have an option to come together on Christmas Eve. If the weather does not hold, we will move the services indoors. **Please make sure you RSVP if you plan on attending.**

On December 24th, we will gather at 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. for a Contemporary Candlelight Communion Service and at 9:00 p.m. for a Traditional Candlelight Communion Service. Space will be limited at our indoor services and you will need to RSVP if you plan on attending.

This is our plan as of December 9, 2020. These plans could change as we continue to monitor the COVID numbers in our area and as we listen to the Governor's Office, Delaware Public Health, and the office of Bishop Peggy Johnson.

I continue to pray for you as we journey through Advent together! Come Lord Jesus! Come!

Pastor Steve

Upcoming Christmas Services

- * **December 17th** Blue Christmas at 6:00 p.m.
- * **December 23rd** Christmas Eve Services—Outside
5:00 p.m. (Traditional) & 7:00 p.m. (Contemporary)
RSVP—<https://christmasatavenue.thersvpapp.com>
- * **December 24th** Christmas Eve Services
3:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m. Contemporary Candlelight Communion
9:00 p.m. Traditional Candlelight Communion
RSVP—<https://christmasatavenue.thersvpapp.com>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORSHIP ON SUNDAY: Worship is held each Sunday in-person or online at 9:00 a.m. (Traditional), 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (Contemporary). We are streaming the morning worship services on our Facebook (facebook.com/avenueumc) and Youtube (youtube.com/c/avenueunitedmethodistchurch) pages.

GIVING AT AVENUE is possible through multiple ways.

- You can give your offering in-person
- You can snail mail your gift to: 20 N. Church St. Milford, DE 19963
- You can give online through the red “give” button on our homepage
- You can text “avenueumc” to 77977 and follow the prompts
- You can download and use our “Avenue Church DE” App on your smart phone

GIVING ENVELOPES FOR 2021: The finance team has issued giving envelopes for those people who give primarily by envelope. They are on a table in Fellowship Foyer. Please pick them up when you come to church or at your earliest convenience when the church office is open. If you are able to deliver envelopes for a friend or neighbor who is fairly shut in, it would be most helpful. If we did not issue a set for you and you would like to have them, please call Kelly. We have extra sets. Harriet and June

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: The Church Office will be open **Monday through Friday** from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. We do ask that you consider using a phone call or email if you are able to accomplish your business before coming into the office.

PASTORAL CARE: If you or someone you know is in need of pastoral care, please call the church office at 422-8111 or contact a staff person directly. You can also email prayer@avenueumc.com to have your name added to the prayer chain. We are doing limited face-to-face visits during this time, but would be happy to make contact any way that we can.

HELP WANTED! AVENUE GREETER TEAM: The Avenue Greeter team needs your help. We're inviting you to join and help serve in this ministry. No experience needed, just a friendly smile and some of your time (a few Sunday mornings throughout the year). If you're interested, please call John Horsman at (302) 222-6642.

CHRISMON TREE 2020: Avenue will again be making Christmas special for area families who are in need. Because of COVID we will be providing gift cards for families to purchase gifts for their children. While there is joy on our end of purchasing gifts, our families will be able to experience the joy of buying gifts for their children. Families will be given gift cards with appropriate funds available based on their wish list and our guidelines for what we provide. If you would like to help share the joy of Christmas, please write "Chrismon Tree" on your check or envelope.

PLEASE MAKE YOUR WORSHIP RESERVATION: As we continue to adapt our worship services to meet the State guidelines and best practices in the midst of a pandemic, **we are asking each person/family planning on attending worship to make a reservation.** By following the link below, you can make a reservation for service you plan on attending (9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m. or 6:00 p.m.) and you will be able to choose to sit in the sanctuary or in overflow seating in Fellowship Hall. If you do not make a reservation, it is possible you will be

seated in Fellowship Hall if the sanctuary has reached capacity.

You can access our reservation system by going to

<https://avenueumc.thersvpapp.com/>

and begin reserving your seat(s). You will need to do this every Sunday you plan on attending worship. Please call the church office at 422-8111 if you cannot make the reservation online.

HELP NEEDED FOR UPCOMING CHRISTMAS SERVICES: If you plan on attending Blue Christmas, Lessons and Carols or Christmas Eve services we could use your help. (Greeters, health check ins, liturgist, ushers, communion assistant and a/v.) If interested please click the following links.

Blue Christmas—<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D45A9A92FA7FBC16-blue>

Lessons and Carols—<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D45A9A92FA7FBC16-lessons>

Christmas Eve Services (12/23) - <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D45A9A92FA7FBC16-christmas1>

Christmas Eve Services (12/24) - <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D45A9A92FA7FBC16-christmas>

DISCIPLESHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS: The Sunshine Bible Class for adults led by Rev. John Van Tine, retired is meeting in the Wesley Room at 10:15AM. Our study for December is “God with Us.” The lesson for December 13th lesson is “Imitate Christ” based on Philippians 2:1-11; December 20th lesson is “Becoming God’s Children” based on John 1:10-18; and December 27th lesson is “The Father Dwells in Jesus” based on John 14:8-14. Feel free to join us in the Wesley Room for these exciting lessons.

ADVENT MISSION STUDY: Pastor Steve will be leading an Advent Study on **Wednesday, December 16th at 10:30 a.m.** in Fellowship Hall. We will look at how Advent prepares us for Jesus’ Second Coming and how our understanding of that prepares us to truly live into Christmas. Please sign up by calling or emailing the church office.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO:

- **Jean Hutchman** who will celebrate her **95th** birthday on **December 10th**.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

- **Jack and Janet McCall** who will be celebrating their **58th** anniversary on **December 14th**.

SYMPATHIES TO:

- The family of Bundy Simms who passed away on Friday, November 26, 2020.
- Heather Abbott and family on the passing of Heather's mom, Sandy Brown on December 1, 2020.

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

- Those affected by the COVID-19, Medical Staff, and those working on a vaccine
- Our local, national, and world leaders
- Our District Superintendent (Rev. Dr. Kyung-Hee Sa), Bishop Peggy Johnson, and The United Methodist Church
- The Pastors, Staff, and Leadership of Avenue United Methodist Church

PRAYER REQUEST:

Bob Cage
Lydia Castro
Brittany and Baby Naomi
Jennifer Clarke
Pat Clearly
Jack & Denny Collins
Luisa & Billy Combs
Donna and Keith Coverdale
Julie Dally
Josiah Davis
Joanna Denney-Turner
Carolyn Evans
Veronica Evans
Fay Farissier
Ken Fechter
Charlie & Barbara Fleetwood
Craig Hanna
Dave Harris
John Horsman
Pat Hudson
Doris Isele
Karl Isele
Dottie & Jerry Jackson
Alvin Jarrell

Dean Johnson
Linda Kemp
Doris Koon
Rhoda & Greg Kurz
Jean Layton
Lauren Lee
Nancy Lee
Brittany Poore Little
Lyn
Jack & Zelda McDuff
Ricki McGuire
Frank Mentusky
Jennifer Hughes Miller
Orville Mills
Kathryn Avery Mitchell
Tiffany Mitchell
Stan Moody
Jason Neall
Alex Oliveras, Sr.
Alex Oliveras, Jr.
Adriel Oliveras and family
Mary Ellin Parsons
Laurel Pastor
Jan Perkins

Millie Remick
Roy Rigby
Lorna Rosella Rulona
Phil Saint
Char Sandifer
Richard Sapp
Alice Sellers
Leo Shew
Roland Simms
Racheal Simesak
Gary Simpson
Linda Singleton
Ann Sutcliff
Teresa
Joan Wadman
Betty Ziesel



Grief

The holiday season makes us grieve over the loss of a loved one. We lose loved ones of all ages. Death does not discriminate on age, gender, religion, or race. We know that they are enjoying the true meaning of Christmas with Christ. However, it still does not fill the emptiness we feel. The hole we feel in our heart that is hard to fill.

Grief has no time limit and healing takes time. Part of healing is remembering the good and fun times with our loved one. Please listen to the memories of a grieving person. They need to feel the good and love of their lost one. Laugh with them. Share your story about their missing loved one. Fill the hole in their heart with laughter and joy, even if it only lasts a short time. It's ok.

A Christmas Prayer

Presents are under the tree and home goods are made.
But this Christmas, a dear loved one will be missed!
Father we ask you to hear our prayer,
For those gathered around the tree and around the table there is an empty chair,
Oh, Lord, comfort our hearts and give us peace.
And remind us that there is a chair at Heaven's table that is filled.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

We need to think about the how tough the holidays are for couples who want a family, and nothing was/is working. In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) was unsuccessful or ended in miscarriage. The holiday is a tough season to mourn the loss of an infant or child.

To all the couples who struggle with infertility, miscarriages, or infant loss. You are not forgotten; we think of you. You are heavy on our hearts. We are praying extra harder for you during this holiday season.

Anyone dealing with the loss of a loved one this holiday season or any time, know that we are praying for you. If you need someone to talk and pray with you, please know we are here. Also, know that you are loved!

**“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” ~ Mathew
5:4**

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

The Sanctuary is never prettier than it is when the poinsettias arrive for December. Placing poinsettias in the church in memory or honor of loved ones is a beautiful and cherished tradition.

This year we will again only be ordering 6.5" pots of poinsettias at \$7.00 each. The Altar Guild has requested that we only order 75 pots of flowers and in RED only. All additional funds will go to the Parish Purse.

Sponsor's Name _____

Memory of _____

Honor of _____

The cost for each Poinsettia is: 6.5" pot \$7.00 _____

The Altar Guild has requested that we order only **RED** Poinsettias this year.

Please Print Clearly

Please use a separate order form for each name
in memory of or honored

Names of sponsors and those remembered and honored will be in the Worship Folder on December 20th.

Please make checks payable to Avenue United Methodist Church

Orders MUST be in no later than Wednesday, December 16th



A hand is pointing towards a glowing hexagonal grid. In the center of the grid, there is a stylized 'F' logo. The background is a dark teal color with a grid of glowing hexagons.

**FUSION IS GOING
VIRTUAL**

**ZOOM MEETINGS
ARE COMING**

**IF INTERESTED CONTACT
PASTOR WILL
LEISTERWILLIAM@AVENUEUMC.COM**

Witness to Our Faith

Each week in the Avenue Midweek, members and friends of Avenue UMC will be sharing their own personal witness of faith. This column will be coordinated by Janice Abbott who will be seeking volunteers and writers who are willing to share their stories. Each article is due one week in advance and should be sent to Kelly at the Church office so there will be time to add it to the newsletter. It will appear the following week. It will be inspirational to read each week how God has blessed each person/family today and through the years. If you would like to contact Janice to volunteer, please call her at (302) 943-7278.

From: Dan Nelson

Sometimes it's hard to look back and explain my testimony because it spans a series of events that brought me to the foot of The Cross and to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Events that stretch all the way back into my childhood.

I grew up in the Catholic Church and was active in it as a young child. Around the time I was 13 years old I quit going and straight up rebelled against being taken to services. I don't fully remember all the details due to time, but something I do remember is what we would learn in CCD class (Sunday school for Catholics) about Jesus and the Bible, would not match up with the behavior of some of the churches leadership. I began to notice this more and more as time went on and I started to get into trouble in class. Partly for misbehaving and partly for asking too many questions as the priests would say and I annoyed them. The questions I often asked were in earnest and had Biblical answers, but some of the priests were not interested in answering them and those experiences built up, so I quit going to the disappointment of my family.

At the same time a childhood friend, Jim Grinnin, influenced me by getting me into reading. I was complaining about censorship of the music we would listen to, as teenagers listen to music their parents hate, and at the time a dust up was happening due to some of the lyrics and congress was debating placing warning labels on the album covers. Jim handed me a copy of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and said I might like it. That book started my love affair with the written word and I began to read everything I could get my hands on and it set me on a path for what I later called the 'search for truth'. This search led me into all sorts of thought and I began to learn how to debate people with different worldviews. It also led me to be more interested in the world and what was outside of the small town I was living in at the time.

Through my high school years I kept reading in my spare time and started to date a girl in my same class, Brook Valentine. Brook and I became the typical high school couple. We dated all though our Junior and Senior years and through the influence of her Mom and Dad, I ended up enrolling in college before graduating high school. Brook and I stayed together through our college years and it was at college that I really started to take notice of Christians and Christianity. Many were in my college classes and or in the local college bars often striking up conversations, attempting to debate me and others trying to explain our need to accept Jesus and the Gospel for our sins. I wasn't very impressed. This was for a variety of reasons, but the

main one was what I was getting exposed to was as moralistic political version of Christianity. The author Rosario Butterfield put it this way: "There is a core difference between sharing the Gospel with the lost and imposing a specific moral standard on the unconverted." That was all I could see in the debates and discussions was a specific moral standard. Well, I already had my own moral standards, why would I adopt another set, which if anything seemed drab, dreary and not very fun!? I don't mean that criticism from the view that I wanted to live a wild life, but rather I enjoyed watching movies, reading a variety of books and listening to a variety of music. When in discussion with one of the Christians in class, or the bars, I could not relate to them as another person. Pretty much everything I liked was considered "evil" or "sinful" and if I didn't watch only Christian movies and only listen to Christian music and only read Christian books, I was a bad person. Oh, and on top of that you had to vote exclusively Republican or you were a really bad person. So the only thing I saw in Christianity was it was some sort of moralistic political belief system that was deeply hypocritical. Therefore, I didn't want anything to do with it and it unfortunately brought out a side of me that became very vicious and I took to embarrassing every Christian I could in debates anytime, anyplace. As I would win debate after debate my viciousness became a downright hatred for Christians. I truly loved it! The debate would usually go the same way. Any counter the Christian would begin to make to me was on the assumption I was liberal in my political worldview. What they didn't know was I was a conservative and I would tear them apart intellectually from a conservative point of view. They had no defense and I always won the debates, usually with much applause from classmates and even some professors. I remember thinking that it would be a good thing if all these Christians just disappeared.

This view of Christians stuck with me for sometime until Brook and I moved to Maryland in 1997 and we married in 1998. This is when God brought Larry and Lori Wizorek into my life. I had not met Christians like the Wizoreks. They took their faith seriously. It didn't seem driven by a political worldview. It was personal and deep. I could see that they really believed in Jesus Christ and His words. The Wizoreks invited Brook and me into their lives and became our friends. As funny as this may sound now, one of the things that had me open up to Larry was he also loved music. Larry was a huge fan of the band Pink Floyd much to my surprise, as I said to Larry "isn't that the devils music?" Larry looked at me like I had lost my mind and said: "who says that?" I told him every other Christian I have met would have said that and Larry asked if I ever paid attention to the bands lyrics? Of course I had and Pink Floyd sings about the trappings of success with money and possessions, mental illness and themes like that! Larry responded: "Yeah, things the Bible talks about." I was stunned at that response and our friendship grew and Larry began to share the Gospel with me over and over and I rejected it over and over. Larry and Lori were still not typical Christians in my minds eye and my heart was still filled with rage and anger. Yet, Larry talked with me and listened to my complaints and concerns about Christianity. Larry opened the door to discussing the Bible in ways I had not heard. He made it relatable and because I trusted Larry I in turn listened to what he and Lori had to say about Jesus and the Bible.

Just after New Years 2000, Brook left me for someone else. We were both 25 years old at the time. To say that was a surprise would be an understatement. This event really changed me because in the secular worldview of love and romance, I had not done something to cause

being left in the manner that I was and for a short time this wrecked me emotionally and spiritually. As I was still on the search for truth since I was a teenager I began reading all sorts of books on religion and cultural behavior.

I needed to make sense out of the chaos I was going through. Part of it involved going to church again, where on my first time at service, I literally felt what I could only describe as the presence of God. That experience deserves its own description but it opened up my heart to trust God. Now the Gospel still didn't make sense to me and I kept rejecting Jesus as Lord and Savior. I liked Jesus, I just didn't understand my need for Him.

It was in this timeframe that I met my wife Jen. Like many young couples we started dating and eventually we moved in together while living in Maryland. Neither one of us wanted to continue living in the D.C. metro area, so God brought us to Delaware in 2003 through a job Jen interviewed for and received in Georgetown. As some of you had heard when I preached, Jen and I needed a place to rent and that's when we met Chic and Darlene Smith as a new co-worker of Jen's referred her to Darlene Smith as a property of theirs was available. As I told in the sermon, my first meeting with Darlene was interesting as I could see from all the religious symbols on the walls of her office that she was a Christian and her questions about Jen and I's plans to get married were very important to Darlene. It was clear she had concerns renting to an unmarried couple and some of it was on religious grounds. Darlene was never rude in her questions, but I reached a point where I had enough and I eventually told her that our plans to marry "were none of her business". Although I wasn't sure how Darlene would react, she did not react in the manner expected. She just let my smart remark roll right off her and she ended up renting me the house! Since the house bordered multiple Smith family members properties Jen and I were invited to just about every family function, as it was clear, the Smith's saw us as a part of their family. At one of the first family birthday parties I was invited to I met the son of Chic and Darlene, Duane. Duane and I are about the same age, had very similar interests and we became fast friends. We also were polar opposites in that Duane was a Christian and I was still hostile and skeptical towards Christianity. Yet, we discussed and debated everything! We shared ideas and books and in all this I witnessed, much like my friends the Wizoreks before, a very different type of Christian. People who actually believe in Jesus and follow Him. Yet, it was more than that too. All the Smith's shared this, but Duane viewed, read and explained the Bible in a way I had not previously heard in my past. The words informed Duane of how to view the world, his place in it and how to work through some very hard situations. Duane also used the Biblical narratives in teaching me what God says about hypocritical religious people, which was one of my major complaints. This was very different than my previous experiences with Christians. The other major part was Duane and his family treated Jen and I as equals. We certainly had rousing debates and disagreements, but it was never taken personally. Not that we didn't offend or highly irritate each other at times.

Roughly nine months after meeting Duane he invited me to a Bible study in the Gospel of John. It was in this study that I met Jesus. I couldn't believe who He was and what He was like! He had compassion for people who didn't deserve it and Jesus called out the religious people in his day for their hypocrisies. I loved it! All the complaints I had about self-righteous religious people, Jesus was attacking that very thing! Yet, slowly I started to see myself on the pages of the story. I was very much like the Pharisees. I looked down on people not like me, who didn't meet my standards or I considered dumb. The only difference was I not

religious like them. One night a question popped into my head, as if God himself was asking: “Dan, who do you put above all others including me?” My answer back was: “Myself”. Suddenly I was struck with what my guilt was in front of a Holy God and what it meant to be a sinner. This was the one thing that I never understood. What it meant to be a sinner. Yes, I knew I sinned meaning I had bad behavior. But to have yourself, your selfish inner core exposed the way Jesus’s words in the Gospel of John did brought me to the Cross. Now I understood my need for Christ. This was not something I could fix, or repair. Only God could do so. My search for truth came to the foot of The Cross. What started in my teen years ended when I was 29 years old. All the things I had been through, all the experiences I had led up to that moment, and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.

I wasn’t happy at first. I was angry because I had rejected the Gospel many times before and also because this had been right in front of me for years! However, I could only be angry at myself. Because it was I who rejected Jesus multiple time, but he never rejected me. That’s the love of God.

Sola deo Gloria!

Dan Nelson