

THE MESSENGER

"For all to know and share the Love of Christ"

The Newsletter of First United Methodist Church Surgoinsville, TN
Elaine Ruth, Pastor



March 2021

Pastor's Corner

Give Up Something Bad for Lent

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?

Or what will they give in return for their life?

(Matthew 16:24-26)

What are you giving up for Lent? That is the typical question people ask during this season. Are you giving up soft drinks, or maybe chocolate? Maybe you are going to give up some TV time. We usually pick something that we know we need to get better control of, but we don't pick anything too difficult—usually.

But the real purpose of Lent is not to make yourself suffer in some way. The purpose of the season is for us to take stock of ourselves, to look at where we are in our relationship with God, and to decide whether it's where we want to be. It's a time to notice what things are not working for us or are separating us from God. What things are keeping us from being as effective in serving God as we could be?

During this time of reflection, we recognize our need for God's grace. I'm guessing giving up things like chocolate isn't the kind of sacrifice Jesus was talking about when he told the disciples they should deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him (Matthew 16:24).

Maybe if we are going to give up something for Lent as a spiritual discipline, we should pick something that we really need to get out of our lives permanently. Why not give up something bad for Lent? Maybe we should work on getting rid of the things in our life that get in the way of our walk with God. The best thing we could do is to get rid of those things in our life that are not Christlike.

Jesus was serious about us learning to be more like him. That's why he said things like, *"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell"* (Matt 5:29-30).

Obviously, Jesus did not mean for us to do actual physical harm to ourselves. He was using hyperbole to make the point that for each of us there are certain acts, certain attitudes, certain habits, certain sins that will contaminate and infect our souls. He means that anything that is destructive and anything that tempts us to sin should be ruthlessly cut out of our lives. Whatever you are doing that is ruining or damaging your life, quit it; give it up before it does you in.

If you have an appendix that is about to rupture and spread poison into other parts of your body, your doctor will not hesitate to cut it out. If you develop a skin cancer, the doctor will say, "Let's cut that off." What bad thing do you need to remove from your life?

Let me list a few possibilities. I'm sure you will think of others. These things interfere with our relationships with Jesus and with each other. Here are a few thoughts to start us off.

Continued on next page

Pastor's Corner continued

First, give up bitterness. Is there some bitterness in your life right now? Is there a grudge, a smoldering hatred, a broken relationship that is occupying your heart and mind? Do you spend too much time having hard feelings toward someone or about a situation? These don't help you. They are the opposite of Jesus's commandment to love. If there is bitterness in your life, give it up for Lent. Give it to God. Let God bring healing.

The second thing you might give up is apathy, especially, spiritual apathy. If you are just going through the motions in your spiritual life, you will not be fulfilled. Jesus wants us to be enthusiastic followers of him. Apathy is the opposite of commitment and faith. Give up apathy.

Finally, give up discouragement. We all have times in our life when we get discouraged or we feel sorry for ourselves. All of us have to walk through difficult valleys. Jesus certainly had these times. Jesus wept in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion. But on that night, he turned his doubts, fears, and discouragement over to the Father.

If during these days of Lent we can—with the help and grace of God—get rid of some of the bad things in our lives like bitterness, apathy, or discouragement, we will be better prepared to receive the new life God has for us. That is what Jesus wants us to do.

Remember that the difficulties of this life are not permanent. What is permanent is the resurrection joy of Easter morning.

The season of Lent is not about making yourself feel like a miserable worm. It is about paying attention to your heart, being reminded of where you most need God's grace, and then taking on a practice or a discipline that can help you reconnect with God.



Now Hiring!

Camp Bays Mountain needs male and female counselors (age 16 and older) and one resource person (age 21 or older). If you know someone looking for a summer job, please call Ms. Jordan Gobble, Program Director, at 423/349-8401.

Registration

Registration for 2021 summer camp is open. Very specific protocols to keep campers and staff safe have been submitted to and approved by the Holston Conference and will be updated as new information or official guidance is received.

Campers may register on-line at www.CampBaysMountain.com. Church Secretary, Gina Skelton, will also be able to assist with registration.

Camp Scholarships

Parents of children and youth in grades 1 – 12: The church has funds to be used toward the cost of attending summer camp. If your child actively participates in church activities, wants to attend camp, and you'd like assistance with the registration fee, please complete a Summer Camp Scholarship Application and leave in the box outside of the church secretary's office. *The deadline to apply for scholarship funds will be determined at a later date. The amount of the scholarships will be determined by the funds available.*

PRAYER PAGE

As you pray this week please remember:

- Gerri Pierce**
Vicki Linderman
Roger Sizemore (Jean Keirse's Brother)
Carla Hughes
Virginia Catlett (sister of Dottie Collins)
Phyllis Hammond
Frances Bean (stepmother of Becky Bowman)
Dottie Collins
Ericka Bellamy
Sarah Williams
John K. Williams

Names on the prayer list will remain there for a month. To keep a name on the prayer list after a month, please contact the church office.



3/7

Max & Phyllis Hammond



3/1

Samuel Hurd

3/3

Tiece Johnson
Sarah Rowland

3/6

Landon Seal

3/8

Eliza Smith

3/9

Heidi Hesoun

3/10

Carrie Smith

3/14

Mary Nancy Thurman
Susan Garman

3/18

Lynda Skelton

3/19

Jalana Clingan

3/20

Dawne Arrington

3/22

Gina Skelton

3/27

Billy Hensley

3/28

Susanna Skelton
Olivia Childress

3/30

Harold Collins

**Don't forget to set
your clocks ahead!**



**We spring forward on
March 14**

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday in the Sanctuary: 11:00 a.m.

Sunday Facebook Live: 11:00 a.m.

Anytime on YouTube

Sermon By Phone by calling
423-445-4001.



UPDATE



The updated church directory is available for pick-up in the narthex. If you wish to receive a PDF copy instead of the hard copy, please send your request to Gina at secretaryumc@bellsouth.net.



The Discipleship Team will be meeting on Tuesday, March 9, at 9:00 a.m., in the fellowship hall. Topics to be discussed are the Hands-On Mission project and summer camp scholarships.

Treasurers Report for February

Received towards the Budget:	\$9,451.00
Received to Special Funds:	\$214.00
Total Offering Received:	\$9,665.00

Our expenses for the month include:

Direct Bill Pension	\$885.40
Direct Bill Health Insurance	\$948.00
Appalachian District Fund	\$238.49
Conference Fair Share	\$1,060.50

This was for January and paid in February

Total Staff Salaries	\$5,730.97
----------------------	------------

Operating Expenses:

Hawkins County Gas	\$735.57
Water & Sewer	\$116.04
Telephone & Internet	\$146.79

Other Expenses	\$70.08
----------------	---------

Thank you for continuing to support the ministries of the church. Our Financial Secretary is Jean Keirse. If you mail your offering to the church please send it to her attention.

Submitted by: Gina Skelton

Mission u

There's Far More Here
THAN MEETS THE EYE

So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without [God's] unfolding grace. [...] There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, The Message (MSG)

Join us **July 23-24, 2021**

We have known and felt what it is like when “things are falling apart on us.” We have experienced a great unraveling that has shifted, quite literally, everything.

Could there be, as 2 Corinthians puts it, “far more here than meets the eye”?

Mission u, like many activities in our lives, has moved **online**. While virtual, we are still creating spaces for spiritual community, lifelong friendships, lessons that change us and our communities, and spiritual practices that arrive when we need them most. In a time when it looks like things are falling apart on us, God’s grace is still unfolding and life is being made new.

At our upcoming **Mission u**, we will examine anxiety, the culture of violence that impacts children in and out of schools, and how we as God’s people can deepen our moral witness and respond faithfully.

Our 2021 **Mission u** will offer the following studies:

- ***Finding Peace in an Anxious World***, edited by Erin James-Brown
- ***Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*** by Monique Morris
- **Bearing Witness in the Kingdom: Living Into the Church’s Moral Witness Through Radical Discipleship**
by Darryl W. Stephens
- ***Becoming Peacemakers in a Culture of Violence: A Curriculum for Youth Leaders*** by Jay Godfrey

Smoky Mountain District Mission u team members are Susan Daffron (Dean), Kim Hill (Assistant Dean), Lori Sluder, Tim Jones, Ben Smith, Deborah Carte, Kacye Castenir, Sandra Guinn, Beverly Hayden, Janie Hull, Janet Jonas, and Tawana Teague.