

WORDS OF GRACE

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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ISSUE NO. 120

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PASTOR RICK PHILLIPS

MAY, 2020

RIK'S REVELATIONS

Thank God!

I am dreaming of a day, sometime not too far in the future, I hope, when I can wake up on a Sunday morning, grab some coffee and a couple of cherry pop-tarts, and look forward to coming to church and leading worship with all my church family and friends in person! Maybe it is just a distant dream at this point, but it is one that I am sure will eventually come true, and I will be just as sure to give God all the glory, thanks, and praise for answering our prayers for his Divine help in healing us and this world he has created to sustain us. Does God require us to thank him? Never! Does He think of us as ungrateful if we pat ourselves on the back and give ourselves all the credit? Maybe a little bit. Can you blame him? One day we will see clearly all that God has been doing behind the scenes that we have not even been remotely aware of all along. I always remember a scene from the movie "Groundhog Day" with Bill Murray, which was a comedy hit, but has been a source of inspiration to many for its deeper portrayal of the meaning of life. In the movie Bill Murray is somehow caught in an unexplainable dilemma where he is waking up and re-living Groundhog day over and over again. I think sometimes sheltering in place feels kind of like that! He finally decides that instead of just existing, he will try to do as much good as he can each day, and at a certain time each morning he has to be underneath a certain tree to catch a boy who falls out of the tree every day, and after he saves him from harm, the boy takes off running and Bill Murray shouts after him: "Every day I save you, and you have never even thanked me once!" Maybe God feels a little like that with us sometimes. We all need to thank God more. We need to really look for Him at work in our lives and give Him thanks for every blessing He sends our way. In the gospel of Luke, chapter 17, Jesus once healed ten lepers on his way to Jerusalem. "One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" (verses 15-18) Now, I don't think that the other nine were necessarily so ungrateful, but they did not make a point of coming back and verbalizing their gratefulness for the miraculous act of mercy Jesus blessed them with. Back in the days Jesus walked the earth, Leprosy was a lot more common. It is a very contagious disease, and when anyone showed signs of having it, they were required to go into isolation outside of the city walls. They would have to leave their lives and their families behind for the good of the community to keep the disease from spreading since there was no known cure. Sounds a little familiar, doesn't it? Self isolation, but not just for a few weeks, but for the rest of their lives, barring a miracle. Then, here comes Jesus walking by on his way to Jerusalem, and they must have thought: "maybe this is the miracle we have been praying for!" And they called out to Jesus to have pity on them. He said: "go,

show yourselves to the priests." And as they were on the way to be examined by the priests, they found that they had already been healed. Before a person with leprosy could return to the village and their families, they would have to be examined by the priests to be certified as cured, or "clean" as they would have described it. So, by Jesus telling them to go get certified as clean by the priests, he was really saying: "you have been healed." Only one man ran back to Jesus so that he could thank him for this miracle that would allow him to return to his family and friends without any fear of infecting them, not to mention his being spared from the painful life he would have had to endure from the disease if he had not been cured. He just had to give God the glory in person to Jesus for this miraculous second chance. The man who returned to thank Jesus was a Samaritan, who were thought of as outcasts from the Jewish faith, and he probably never thought that the Messiah of the Jewish people of Israel would ever choose to save an outsider like him. But we know that Jesus came to save all! I'm not really too sure just how most of our country and most of the world feel about the power of God to heal. I'm sure there are skeptics right now, and it is only human nature to doubt, especially when there doesn't seem to be a lot of evidence of miracles right now. Or is there? Maybe we are the miracles. Maybe God is working a miracle through each of us to defeat this pandemic we are faced with. Think of all the doctors and nurses right there in the middle of the fight. All the police officers and governmental leaders and workers who are trying to keep our cities and towns and neighborhoods safe as we isolate from each other temporarily. All the teachers and parents who are trying to finish out the school year by whatever means possible. And the list goes on and on. When that day comes, when our world is certified to be "clean" from the pandemic, we can be proud of our efforts and sacrifices, but let us also remember the source of our strength and our faith and even our very lives on this earth, and let us take the time, every day, to thank God. Let us thank him first and foremost, even at the expense of our own glory, pride, or honor. It does not diminish what we have done together, or what we have been through together, but it would just not be right to not include the Creator of the universe and the giver of all life at the top of our list of those to thank. Without him we can do nothing. So let's praise God now, In the middle of this storm we are riding out, sheltering in place. Thank God for every day that brings us closer to our freedom again. In every trial and in every victory let us always humbly and gratefully thank God. He doesn't require it from us, but I like to think it just may make him smile. We are not ever alone in anything in this life, thank God! From the first breath in the morning to our last breath at night, let us use that breath of life he gives to us... to thank God! *Pastor Rick*

If you have anything to put in the monthly newsletter please contact us via email at graceumcpc@verizon.net or call 659-3718.

Please remember on the fifth Sunday of the month a special offering will be taken up for the Florida United Methodist Children's Home.



The Flower Donation Sign-up Sheet is in the foyer. The cost to buy a pair of flower arrangements for the altar is fifteen dollars for the two altar bouquets or twenty-five dollars for the one large one. Please help support this ministry.

PRAYER LIST: If you have a request to add a person's name to the Prayer Chain please contact: **PASTOR RICK PHILLIPS** 813-503-7933 (Cell or e-mail-graceumcpc@verizon.net)



The Christian Fellowship Brunch will be held **Friday, May 27th**, at 11:30 A.M. restrictions permitting. The location will be decided upon and announced as soon as determined. **Everyone is Welcome!**

WEDNESDAYS

Bible Study is at 10:00 a.m. All are Welcome!



CHURCH SERVICES
SUNDAY, MAY 3RD

10:00 A.M. Worship Service
HOLY COMMUNION

SUNDAY, MAY 10TH

10:00 A.M. Worship Service
MOTHER'S DAY

SUNDAY, MAY 17TH

10:00 A.M. Worship Service
POTLUCK SUPPER

SUNDAY, MAY 24TH

10:00 A.M. Worship Service

SUNDAY, MAY 31ST

10:00 A.M. Worship Service
CHILDREN'S HOME SUNDAY
(All services subject to cancellation
Or modification due to health orders)

MAY IMPORTANT DATES

- 1 st - May Day
- 3 rd - Communion Sunday
- 5 th - Cinco De Mayo
- 5 th - National Teacher's Day
- 6 th - National Nurses Day
- 7 th - National Day of Prayer
- 8 th - Military Spouse's Day
- 10 th - Mother's Day
- 15 th - Police Officers Memorial Day
- 16 th - Armed Forces Day
- 17 th - Potluck Luncheon Sunday
- 21 st - Ascension Day
- 25 th - National Missing Children's Day
- 26 th - Sally Ride Day
- 25 th - Memorial Day
- 31 st - Pentecost

Money Matters - Mar. 2020

Beginning Balance -	\$ 36,996.12
Expenses -	\$ 4,173.19
Income -	\$ 4,022.00
Ending Balance -	\$ 36,842.93

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Grace Yancey	1st
Marion Snowman	6 th
Leah Cowen	9th
Carmela Greene	13 th
Sandi Crawford	15th
Ernie Jones	16th
Gracen Mae Cowen	20th
Raymond Wright	23rd
Ryan Butler	24th

Have a fun-filled day and a blessed year!

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

- Rick and Margie Phillips
May 16th
- Joe and Shelby Ketchen
May 16th
- Bill and Debbie Zinke
May 28th

Congratulations!



CHURCH POT LUCK LUNCHEON

WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, **MAY 17TH** DEPENDENT UPON CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ON GATHERINGS. COME SHARE IN THE FELLOWSHIP AND FOOD DIRECTLY AFTER THE SERVICE! INVITE YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS AS WE COME TOGETHER IN CHRIST! ALL ARE WELCOME!

Queen Margaret and the Robbers - One day when roses were in bloom, two noblemen came to angry words in the Temple Gardens, by the side of the river Thames. In the midst of their quarrel one of them plucked a white rose from a bush, and, turning to those who were near him, said, "He who will stand by me in this quarrel, let him pluck a white rose with me, and wear it in his hat." Then the other gentleman tore a red rose from another bush, and said, "Let him who will stand by me pluck a red rose, and wear it as his badge." Now this quarrel led to a great civil war, which was called "The War of the Roses," for every soldier wore a white or red rose in his helmet to show to which side he belonged. The leaders of the "Red Rose" sided with King Henry the Sixth and his wife, Queen Margaret, who were fighting for the English throne. Many great battles were fought, and wicked deeds were done in those dreadful times. In a battle at a place called Hexham, the king's party was beaten, and Queen Margaret and her little son, the Prince of Wales, had to flee for their lives. They had not gone far before they met a band of robbers, who stopped the queen and stole all her rich jewels, and, holding a drawn sword over her head, threatened to take her life and that of her child. The poor queen, overcome by terror, fell upon her knees and begged them to spare her only son, the little prince. But the robbers, turning from her, began to fight among themselves as to how they should divide the plunder, and, drawing their weapons, they attacked one another. When the queen saw what was happening she sprang to her feet, and, taking the prince by the hand, made haste to escape. There was a thick wood close by, and the queen plunged into it, but she was sorely afraid and trembled in every limb, for she knew that this wood was the hiding place of robbers and outlaws. On and on she went through the dark wood, this way and that, seeking some place of shelter, but not knowing where she was going. At last she saw by the light of the moon a tall, fierce looking man step out from behind a tree. He came directly toward her, and she knew by his dress that he was an outlaw. But thinking that he might have children of his own, she determined to throw herself and her son upon his mercy. When he came near she addressed him in a calm voice and with a stately manner. "Friend," said she, "I am the queen. Kill me if thou wilt, but spare my son, thy prince. Take him, I will trust him to thee. Keep him safe from those that seek his life, and God will have pity on thee for all thy sins." The words of the queen moved the heart of the outlaw. He told her that he had once fought on her side, and was now hiding from the soldiers of the "White Rose." He then lifted the little prince in his arms, and, bidding the queen follow, led the way to a cave in the rocks. There he gave them food and shelter, and kept them safe for two days, when the queen's friends and attendants, discovering their hiding place, came and took them far away. If you ever go to Hexham Forest, you may see this robber's cave. It is on the bank of a little stream that flows at the foot of a hill, and to this day the people call it "Queen Margaret's Cave."

Explaining God One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way, He doesn't have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers. God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times besides bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because He hears everything there must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off. God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting His time by going over your mom and dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have. Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church. Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind like His Father and He told His Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said OK. His Dad (God) appreciated everything that He had done and all His hard work on earth so He told Him He didn't have to go out on the road anymore, He could stay in heaven. So He did. And now He helps His Dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary only more important. You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to hear you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the times. You should always go to Church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God. Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong! And, besides, the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway. If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared in the dark or when you can't swim very good and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids. But you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and He can take me back anytime He pleases. And that's why I believe in God." Danny Dutton, age 8, from Chula Vista, California, for his third grade homework assignment to "Explain God."

REMINDER

Newsletter items need to be to
Pastor Rick by MAY 22,
for the JUNE Newsletter.
Call 813-659-3718 or
e-mail - graceumcpc@verizon.net

I CAN, YOU CAN

On the First Sunday of the month,
Communion Sunday, please bring a
can or non-perishable food item
to be donated to the local
Food Bank of Plant City.
Put it in the basket as you
enter the church .
Thank you for caring!

REMINDERS

Just a reminder we recycle aluminum
soda cans at the church. Please rinse
them and bring them to the church. The
money raised by this endeavor is given to
the Children's Home. This is another thing
we can do to help out.

Also Soda tabs are being collected by
John Houck for a Mission Project.

**Have you noticed the Brown Box
on your left when you enter the
Sanctuary?**

**This is there for your spare change.
All this money goes to the
Children's Home.
God Bless You and thank you!**

New Building Fund

We have made many
improvements over the last few
years to our aging church property,
we were able to pay for them in
full, thanks to your extravagant
generosity! We do have other
repair projects that will need to be
addressed and if you would like to
support those efforts you can
make a donation to our new
Building Fund. God Bless You!



Local Ministry Opportunities

We are currently helping our local food bank of Plant City on
Alsobrook street on one Tuesday of each month from 9-11
am. We are helping them sort and date the various food
donations to help them be able to distribute the food in a
timely manner. Anyone is welcome to join us in this
cooperative ministry effort that helps us fulfill the call of Jesus
to feed the hungry in His name. We will be helping them
again Tuesday, **MAY 12TH.**

Happy Belated Easter!

I know we were all disappointed that we were not able to celebrate Easter
together in our usual manner due to the corona virus concerns. We are
going to schedule a special worship service sometime later in the
summer whenever it is safe to gather together to worship again. We will
have a free breakfast and a special Easter Themed service and an Easter
egg hunt and fun for the kids! More information to come as our plans
start to come together.

Thank you for your support! I just want to take a moment to
thank all of you for your support to the church in these challenging times.
Your generosity in getting your tithes and offerings to us by mail or other
means has been inspiring and heartwarming. Please let us know if any of
you are in need of any kind of help from the church. I want you to know
that I am here for you, and praying for you every day, and may God bless
you greatly for your faithfulness!

Re-Opening - I know we are all ready to start trying to get back to some
sort of normal life even if it won't be exactly as it was before the corona
virus hit. Our Bishop has requested that we refrain from worshipping in
person until after May 15th. We will resume our 10 am Sunday Worship
Services as soon as it is deemed safe to do so, and we will observe any
of the guidelines for gathering as a group to worship together that may be
in place. We will continue to offer an on-line worship service as we have
been lately for those who may not feel ready to return to our in-person
style of worship. Please check the website, our face book page or call or
e-mail us for the most up to date information on the church re-opening.

