

Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave
United Methodist Churches
Porterville, CA

May 2020

Moving Out While Staying In

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

The root meaning of the Old Testament word for holiness is the idea of being separate—different and separated from the ordinary. And when applied to God, this separateness implies that he is in a class by himself. He is like a one-of-a-kind diamond, supremely valuable.

Our God is holy. For God to be holy he must also be righteous. An unrighteous holy God is a mirage, a contradiction outside the bounds of logic.

If there is one thing a pandemic threatens is our sense of God's righteousness. If God does nothing wrong through the normal tragedies of life, God does nothing wrong in a pandemic. God consistently uses hard times, infrequent catastrophes, tragic outcomes of cause-and-effect relationships, to create opportunities for his people. COVID19 is no different.

We are to shelter in place, stay-at-home, be by ourselves and with as few people as possible for as much time as possible. In effect, we are to pull our physical environment in and limit it. However, the very degree to which our physical environment should be pulled in, our outlook, perspective, and social audience should expand beyond imagination.

Jesus said, *"As the father sent me so now, I send you."* As followers of Jesus we are the "sent ones." How can we be sent if we are supposed to stay home? In the same way that God's finger is on and in the coronavirus but not unrighteous because of that, so are we to be physically limited, but socially reckless, wasteful, and extravagant.

We have never lived in a better time to have access to people without physically being with them. We can call, email, text, voicemail, instant message, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, anyone we want to. If you're old school you can use a Carrier pigeon, Morse code, sign language, yell, connect two tin cans with a string, write a letter, send a card, and any other way to get your message out.

Because of our physical limitations the need to do this, to offer care, to apply ourselves to "virtual fellowship," could not be more crucial. We arrive at a critical portal through which we must leap. That portal is our ability to virtually fellowship.

I am not only talking to people who have a computer. Some of you are reading this letter on paper, some on a computer screen, some on your phone, some not at all. The point is, your technical sagacity is not at issue, your ability to virtually fellowship is. All of us have the means to do this; all of us are sent ones; all of us are part of a church charged with offering care to another.

Our hospitality must become something that occurs over distances as well as face-to-face now. We must learn to give ourselves to others virtually, through words we write, record, send, screenshot, and mail.

In our church today, it has often been clergy who have "all the answers" for how to do mission. But pastors do not know enough about every vocational field to know how the gospel influences work in your

sector. In this endeavor, you and I sit down as equals—each with some knowledge the other does not have—to plan for Christian witness in public life.

Matthew 5:13 tells us that we are to be "salt of the earth." This is a wonderful metaphor. In ancient times, salt was used not only to bring flavor out of meat, but also to preserve it from decay. So, when Jesus said we are the salt of the earth, he meant we're supposed to be honest, work hard, do good and keep things from becoming corrupt—but also be open about our Christianity.

We can make all this happen because we have a holy God. God makes all this because he is holy. We can make this happen because God has made us holy in Jesus.

I pray this excites you about the great commission and motivates you to invite your friends, neighbors, family, and shelter-in-place partners to view our resources and to engage in conversation about faith. We may never have another opportunity presented so unambiguously and with such clarity.

I long to be with you again in the sanctuary, to sing praise and gather with you as we smile and pray for one another. I want to stand in the sanctuary, sit at tables, in the lobby, on the platform, and in my office with all of you. I love seeing you on the screen, but it pales by comparison to having you in front of me.

Until that time may our longing motivate us to reach out and share the good news at a distance with the same burning intensity we have in person. To do this is to give honor and praise to a holy God and fulfill the Great Commission!

Youth Ministry

As a youth pastor, I have spent many years meeting students face to face for various activities. I have been blessed to take students to lunch or dinner, I have had them to my home for movies, Super Bowl parties, and Bible studies, and we have had many other adventures as well. With this unique situation the world is currently experiencing with the quarantine and social distancing, all the gathering in person has come to a halt for the time being. This has made us in ministry strive to do ministry in different ways that still meets our goals of sharing the love of Jesus with our community. No longer can we meet face to face, but we can still gather through technology and the internet.

The youth and I have been meeting on Zoom since the quarantine began. Virtually, we gather through cameras and microphones and proceed to have youth group in this special way. At first, I did not know what to expect. I wondered if the students would like our gatherings online, if they would feel as engaged as they are in person when we meet, and would they keep attending our virtual hangouts. These concerns were soon wiped away by the enthusiasm our youth have as we gather weekly for our times together.

Currently, the youth and I meet online on Wednesdays and Sundays. Our time together is rewarding for all in attendance. The students share updates about themselves and their families to all in attendance. We play social games and we have discussions about God's Word and we spend time at the end in prayer. And much to my surprise, it is a wonderful time of ministry with my youth. Their joy and excitement as we spend time together online is contagious and I always leave the gatherings uplifted and with a smile.

So, what have I learned through these unique ways of doing ministry? Social distancing has no power over the love Christ's people have for Him and each other. We may not be able to gather physically, but that cannot stop us from still doing life together. Regardless of the way we spend time with each other, whether through speaking on the phone, sending text messages, writing letters, or having virtual meetings like we do on Zoom, when followers of Jesus are together, we are able to encourage, uplift, support, and worship together in unity and in beautiful ways.

During our virtual hangouts and through text messages that I have received from youth group members, I have been asked to share a couple of messages to our church family. One youth asked me to tell everyone that he misses each of you and loves you all. Another youth shared that they are very excited about when we get to be back together in person. And finally, another youth said they are thankful for our church and the support they have for the youth. I must confess, when I was asked to share these messages, my heart swelled up with joy at the love our youth have for our church family.

Announcements

Sack Lunch Update

Sack Lunch is assisting the City in serving the homeless lunch at the parking lot on J St. (at the J Street bridge) on Saturdays and Sundays. Volunteers are asked to arrive at 11:30 a.m. We serve lunches from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. We would love to have your help. Please contact Sue Wright or Cindy Bartlett (559)789-3436 for more information. Let them know when you are able to help! Please bring your own **required** masks and gloves.

Grand Ave Yard Sale

The Grand Ave Yard Sale scheduled for May 1 and 2, 2020 had been postponed until a later date. We are not pricing at this time.

First Church Yard Sale

The yard sale is on hold until further notice.

Please continue to collect yard sale items for either First or Grand Ave and keep the items at home until we are able to announce new yard sale dates. Thank you so much for your help.

Linda Circle

Linda Circle will not meet again until it is safe for all to do so. We hope to resume our third Tuesday of the month meetings in September.

Worship Service and Sermon Video

Watch a video of the online Worship Service and Sermon and share a link with a friend. Pastor Tom's sermons are posted on www.grandavenue.org each week.

Check out the Facebook page for each church:
<https://www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC>
<https://www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC>



Children's Sunday School at First United

Hello, Children's Sunday School. A lot of kind of crazy things have been going on in our world lately. I'm sure that you agree. We have seen a lot of changes in our lives. Ok, for one thing, you all are going to school in a different location now, right? You are not going to the school building anymore, you actually are staying at home and doing your schoolwork on the computer. Instead of seeing your teacher in person, every day, in the classroom at school, most of you are joining a virtual classroom on your computer, a few times a week.

The same goes for church too. We are not going to the church building right now for church. We are watching Pastor Tom give our church message over the internet on our computers.

So, right now, it seems to me that a very big change in our lives is that we are using computers even more than we were before. Kind of a funny change too. Because normally your parents are saying, "How long have you been playing that device? You can't be playing all day on your computer, PlayStation, Nintendo, or Xbox. It's time to turn it off."

Now your parents are saying, "Did you do your schoolwork? You need to get on your device and get your work finished. Stay on it until you are finished." I think that is so funny but what is even funnier, is that kids don't want to be on their devices now. They don't want to do their work. So, things, kind of, changed.

Another change in our lives is, if we have to leave our houses, we are supposed to wear a facial covering, a face mask, to cover our nose and mouth, and gloves on our hands. This is quite different from what we are used to doing, when we leave our homes. Now, we are doing this to practice keeping ourselves and our families safe from getting sick.

May 2020



Also, I'm sure you have noticed that you are washing your hands a lot more than you normally do. Most likely, other things have changed as well.

So, it seems that lately our lives are filled with lots of changes. Sometimes, these changes can be very overwhelming. We might feel a little hopeless, impatient or even angry. We may also feel like, I don't like doing all of these things. Or maybe like, why can't things be like they were? You know, it is ok to feel that way, if you do. The disciples felt the same way after Jesus died.

So, we just celebrated Good Friday and Easter. Jesus died on the cross for our sins on Good Friday and was resurrected on Easter Sunday. Back in the times of Jesus, the death of Jesus was an awful tragedy. The disciples loved Jesus so much. They knew he was such an amazing man. They had seen him perform so many miracles. Their faith in him was so strong. They felt like nothing bad could ever happen to him or them.

But now they saw him die. How could this happen? Why hadn't Jesus saved himself? What would happen to them now? Where would they go? They were so confused, hopeless, afraid, and alone.

There was not any way for them to understand that we would now look at Jesus dying on the cross and being resurrected as a good thing. It was the worst thing

that could have ever happened to them.

The disciples cried and just felt lost. They were frustrated and angry. Then, Easter Sunday came and Jesus was resurrected. They were filled with such joy, knowing that Jesus was alive. So, like the Bible verse above says (Weeping may last for a night but joy comes in the morning) the disciples had this period of time, in their lives, of a very horrible change that took place, and they cried. Their crying only lasted for a certain amount of time and then they felt joy, because Jesus was alive.

I have great faith that the changes that are happening in our lives won't last forever. God has told us that it will only last for a certain amount of time and then joy will come back to us. It says so in our Bible verse, "Weeping may last for a night but joy comes in the morning." Psalm 30:5 We don't know how long things will be like this for but we just need to remember to be patient. God has got this situation and is fixing it for us.

My prayer for you, we thank you God that our tears and confusion will only last for a certain amount of time and joy will return to us. Thank you for watching over us and loving us. Thank you for Jesus and the sacrifice of your Son for us. Thank you for giving us the gift of Everlasting Life through your Son. Thank you for giving us computers so that we can have online schooling and church. Thank you for our Teachers and all that they do for us. We ask you to keep your protection over all of us, until we are able to meet at the Church building again. Please bless all of the families that have been touched by this sickness. Be with them, comfort them and bring them peace. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Melody Burkhart

Children, Are You Listening?

By Judy Lowery

“While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.’” Matthew 17:5 NIV

During my years of teaching elementary school, there occasionally came visitors to our classroom who graciously shared various interests, hobbies and skills with the children. Our guests included the husband of a colleague who demonstrated sheep shearing one afternoon while clutching tightly to a bleating sheep; and a father who was a Farrier shoeing one of his horses.

Robin Galloway, a Naturalist for the Forest Service, came to the classroom and gave an interesting talk on owls that included her demonstration of hooting; and often in January, Kindergarten teacher, Alvina Sue, would come to share about the Chinese New Year, wearing an embroidered red and gold jacket and carrying a decorated Lion’s head mask.

Another guest was Joy Harvey, a local artist specializing in Chinese art and calligraphy. Joy showed the kids how to paint stalks of bamboo with delicate brush strokes on rice paper. My dad and mom even came to visit, bringing along my niece, Jennifer, who shared her artwork for “show and tell.” Jennifer was about 8 years old at the time and had been taking art lessons. She definitely had talent!

Afterwards we went out on the playground where dad, former All-American football player, tossed passes to each one of the kids. In spite of feeling pretty “creaky” he still managed to throw several spirals to them while they took turns running as hard as they could to catch the football.

After Myron Wilcox retired from teaching, he would come and juggle for my students. Myron, with his

brightly colored cap, always had the class transfixed as he juggled a number of different items—often all at the same time! While doing this, he would give short, memorable lessons to the kids in his booming voice.

My favorite one was, “Kids, Listen to your teacher!” Oh, how many times had I told them that? It was lovely to hear someone else say it for once! Myron certainly had their attention!

And those were just a few of the many special people who came sharing their wealth of information and talents with the children over the years. Needless to say, there was never a problem with discipline during those times.

Well, like juggling, listening is a skill that has to be practiced and perfected over time. During my sixth or seventh grade year, the teacher asked our class to come up with different parts of the buffalo that might have been useful to the Native Americans who lived on the Great Plains. I remember raising my hand and saying, “The claws!”

Everyone started laughing when the teacher pointed out that buffalo don’t have claws, they have hooves!” Did I listen? I thought she was talking about bears! How embarrassing!

Jesus talked about the importance of listening to a crowd of people around him, including his disciples, some religious leaders and

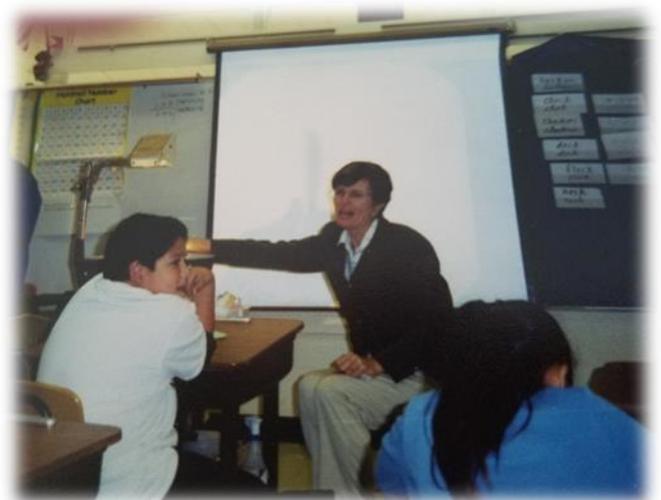
others. Using the example of a shepherd calling his flock of sheep by name, he pointed out the fact that if the sheep recognized the shepherd’s voice, they would follow him to a safe place of pasture.

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

(John 11: 27-28 NIV)

Three of the disciples, Peter, James and John, heard the admonition to listen directly from God in a supernatural moment as Moses and Elijah appeared and began conversing with Jesus. “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.” They listened too—for a time. However, those words didn’t seem to sink in until after Jesus had risen from the dead.

During this time of crisis that we are all experiencing to one degree or another, are we listening to the Lord’s voice? And how well are we listening? He definitely has something to say! May our ears be opened to hear and our hearts moved to follow Jesus, our good Shepherd.



May 2020 Prayer Calendar

Friday, May 1 - Pray for health and wellness for our church families. For healing from above for those who are sick, especially those who have trouble getting access to services.

Saturday, May 2 - Pray for those who need clothes. May they find their way to the Clothing Closet at First Church.

Sunday, May 3 - Pray for the Sunday Worship.

Monday, May 4 - Pray for the Children of our churches. Pray especially for those struggling to learn in an online environment. May they be filled with a spirit of learning and curiosity.

Tuesday, May 5 - Pray for the finances of our churches and for generosity to inspire those yet to participate.

Wednesday, May 6 - Pray for Ryan Ridenour and Melody Burkhart as they plans for future events and activities at GAUMC and FUMC.

Thursday, May 7 - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare to record. May the recordings be imbued with power from on high to touch and draw people to Jesus.

Friday, May 8 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon. May God bless the sharing of His Word

Saturday, May 9 - Pray that today we can reflect on Proverbs 12:25 - *"Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up."*

Sunday, May 10 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services. Pray that all would guard the time to view and apply the service and share it as a family.

Monday, May 11 - Pray as we go through this week, that we know God is with us.

Tuesday, May 12 - Pray for the 6:00 p.m. GAUMC Finance Meeting and for the finances of FUMC.

Wednesday, May 13 - Pray and reflect on Romans 12:2 *"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

Thursday, May 14 - Please take a moment to pray today about the global pandemic we are facing. For those who are sick and those anxious about getting sick. May the peace of God flood their heart and mind and give them rest.

Friday, May 15 - Pray for our community of Porterville.

Saturday, May 16 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Lamentations 3:23 *"Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning."*

Sunday, May 17 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services today. Pray that all would guard the time to view and apply the service and share it as a family.

Monday, May 18 - Pray that we know God will be with us as we go through many different situations this week.

Tuesday, May 19 - Pray for the ladies of Linda Circle who continue to accumulate yard sale items.

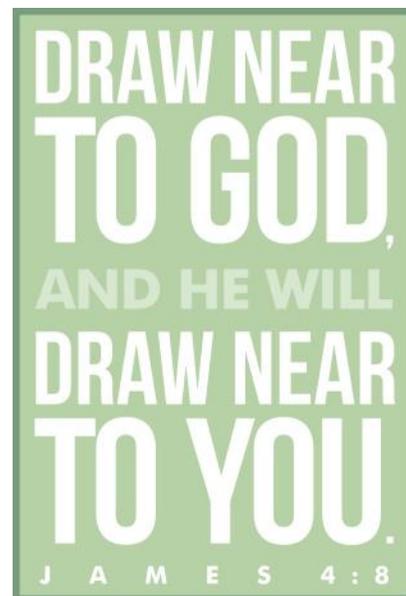
Wednesday, May 20 - Pray and reflect on Psalm 46:1 *"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble."*

Thursday, May 21 - Pray for the 6pm GAUMC Trustees meeting.

Friday, May 22 - Pray for the youth and children at GAUMC and FUMC.

Saturday, May 23 - Pray and reflect on bible verse Isaiah 43:2 *"God will carry you through the storm."*

Sunday, May 24 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services today. May we worship the Lord in the beauty of God's holiness.



Monday, May 25 - Pray that we can live according to Galatians, Chapter 5:22-23 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*

Tuesday, May 26 - Pray for the homeless in our community. Give thanks for those who serve them.

Wednesday, May 27 - Pray and reflect on Psalm 103:5 *"Lord, renew my energy when I feel tired and weak."*

Thursday, May 28 - Pray for the ladies of the Women's Bible Study and the people of Wednesday Bible Study.

Friday, May 29 - Pray today for God to give us strength and grace as we face many different challenges.

Saturday, May 30 - Pray and reflect on Proverbs 14:30 *"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."*

Sunday, May 31 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services today. Pray that all would guard the time to view and apply the service and share it as a family.

Grand Ave Methodist Weekly Schedule

Meetings are via Computer Connection

Sundays

Join us for online Worship Service
Www.grandavenue.org or
www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC

First Methodist Weekly Schedule

Meetings are via Computer Connection

Sundays

Join us for online Worship Service
Www.grandavenue.org or
www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC

Happy Birthday!

First UMC

Loretta Sonksen • May 5
Adam Garrett • May 11
James Mankins • May 14
Margie Mylander • May 20
Ethel Anderson • May 26
Linda Rhoadarmer • May 27
Stacey Farquharson • May 28
Dare Quatacker • May 30



Grand Ave UMC

Jason Buratovich • May 1
Electa Wright • May 5
Shirley Gutierrez • May 10
Fernando Gutierrez • May 23

Next Newsletter Deadline

Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at judy.bur87@gmail.com. The deadline for the June 2020 Messenger is **May 20**. Thank you.

Grand Ave Staff

Senior Pastor • *Rev. Tom Buratovich*
Director of Youth Ministries • *Ryan Ridenour*
Worship Administrator • *Judy Buratovich*
Treasurer • *Rodel Lipumano*
Custodian • *The Congregation*

First Staff

Senior Pastor • *Rev. Tom Buratovich*
Counseling Center Director • *Joy Semple*
Administrative Assistant • *Melissa Sutherland*
Music Coordinator • *Christine Klippenstein*
Organist • *Donita Roulsten*
Children/Custodian • *Melody Burkhart*

Grand Ave Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

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*Grand Ave United Methodist Church
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Porterville, CA 93257*

Offering

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1Thessalonians 5:16-18

Despite my constant over-worrying about church finances, despite national polls predicting church giving dropping profusely, despite the ongoing need to fund our ministry and its growth, we must pause to give abundant thanks to God who supplies our every need in Jesus.

However, as your pastor, I must also thank you. Your faithfulness, generosity, and sacrificial discipline is humbling to me and convicting when I consider all that you have endured to keep our churches going.

While we are not out of the woods, we are solid, solvent, and able to operate, pay our bills, our staff, and fulfill most of our obligation to our Annual Conference. If you have neglected your tithe, this is a gentle reminder, if you have never practiced a biblical tithe, I encourage you to surrender to God your financial world which opens up a world of freedom beyond your imagination. You may mail your offerings to the addresses at the bottom of the page.

Thank you again! *Pastor Tom*

First and Grand Ave UMC

We expect to hold our meetings through computers for now (Zoom). Hopefully, in the near future we will be able to meet for Worship Services, Bible Studies and groups again. Each week a Worship Service Video is posted on www.grandavenue.org. Our church Facebook pages will have a link each Sunday morning by 6:00 a.m. (or earlier) and it will be available throughout the week. Please continue to pray for our community during this time. **Invite friends to watch our online Worship Services.**

First Methodist Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-4232
pvfumc@ocsnet.net

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