



Messenger Newsletter

*First and Grand Ave
United Methodist Churches
Porterville, CA*

June 2020

6 Feet of Love

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

Clean and disinfect; wash your hands for 20 seconds; avoid close contact; put distance between yourself and other people; stay at home. Stay home. Stay-at-home!

You have read these words, pondered their application, looked bewildered at people who were not following them, and become weary of hearing and practicing these words.

We now find ourselves at a rather interesting place - many places have opened, plan to open, or talk enthusiastically about opening. However, nowhere is Covid-19 gone. We are happy to accept a smaller growth. We are happy to accept the risk of opening vs. the risk of prolonged isolation. In our call to love our neighbor we are asked to keep our distance -- 6 feet -- of love!

That is a fascinating affirmation to me of our need for community, for social interaction, for human input into our world, to hear, see, touch, albeit virtually, people is a reminder of the God-shaped hole each of us have that clamors for input from others as a way to satiate this need.

The church sees fellowship as a way for us to interact in the presence of God. We participate in the kingdom of God by joining the work of God together. As we converge on Pentecost part of the blessing of the Holy Spirit is that

Christians are now in Christ as well as with Christ, and with people in the work of the kingdom of God. This is a profound truth: we are with people and in Christ when we fellowship. We are with people who have Jesus in common with us and that makes us one, not the same but one in mind because we have the mind of Christ in God.

We will open again soon. Probably sometime in June, but that, of course, is subject to change. We are preparing and trying our best to remain connected to all of you because we are "in Christ and with you." We are preparing -- making sure that we are doing everything we can to love our neighbor which means keeping people safe while providing for the health of their soul.

You may feel that you cannot attend church for a while. I release you from your guilt if you feel any. I thank you for continuing to support the churches financially as

your spiritual practice. Our overall giving is down in both churches, but others have stepped forward and are giving extra. This lessens the shortfall, makes what we do possible and gives us great joy.

Church will look different, start slower, with a slow walk at first then a brisk walk, moving slowly to a gentle jog until we finally run. Run we will, but that will follow a long warm-up. When there are more definitive plans, we will communicate those so please watch your inbox and mailbox.

We are developing ways to connect using the app Remind™. If you would like to receive updates via text messages about prayer concerns or general announcements, please send a note with your name and cell phone number to either Melissa at First Church or Ryan at Grand Avenue. We will add you to the list.

In these days, I ask our God to give you 6 feet of love between you and your neighbor and 6 million miles of love in your heart for Jesus and 6 billion tons of passion to live for him.

Worship Service Online

Watch the online Worship Service and share a link with a friend. Services are posted on www.grandavenue.org each week until we are able to meet in the Sanctuary again.

Check out the Facebook page for each church:

<https://www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC>

<https://www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC>

Youth Ministry

Dear Graduates,

Over the past many years, you have had the blessing of experiencing the full magnitude of the school journey. Many of you have played sports, participated in extracurricular school activities, played in the band, and formed relationships with your peers that have brought many blessings into your life and into theirs. You have had times of joy and times of struggles, times of laughter and times of tears. Each experience, big or small, played a roll in your development as a person, student, and as a Christian. You have had to study, read, and put in the work needed to achieve the passing grades required to be handed that beautiful piece of paper validating your hard work, titled: Diploma.

Traditionally at this point in your school career, with your schoolbooks turned in, hugs and handshakes handed out generously to teachers and friends, you would be eagerly awaiting the big moment when you will put on that shiny robe and academic hat and stride across the stage to the sound of clapping and cheers as your name is read aloud. Unfortunately, our current situation has restricted our ability to carry on this tradition during this time. Other measures have been taken, for you to one way or another receive your diploma and be recognized for your hard work. Many of you are sad and disappointed because of these issues, which is understandable.

I want each of you to know that whether or not you walk across a stage to a crowd of cheers or if you simply drive up in your vehicle and receive your diploma, your hard work is honored and appreciated and all of us here at Grand Avenue and First UMC rejoice with you on your success. You are a graduate, and nothing can take that away from you. Circumstances do not define you, your heart and love



for God and His creation is what shines bright for all to see. And when I look at you, I am so pleased at who you have become and who you are becoming through God's work in your life.

It has been a blessing for me to watch each of you grow up physically and spiritually. The many times we laughed together, cried together, prayed together, and had those not so fun conversations have created a love in my heart for you that will never be replaced. Thank you for allowing me to be your youth pastor. Thanks for laughing at my silly jokes. Thanks for trusting me to guide you spiritually down a path that leads to continued growth in your relationship with Jesus. Each one of you are dear to my heart and regardless if you are a high school graduate or a college graduate, I am still here and willing to be your youth pastor and your brother in Christ. You will always have a home at Grand Avenue because we are more than peers, we are family.

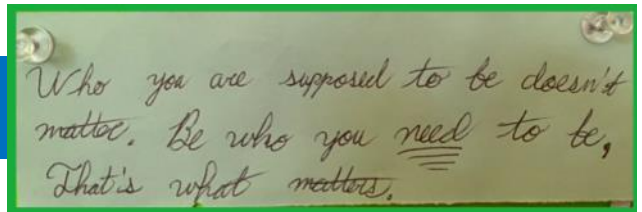
As you look to the future, I encourage you to allow God to guide your steps and your heart. His love for you is beyond human understanding. He created you on purpose for a purpose. Pray daily. Resist the easy path and embrace the journey God has in store for you. Life will not always be easy, but difficult times build character. Go forth with confidence in the Lord and joy in your heart at the work He is doing in your life. Blessings to each of you.

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour

I can do all things
through Christ who
strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Who Do You Need To Be?



Before I write something for the Newsletter, or do a project that I am entrusted with, I always go through a time of prayer. Then, I just clear my head and don't think about the task at hand and let God lead me to a topic or give me a suggestion, as to what path I should take. Well, I thought this month would be different because I already had a topic that "I" wanted to write about. In fact, the subject is half written at this very moment. I didn't finish it. Obviously, God had different plans. So, here is where God led me.

I was walking through the Sunday School rooms the other day, when I was cleaning. I happened to look up at the bulletin board and the above quote stood out to me. "Who you are supposed to be doesn't matter. Be who you need to be. That's what matters." The light bulb turned on and I knew this was the topic that God wanted me to write about. This quote was written by one of our Youth. In a lesson, almost a year ago, they each came up with their own quotes. I remember when this gentleman came out of Sunday School and he handed it to me. At the time, I thought it was a wonderful quote so I attached it to the bulletin board. There it has been, waiting for when the time was right. I haven't thought anything about it since, regretfully.

Thinking about this quote, makes me feel that in the times we are living in, we really need to listen to the advice of this young man. There are so many sides to take in this whole COVID 19 story. It seems like when we started this story, we were fighting a battle against an invisible force. A virus. A very deadly virus for some and not so deadly for others. This is nothing new for Christians. We are always fighting a battle against an unseen enemy, Satan. But now, as Christians, we are not only fighting one battle against Satan but now another enemy, the virus. So, from here it escalates to a fight against the Government, to open the States or not. Take it up a notch, and another battle against our own. This one separates you into groups. You have the "People Who Wear A Face Mask Group" and the "People Who Don't Wear A Face Mask Group". So, we are now pitted against each other and the peer pressure is mounting. Pretty soon, you deny who you need to be and conform to who you think someone else wants you to be.

So, from one battle (the one against Satan) came a total of four separate battles. All these four battles cause confusion, frustration, anger, fear, and leave us in a jumbled mess distracted from the one thing that we should be fighting for, God. Where is He in all of these battles?? Forgotten. Left behind.

You see, if you stop and think a second and start taking all the distractions out of the picture, you realize that all along there has only been just one battle. The one against Satan. Everything else is a distraction to keep us from God.

My feeling from the start, is that COVID 19 was bringing people back to who they needed to be. They were changing from who they were trying to be. People were waking up and wanting to come back to God, their families, and leaving behind the things that seem important. They were looking for their roots.

Churches had to close, but didn't miss a beat and went online. Now instead of listening to one sermon a day, people are listening to 3 or 4. God was winning. So, Satan stepped up his efforts and brought out other distractions, as always. Thus, the four battles.

You know, the same sort of thing happened years ago. Jesus had so many followers. He was gaining such influence. Many, many, people knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he was the Messiah. They were becoming who they needed to be and leaving behind who they thought they were supposed to be.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey before Passover. Countless people lined the streets to see him. They believed they were seeing the Son of God. Nothing could have been more amazing to see. I'm sure their love for him poured out of their souls as they watched him pass and laid

down palms for their King to tread over. I'm sure the air was filled with the utmost rejoicing. It might have been as close as you could get to Heaven on Earth, type of feeling. The amount of faith and belief in The Messiah, was overwhelmingly powerful. They knew exactly who he was.

I'm sure, it really burned Satan up. But Satan used his influence to change that situation. Jesus was arrested, judged and everyone shouted "Crucify him". The same people who had just laid down palms & jackets for the donkey, that carried Jesus, a few days earlier, had changed. . The same people overcome by such a powerful love for their King,

their Messiah, were against him. Jesus was crucified and no one stood up for him.

They did not stand up for themselves. They became, again, who they thought others wanted them to be. Yes, out of fear. Fear of death, fear that maybe they were wrong, fear of the person that God had created them to be, and fear of the person Jesus brought out in them. Who is that person?

Who do we need to be? I guess that is the question. We are Christians. There is no time better than now to stand united in our beliefs. To show mercy, humility, kindness and love to your fellow man. To help bring peace and light in the darkness.

So, here are my questions for you. Do you, or rather, will you accept God's call to stand with your sisters and brothers for him, now in these troubled times? To bear witness that He is God? Or will you stand for who other people think you should be?

Who do you need to be?

Melody Burkhart
FUMC Children's Sunday School
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Water in Abundance

By Judy Lowery

"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified." John 7:37-39 NIV

When the weather turned out to be sunny and clear one Saturday morning, Al and I decided that we'd better take the opportunity to plant annuals and also a vegetable garden. It was mid-May, yet spring in Michigan seemed a long time in coming and winter a long time in going!

In spite of several rainy days, dump trucks had delivered piles of mulch to homes around the neighborhood during the previous week,. One of our neighbors was upset when the piles of mulch were dumped in the wrong place, making a lot more wheelbarrowing for her. Her whole family showed up on that nice Saturday morning and spent the day helping distribute it around the yard.

Why so much additives to the existing dirt? We discovered soon after moving here that the soil was adobe and that when it dried out during the summer, it baked like clay bricks in a kiln. Anything to keep in the moisture was beneficial in helping plants survive the summer heat.

People here were happy when they were recently given permission to go shopping at nurseries and greenhouses. Earlier that week, Al and I had joined a crowd of "do it yourself" gardeners at a busy Home and Garden center, all with the same idea of buying plants. Even though everyone was wearing a mask, it was hard not to bump into each other. But we stayed outside and kept moving as we walked through the aisles of flowers and vegetables.

What a great display of color... a treat for the eyes! It wasn't long before we had two carts filled with eight-packs of red, white, pink and purple petunias, red impatiens and orange variegated marigolds. We also picked out a large tomato plant, a couple varieties of lettuce, peppers, and some cabbage plants... as much as two small garden beds could hold.

All Saturday morning to mid-afternoon was spent mulching the garden beds, planting the vegetables and potting the flowers. Many of the eight-packs of petunias and impatiens turned out to be difficult to remove from their containers due to staying on the shelves too long—roots had grown from one small plant to the other in a tangled mess. Some were dried out and in great need of water.

While I was soaking the newly potted plants using the watering can, Teddy the dog licked up the puddles of dirty water oozing out from them. Why would he prefer the muddy water to his clean water bowl? A mystery!

Why use the watering can? Al thought there would still be enough rain to keep the ground moist and the plants well-watered without taking the hoses from the basement where they had been stored for the winter. He was right! A record amount of rain fell on Sunday and Monday. So much rain in fact that two dams burst, forcing people to evacuate from their homes near Midland, Michigan.

Being from the central valley of California, where it is hot and dry from now to mid-October, I still find it hard to believe that so much water can fall from the sky in such a short period of time! Not a storm passes by without my thanking God profusely for providing the rain and praying for areas of the country in the midst of drought.

It felt good to spend the day outside planting, like a drink of fresh water to my dried-up soul. It was a reminder of God's abundant grace, grace that is always available to us. Why be thirsty or lap up water from puddles? We only need come to His streams of living water and drink!

Dear Father, thank you for the reminder to come to you and drink of your living water. Forgive us for trying to satisfy our thirsty souls any other way. Thank you for Jesus who makes possible abundant life, flowing life through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. In His precious name, Amen.



June 2020 Prayer Calendar

Monday, June 1 - Pray for the kids and teachers as they finish the school year and start the summer break.

Tuesday, June 2 - Pray for the ones who are ill or who are rehabilitating. Pray for healing and strength. May God grant us health.

Wednesday, June 3 - Pray and reflect on Philippians 4:13 *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

Thursday, June 4 - Pray for our community of Porterville as they slowly open businesses safely.

Friday, June 5 - Pray for all the church youth who have graduated school. Pray as they start on their new venture.

Saturday, June 6 - Pray for the Sack Lunch at GAUMC. Pray for the Clothing Closet FUMC, Pray for the helpers and those who are helped.

Sunday, June 7 - Pray for Worship Service today.

Monday, June 8 - Pray as we start a new week. Pray that we know we are blessed. Give us patience in haste and peace in stress.

Tuesday, June 9 - Pray for the GAUMC Finance Committee meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, June 10 - Pray for "perseverance" in these trying times. Pray for Bible studies that occur and attenders.

Thursday, June 11 - Pray that we can love our neighbors.

Friday, June 12 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon for the Worship Service.

Saturday, June 13 - Pray that we can tell someone about the love of Christ. Pray for listing ears and soft hearts.

Sunday, June 14 - Pray for the Worship Service today.

Monday, June 15 - Pray for strength and reflect on this Bible verse *"But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength."* 2 Timothy 4:17

Tuesday, June 16 - Pray for all the ladies of Linda Circle at Grand Ave. Pray for the UMW ladies of FUMC.

Wednesday, June 17 - Pray for the Praise Team who will prepare to play music at Worship Service.

Thursday, June 18 - Pray for the GAUMC Trustees who will meet today.

Friday, June 19 - Pray for the finances of our churches.

Saturday, June 20 - Pray and reflect on this Bible verse; *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11

Sunday, June 21 - Please pray for all the Dads in our congregations this Father's Day. Pray for our Worship Service today.

Monday, June 22 - Pray for the ones in our community who are struggling and need shelter and food. Pray that we can find ways to reach out and help if we are able.

Tuesday, June 23 - Pray and thank God for the many blessings in our lives.

Wednesday, June 24 - Pray and reflect on this Bible verse *"For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."* Psalm 91:11.

Thursday, June 25 - Pray that the gospel will touch our lives and renew our souls.

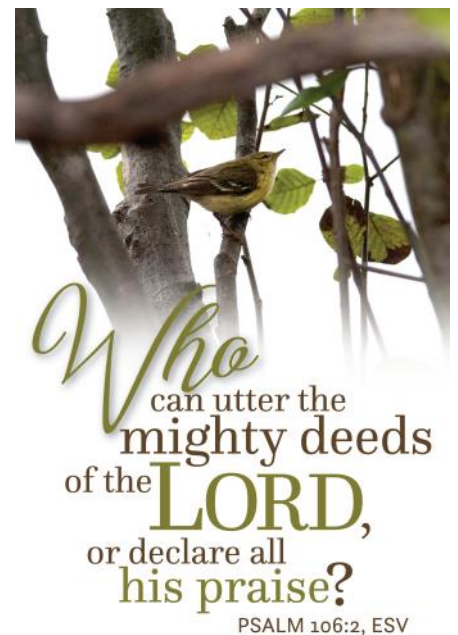
Friday, June 26 - Pray and reflect on this Bible verse; *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, 'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.'" Hebrews 13:5*

Saturday, June 27 - Pray that we can find ways to be a helper in our community. Pray especially for caregivers and first responders.

Sunday, June 28 - Please pray for our Worship Service today. May we hear the word of God and respond.

Monday, June 29 - Pray for those who may be traveling at this time. Pray that they will be safe and well.

Tuesday, June 30 - Pray and think about this Bible verse; *"Now may the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you."* 2 Thessalonians 3:16



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
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Happy Birthday!

First UMC

Donita Roulsten • June 4
Jennifer Guty • June 13
Paulette McFarlin • June 17

Grand Ave UMC

Lorraine Fleming • June 2
Shirley Gutierrez • June 5
Stella Steventon • June 20
Bethany Phillips • June 21
Jessica Hillard • June 24



First and Grand Ave UMC

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.

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.

Phone: 559-784-3791

Fax: 559-784-3798

info@grandavenue.org

www.grandavenue.org

Grand Ave United Methodist Church
776 W. Grand Ave.
Porterville, CA 93257

First Methodist Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-4232

pvfumc@ocsnet.net

First United Methodist Church
344 E. Morton Ave.
Porterville, CA 93257

Announcements

FUMC Wednesday Night Bible Study

The Wednesday night Bible study is on a break for the summer. We will resume after Labor Day.

FUMC Yard Sale

Though we have postponed the church yard sale, we continue to receive items. Please bring all items, large and small, old and new, to First UMC when we are there to receive them. Thank you for your donations!

Help Us Restock!

Many cleaning supplies may only be purchased one item at a time. This makes the process of restocking very slow. Please help us by observing the availability of Lysol spray, disinfectant wipes, liquid hand sanitizer, and liquid hand soap. You would help us by purchasing extra, then donating it to the church. If donating the item would be a financial hardship the church will gladly reimburse you. We thank you for your observant service as we keep one another safe and healthy physically as well as spiritually.

Next Newsletter Deadline

Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at judy.bur87@gmail.com. The deadline for the July 2020 Messenger is **June 18**. Thank you.

Sack Lunch Update

We would love to have your help with Sack Lunch. 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.