



Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave

United Methodist Churches

Porterville, CA

September 2020

Following Jesus Through Uncertainty

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

When I think of uncertainty, I discover different kinds. For instance, I do not know about things which I am uncertain about, like in the past and present. I could come to know them through measurement, research, examination, etc. Then there are unknowns about the future due to randomness, indeterminacy, chance, or luck (some Christ-followers would use the word “providence”).

Common wisdom tells us that people do not like uncertainty, especially about the future, and that it generates a negative emotional response. (Psychologists call this “ambiguity aversion.”) We all deal with this in some way. For instance, we are all going to die sometime, and the odds increase as we age. Most of us do not think about this much, which can be denial but can also be an expression of faith.

The most sobering statement I have read about uncertainty is this, “What we don’t know about Covid-19 will degenerate into ever more intricate conspiracies — some almost believable, some outrageous but all dangerous.”

It occurs to me that sometimes we go through the same process with Jesus. The Bible is very clear that we have a choice and our choices matter yet, God is in control and nothing happens outside the purview of God’s allowance and will. These do not go together well in our brain, but that is the truth of Scripture. No other religion makes such a nuanced argument. The strength of our faith

lies in our comfort with this tension as we strive to be as Christlike as we can be. We should be accustomed to living with uncertainty, but we are not. Uncertainty, for Christians, should be one piece of the “following Jesus puzzle.” However, it seems to hamstring us as much or more than those far from Christ.

In crisis situations — speaking personally — my desire for information exceeds my ability to accurately deliver it. It also exceeds my ability to trust God for the outcome however uncertain that outcome is. Jesus asks me to live beyond my uncertainty and beyond what I would trust most readily in. How do we do this?

We do it just like we confront any other barrier, with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving and humility. We let our requests be known. When we do this the peace of God strangely comes over us. We understand this process as little as we understand the source of our uncertainty, but we know it is true.

That is why I can write to you and say, “I do not know when the pandemic will end, when we will have a vaccine, or when things will return to normal. I do not know if my normal is actually “normal.” However, I do know Jesus as my

Lord and Savior and, therefore, know that anything that happens does so within the boundaries of his watchful eye, powerful hand, and gracious loving kindness — kindness toward me and God’s people, his limitless majesty beckons my praise, adoration, and life in the form of sacrificial living, loving, and service. Of this I am certain, so certain.

I cannot finish this article without thanking you, the Porterville Methodist congregations again. You have continued to give sacrificially and reveal your faith in hidden and evident ways through your patience, consistency, and flexibility with the many changes to which we have had to adapt.

Financially, we are in some uncharted territory and I do wish to be honest here. I feel we are doing well under the circumstances. However, our annual comparisons are not completely rosy. Our giving is down, and this is a trend that cannot continue if we are to survive in the same form. While I do not know what this means in the short term and this does not dampen in any way my gratitude for your present sacrifice, it will inform my conversations going forward. We do not plan to fail but failing to plan ensures that.

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Outdoor Worship Service - Sundays at 8:00 a.m.

Both churches meet together Sundays at 8:00 a.m. in the Courtyard of First UMC. Bring your own lawn chair, Bible, sun glasses and face covering. A video of the Outdoor Service will be available online by Sunday evenings. Videos are posted on grandavenue.org.

Youth Ministry

It is that time of year where teachers are back to work, either from the classroom or their homes, and our youth are in full swing with the school year started. Things are different, to say the least, with teachers and students having to do their best to be successful with teaching and learning distantly. Some teachers have shared the difficulties they are experiencing teaching through an online format separated from the students that are so important to them. Youth have also shared with me their frustrations of being out of the classroom, away from friends, and having to learn distantly and the struggles that come with this way of life. With the tough situations facing our teachers and youth, I find it fitting to use this article as an avenue of prayer lifting up our teachers, parents, and students and their situations to our living God who is merciful and faithful to His children. Let us begin:

Heavenly Father,

We praise you and we love you and thank you for all the blessing in our lives that you continuously produce. It is often easy for us to look around us during these strange and difficult times and focus on the trials and negativity we are facing daily and, in by doing so, we can lose focus of you, and your love, your power, your patience, and the understanding that you are in control when everything seems to be out of control. I pray that through our trials we will be drawn closer into our relationship with you, creating in each of us a perseverance only achieved by your amazing grace at work in our lives. Help us Lord to keep our focus on you during our days when trouble arises and threatens to trample the hope that you have planted in our hearts. May we always remember your love that is perfect in every way. Help each of us to be patient in the work you are doing in our lives and be

confident in your will for each of us.

I lift to you the teachers in our churches and community that are having to learn new ways to teach their students virtually. Please guide each of them as they must make important decisions of how they will share knowledge to the students that are under their care. May they each be filled with encouragement and determination to continue to produce intellectual growth in the lives of their students. Please bless our teachers with an abounding hope in you, Lord, and mercy and grace toward their students and the parents who are also dealing with the new way of doing things. May your loving presence be felt by all our teachers.

I pray, Lord, that the youth in our church and community will be drawn to you and the life you have planned for them. May they stay encouraged during their struggles of being out of the classroom and away from friends and sports. During this time of doing life differently, may each youth excel at their classwork, stay focused on the work that needs to be done, and be confident in the work that you are doing in their lives. May they each be comforted and surrounded by your loving

presence when loneliness attacks their hearts. We thank you Lord, that even though everything around us seems to be changing, you are the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I pray this truth will bring confidence into the hearts of our youth and produce a hope in you that cannot be shaken.

Lastly, we lift to you the parents who are having to face the challenges of helping their children do school and life in a new, and at times, frustrating way. May each parent be blessed with the endurance and perseverance to help their children be the best they can be in these difficult situations. I pray that as parents juggle helping their children with their school responsibilities and carrying on a healthy home environment all while working and doing the countless things that parents do, may each parent be blessed, encouraged, strengthened by your amazing grace to achieve what needs to be done and be filled with hope that is found in you, Lord. We thank you for each parent and the blessings they bring into each of our lives. Amen.

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour

Following Jesus • continued from page 1 by Pastor Tom Buratovich

Make no mistake, we continue to press forward in our commitment to our community. We met with the district who was overwhelmed with hope that we had adopted many of our programs to virtual learning. One district administrator said, "I cannot believe your tenacity! To love our community so much means the world to us and we know we will succeed with folks in our town like you."

She was talking about us! Our churches are loving our community through the many avenues we have

traveled down. We work with kids, teens, parents, the hungry, the naked, the sick, those in mental crisis, and those who need a touch from the Master's hand. How could we not be tenacious? How could we not love our community when we are loved so deeply, so intensely. We serve one to whom we are ravenously beautiful and cherished beyond all good reason and measure. Certain or uncertain, prepared or surprised, in and out of season we are ready. Of this I am certain. I pray you are too!

Faith ... Where is your faith?

In the times of Jesus's ministry, he performed many miracles. In fact, there were so many miracles that the disciples saw daily that I'm sure, after a while, it became common place. They actually woke up each day and expected that Jesus would perform, at least, one miracle that day. Some days, in fact, they saw many. Imagine the amazing unalterable faith that they had in their Savior. Seeing is believing, right? They did see, with their own eyes, every single day so many miracles that perhaps, one may become jaded, so to speak. Jesus performing miracles was expected. They knew he could and would do it. Their faith was more like knowing, now. They knew, I mean KNEW that Jesus could and would perform miracles. Why? Because He is the Son of God, the Savior. He proved it repeatedly. So, the disciple's faith was unwavering. We are talking, solid rock hard, faith. Like we should have. Like Jesus wants us to have. Jesus told his disciples one day that they were going to get on a boat and cross the lake. Those were the instructions. "Take the boat to the other side of the lake." The weather was great. After they got on the boat, Jesus fell into a deep sleep. He was exhausted from ministry. After all, he was human. As humans, we get exhausted mentally and physically. This is the place where Jesus was at. Sheer exhaustion.

The Sea of Galilee, the lake they were crossing, is known for it's sudden ragging storms. Many of the disciples were seasoned fisherman and they knew this. So, it would seem that they would be prepared for the task at hand. But as they sailed, a furious storm came upon them. It seemed that things were happening beyond their control, or so they thought. The waves swept over the boat and as they did, fear consumed the disciples. Most likely, they were in a complete state of panic. They knew they were going to die. So, faith in the Son of God was replaced with fear and utter terror. There was nothing that could be done. Throw up



your arms and die. Wow! We are talking about seasoned fisherman giving up in the middle of a storm and they were with Jesus, who proved to them daily that he was God's Son. That must have been one horrible and terrifying storm. They went to Jesus and woke Him saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

In Luke 8:22-25 it says that Jesus arose and "rebuked" the wind and the raging water. That means, he told the wind and waves forcefully, with sharp disapproval, to stop. Then he turned to the disciples and said "Where is your faith?" And the disciples, who had witnessed many miracles, were afraid and marveled to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the wind and water, and they obey him!" So, they were totally surprised. How can men who walk with Jesus every day be surprised by the wind and water obeying him? Where was their faith? In the storm or in Jesus? Herein lies the question. Where is our faith? We are living in some pretty troubled times right now. It seems like, in January, we got on a boat to sail the calm waters into the New Year and a storm started in February and seems to continually get worse. As time goes on, the storm becomes more fierce, the waves get higher, the wind is raging and we become consumed in everything that is going wrong around us. There are so many issues that have come from this COVID crisis around us. Most of all, I believe, exhaustion. We are all to the point where we want to put it all behind us. We want that world back that we knew, before COVID. We are done with it. So, we just assume that there are 2 choices. We can throw up our hands and just say forget it, ignore it and pretend that nothing is wrong or we can just accept that it is here to stay forever and embrace the fact that the sinking ship is going down. We are lost either way. Where is our faith? Is it in the storm? In COVID?

God can take any storm away, but it doesn't mean that he will. Stormy seas have a purpose. If we lose faith in God, the storm does not fulfill it's purpose. The purpose of having storms in our lives, is to

build our faith. If we truly have our faith in God, this storm would not affect us. We would not be exhausted, fed up, done with the way we are asked to live our lives. We would just do whatever we had to do, because we know that God has got this. In times like these, you either choose faith or fear. Fear brings anger, bitterness, short tempers, jealousy, rage, and more. Faith brings peace, love, patience, comfort, and calmness about us.

As a parent, there are many times that I wish I could take the hardships out of my children's lives. Nothing hurts worse than to see your child going through an awful time and not being able to help them. Sometimes I think and think about how I can make it so they can, maybe, skip over this hardship. But in the end, I realize that this is something that they have to go through, so they can become a better person. It will make them who they will be, when they grow up. Sometimes the best way to help them, is to just hold them. I can't imagine our Heavenly Father feeling any different about us. He sees what we are going through. He knows. But I do believe that this is a storm we have to ride out. Never fear, because He is in the boat with us. Where is your faith?

In closing, I heard a wonderful song that sums this up. Here are some of the lyrics.

*All who sail the sea of faith,
Find out before too long
How quickly blue skies can grow dark
And gentle winds grow strong. Suddenly,
fear is like white water
Pounding on the soul.
Still, we sail on
Knowing that our Lord is in control.
Sometimes He calms the storm, With a
whisper, peace, be still.
He can settle any sea
But it doesn't mean He will. Sometimes
He holds us close,
And let's the wind and waves go wild.
Sometimes He calms the storm
And other times, He calms His
child.*

May God bless you,
Melody Burkhart
Children's Sunday School
Luke 8:25 But He said to
them, "Where is your faith?"



A Gifted and Unique Team

By Judy Lowery

The Chaplaincy Assistants team at Sierra View Medical Center (SVMC) in Porterville California is comprised of four very compassionate and dedicated people: Nancy Castaneda, Juan Ayala, James Rogers and Michael Trimble. They are a well-qualified team having received training from seminaries, chaplain training programs, pastoral care and a variety of past experiences. "Everybody comes from a different place; but together we can minister to almost anyone in the hospital."

Nancy Castaneda's first job was at Sierra View Hospital, as it was formerly called, in the summer of 1964. "I learned to be a nurse's aide on the job, no certification required! Back then our hospital consisted of the one corridor of what is now DP/ SNF and the corridor heading north toward the lab."

She went on to become an RN in 1970 through a Catholic nursing program that emphasized providing spiritual as well as physical care for patients. She has worked in medical/ surgery, home health, case management and hospice. In 2012, while visiting someone in the hospital, she happened to be introduced to the chaplain. As a result of that meeting, a volunteer packet was put into her hand! "God ordered my steps," she said.

Nancy feels that this particular team was brought together for a purpose. "It's wonderful knowing that whatever we walk through, the other three are there to support us."

After attending seminary in Latin America, Juan worked with the Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa and dedicated to helping the poorest of the poor. He served in Los Angeles for several years running homeless shelters and ministering to people on the streets.

When a friend invited him to come to Porterville, he initially

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him." 2 Corinthians 2:14 NIV

worked as an interpreter for laborers in the fields. Later, he took a Psych Technician course through Porterville College. However, in 2013 Juan applied to be a chaplaincy assistant at SVMC.

"God pointed me to Sierra View... Nancy interviewed me!" Comforting people gives him great satisfaction. "I see a lot of miracles every day, God working every day."

Jim Rogers joined the team in 2016. An ordained Presbyterian minister, Jim has served congregations in several states and also as army chaplain. He currently pastors two congregations in Porterville—Foothill Presbyterian and Trinity Lutheran. Two big milestones are coming up in his life this year...a 50th wedding anniversary and retirement!

Jim sees the role of chaplain as one of reminding people that God is present and they are loved. "God goes before me and He's already in tomorrow. He's got it!" And from scripture: "Nothing can separate us from God's love..." (Romans 8:28)

Mike Trimble grew up in Tulare County and now resides in Visalia with his wife of 35 years. After receiving his Master's degree in counseling, he needed to do an internship and looked into the chaplaincy program. He liked Sierra View very much and after being interviewed, was

accepted as part of the team in 2019.

A pastor for thirty-five years, he also currently leads a church in Farmersville. The most satisfying thing for him in the role as a chaplain is at the end of the day knowing he's made a difference in someone's life. "I've fallen in love with it. In my days off I think about this place and can't wait to come back." He, as well as the rest of the team feel, that they have 100% support by the administrative staff of the hospital. The Chaplains Assistants offer prayer and comfort to staff, patients and family members. It has been hard during the pandemic, but "if we can visit or make a phone call or facetime, we will." They believe that their diversity helps them "minister effectively to people..." Diverse yes, but united in their desire to serve the Lord, faithfully bringing love and comfort to those who are hurting.

Nancy, Juan, Jim and Mike spread the sweet fragrance of His love at Sierra View Medical Center and wherever they go. What a blessing!

"Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of yours..."

*Mother Teresa of Calcutta
(1910-1997)*



James Rogers, Nancy Castaneda, Juan Ayala and Michael Trimble

September 2020 Prayer Calendar

Tuesday, September 1 - Pray for the City of Porterville.

Wednesday, September 2 - Pray for the "body & soul wellness" of our congregations during these trying times..

Thursday, September 3 - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare for the Sunday Outdoor Worship service at 8:00 a.m.

Friday, September 4 - Pray for the youth and children of our congregations.

Saturday, September 5 - Pray for the FUMC Clothing Closet.

Sunday, September 6 - Pray for Outdoor Worship Service at FUMC at 8:00 a.m. Please bring your mask, chair and Bible..

Monday, September 7 - Pray and reflect on this Bible verse: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* Matthew 11:28-29.

Tuesday, September 8 - Pray for the GAUMC Finance meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 9 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse: *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* Thessalonians 5:16-18

Thursday, September 10 - Pray for Pastor Tom and the SPRCs as they meet to support our staff.

Friday, September 11 - Pray for all the families who lost loved ones on September 11, 2001.

Saturday, September 12 - Pray for the FUMC as they prepare for Sunday Outdoor Worship Service.

Sunday, September 13 - Pray for the Outdoor Worship Service at 8:00 am. Please bring your mask, chair and Bible.

Monday, September 14 - Pray for God's guidance as we navigate through the week. May God keep us safe.

Tuesday, September 15 - Pray for the ladies of Linda Circle.

Wednesday, September 16 - Please pray and reflect on Bible verse: *"For with God nothing will be impossible."* Luke 1:37.

Thursday, September 17 - Pray for the GAUMC Trustees meeting 1:00 p.m.

Friday, September 18 - Pray as our church leaders plan for the future of our churches.

Saturday, September 19 - Please pray and reflect on the Bible verse: *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows."* Psalm 23:5.

Sunday, September 20 - Pray for our 8:00 a.m Outdoor Worship Service. Please bring your mask, chair and Bible.

Monday, September 21 - Pray for the ones in our congregations who are experiencing physical and mental health issues.

Tuesday, September 22 - Please pray and reflect on Bible verse: *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* Romans 8:18

Wednesday, September 23 - Please pray and reflect on Bible verse: *"In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.."* Psalm 25:1.

Thursday, September 24 - Pray for the ladies of the Women's Bible Study.

Friday, September 25 - Please pray and reflect on Bible verse: *"This is how we know that we live in Him and He in us: He has given us of His Spirit."* 1 John 4:13.

Saturday, September 26 - Pray that we can be a shining light of God's love.

Sunday, September 27 - Pray for the Sunday Outdoor Worship Service at 8:00 a.m. Please bring a mask, chair and Bible.

Monday, September 28 - Please pray and reflect on Bible verse: *"Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses."* Acts 13:39

Tuesday, September 29 - Praise God for the abundance of our blessings to inspire generosity..

Wednesday, September 30 - Please pray and reflect on Bible verse: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."* Colossians 3:15.



There's a space
for you!
Sundays at 8:00 a.m.

We invite you to join us for Outdoor Worship
Sundays at 8:00 a.m. Bring your own chair,
face covering, and Bible.
First & Grand Ave UM Churches, Porterville, CA
Meeting at 344 E Morton Ave in the Courtyard

First United Methodist Church Grand Ave United Methodist Church

Weekday Meetings are via Computer Connection

Sundays In September

Grand Ave and First UMC will meet together for an Outdoor Worship Service Sundays at 8:00 a.m. in the Courtyard of First UMC (344 E Morton Ave)

www.grandavenue.org or

www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC or

www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC

Happy Birthday!

First UMC

Jo Ann Miske • September 11

Ruth Brinkman • September 18

Dorothy Sandberg • September 23

Jean Edwards • September 23

Steve Tarin • September 29

Grand Ave UMC

Gerri Jasper • September 4

Aprille Wait • September 7

Pat Duboski • September 8

Jackie Borges • September 15

Barbara Means • September 20

Shaughn Galloway • September 24



**Outdoor Worship Service
Sundays at 8:00 a.m.**

Grand Ave Staff

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

Grand Ave Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Phone: 559-784-3791

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776 W. Grand Ave.
Porterville, CA 93257*

Announcements

Next Newsletter Deadline

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

First and Grand Ave Yard Sales

We continue to receive items for a future yard sale at both churches. Please continue bringing items to either Frist or Grand Ave. Watch for more information on a sale date. Thank you for your donations!

Outdoor Worship Service



Beautiful Crosses



View the song sheet on your phone



**Hand Sanitizer and
Face Coverings Available**



**Pastor Tom
Preaching**

Sundays at 8:00 a.m.
In the Courtyard of First UMC

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

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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