

# Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave

United Methodist Churches

Porterville, CA

November 2020

## Making All Things New

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

We dole them out with every satisfaction survey we take. We rate the experience from 1-5 stars. 5, being incredibly life-altering to 1 ... barely tolerable.

On the surface, 2020 seems to be headed for a 1-star review – barely tolerable. But is that all? Are we just to assign 2020 to the memory dustbin resurrecting it only as an example of the “worst of the worst?”

I believe that would be a mistake.

Hard times, evil, unpredictable, unprecedented, challenging, painful times all come down on us from every side. Many people have experienced hard times, surprising crisis, immeasurable loss. However, God remains on the throne. His plan remains un-thwarted. He is always on time. And continues to accomplish all things according to God’s good pleasure.

“But Pastor, that might be true but it does not make feel better.” I understand. What if I told you experiencing times such as these are not supposed to make you feel better? They are supposed to help you wean yourself from thinking God is a giver of only positive emotions, successful economic futures, and general well-being. These are definitely a byproduct of serving God, but they are not a guarantee, and they can very easily become an idol of their own.

Jesus asked a lame beggar by the pool of Siloam, “do you want to be well?” The person responded by complaining. The beggar most likely did, but the emotional baggage he had accumulated in his identity as a lame, worthless, dependent beggar had seeped into his soul and impaired his ability to believe that God had a plan beyond his wildest dreams. Is this you?

2020 may be a one star review but it should be a five-star year if it teaches you to depend only on God, depend only on him for your joy, only on him for your peace, only on him for how you would define success and where you would first and only search to feel love, acceptance, and unlimited grace lavishly poured out on a beautiful, Jesus-imagined you. That is the gospel. That is the blessing in the thorn of 2020.

When Jesus told John in Revelation, “Behold, I am making all things new.” He described what he was doing and what he was not doing. He is not starting over, not junking the old, not worrying how broken the present is, but He is simply at the work of renewing

everything. There is *nothing* that will not be made new.

I say this because 2020 can easily become the year most of us want to forget ASAP. Do not do that! Instead, dive deeper into your faith and into the local church that needs you to apply your faith to reaching our community.

In what ways can you do this? You can explore membership if you have not. You can explore baptism. You can explore discovering your spiritual gifts. And then experiment by getting involved in trying different things. That is the quickest way, the most direct course.

Presently, Tulare County’s Covid numbers continue to improve. Despite this, we will more than likely remain outside for the remainder of the year. We are beginning to plan for Christmas Eve already. A 4:00 pm courtyard candlelight Christmas Eve service will be a new experience for the books. I am looking forward to it.

We will record a Service of Remembrance for those who would benefit from this experience. Many of us have suffered a lot of loss and

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***Outdoor Worship Service - Sundays at 10:00 a.m.***

**Grand Ave and First meet together Sundays at 10:00 a.m. in the Courtyard of First UMC. Bring your own lawn chair, Bible and face covering. A video of the Outdoor Service is available by Sunday evenings on [www.grandavenue.org](http://www.grandavenue.org).**

# Youth Ministry

I have vivid memories of my childhood that have stayed with me throughout the years. One of my favorites is of riding around with my dad in his old Buick. It was summertime, there was no air conditioner in the old car which should have been retired and put out of its misery a long time ago, and we were going around town running errands. With the windows rolled down and sweat on our brow, we enthusiastically would sing a song together called *A Father's Love* by George Strait. We would sing loud and off tune, occasionally looking at each other, smiling all the way through the song. To this day, every time I listen to that song, I get flashbacks of me and my dad, and I love it. It is such a simple memory, yet one of my favorites.

Looking back on that memory, I wonder why it is so special to me. Was it the song that I liked so much or possibly the musician? Was it singing that made me happy? I think not. I believe the reason that memory has been planted firmly on my heart is because of who I was with, my dad. In that moment, as we smiled and sang together, I had the realization that there was no other father in the world like him because he is mine. Being with my dad, having his full attention on me, knowing that we were together and that he loves me was so powerful in its impact on my life that it still touches my heart to this very day, many years later.

Many of us have memories from our childhood that have stayed with us as we have grown into adults. Many of these memories are happy ones, but some are not so happy. Regardless, the love, attention, and actions of a parent has the power to affect each of us from birth to death, positively or negatively. Proverbs 22:6 instructs us to, "*Start children*

*off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*" I look back at my childhood and I am grateful for the love I was given and the positive attention and encouragement I received from my parents. Their example of love to me and my brothers has been a staple in our relationships with them that continues to this day. My parents were not perfect, but no parent is. Parents make mistakes just like everyone does at times. But, recognizing those mistakes and learning from them has been a trait I have witnessed in my parents and this has blessed me with guidance as my wife and I are beginning our new journey from husband and wife to mom and dad.

My wife and I are expecting our first child to be born this

November. After eight years of prayer and hope, we are now going to be parents. My wife's due date is Thanksgiving Day, which is fitting since we are so thankful for the opportunity to be parents to a daughter. I am excited, nervous, joyful, scared, curious, and eager about being a new dad, which I hear is normal, but it sure does not feel normal. My wife is super excited as well and I know she is going to be an awesome mommy. I look forward to creating memories with my daughter that will stay with her throughout her life as the memories I have of my parents have stayed with me. And I know that my daughter will be one of a kind, because she will be mine.

God is Love,  
Ryan

## Making All Things ... • continued from page 1 by Pastor Tom Buratovich

find the holidays sluggish with unprocessed grief in our hearts. A time to acknowledge that grief in a safe place is very helpful and cleansing. It allows the healing power of the Spirit room to do the work needed.

We will continue to plan and unfold those plans in a way that helps us implement wise programming. We should be prepared for anything.

We will continue to plan ministry with a clarity of vision, A vision that invites us to welcome all into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. To do this we must move out into our community. Our movement must be outward otherwise we will default to inward focus which will accelerate decline and the decline

of our influence and impact on our community. as we move out our message must always be the Gospel, of Jesus Christ crucified for us and risen that we might have eternal life now and secured for us in eternity. This will focus our intentions, our methods, and our response.

Please join me by giving the hope we have in Jesus working within us and among us a 5-star review, even if 2020 gets one star. Let us not forget how God worked to form and prepare us for something greater.



# Casting The First Stone

I have been listening to a lot of News lately. Something that is not my favorite thing to do. I really don't care for the News because it is all so depressing. Most of the time, all you hear is bad news. Very rarely, do you hear something good. It's like they actually go out and just find the worst things to report, because that is what sells. Negativity. One could almost believe that when people have good stories, the News tells them that their stories don't meet the criteria for the News.

With this year being an election year, the same thing has happened with the Candidates. Bringing out the bad in someone else, is what you need to do, to make yourself look good, at election time. Kind of crazy, if you really think about it. With that kind of behavior from our leaders in the Country, what example is being set for all of us. I think we all know. I'm seeing this behavior trickle all the way down to the children.

In this unique year, that seems to be filled with surprises, it seems that anything that could ever possibly happen, is happening. I have been watching and listening to people take sides with the election, Black Lives Matter, and with other officials all the way from judges to health officials. Also taking sides for and against Counties, States, Governors, and the list goes on.

It is so sad, as I have been seeing a lot of people, I know, show a side of themselves that I have never seen before. I have seen anger and accusing. Arguing, and a lot of, "my opinion is the only one that matters", type attitudes. I have seen people actually ending long friendships over their opinions. Forcing others around them to choose between the friends.

This behavior is being carried down to the children. Accusers have brought out a parent, an uncle, an aunt, a teacher, and made children decide, based on the accuser's facts, who's side they should be on and

suffer the consequences because of their choice.

Of course, this is not something new that is happening. It has been happening all along. Though, it seems, that it is happening at an alarming rate, lately. Whatever came of "He who has no sin may cast the first stone." It seems to me that all I see are stones flying like crazy, all over the place.

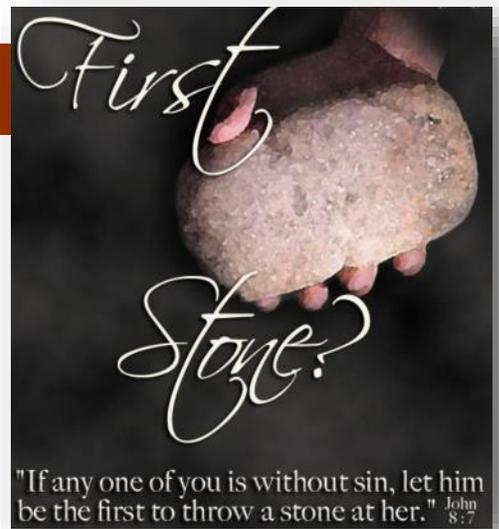
After Jesus was crucified, the Disciples were forced to take sides. Accusers were everywhere, trying to find anyone who was with Jesus. The Disciples had to deny knowing him and go into hiding or risk being killed. Their whole world was in an uproar. "Lots of stones flying around."

Things were quite the same for Jesus. The Pharisees were always trying to set Him up. They tried their best to find "dirt", so to speak, about Him. They challenged his knowledge of the law and used devious tricks to try to get Jesus to slip up. But to no avail.

In one such instance, Jesus was at the temple. Many people came to Him; and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Him who had been caught in the act of committing adultery. This sin was punishable, in Mosaic Law, by stoning to death. They told Him this and asked Him, "But what do you say?"

You see, they were using the woman as a trick. According to the law, both the man and woman committing this sin should be stoned and they did not arrest the man and bring him with them. They also did not produce any witnesses of this act. A witness would begin the execution.

All they wanted to do was accuse Jesus of making a mistake. They did not care anything about this woman. But if Jesus said the woman should not be stoned, they



would accuse Him of violating Moses' Law. If He said execute her, they would report Him to the Romans, who did not permit the Jews to carry out their own executions.

Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger, almost as if He did not hear them. They kept pressing Him. They wanted Him to answer. He stood and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." He then stooped down and wrote on the ground. One by one, from the oldest to the youngest, her accusers left, until Jesus was alone with the woman. Jesus stood up and when He saw they were alone asked her, "Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus replied, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Jesus was the only one who could condemn her and He chose not to. Instead, He chose to look ahead to His work on the cross and show her forgiveness.

From this story, we learn that we do not accuse others unless we first thoroughly search our own hearts and minds to make certain that we are pure in every aspect. We should use every possible opportunity that we have to show forgiveness and reach out to others in love. Showing kindness in every act that we do. Always remembering that we, too, are sinners in need of the Savior.

May God Bless you.

Melody Burkhart

Children's Sunday School

# Great Is Thy Faithfulness

By Judy Lowery

*“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope; because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness...The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.”*

Lamentations 3:21-23, 25 NIV

**M**y husband, Al, was attending a meeting when someone admired the leather hat he was wearing. “Thanks!” he said. I like this hat! It’s old and beat up, like me!”

Al definitely has an affinity for his outback hat, one that has accompanied him on many adventures and shielded him from the elements. With several visits to doctors, three surgeries and one procedure this summer, I can understand why he’s feeling beat up—like his hat! It has been a challenging summer.

After having a successful shoulder joint replacement, weeks of therapy to gain strength back in his shoulder muscles and the surgical removal of skin cancer on one ear, a blockage of the left carotid artery was discovered.

Rather than opening up the artery by using a stent, the doctor recommended removing the blockage surgically. That required an overnight stay in the hospital after the surgery so that his vital signs could be monitored in case of blood clots or a stroke. I was very glad when the call finally came to go back and see him for a few minutes in the recovery room.

He was alert and awake, but could hardly speak above a whisper. The nurses in the recovery room thought that it was due to his being intubated in order to receive oxygen and that it would improve in a short time.

Later that afternoon, a friend of our family happened to be walking down the hallway when I recognized her and called out her name. She, a

speech therapist, came in to visit with us. Upon hearing Al’s whisper, she advised him to see an ENT (ear, nose and throat) doctor if it didn’t improve in a week.

It was the Lord’s timing that she happened to walk by Al’s room, because otherwise he would have waited, expecting his voice to come back, without realizing that he needed to see a specialist. As it turned out, when he did make the appointment a few weeks later, the ENT doctor discovered nerve damage to be the cause, preventing his vocal cords from opening and closing properly.

The doctor told Al that there was a temporary procedure he could do to inject gel into the vocal cords, plumping them up so that they would open and close. This necessitated another trip to the hospital, a different hospital from the previous time and once more I sat in the surgical waiting room, counting the minutes and praying.

Later I went to the store and bought a white board with dry erase markers so that we could communicate while he followed the doctor’s orders...absolutely no talking for two days! That was quite a new experience for us. The house was sure quiet!

While the procedure did not produce the immediate results we were hoping for, it did help. He now speaks above a whisper, but still requires attentive listening on the part of those to whom he is speaking. No more talking to each other from different rooms!

This has been a frustrating time for him however, as he does



Al and his favorite hat.

like to talk and has always enjoyed singing. He will soon start sessions with a speech therapist, not with our friend who works at the hospital, but hopefully with someone who can give him encouragement and pointers on strengthening his voice.

The verses above were written by one of Israel’s prophets, Jeremiah, during a time of sorrow and distress. Jerusalem had been overrun by the Babylonian empire, burned, ransacked and many of its citizens taken away as captives. Jeremiah’s future as well as the future of the nation looked bleak.

Beat up? Yes! Defeated? No! Jeremiah’s hope was in the Lord, whom he knew loved him and would be with him no matter what happened.

Does life beat us up? Sometimes yes! But it doesn’t have to beat us down. God is faithful!

*“Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father, There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not; As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.”*

(Thomas Obadiah Chisholm, 1866-1960)

Have a blessed Thanksgiving!  
Praising God for His mercy and compassion,

For more information, please visit  
[www.goodnewswithjudy.blogspot.com](http://www.goodnewswithjudy.blogspot.com)

# November 2020 Prayer Calendar

**Sunday, November 1** - Pray for the Worship Service that starts at 10:00 a.m. at FUMC starting today. Please bring an outdoor chair and face covering.

**Monday, November 2** - Pray that we know God is with us as we go through this week.

**Tuesday, November 3** - Pray that we can read and reflect on Bible verse, Colossians 3:15: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."*

**Wednesday, November 4** - Pray for the online Bible study that will be led by Pastor Tom from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. today. For a link to the zoom meeting, please email Pastor Tom - tburatovich@gmail.com.

**Thursday, November 5** - Pray for the ones of our congregations that are ill or are rehabilitating. Pray for strength and recovery.

**Friday, November 6** - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare for Sunday Worship Service.

**Saturday, November 7** - Pray for the 10:00 a.m. Clothing Closet at FUMC.

**Sunday, November 8** - Pray for the Outdoor Worship Service at FUMC. Starting time 10:00 a.m. Please bring outdoor chair and face covering.

**Monday, November 9** - Pray for Ryan Ridenour, Youth Coordinator at GAUMC. Pray for him as he prepares lessons and reaches out to the youth.

**Tuesday, November 10** - Pray for the GAUMC Finance Committee meeting at 6:00 p.m.

**Wednesday, November 11** - Pray for the Veterans' and their families this Veteran's Day.

**Thursday, November 12** - Pray and read Bible verse 1 John 3:18 *"Dear Children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and truth."*

**Friday, November 13** - Pray today that God will fill us with the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

**Saturday, November 14** - Pray and read Bible verse Micah 7:8: *"Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me."*

**Sunday, November 15** - Pray for the Outdoor Worship Service at FUMC that begins at 10:00 a.m. Please bring outdoor chair and face covering.

**Monday, November 16** - Pray for our community of Porterville.

**Tuesday, November 17** - Pray for the ladies of Linda's Circle.

**Wednesday, November 18** - Pray for the online Bible study that begins at 10:00 a.m.

**Thursday, November 19** - Pray for the GAUMC Trustees Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

**Friday, November 20** - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes the sermon for Sunday Worship Service.

**Saturday, November 21** - Pray for FUMC as they prepare for the Worship Service tomorrow. Pray for the coat drive at the Porterville Welcome Center at 9:00 a.m. May the homeless be warm!

**Sunday, November 22** - Pray as we come together for the Outdoor Worship Service at 10:00 a.m. at FUMC.

**Monday, November 23** - Pray for the ones of our congregations who will be traveling this week. Pray for safety.

**Tuesday, November 24** - Take a moment today and pray for faith, hope and love for our church families.

**Wednesday, November 25** - Pray and reflect on Bible verse 1 Thessalonians 5:18: *"give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

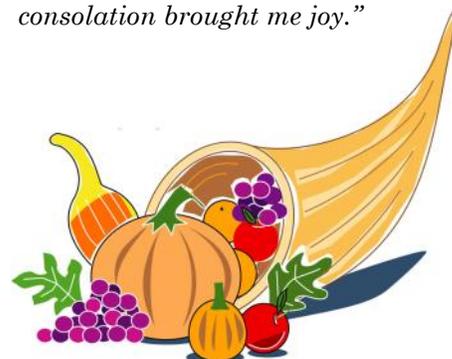
**Thursday, November 26** - Pray for a grateful and thankful heart this Thanksgiving Day. Thank God and think of your many blessings.

**Friday, November 27** - Pray and reflect on this Bible verse: *"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."* Proverbs 16:9.

**Saturday, November 28** - Pray and thank God for His amazing, unconditional love.

**Sunday, November 29** - Pray for the Outdoor Worship Service at FUMC at 10:00 a.m. Please bring outdoor chair and face covering.

**Monday, November 30** - Pray and read Psalm 94:19: *"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy."*



# Announcements

## First United Methodist Church Grand Ave United Methodist Church

*Weekday Meetings are via Computer Connection*  
Grand Ave and First UMC will meet together for  
an **Outdoor Worship Service Sundays at 10:00  
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

Joe Mitchell • November 11  
Dave Hammelmann • November 18  
Frankie Feldman • November 25  
Susan Mankins • November 26  
Gayle Hammelmann • November 27

#### Grand Ave UMC

Elon Wright • November 7  
Rodelyn Smith • November 8  
Dorothy Anderson • November 15  
Nancy Nevels • November 26

### Wednesday Morning Zoom Bible Study

All are welcome to join Pastor Tom on Wednesday morning 10:00 –11:30 a.m. for an online Bible study via zoom. Please email Pastor Tom for the zoom link information, tburatovich@gmail.com.

### Charge Conference

Our Annual Charge Conference for both First UMC and Grand Ave UMC is Thursday, November 5. A video report time will be available at a later date.

### Clothes for the Needy

The First Methodist **Clothing Closet** is open on the first Saturday of every month. We are open November 7 at 10:00 a.m. for those in need. Greeters and volunteers are welcome to help distribute and engage visitors. Social distancing and face coverings are required.

### Next Newsletter Deadline

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

### Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

This year our Christmas Eve Service will be outside in the Courtyard of First UMC at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 24.



**Outdoor Worship Service  
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.**



**In the Courtyard of First UMC**

#### 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*