

Bellringer

Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church

September, 2015

From the Pastor's Desk

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

2 Peter 3: 18 (NIV)

September is a very important month in the life of many congregations. Some people say that it is the real beginning of the church year. After all, Sunday school returns. Ministry teams and committees get busy. Choir and Hand Bell Choir resume. The local schools and colleges are now in session, and that clearly impacts the church. Attendance often rises as people are no longer vacationing, except for special occasions. Usually, church giving starts an upward spiral that continues to the end of the year and planning for our 2016 church budget begins. And of course, we start the preparations for our annually Church/Charge Conference.

As Pastor, I get excited for the opportunities we have as a church to grow in our spiritual lives as we enter into the church calendar year. In this month of September, I want to reflect with you in the words of the Apostle Peter and how we are encouraged by the scripture to grow as Disciples of Christ.

The word **"Grow"** means *to increase, to augment*. Growth is not an event; it is a process. Salvation is an event, but growth is a **process**. When I reflect on this scripture, I see that the word "grow" is a command. It is not an option. I believe that as Christians we are to keep on growing. Now this process of growing takes a double direction, one is to grow in **Grace** and the other is to grow in **Knowledge**. Both the grace and the knowledge have a connection with **Jesus Christ**. So, that's the goal! To grow Jesus Christ in Us! Now, the question is: How do we grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ?

I believe and affirm that the Church is the instrument that God uses to provide the resources that can help us to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ. Here at Church, the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism are administrated in worship. Christian education for all ages takes place, Sunday school and small groups that can help us grow in Christ are provided.

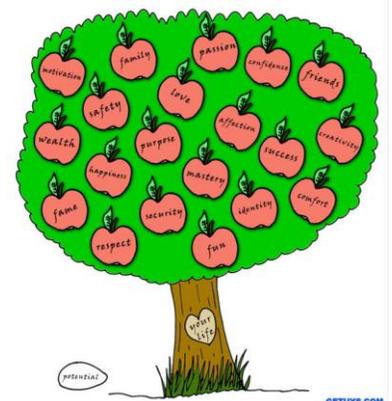
I know that nowadays in our culture, we have so many activities during the weekdays and even on Sundays that prevent us from attending to Bible studies, Sunday school classes and other activities that our congregation offers to grow. But we need to work on keeping balance in our life. It's like when you work on doing exercise. Do you work out physically but rarely work out spiritually?

If we are going to grow, it must be our passion. It cannot be something that we give attention just once a week. We need to work at becoming more spiritually mature. This is not something that comes naturally. We never fully arrive at perfection in the Christian life, but if we continue to grow, we will never be static either.

I invite you this month of September to make plans to grow your spiritual life, to come with your family, friends, relatives and coworkers and join a Bible studies, Sunday school class, the choir, or any other small group of our congregation.

Come Grow with Us!

Your Servant in Jesus Christ, **Pastor Rafael**.



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Divine Direction by Veronica Berry

“If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible for you.”

Matthew 17:20

As our summer is ending, most of us are beginning to prepare for more structured days with more meetings, obligations, and responsibilities. It may feel as if fun-filled and relaxed moments have to be pushed aside to make room for hard work and new accomplishments. We want to do what's right but we are torn between honoring that child-like joy of spontaneous adventure, and buckling down to be totally immersed in our projects, to-do lists, meetings, and responsibilities. It's as if we are standing on a scale with one foot up, totally unbalanced. We know something is a little off, but since everyone seems to operate this way, we silence that child-like joy to seriously take care of business. We assume we can't do both, inwardly feeling as if something is missing, constantly searching for that spark of fulfillment.

How do we find balance? How can we go through life inwardly standing with two feet on the ground honoring our total selves? I've learned to ask God for guidance before any important decisions, new changes, and new ventures. I also ask him to help me find balance so I can be my authentic self in every meeting, every encounter, and in every situation. I have faith in his divine direction. I know that I don't have to see the entire path before I start because God will guide every step of my journey. I've also learned that he created me with everything I need to walk solidly on my path, so I don't have to deny my child-like joy in order to take care of business.

I have a horrible sense of direction. When I go somewhere new, I have to really focus on landmarks along the way to remember the path and even then I can get turned around and get lost. When I feel myself beginning to panic, I stop, focus on God, and ask him to lead the way and guide my steps so I'm no longer lost. He always has led me in the right direction. It's such a relief to let go of the need to try to memorize every detail or landmark along the way. Now when I face new changes, I try to see it as a new path. I know God has my back; all I have to do is ask for his help.

We were created to be whole balanced unique individuals who love God, ourselves, and each other. We don't have to deny the spontaneous joyous adventure we allow ourselves to experience in the summer in order to become the responsible serious project immersed individual in the fall. With God's divine direction we can find the courage to bring new ideas to meetings, add spontaneous joy to our projects, and tackle our to-do lists in a different way with a new sense of adventure. We also realize that in order to restore our well-being we need to take time to relax so we can be revitalized to accomplish new things. We don't have to silence a part of who we are in order to meet our responsibilities.

We don't have to live an unbalanced life.

Asking for God's guidance and following his directions will always help us find our way. With a little bit of faith anything is possible.



Christian Education Opportunities

Early Adult Sunday School begins at 8:30 each Sunday. The group is currently discussing “Twelve Women of the Bible”, a study which will help us see how God changed the lives of twelve biblical women. On September 20th the group will begin **The Story**.

Sunday School for All, beginning at 10:45 each Sunday will resume September 20th.

Wednesday Bible Study begins at 4:30. The group is currently studying the *Gospel of John*. Lisa Bobo is the study leader.

A new **Wednesday Bible Study** will begin September 23rd at 6:30. This group will study **The Story**. Patsy McDonald is the study leader.

The Youth Group meets Wednesday and Friday. Please check the Bellringer and Bulletin for activities, topics and times.

All of the above groups will begin a new study called **The Story** beginning the week of September 20th. **The Story** is a dynamic, powerful, and rewarding experience. **The Story** helps people experience Scripture in a new way. Carefully selected verses from the Bible are organized chronologically and written in the form of a novel from Genesis to Revelation. This study is for all age groups and a great opportunity for families to study the Bible together.

Anyone interested in joining any of these studies is welcome at any time. Please contact Patsy McDonald if you have any questions.

The Story

A new Bible Study program, called The Story, will begin the week of September 20th. In preparation for the study, please offer up prayers for our Church using the Prayer Guide that is included in this Bellringer.

The Story is a Bible that reads like a novel. There are no verse references, and Scripture segments are seamlessly woven together with transition text into a single grand narrative. **The Story** helps people understand God’s Word more fully and interact with it more easily.

The Story is a tool to increase Biblical literacy, helping readers understand God’s story from Genesis to Revelation and how their own stories intersect with God’s.

The Story Church-wide study is a unique program providing up to 31 weeks of curriculum for children, teen and adult Sunday school programs. When accompanied by reading through the five age-related books (*The Story*, *The Story: Teen Edition*; *The Story for Kids*; *The Story for Children*; and *The Story for Little Ones*) the entire church can be literally on the same page for 31 weeks. This is a wonderful opportunity for families to study the Bible together.

Classes will begin the week of September 20th. Classes will be held on Sunday at 8:30 and 10:45, and on Wednesday at 4:30 and 6:30. Bible material will be provided. If you would prefer to have a small group study outside the church building, please contact Patsy McDonald.

Come and experience The Story.



Stephen Recognition In the spirit of the Book of Acts

*"Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word."
Act 6: 3-4*

Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church Certificate of Appreciation Presented to Lisa Bobo

In recognition of volunteer service to our church for co-coordinating the Craft and Direct Sales Fair and Ham Dinner, and being a Bible Study leader, and working on committees for the Church Anniversary Party, Conference In-gathering and our website.

We hope this certificate will serve as a lasting memento of our appreciation for your continued and dedicated service.
In the name of God, Thank You!

Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church is pleased to announce the introduction of an electronic option for making regular offerings. Contributions can now be debited automatically from your checking or savings account. Our new electronic giving program offers convenience for you and much-needed donation consistency for our congregation.

If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. And, when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, this program will allow your weekly offerings to continue on an uninterrupted basis.

An authorization form and a "Frequently Asked Questions" flyer are available from the church office.



United Methodist Women

United Methodist Women invite you to join them, on Tuesday, September 1st at 6 PM, in viewing the PBS Frontline documentary, "Firestone and the Warlord". The documentary reveals how Firestone Tire conducted business during the brutal Civil War in Liberia. Light refreshments will be available. This film is not suitable for young viewers.

CONNECTIONS BY CRAIG MYRBO

We connect through study of scripture to "Do the Word".
This is part of the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice Scripture study relating to workers.

Being Doers of the Word: James 5:4 *by Reverend Jerry Folk Evangelical Lutheran Church of America*

"Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts." James 5:4

Christian teaching often gets caught up in abstract philosophical speculation, losing contact with concrete situations and circumstances. This tendency to interpret Christian faith in abstract philosophical categories appears from time to time already in the New Testament, particularly in books influenced by Hellenism like the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul. In the book of James, however, there is none of this speculation. James addresses very concrete, down to earth concerns in a very practical way, one reflecting a more Jewish than Hellenistic way of understanding Christian faith.

Some scholars believe this is because the book was written by a Jew to a Christian community made up of Jews at a very early time in the history of Christianity—perhaps as early as the 40's CE. At that time almost all Christians were Jews and Christianity understood itself and was understood by others to be a sect of Judaism. Other scholars suggest that James expresses himself in such a Jewish manner because he is using the frame of thought and sometimes the very language of another Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. For example there are many echoes of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in this Epistle. The main theme of this book, "Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves" (James 1:22), is an important theme in that sermon and throughout Jesus' ministry, second in importance only to his emphasis on the compassion, mercy, forgiveness and love of God. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells the crowd, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." And in Mark 3 he says, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Whatever the reason for the Jewish manner in which James expresses himself, it makes his book particularly useful in addressing the issue of worker justice in the Church and the world.

What is the will of God? Both Jesus and James make it abundantly clear that for them "Doing the will of God" does not mean primarily engaging in religious rituals and activities, supporting religious causes, or subscribing to the proper beliefs with the hope of getting to heaven. For them doing the will of God means trusting in God, loving kindness and doing justice here on earth, in this life. That is what God requires of us.

There are many ways to practice justice on earth, but perhaps none is more important than ensuring that workers, that is people who make their living through physical or intellectual labor, are respected and treated justly, since the vast majority of people in the world fall into this category. James and many other biblical authors, including the Hebrew prophets, believe that all workers have a God-given right to a just wage, safe and humane working conditions, and time for life with their families and friends; that they have a God-given right to a life of dignity with some measure of comfort and security.

How can politicians and corporate boards who exploit workers to advance themselves or improve the bottom line for their stockholders claim to be practicing justice or doing the will of God? And how can those of us, who fail to oppose corporate or public policies that deny workers this God-given right or try to take it away from them when they have it, claim to be doing justice or serving God, no matter how religious or charitable we may be, no matter how loudly and publicly we piously say "Lord, Lord?"

In the end, of course, the point is not to write or do a Bible study. At best that's a first step that will motivate us to act. And that's the point—to be Doers and not mere hearers of the Word.

Prayer:

Fill us with your tender mercy and awaken in us a love of justice. Make us doers of the Word, not hearers only. Give us courage to speak the Truth, as we are given to know it, boldly and humbly in the Church and the world, that justice may roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. We ask this with confidence, for we know that you are gracious and the Lover of humankind. Amen

School begins on September 1, 2015

Back to School Prayers are requested

PRAY FOR THE STUDENTS

- that they might gain wisdom (a Godly application of knowledge)
- that they might receive the fruit of the Holy Spirit's including *self-control*
- that they will seek guidance of mature adults
- that their parents and godly adults become richly involved in their lives
- that they gain perspective that many "problems" in school are not the biggest problems they'll ever face
- that there is an atmosphere of peace for them to study at school
- that they involve themselves in healthy extra-curricular activities like sports, clubs, and jobs

PRAY FOR THE PARENTS OF THESE STUDENTS

- that they might be good examples of maturity and problem solving
- that they would be involved in the lives and decisions of their children
- that they would set healthy limits for their children
- that they would be involved in PTO and School Board decisions
- that Colossians 3:20 & 21 would be fulfilled, "You children must always obey your parents, for this is what pleases the Lord. Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying." (see also Ephesians 6:1-4)
- that the fifth commandment be fulfilled, "Honor you father and mother." (Exodus 20:12)
- for home schooling parents and students to excel

PRAY FOR TEACHERS and BUS DRIVERS

- that school boards look beyond politics to secure safe places for our children
- that teachers are respected by students and parents
- that teachers work together and trust one another and the administration
- that bus drivers are respected, drive safely, and maintain order on their buses
- that they might live up to Romans 12:8, "If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously."



that was easy.

September 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Need A Prayer? Call Pat Bruccoleri (576-7331) or Cvdv Hoffman (513-2280)		1 9:00 ELL 6:00 UMW	2 4:30 Bible Study 6:00 Band Practice	3 New Office Hours begin for Thursdays 11:00 am - 3:00 pm each week	4	5 5:00 Men's Group
6 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense	7 Labor Day	8 9:00 ELL 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:30 Trustees	9 4:30 Bible Study 6:00 Band Practice	10 6:30 Choir	11 6:00 Hmong Ministry 6:00 Youth Bible Study	12
13 Multi-Cultural Day 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Multi-Cultural Worship and Potluck 6:00 Self-defense	14	15 9:00 ELL 6:30 Admin Council	16 4:30 Bible Study 6:00 Craft Night 6:00 Band Practice	17 6:30 Choir	18	19
20 UMW Sunday 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:30 Youth Breakfast 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 3:00 Cadette Troop	21 5:00 Newsletter Deadline 6:15 Brownie Scouts	22 9:00 ELL 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:30 Outreach & Missions	23 4:30 Bible Study 6:00 Band Practice 6:30 The Story Bible Study	24 8:00 Copy & Fold 6:30 Choir	25 6:00 Hmong Ministry 6:00 Youth Bible Study	26
27 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:30 Blood Pressure Clinic 10:40 New Member Class 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship	28	29 9:00 ELL	30 4:30 Bible Study 6:00 Band Practice 6:30 The Story Bible Study	Mark Your Calendar! Ham Dinner October 3rd		

**Please take a moment
to remember our
homebound members
Contact Lisa in the office for
current addresses: 244-0868**

Linda Jungbluth
608-274-4350

Marvel Mapes
608-663-8783

Jean & Justin Kramer
608-268-9114



September Birthdays

JENNIFER N	9/12
DAWN N	9/12
LISA B	9/16
GINNY S	9/24
SANDRA L	9/24
JERRY T	9/29

September Anniversaries

JUDY & GARY K	9/1
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These are the dates that are in the database. If you find that your name is not included with the Birthdays or Anniversaries, please call Matt Treadaway

Multicultural Sunday

There are sign-up sheets in the narthex for needed committee help for Multicultural Sunday on September 13. Take a minute to think about what you would like to do to help out. Your commitment and efforts will be greatly appreciated.

Also in the narthex is a sign-up sheet for the Potluck following the service. Sign up to bring a dish to pass that represents where you come from, who you are or would like to be, or even a dish inspired by memories of travel. I ask for this in advance so I can fill in or round out the meal as needed.

If you or someone you know would like to share a talent or craft regarding your heritage please contact Carol 834-0282 or hermansencarol@yahoo.com.