



Forecasting

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

Luke 14:28 (NIV)

At the edge of the present experience lies the great unknown—the future. All our choices, experience, predictions, skill, and talent give us a rough estimation of what will occur, yet the actual future remains in the present a mystery, an unknown.

However frustrating the unknown can be, we realize that part of the work of God is the opportunity to trust Jesus with our whole life with the unknown. In my own life, I have seen the greatest light emerge from the darkness of the unknown.

Before the pandemic I moved around freely in the community. I taught in-person classes with parents, kids, and educators. I visited people in assisted living homes, even led a monthly Bible study at Sierra Hills.

Since the pandemic began, all this is gone. It is not my preferred future yet God is at work amid these odd circumstances to bring about the results according to His good pleasure. Do you believe that? Do you somewhere think deep down that the pandemic surprised God,

caught Him off guard? No, no, not for a minute!

It is easy to forget when we encounter crisis. This why we celebrate Lent, a season to reconnect with the sovereignty of God, His mysterious grace, and His glorious bounty.

The season of Lent invites us to go from ankle deep water into the deep blue mysterious depth of **God’s presence, love, and grace.** From Wednesday, March 2, until Easter Sunday, April 17, we can leverage the season of Lent to apply the disciplines of the Spirit to ask God to assist us in becoming people we could not otherwise become.

Lent: A Short History

When we leave on a journey we must know where we are going. We plan a route to reach our destination. Thus, with Lent which is a spiritual journey with the destination of Easter. It is the preparation for the fulfillment of the Easter Revelation, the center of the Christian life and essential to our understanding of Jesus and his plan for humankind.

In the early church new converts were instructed in the foundational tenants of the

Christian faith. These people were to study theology, Christology, to give witness to the faith within **them and to practice “disciplines of the Spirit.”** These activities included study, evangelism, fasting, meditation, and solitude. The converts were baptized on Easter Sunday.

Over time, the practice was commended to the whole church as a preparation time to celebrate the resurrection in the same way that we celebrate the return of Jesus. Therefore, we have devotionals. We have different routines. We attempt to unlearn the false constructs of the world and the falsehoods of the Evil One sowing doubt in our minds.

We will begin the journey on Wednesday, March 2. I invite you to come to the FUMC and attend our self-guided **“Journey to The Cross.”** It will be available from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. At 2:00 p.m. we host a Centering Prayer session in the Lobby

Communion

We will serve communion every other week during the Lenten season which will be on Sunday, March 6, 20, and April 3. Easter Sunday, April 17 will consist of

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“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4: 7-8

The month of February often stirs up thoughts within me of roses and chocolates and cute personalized cards. This is understandable because this is the month where many of us will make an extra effort to show our love through gifts and outings to the special people in our lives as we celebrate Valentine's Day. I've always been a fan of Valentine's Day since I was a child, often looking forward to waking up and receiving a card and candy from my mom and then going to school and giving cards with small pieces of candy in them to my friends. It is a beautiful act to show your love to someone who may not realize how important they are to you.

From a young age, I came to realize that when someone takes time to express their love for you, it produces within the recipient of that love a unique sense of joy and hope. I believe love produces joy and hope because when we share love with someone, we are sharing the very essence of God with that person, and we know that where God is, there also will be joy and hope. We read in 1 John that God and love are intertwined together. You cannot have one without the other. Where love resides, God is there. **God's very being is love. God is Love.** This is profound because of its implications. If we purposely choose to not love someone for whatever reason, we are missing out on the opportunity to share God with them. When we purposely make the decision to love others, we are actively sharing God with them through our actions. We were created to love God and are commanded to love our neighbor. For clarity, I am not writing about romantic love, but instead a love created within us by centering our lives around God.

With this understanding, it makes me wonder why we only have

one day a year that is focused on showing love to others. Each day of our lives we should make an effort in how we speak to people, treat people, and help people to express **God's love to them. Of course, we are human, and mistakes will happen, and we will have moments where we don't show love the way we know we can and should.** Thank God for His amazing grace when we fall short, and we all fall short at times.

I pray that the love of God will resonate deep within each of our hearts and lead us to love one another endlessly with patience and endurance. May God forgive

**Love one another,
for love comes
from God.**

1 John 4:7



us when we don't love accordingly and guide us to forgive those who don't love us. Each day we wake, may it be a day where we choose to love, choose to help those in need, and choose to show grace as grace is given to us. **Happy Valentine's Day** to you and yours.

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour

Grand Ave UMC Trustee Happenings

The Trustees are currently looking for a church member to fill a vacancy on our committee. If you feel led to serve in the decision making process regarding the maintenance of our campus, have a talent for fixing things, or just want to be more involved at church we would love to have you. We currently meet the third Monday of the month at 10:00 a.m. via zoom. Please contact Ray H, 559-202-9010, or the church office for more info. *"Many hands make light work"* -English Proverb

Playground Maintenance/ Vandalism/ Future

There will be short meeting on Sunday, February 6 after the service at Grand Ave to discuss the future of our playground and we ask for your input this topic. Some of the issues to be addressed: Vandalism, closing or moving the playground, updating our equipment, alternate uses for the area, the memorial value of the area, is it a Ministry?, the effect on our neighbors, legal ramifications, up keep and maintaining the site, Porterville PD recommendations, etc. Please attend and provide your ideas to help the Trustees make wise and thoughtful decisions. Please contact Ray H or other Trustees with questions. Feel free to submit written suggestions if you are unable to attend the meeting.

Campus Cleanup

The Trustees at Grand Ave ask for the Congregation's help to clean and maintain some of the areas of our campus. We were blessed in the past to have several members go above and beyond in providing many services after having to downsize our staff. While they continue to help we feel that there are areas that could use extra attention. We will compile a list and ask members to sign up for a specific week to volunteer with some simple housekeeping items. Further information will be available soon.



Thank You and God Bless, *Ray Holdsworth* for the Trustees

Fear Not

February, the month of love is upon us. I actually really love celebrating **Valentine's Day**. It is one of my many favorite holidays. I believe that it is a good thing to remember all of the people we love on **Valentine's Day**; even though it is normally a day that couples celebrate. Couples buy flowers, jewelry, chocolates and cards with love notes written in them.

Have you ever thought about the fact that the Bible is actually **"love notes" from our Heavenly Father** to us? Kind of interesting, that before we ever thought of writing love notes to each other, that He wrote them to us.

Everything that we need to know is in the Bible. How to live a good life, to gain wisdom, to be strong spiritually, is all written in the Bible, along with His commandments for us. Love notes.

God has given us **commandments or "love notes"** on how to be happy. One of these **doesn't sound like a "love note" but it really is**. It is something that is repeated many times in the Bible. **"Fear not."** This actually makes you

scared when you read it or hear it, but it is actually said in love, by God. It is not meant to invoke fear. It is a wonderful reminder for us to keep our faith fed, not fear.

Our Heavenly Father knows who we are and that fear is a constant that will try to creep into **our daily lives**. "Am I good enough?"

"Will I get the new job?" "Am I going to find someone to love me?" "Will I ever get well?" These are just a few of the many things that trickle through our minds. God also knew that Satan would use these questions, and many more, to his advantage. With these questions, Satan brings in doubt, despair, hopelessness and FEAR. **Fear that we aren't good enough. That we won't get the job or someone to love and that there is no way we will escape the illness.** So, ultimately Satan gets what he wanted. Us to doubt God. This is exactly why God left us this special **"love note"**, this special **commandment. "Fear not."**

God says in Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not, for I am with you, be not



... fear not,
for I am with you;
be not dismayed,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you
with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Now that is one of the most beautiful "love notes" I think I have ever heard from a loving Father to His child. Something that any parent would say to their child. Written for us, in the Bible. Our own special Valentine's "love note" from our loving Heavenly Father.

Blessings,
Melody Burkhart
Children's Sunday School



Ash WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday, March 2
at First UMC self-guided
"Journey to The Cross."
available 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

2:00 p.m. join us for a Centering
Prayer session in the Lobby
of First Church.



Easter SUNDAY

Easter Sunday, April 17

Sunrise Service
6:30 a.m. at Murray Park

Easter Worship Service
One combined service at
First Church at 10:00 a.m.

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two services, the first at 6:30 a.m. at Murray Park behind the public pool. This sunrise service is a wonderful tradition for us and our city. The second service is at First Church at 10:00 a.m. Activities for the children are in process.

We plan. We pray, we fast. We sing. We do all we can to prepare for the future yet only God hold the perfect plan according to His good pleasure in the palm of His hands. Let us lean into knowing Him and loving Him at the risk of being swept away by an unexpected future.

“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.” Proverbs 3:3-4 NIV

Names! Our names carry great significance throughout our lives—they identify us, shape the image we have of ourselves and influence how others respond to us. Having a **“good name” is often synonymous** with having a good reputation.

For young children, getting used to a name can take some time. My cousin Larry came home from kindergarten with the report that **there was a “dumb kid” in his class** who never raised his hand when the teacher called his name.

“Well, what was the kid’s name?” his mom wanted to know.

“It’s Lawrence.”

“Larry, that’s your name!”

Revelation! The next time the teacher took roll, Larry knew when to raise his hand!

Our son-in-law was named William Christopher; however, his family always called him Chris or Christopher. When asked to give his first, middle and last name at school, young Chris responded, **“Chris Topher Sachs!” Very Logical!**

The names William and Christopher together paint a **picture of someone who is “a resolute protector, a person of strong will, a warrior of Christ.”** That is the person he has become for his wife and four children.

How did his parents know when they were picking a name for their newborn? How does anyone know? And yet our names do define us.

In my second-grade classroom one morning, a little girl named Patty beckoned me over to her desk. She pointed to the lunch menu for Tuesday and said, **“Look Mrs. Lowery, they’re having me for lunch on Tuesday—pork patties!”**

Then we both broke out laughing. **It’s always exciting to see one’s name in print, even on a school lunch menu!**

Once when volunteering at the Sierra View hospital gift shop, I approached a young lady who stood at the rotating display of key rings and asked if I could help her. The key rings were arranged from A to Z, each bearing a common boy’s or girl’s name.

“Oh,” she responded, “You won’t have the one I’m looking for. I’ll never find it.”

“Well, what is it?” I asked, thinking maybe it could be ordered.

“It’s ...and she said something like... “Abicity”

“Would you please spell that?”

“A-B-C-D-E!!!” she responded

I tried hard not to laugh. “Well that certainly is different!”

“If I have a girl, that’s what I’ll name her. And,” she went on to say, “if I have a boy, I’ll name him XYZ!” (pronounced “Exwazy”) Most unusual! But it does make sense, especially if the girl was the first and the boy was the last of her children!

Like so many folks who bear the names of their parents, grandparents or other family members, my younger brother was named James and now goes by **“Jim” just like dad. Our sister, Jan, was the third child in the family in keeping with the “J” theme.**

When the twins came along, we got to help choose their names... **a boy’s name and a girl’s name, starting with the letter J...** Jack and Jill! Needless to say,



Jack and Jill took some teasing from their classmates during their years in school.

I’ve often wondered if my middle name, Lynn, was given because of the ending of my mom’s name, Madolyn, or due to the influence of my dad’s famous football coach from Cal Berkeley, Pappy Lynn Waldorf. They always assured me that it was from mom’s name, but it was spelled like Pappy Lynn’s.

The names Judy, “praise,” and Lynn, “free flowing,” have often served as reminders to be grateful. Now to let praise flow from me **freely and genuinely...what a wonderful way to live. What a wonderful way to bring glory to God!**

As Christians we bear the name of Christ, which is both an honor **and a responsibility. Is Christ’s character expressed in our daily lives? In who we are or are becoming? Are we living the way He would have us live, in love and faithfulness?**

If we make it our goal to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves, the proverb quoted above promises that we will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. A good name, a good **reputation, favor...from living a life of love, from being found faithful.** Help us Lord!

February 2022 Prayer Calendar

Tuesday, February 1 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Ephesians 4:2 *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient bearing with one another in love.”*

Wednesday, February 2 - Pray for the Online Bible Study via Zoom at 10:00 a.m. Email Pastor Tom tburatovich@gmail.com for link.

Thursday, February 3 - Pray for all the prayer group leaders and participants.

Friday, February 4 - Pray for healing and strength for those in our churches who are ill or who are rehabilitating.

Saturday, February 5 - Pray for our community of Porterville.

Sunday, February 6 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services at GAUMC 9:30 a.m. and FUMC Porterville 11:00 a.m.

Monday, February 7 - Pray for Melody and Ryan as they make plans for the children/youth of our churches.

Tuesday, February 8 - Pray for all the church committees members who will be making decisions for our churches.

Wednesday, February 9 - Pray for the Online Bible Study via Zoom at 10:00 a.m. Email Pastor Tom for information.

Thursday, February 10 - Pray and read Bible verse 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”*

Friday, February 11 - Pray for the musicians as they prepare for Sunday Worship Services and share their talents with the congregations.

Saturday, February 12 - Pray **for the Greeters’ who will welcome** all to Sunday Worship tomorrow.

Sunday, February 13 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services at GAUMC 9:30 a.m. and FUMC Porterville 11:00 a.m.

Monday, February 14 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Psalm 143:8 *“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.”*

Tuesday, February 15 - Pray and read Mark 12:30-31 *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second (Commandment) is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”*

Wednesday, February 16 - Pray for the Online Bible Study via Zoom at 10:00 a.m. Email Pastor Tom for information.

Thursday, February 17 - Pray **and read 1 John 4:9** *“This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.”*

Friday, February 18 - Pray for our church families.

Saturday, February 19 - Pray reflect on Bible verse Romans 12:10 *“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”*

Sunday, February 20 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services at GAUMC 9:30 a.m. and FUMC Porterville 11:00 a.m.

Monday, February 21 - Pray we will know that God is with us as we encounter different situations through out the week.

Tuesday, February 22 - Pray and read Ephesians 3:16-17 *“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being.”*

Wednesday, February 23 - Pray for the Online Bible Study via Zoom at 10:00 a.m. Email Pastor Tom for information.

Thursday, February 24 - Pray that today we can praise God for our many blessings.

Friday, February 25 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes the sermon for Sunday Worship Services.

Saturday, February 26 - Pray and **read Romans 5:8** *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Sunday, February 27 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services at GAUMC 9:30 a.m. and FUMC Porterville 11:00 a.m.

Monday, February 28 - Pray and **reflect on 1 John 4:16** *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”*

Wednesday, March 2
Ash Wednesday self-guided stations at First Church 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Centering prayer at 2:00 p.m. in the lobby of First Church.





First UMC

Emma Burkhart • February 1
 Wyatt Burkhart • February 1
 Sharon Fisk • February 17
 Barbetta Narin • February 18
 Marilyn Schaffer • February 26
 Beverly Farquharson • February 26
 Deborah Hutchinson • February 28

Grand Ave UMC

Kyle Wright • February 2
 Rodel Lipumano • February 7
 Elaine Jenne • February 8
 Paige Borges • February 12
 Charlotte Crawford • February 23

Walking Devotions

Each Tuesday and Thursday short 2-3 minute devotion videos are posted on each church Facebook pages.

www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC
www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC
www.grandavenue.org/walking-devotions

Sunday Sermons

Sunday Sermons are on the website
www.grandavenue.org. Check it out.

Announcements

Clothing Closet at First UMC

Clothing Closet is open by appointment only in February. Contact Ann for further information 559-920-0977.

Next Newsletter Deadline

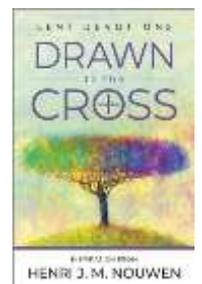
Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at judy.bur87@gmail.com. The deadline for the March 2022 Messenger is February 20. Thank you.

Tithes and Offering

Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of First UMC and Grand Ave UMC.

Lenten Devotional

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2. This season we have a Lenten devotional available for you. Pick up a Lenten Devotional booklet at either church any Sunday in February.



Easter Sunday • April 17

6:30 a.m.
 Community Sunrise Service
 at Murry Park

10:00 a.m.
 Combined Easter Worship
 at First UMC



Grand Ave Staff

Senior Pastor • Rev. Tom Buratovich
Director of Youth Ministries • Ryan Ridenour
Children's Director • Melody Burkhart
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
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