

Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave
United Methodist Churches
Porterville, CA

June 2021

Next Stop?

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

Have you ever ridden Amtrak? One benefit: the driving is left to someone else, and you are free to pursue other tasks besides driving. I have read it is also greener.

I love when approaching the next stop, they announce, "Approaching (our next stop) in five minutes." You know where you are. Church members might enjoy such an announcement. What is our next stop? Where are we going? Well, I cannot tell you definitively where we were going but I can tell you what the leadership is working on and what are compass heading is.

Our denomination is headed for a redistribution. The results will more than likely be 2-4 separate denominations. The process is complex, and the reasons are many. More importantly what does this mean for us?

Undoubtedly, many things, some relevant, others less so. I will expand on the relevant.

Our Methodist denomination will look very different. General Conference will occur in the spring of 2022. The result could mean one denomination will become two, perhaps three or as many as four. We will be one of those. More than likely the most conservative one theologically.

There are many things this will change but many will not. It will not change our commitment to love and follow Jesus, love and serve his

people, invite and transform our community. None of that will change.

We will continue to study the Scripture and use our study of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason to form the best expression of what we believe the Bible teaches, and to what God calls us.

You may have also noticed Vida Nueva UMC worshiping in Fireside room in May. They needed a place worship and have done a wonderful job giving witness to the gospel and caring for the facility. They will continue to worship with us through the summer. We are thrilled to possibly have them join our VBS.

The Conference will not require protocols after June 15. Does this mean the end of masks, social distancing, and no-touch worship experiences? Maybe. Instead of the Conference, we will be required to look to the county CDC for direction. We expect them to open up Tulare County but we will need to wait until June 15.

Again, thank you for your patience as this process has been relentless. We hope the Lord has taught you, patience, endurance, and perseverance.

We continued our Bible study on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. In June we will start a series on 1 John. We hope you will join us.

Our county opening up depends on us doing our part to ensure that we are safe enough to do so. That means getting vaccinated and being flexible when you are in the presence of vulnerable people. Our desire to love one another, and mandate to practice this lifestyle compels us to do all we can to help those in need.

We exist to invite all into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ to serve our God by serving our community. That is why we are a church. His vision guides us - to know Jesus the one the Father sent. To seek to know him better and to look for him in the eyes of our lost brothers and sisters. We wish to help them find a way.

It is so good when we know where we are going. Our next stop is closer to seeing Jesus face to face than before. I hope that motivates you to do all you can to help us get there.

**Sunday
Worship Services
Grand Ave • 9:30 a.m.
First UMC • 11:00 a.m.**

Children's Sunday School
at both Services
Bring your face coverings.

Youth Ministry

Throughout my life, I have been blessed to have multiple positive male role models influence me in awesome ways. These men, through

their actions and words, showed me the effectiveness and impact of healthy male figures in the life of children, youth, and even adults.

Now as a father myself, I can clearly see the value of these men and the role they played and continue to play in my life. This, I am grateful for, especially this month of June as we take time to recognize and celebrate fathers and men who have blessed us in so many wonderful ways.

My dad is an amazing man. Growing up, he did all he could to provide a healthy atmosphere for my brothers and I. We didn't have much money or a big fancy house with cool cars, but we did have dirt bikes and time. We had lots of fun outings with our dad from playing sports, which he often coached our teams, to fishing and going to the mountains together. Of all the fun things we did together as a family, riding dirt bikes was by far our most favorite activity. We would go to different family members' homes and ride in the fields until we ran out of gas and were exhausted. It was some of the most memorable times of my childhood.

Looking back, I confess one activity I looked least forward to was going to church on Sunday morning. That may shock you, but it's true. It wasn't that I disliked church, in fact I really liked church and seeing all my friends. The

problem I faced as a youngster was the mentality that if I was at church, then I wouldn't be on my dirt bike. As an adult, this sounds

silly, but for a child it makes sense. Children will focus on what they want, not what they need. I wanted to ride my dirt bike every waking hour because that was a desire I

had, but I needed to be at church because that was where I would be shown the true desire of the human heart, which is Jesus. I am grateful for all the Sunday mornings that my dad made me go to church and for him choosing the desire for his children to know Jesus over us children's desire to have fun.

I look forward to the moment I get to buy Presleigh her first dirt

bike and spend valuable time with her like my dad did with us boys. Even more importantly than any worldly item or activity, I have grown to see the importance of bringing my daughter to church so she can experience Jesus as I did. My dad established a much needed foundation within me of knowing and understanding the importance of learning about Jesus and surrounding myself with like-minded believers. This foundation which has rooted deep within me from an early age has continued to be a staple in my life, and I pray the same will happen for my daughter.

I want to say a big thank you to my dad and all the male figures in my life that played a role in guiding me on the path to Christ, helping me develop Christian principles and showing me that the love of Christ conquers all. Happy Father's Day to each and every one of you!!

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour



VBS

July 15 & 16
9:00 to 11:00 a.m.
At Grand Ave UMC
Sunday Program on July 18

Come make a huge splash with us at Grand Ave as we dive deep into our faith and discover the unwavering love of God. First & Grand Ave are combining efforts for an under the sea experience like no other. Contact Melody or the church office for registration information.

Can't wait to sea you!

A Light in the Darkness



It was a dark and stormy night. The wind was so fierce and strong that the cold felt like it went through you. The night was pitch black, without the moon and stars. It was so dark, that it was as if a giant hand was stifling out every hint of light.

The rain pelted anyone who dared set foot outside. The water crashed down on everything with a torrential force. It showed no remorse for anything in its path of destruction. This was definitely, the big one.

The thunder roared and boomed like an angry caged lion. So intimidating, that even the lightning did not dare to show itself. The wind was fierce and everyone sat in the darkness, that enveloped the whole town. Not a single light could be seen anywhere. And the darkness reigned.

Everyone felt lost. They didn't know where they could go to find light, so they just sat in silence and waited, in the darkness. They waited and waited, for what? No one knew, but it was all they could do.

After what seemed like hours, the rain slowed to a steady pace. But still darkness prevailed and the whole town felt lost. So, they waited.

In one of the homes, a family sat in front of the window staring outside into the Black Sea before them. A void that seemed to consume them. Suddenly, the youngest girl jumped up, pointed and exclaimed "What is that?"

Way off in the distance, there was a white orb that seemed to dance

up and down to the rhythm of the pouring rain. They stared at it and were mesmerized with how the orb seemed to bounce up and down and to the right and left. All of them watched in amazement, as it seemed to get closer and closer. Excitement welled up in their souls, as they started to realize that this wonderful white little orb was giving them something so precious, sight. With each second, the orb got closer and it began to transform into a beam of light. Glee filled their hearts, as they watched in awe as the light pierced through the darkness. They could make out the forms of trees, cars, and other homes. As the beam of light reached their porch, they saw that it was a man with a flashlight.

He knocked on their door and called out to them. "Hello! Can you open the door? I'm here to help you."

They excitedly opened the door. The man asked, "Is everyone ok?" As he moved inside the doorway of the house. He shone his flashlight to the left and to the right to survey the situation. Then reached his hand to the wall and flipped on the light switch. Instantly, the house was filled with a magnificent light that comforted their souls. The family was amazed. The man looked at them and asked, "Why are you all sitting here in the darkness? Why have you been hiding your light, that you so desperately needed? All you had to do was flip the light switch on. Come, let's bring light to the others."

As they all moved together through the town, they were able to provide light to everyone. Soon the whole town was filled with lights everywhere. The people were so happy and their hearts were filled with gratitude. They were so thankful for the ones who shone their light to help them.

Are we hiding our lights and

maneuvering through the darkness. Are we lost and looking for our light? Or are we just waiting, in our own darkness, for someone to save us. Hiding our own light, not using it, saving it?

Or are we sharing our light with others, by bestowing them with the beautiful gift of Jesus, so that they may have a light of their own? Are we, as Christians, showing through our day to day actions, our lights for others, who are lost in darkness? Showing them how a Christian should live? Being an example, of the teachings of Jesus?

If we are just waiting in the darkness to be saved, the Savior has already come. He has already saved us. Jesus already stood on our porch and gave us our light. We just have to choose to use it. Others are waiting for us to use our light to save them from their darkness. They are waiting for the chance to know Jesus through us. By shining our light for them. We need to make sure that every day, the bushel is not covering our light. Others are waiting in the darkness for us, for their first glimpse of hope. Let's all shine our lights.

As the song says "This little light of mine. I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."

May God be with you and your family!

Blessings,
Melody Burkhart

Children's Sunday School

Sunday School at Church

9:30 a.m. at Grand Ave

11:00 a.m. at First UMC

Children begin in the service with their family and are excused about 15 minutes into the service for their own class. During May the children will meet outside for their Sunday School lesson.

Blessed by the Best

By Judy Lowery

“Here I am! Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.” Revelation 3:20 NIV

One of our grandsons has begun playing tennis on a combined team of students from two neighboring middle schools. It was special that Al and I were able to attend the first match of the season and the first match ever for Nate.

On a beautiful sunny afternoon, Al and I met up with mom Shanda and many others to support all of the kids who were playing. Nate was going to be playing doubles, unfortunately on a court that was far from where we were sitting. We couldn't see what was happening very well but could keep track of the game score cards hanging on the edge of the court.

He hadn't played with his partner previously, who claimed to have a weak serve.

Although it was a lop-sided match, Nate didn't seem too disappointed by the loss and thought that maybe the coach would spend time with his partner working on serving the ball before the next team match.

Nate's coach spoke to both boys afterwards for quite some time. He was wearing a visor, white warmup suit and mask. The jacket and mask were emblazoned with capital letters, “BBTB.”

“What do those letters mean?” I asked a parent curiously.

“Blessed by the best!” she answered.

There had to be a story behind that slogan. Since he was busy coaching, I decided to inquire about it in an email:

“My husband and I attended the tennis match on Tuesday (April 13) to support our grandson. We were pleased with the way all of the kids played and especially your

professional way in coaching them. We both started out as Jr. High school teachers and know how much energy it takes...lots of fun but challenging at times too. So, thank you!”

Then I went on to ask about the story behind the letters BBTB. “Someone shared that they stand for ‘Blessed by the best!’ How encouraging for the kids! It also has helped me this week to be thankful for the many blessings I have, knowing that ‘every good gift is from above...’ (James 1:17)”

“I write a weekly newspaper column called “Good News!” for the Religion page of the local newspaper in our hometown of Porterville, California. Your slogan would be nice to incorporate into one of the articles. I try to share how God is living, active and what He is doing in my life and in the lives of others too. An email would be fine, when you have a minute... (hard to find I know) or you can call me at my home phone number...”

It was a surprise when the phone rang later that evening. It was Coach Hall, who not only coaches the middle school boys' team, but also coaches the girls' team, works at a tennis and golf shop, sells tennis rackets and is a teaching pro at the club in our neighborhood.

“And I'm retired!” he added.

He obviously loves tennis; however even greater than that is his love for Jesus. When the coach happened to overhear someone on his wife's daily “prayer line” use the expression, “Blessed by the best,” it caught his attention.

“Hey, can I use that?” He

asked the woman.

“Sure,” she answered. “It doesn't belong to anyone. Use it!” The phrase stuck with him and for years he has used it on his correspondence to team parents and when talking to his students. Picking up on that, former players and friends have gifted him with different items bearing the letters BBTB, including the mask and jacket.

His slogan seems appropriate for the team this year, encouraging the students by reminding them that to him, they are the best and that they are a blessing. And it also is a good reminder for those who know him to be grateful for the blessings God has given them.

Coach Hall likes it because it's a great discussion starter...especially when people ask, “Well, who is your best?” Evangelism on the tennis court!

Thanks, coach, for putting so much time, energy and enthusiasm into the lives of young athletes. Thank you for living out your faith on and off the courts.

What a joy it is knowing Jesus and walking with Him along life's journey! Truly, we can say that we are “Blessed by the Best!”



June 2021 Prayer Calendar

Tuesday, June 1 - Pray for the teachers and students as they enter Summer Break. Pray for all of the graduates who will enter a new chapter in their lives.

Wednesday, June 2 - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

Thursday, June 3 - Pray that we can reflect on the Bible verse: Proverbs 11:25 - *A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

Friday, June 4 - Pray for the ladies of Linda Circle as they have the Grand Avenue Yard Sale today and tomorrow.

Saturday, June 5 - Pray for the Clothing Closet workers and attenders as they seek to give witness to the Gospel by providing clothes and hopes to those in need.

Sunday, June 6 - Pray for Sunday Worship Service. Worship Service at GAUMC starts at 9:30 a.m. Worship Service at FUMC starts at 11:00 a.m.

Monday, June 7 - Pray that God will help us this week as we maneuver through different situations.

Tuesday, June 8 - Pray for all of the church committees who will meet this month.

Wednesday, June 9 - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

Thursday, June 10 - Pray for our church families today.

Friday, June 11 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon for the Sunday Worship Services.

Saturday, June 12 - Pray for the Greeters who will welcome all through the church doors.

Sunday, June 13 - Pray for Sunday Worship Service. Worship Service at GAUMC starts at 9:30 a.m. Worship Service at FUMC starts at 11:00 a.m.

Monday, June 14 - Pray for the ones from our churches who are ill and rehabilitating. Pray for strength and healing.

Tuesday, June 15 - Pray and reflect on John 8:12 *"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world, Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"*

Wednesday, June 16 - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

Thursday, June 17 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse 1 Peter 5:7 *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because he cares for you."*

Friday, June 18 - Pray for the Porterville Community today.

Saturday, June 19 - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare for Sunday Worship Services.

Sunday, June 20 - Pray for Sunday Worship Service. Worship Service at GAUMC starts at 9:30 a.m. Worship Service at FUMC starts at 11:00 a.m.

Monday, June 21 - Pray that we can reflect on bible verse Matthew 7:7 *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."*

Tuesday, June 22 - Pray and reflect on 1 Corinthians 13:1 *"If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it*

keeps no record of wrongs."

Wednesday, June 23 - Pray for Melody and Ryan as they prepare activities for the children and youth of our churches.

Thursday, June 24 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he does the Walking Devotions on Tuesdays and Thursdays that can be viewed on the website and on Facebook at Grand Avenue UMC and Porterville FUMC.

Friday, June 25 - Pray for the ones of our churches who are travelling. Pray for safe travels.

Saturday, June 26 - 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

Sunday, June 27 - Pray for Sunday Worship Service. Worship Service at GAUMC starts at 9:30 a.m. Worship Service at FUMC starts at 11:00 a.m.

Monday, June 28 - Today, pray for all the many blessings in your life.

Tuesday, June 29 - Take a moment and spend time in nature if possible and pray and thank God for his beautiful creation.

Wednesday, June 30 - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

Need Prayer?

Both churches have people who come together to pray. One prayer meeting is Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. Please call Pastor Tom or Ann White to be included in the prayer meeting. Let's make 2021 the year of constant prayer!

Pastor Tom



JUNE Birthdays

First UMC

Donita Roulsten • June 4
Paulette McFarlin • June 17

Grand Ave UMC

Lorraine Fleming • June 2
Shirley Guttierrez • June 5
Stella Steventon • June 20



Announcements

Church Yard Sale

Grand Avenue Missions Yard Sale

Friday, June 4 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Saturday, June 5 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Donate, Shop, Help - Contact Lenora for more information 559-942-0995. After the yard sale help is needed boxing up the remaining items.

Clothing Closet at First

The FUMC Clothing Closet is **Friday, June 4** from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. This change has been made to accommodate those who may be working on Saturday mornings. Help is needed on Friday evening. please call Ann at 559-920-0977 for more information. We will continue to be open by appointment as needed.

Wednesday Online Bible Study

The Online Bible Study meets 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. each Wednesday. We are beginning a new study on I John in June. All are welcome to join us. Contact Pastor Tom for a link to the zoom online meeting, tburatovich@gmail.com.

VBS

Our combined VBS is July 15 and 16 • 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. at Grand Ave this year. Please contact Melody or the church office for registration information.

Next Newsletter Deadline

Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at judy.bur87@gmail.com. The deadline for the July 2021 Messenger is **June 20**. Thank you.

First United Methodist Church Grand Ave United Methodist Church

Weekday Meetings are via Computer Connection

www.grandavenue.org or
www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC or
www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC

View Past Worship Videos on Vimeo
<https://vimeo.com/grandavenueporterville>

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
Organist • Donita Roulsten
Children/Custodian • Melody Burkhart

Grand Ave Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

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