

Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave
United Methodist Churches
Porterville, CA

Striking an Asteroid

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

October 2022

The Double Asteroid Redirection Test mission, or DART, will assess the viability of smashing a spacecraft into and deflecting an asteroid to one day protect Earth. The stunt-like experiment looks like an unorthodox frat boy prank but is actually a quite straightforward test that could save our lives one day.

DART is planning to make impact with Dimorphous, an asteroid circling a larger asteroid called Didymus. It presently takes 11.9 hours for Dimorphous to make a complete orbit around Didymus. What the experiment hopes to achieve is to slow the post-impact orbit of dimorphous to roughly 11.8 hours.

Why would this indicate success? If you slow the approach of an object on a collision course with the earth, you allow earth to move out of its way as the approaching object draws near. The further away the object, the less you need to slow the approach to miss our planet. This is long-range crisis management at its best!

Did you know Jesus asked us to practice long-range crisis management as well? In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus told his sleeping disciples, *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”* Anticipating temptation, Jesus says, is the best anti-aircraft or incoming airborne temptation is to watch and pray. We watch with our heads are up and we

our eyes open to discern our world and all around us. This is the content of our prayers. This is the basis on which we cry out and plead for His hand to move.

The apostle Peter told us, *“If you suffer for what is right you are blessed. Do not fear their threats do not be frightened”* threats get our attention and invoke an emotional response that causes us to become hyper focused on the threat rather than the goal.

The Christian life, the church, our impact in the community, all compete within impact trajectory of our time, and attention. To realize this competition, this covert conflict for our attention is to implement long-range crisis plans for our spiritual growth.

Temptations that we may have long ago succumbed to can now be effectively preempted. We can curb those appetites long before they become irresistible. We can apply the word of God by watching, praying, realizing that to endure is to keep our eyes on Jesus who ran the race for us and with us to win a crown of glory.

James also wishes his readers to be concerned about long-range crisis management when he said, *“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go ... spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist*

that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, ... say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

James is careful to not condemn his readers’ activities. Rather, he is condemning their presumption. It is not our actions that will be the source of our temptation. It will be the presumption that those actions have their source in our own greatness and ability to self-engineer our success.

Make no mistake, we do want to exert effort in reaching the poor, families, the homeless, those on the margins, the married, unmarried, divorced, the sick, the mentally ill, the elderly, and the countless other groups that God’s Spirit draws us to with cords,

But it is not through your greatness, your effort, brains, or genetics that will allow us to accomplish these things. It will be the Lord that wills it according to His good pleasure. God will build His church, build us, our programs, and our future in ways that we cannot presently imagine. This doesn’t mean we should not try to imagine a preferred future. However, to hold too tightly do it is to perform crisis management in a vacuum which the Bible would describe as “chasing after wind.”

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“Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me.”

Psalm 66:16

Last month we discussed the importance of understanding our identity, particularly our identity in Christ. We discovered how our identity in Christ positively effects the outcome of our personal goal choices in our daily life. We also learned that when our identity in Christ is established, our whole focus changes from a worldly perspective to a Christ centered perspective, resulting in a healthy outlook for personal goals. Now, I believe the next step for continuing our growth in identity in Christ is to have a solid understanding of our own personal testimonies and a willingness to share them with people in our lives.

Believe it or not, if you have accepted Jesus into your heart and surrendered your life to God, you have a story the world around you is desperate to hear. A personal testimony is your Jesus story; how you came to know Jesus as your Savior and how Jesus has changed and blessed your life. A personal testimony is a powerful tool that God blesses His children with to accomplish victories for His kingdom. The biggest hang up believer’s experience when discovering their personal testimonies is the incorrect belief that their personal story of redemption is not a powerful one. An unfortunate ordeal that us humans deal with deep in our hearts since we were children is comparison. We compare our lives with others to gauge our level of looks, success, and joy, among other things. We see this issue in most areas of our lives, even when it comes to our personal testimonies.

Some people have the negative notion that since they may not have experienced a tragedy in life or haven’t had a life altering addiction or possibly faced insurmountable odds and the end result was triumph through salvation in Jesus Christ, their story is simply not powerful enough to share. This is completely false.

When someone comes to the realization that the only way to true salvation is through repentance and putting their faith in Jesus Christ, and they make the choice to accept Jesus as their savior, a new life begins. All sin is forgiven, blessed with a clean record before God. The angels of God fill with joy by the act of a person’s repentance. Heaven itself awaits your entry when the Lord calls you home. You are now a child of God. And these blessings are not only for those who have heart wrenching testimonies, but for all people who accept Jesus.

We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So, you see, your story is a big deal and it’s worth sharing. The truth of the matter is that there is someone in each of our lives who will benefit from you sharing your personal testimony with them. Are you willing to do so?

I encourage each of you to take some time this month to sit down in a quiet place and write out your testimony. If you’re not sure how to write it, follow this simple structure: what was your life like before Jesus, how you met Jesus and why you accepted him as your Savior, and how is your life after having Jesus as your Savior. Yes, it is that simple, yet the words you share are profound and will bless those who hear them because of what Jesus has done for you. Your story matters and I hope to hear it soon. Blessings!

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour

Striking an Asteroid **continued from page 1** *by Pastor Tom Buratovich*

We need to hit the asteroid. We need a firm, strong impact that allows us to touch lives in immeasurable ways with the gospel love of Jesus. We should seek to plan deeply, and try to forecast, and pray for sunny days, a breeze at our back, and favor among all people. But we know that each moment contains within it the potential to simply be available to the Lord in a way that gives us a sacrament of present moments that connect each other to culminate in seasons of grace.

We will move into the fall season which contains many activities that allow us the opportunity to give witness to all that Jesus has given us. We will stuff shoeboxes, decorate cars at Trunk or Treat, donate turkeys, give coats to the coat-less, cheer for children as they present the Christmas program.

May we all endeavor keep our eyes on Jesus as we aim for the big impact on the asteroid that may save many lives!

Break The Cycle

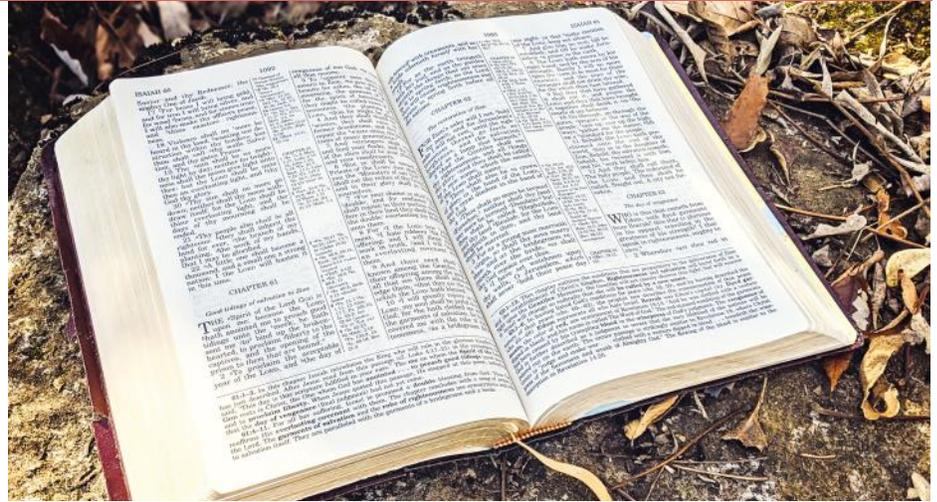
Children's Sunday School is continuing their studies of the Israelites. We are now learning about the Book of Judges. This time period takes place when the Israelites are living in the promised land. They are getting very comfortable not having to live in temporary homes in the wilderness and moving from place to place. They now have permanent homes and are getting very used to living their daily lives. In fact, life is becoming very routine.

Joshua grows old and dies and they are left without a leader. This becomes a problem because even though they know the right way to live; they get busy and begin to choose unwisely. They start to abandon God and sin more and more. Then, they decide they need to worship false gods. This, obviously, makes God upset. From here, things escalate with people around them and they begin to get in "deep trouble". They need help and God brings in a deliverer, a judge, to help them. This works and everyone gets back on track again and life is good. In fact, so good that they fall into the same cycle again and again and again.

This repetitive behavior is absolutely crazy when you look at it, as an outsider. My mind just practically explodes, because I think that after all the miracles that the Israelites see continually; they seem to keep making wrong choices. Why don't they just do the one simple thing that they know is right? "Follow God."

Everything always works out for them when they "Follow God." Though, time and time again this simple truth just does not get into their skulls. Their faith in God waivers constantly.

Why is this long story about the Israelites journey even in the Bible? Couldn't God have given us the short version of this story. The



answer is "No". There is no short story about the Israelites. It has to be the unabridged version. Why? The answer is right in front of us.

It's easy for me to say "How can the Israelites keep turning away from God? Follow God." That is all they need to do and life will be fine. It's quite simple, but is it really?

As I look in my own life, I am in the very same cycle today. Every day life gets crazy. I sometimes get too busy for quiet time with God, for prayer, for reading my Bible. (I'm abandoning God.)

Then something bad happens, I turn to God. Help me, God. (He is there for me, waiting with open arms.)

I make more time for reading my Bible, and praying. (Then life

gets busy again and the cycle repeats. Again and again and again.)

This is why the long unabridged story about the Israelites is in the Bible. For us! That way instead of pointing fingers at them and saying how disobedient they are; we can look at our own lives and see how disobedient we are and **BREAK THE CYCLE**. That is all we have to do. Remember Him, return to Him. He is waiting with open arms. Great news, isn't it?

Blessings,
Melody Burkhart
Children's Sunday School

Psalms 145:8 "The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love."

Advent Season Combined Worship Services

Sunday, December 18 • 10:00 a.m. at First UMC

Saturday, December 24 • 4:00 p.m. at First UMC

Sunday, December 25 • 10:00 a.m. at Grand Ave UMC

Sunday, January 1, 2023 • 10:00 a.m. at Grand Ave UMC



Offering a Choice in Education ... Roberta Hunter

By Judy Lowery

"Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf." Psalm 66:5 NIV

This verse from Psalm 66 sums up how Roberta Hunter feels about working with children and youth in the setting of a Christian school. Roberta is the founder and administrator of two private Christian schools, one in Delano and one that recently opened in Porterville, California.

After growing up in Pasadena and getting her education through both public and private schools, she attended Point Loma College in San Diego. She went on to pursue further education after getting married and moving to Delano.

Roberta has received an impressive number of degrees and credentials, the most recent being a Doctorate of Organizational Leadership, with an emphasis in Special Education. She also holds a degree in Ministry, a California Teaching Credential and a Special Education Credential, making her well qualified for founding and directing a Christian academy!

In 1997, the first Sequoia Christian Academy was established in Delano as a means of providing the choice of Christian education to the families in the community. Roberta says, "I have always had a heart for private schools."

The Sequoia Christian Academy of Delano has been very well received, offering instruction to students from pre-K to eighth grade. Because the number of students per teacher is very low, individual needs can be addressed. As posted on the Academy's website, "The school is open to students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds and from all walks of life, including the poor, disadvantaged and those with special needs."

At the time of the COVID crisis in 2020, Roberta and her husband were living in the Springville area. Because the public schools were shut down, there was a cry for help from families in the community. Roberta responded to the need and began a hybrid Christian school, combining online instruction with personal instruction.

Thus, in 2020 the second Sequoia Christian Academy was founded. When the opportunity opened up to use a church facility in Porterville, the new school moved from Springville to Porterville.

Mrs. Hunter has invested her time, energy and expertise in getting the SCA Porterville up and running on the campus of the Grand Avenue United Methodist Church. Not only are the students in both schools receiving special services as needed, they are also getting a Bible-based education and are learning the importance of developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Roberta's mother taught her about Jesus and the Bible as a young child, taking her to church regularly as she was growing up. "God has been with me every step of the way, through good times and in difficult seasons...This is how I want children to know Him; as a loving, never-failing friend that will walk through this journey of life with them."

The importance of developing strong interpersonal relationships is also stressed at both schools through Bible stories, instruction from scripture and also by example. Learning how to apologize when they have hurt someone, how to forgive someone who has hurt them and how to be kind are valuable life lessons for

the students. According to Roberta, "Kids come back to us and say, 'You taught us how to live.'"

A few years ago, a mother came to Mrs. Hunter at the academy in Delano with her son, after he had been expelled from middle-school. The mother was in tears as she explained that her son was getting into trouble with gangs while she and her husband were working long days out in the fields.

He was enrolled in Sequoia and in six months did a complete "turn-around." Upon his eighth-grade graduation, his mother returned to thank Roberta, this time with tears of gratitude. The young man went on to graduate from high school, got married and was able to successfully provide for his family.

This is just one story, one example of the miracles that happen every day, according to Mrs. Hunter. From the success of a child learning how to read, to the life-changing transformation of an attitude, God works in wonderful ways in the lives of the students, teachers and volunteers too.

Thank you, Mrs. Hunter, for your love for your students and your dedication to seeing that they receive a well-rounded, Christian education, one that will prepare them to be successful in life.

For more information, go to the school's Facebook page or to the website:

www.sequoiachristianacademy.org



October 2022 Prayer Calendar

Saturday, October 1 - Pray for the Clothing Closet.

Sunday, October 2 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services - GAUMC - 9:30 a.m. and FUMC - 11:00 a.m.

Monday, October 3 - Pray for Care Portal that helps those in the Foster Care System.

Tuesday, October 4 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Psalms 31:24 *“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.”*

Wednesday, October 5 - Pray for the Bible Study at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Email Pastor Tom for link at: tburatovich@gmail.com

Thursday, October 6 - Pray and read Bible verse Isaiah 43:18 *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.”*

Friday, October 7 - Praise God for our partner Sequoia Christian School, the teachers and the students.

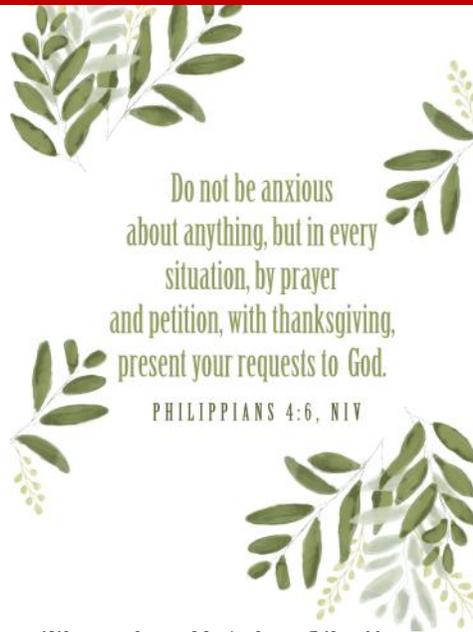
Saturday, October 8 - Pray for the Greeters who will welcome all to Sunday Worship Services tomorrow.

Sunday, October 9 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services - GAUMC - 9:30 a.m. and FUMC - 11:00 a.m.

Monday, October 10 - Pray for Ryan and Melody as they plan for the children and youth of our churches.

Tuesday, October 11 - Pray and reflect on Luke 9:62 *“Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

Wednesday, October 12 - Pray for the Bible Study at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Email Pastor Tom for link at: tburatovich@gmail.com



Thursday, October 13 - Pray and read Philippians 4:13 *“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”*

Friday, October 14 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he prepares his sermon for Sunday Worship Services.

Saturday, October 15 - Pray for the Annual Charge Conference for FUMC and GAUMC. SPRC meets at 5:30 p.m. The church wide meeting will take place at 6:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

Sunday, October 16 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services - GAUMC - 9:30 a.m. and FUMC - 11:00 a.m.

Monday, October 17 - Pray as we start the week that we will know God is with us to deal with many situations.

Tuesday, October 18 - Pray and reflect on Romans 8:28 *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

Wednesday, October 19 - Pray for the Bible Study at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Email Pastor Tom for link at: tburatovich@gmail.com

Thursday, October 20 - Pray for the ones who are ill, having procedures and rehabilitating. Pray for healing and strength.

Friday, October 21 - Pray for all the church committee members.

Saturday, October 22 - Pray for all the church prayer groups.

Sunday, October 23 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services - GAUMC - 9:30 a.m. and FUMC - 11:00 a.m.

Monday, October 24 - Pray and read 2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here!”*

Tuesday, October 25 - Pray for our church families.

Wednesday, October 26 - Pray for the Bible Study at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Email Pastor Tom for link at: tburatovich@gmail.com

Thursday, October 27 - Pray and reflect on Isaiah 40:31 *“but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on the wings of eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.”*

Friday, October 28 - Pray for the city of Porterville.

Saturday, October 29 - Pray for the Praise teams of our churches as they prepare for Sunday Worship Service.

Sunday, October 30 - Pray for Sunday Worship Services - GAUMC - 9:30 a.m. and FUMC - 11:00 a.m.

Monday, October 31 - Pray and read Proverbs 4:25 *“Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.”*





OCTOBER

BIRTHDAYS

First UMC

Danny Burkhart • October 17
 Tamara Mitchell • October 22
 Ellen Lohneiss • October 22

Grand Ave UMC

Lenora Rodarte • October 5
 Charles Nevels • October 7
 Linda Brown • October 9
 Danny Burkhart • October 17
 Kathy Bartlett • October 20
 Gordon Young • October 26

Announcements

Clothing Closet at First UMC

Clothing Closet is open on Saturday, October 1 between 8:30 –10:00 a.m. Call Ann 559-920-0977 for more information. Thanks to all who have made time to help.

Charge Conference—October 15

The annual Charge Conference is **Saturday, October 15 at 5:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room for SPRC and 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall for everyone** at Grand Ave. First UMC, and Grand Ave UMC will join together for this meeting led by District Superintendent **Rev. David L. Niu**.

Tithes and Offering

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

Next Newsletter Deadline

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

First United Methodist Church Grand Ave United Methodist Church

www.grandavenue.org or
www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC or
www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC
View Past Worship Videos on Vimeo
<https://vimeo.com/grandavenueporterville>

Children's Books Needed for Church Library

Grand Ave is expanding its library to include more children's books. Donations of books you may have in your home are welcome. Contact Hope Overholt for further information.



Grand Ave Staff

Senior Pastor • *Rev. Tom Buratovich*
Director of Youth Ministries • *Ryan Ridenour*
Children's Director • *Melody Burkhart*
Worship Administrator • *Judy Buratovich*
Treasurer • *Beverly Farquharson*
Custodian • *The Congregation*

First Staff

Senior Pastor • *Rev. Tom Buratovich*
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

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Phone: 559-784-4232

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