

Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave

United Methodist Churches

Porterville, CA

January 2022

Beyond The Horizon

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

Maturity is an important goal for the New Testament church.

Maturity is equated to knowing Christ more, deeper, better, so that our lives look more like Jesus.

Christians everywhere should regularly renovate their agreement between themselves and Jesus. In the same way the Old Testament transitioned and held its breath to become the New Testament, so our lives require regular massive renovation.

Jesus said, *“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”* (John 2:19) his disciples were thinking about the physical temple, but Jesus was referring to his body.

Grand Avenue is in the process of painting its facia. *“Repaint this facia and I will smooth the rough parts of your spirit.”* First church is planning to replace its office HVAC unit, *“Destroy this HVAC unit, and I will rebuild it and make it new.* We only look at buildings; God is looking at the heart.

We invite you to journey with us as we remake, restore, and reactivate the vision of the church that it might remake, restore, and reactivate a community in such deep darkness it does not even realize it. We feel that darkness too. We feel it when we try to look beyond the pandemic, when we feel a flat-lined emotional response to things that once gave us abundant

joy. Our community lives this, and God is calling us to use us in His grand rescue plan.

When we think of ourselves as part of His rescue plan so many ways come to mind – feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, listening to the downcast, the broken, the oppressed. God gives us authority to so that ... We, you, me, the church, Grand Ave, First Church, might be ambassadors of God’s disaster response team!

We are people of Porterville, a blend of rugged can-do spirit, deep dependence on God, combined with a virtue of acceptance characterized by our identity as Methodists. We have a passion for helping people developing processes focused on eradicating hunger, pain, homelessness, poverty. We excel at funneling resources to ensure that no child gets neglected, no parent is under-resourced, and no authentic need goes unaddressed if it is in our power to meet it.

God has designed the church to be a place, *“full of mercy and good fruits”* (James 3:17). We plan to do this and ask you to pray for us as we organize ourselves around these priorities.

Let us strive for maturity in the new year. Let us strive to know Jesus better in the new year. Let

us strive to rescue those yet to hear of the good news of Jesus which allows us to renovate our great churches to be used as God’s vessels to help the helpless, discouraged, depressed, and frustrated to find love, acceptance, guidance, and encouragement! Let us start the slow but ubiquitous march into the horizon of maturity in Christ!

Happy New Year!

January 2, 2022
Combined Service at
10:00 a.m. at Grand Ave
Soup and Pie Luncheon
following the Service



January 9, 16, 23, 30
9:30 a.m. at Grand Ave
11:00 a.m. at First

Youth Ministry

Philippians 3:13-14 *“Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

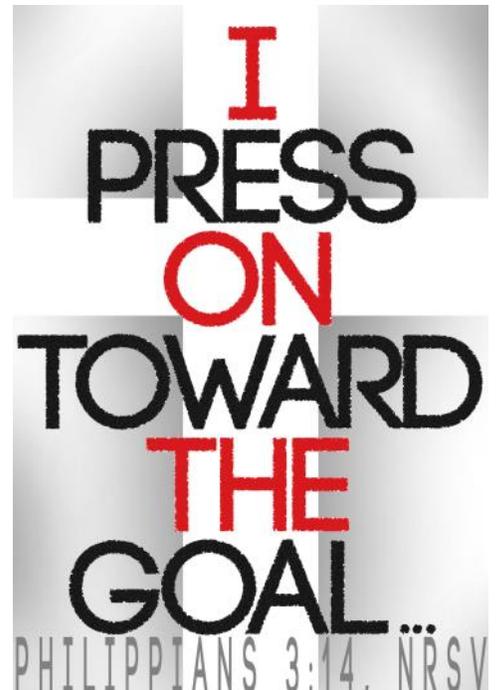
Happy New Year! It sure feels good to say that to all of you. I imagine that each of you are as excited as I am that we are leaving another year in our past and entering a new year that brings with it new possibilities and refreshed hope in what God has in store for us. Many of us will follow the tradition of making New Year's resolutions beginning of January 1. Our minds and hearts will be steadfast on meeting the goals we have set forth for ourselves for 2022. Like many of you, I have a few goals that I look forward to meeting and I am excited for the journey ahead.

When making New Year's resolutions, or personal goals, many people will focus on health, wealth, and personal happiness. There's nothing particularly wrong with having goals focusing on these topics, but unfortunately, most of the goals people set for themselves center around worldly achievements and the acceptance of others, while leaving God out of the picture. For instance, I have a goal to lose weight and get healthy this year. Many people share the same goal. We have a problem, and it needs to be addressed. But is our motivation to get healthy inspired by how people may view our current state or how our future new and improved looks may bring with it claps on the back from people who congratulate our success? Or is our motivation to achieve this goal of getting healthy centered around honoring God and bringing Him

glory by purposely caring for the body He blessed us with?

Our perspective towards achieving a goal will either fuel the motivation to set ourselves up for success or empty our tanks of the determination we need to succeed. If our perspective is determined on the opinions and views of society, we set ourselves up for an uphill battle that is difficult to win. On the other hand, when God is at the center of our perspective towards our goals, we will look at our challenges differently. We know that with God all things are possible. And, if our goals line up with a way of being that brings Him glory and follows His will for our lives, we set ourselves up to be victorious.

I pray that each of you will be blessed in your resolutions this



year. May they draw you closer into the arms of the Lord, enriching your relationship with Him with each step you take. *Happy New Year to you and yours!*

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour



No Regrets

January is here and we are at the beginning of a New Year. With a New Year comes a whole lot of New Year's Resolutions. Things that we want to change in our lives and lots of brand new goals. Many of these goals that we have for ourselves, though they are good goals, are based on guilt and regret.

For instance, a goal that many people have at this time of the year is losing weight. Losing weight is a very good goal to have. Though, the reason why we decide to do this is because we ate too much over the holidays. Literally, we say "Ugh! I ate too much over the holidays. I'm going to make a New Year's Resolution to get this weight off." While saying this, we are filled with regret, in our mind. Thinking things like "If I just hadn't eaten so much at all those get togethers" or "Why did I have to eat dessert every night for the whole two weeks of the holidays?" See. There it is. A goal based on regret and guilt. In November and December, when we ate to much, we weren't thinking of dieting and had no regrets as we were eating wonderful food and enjoying the company of friends and family. Then why, do we torture ourselves in January and suffer in guilt.

In Isaiah 43:18, the Bible says "*Forget the former things; do not dwell in the past.*" God does not want us to dwell in the past. He doesn't want us to feel guilty, regret things that we have done, suffer for



our sins, or make New Year's Resolutions based on regret. That is why He sent Jesus to us. To suffer, in our place.

God knew that it was human nature to feel these things and that we tend to not let go of them. So, He has instructed us to forget these things and live in the present. If we don't let these things go, we won't be able to see the many blessings that He gives us daily. God wants us to know Him and, enjoy Him and live our lives to the fullest.

As we move through the beginning of this New Year, let's remember that it is a time for new beginnings and resolutions. But the truth is that with God anytime is a time for a new beginning.

Melody Burkhart,
Children's Ministry



Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Children's Christmas Program. Thank you to both churches' teachers for making it a success. Thank you to the children for their amazing performance. Thank you to the parents for bringing their children to church. Thank you to Paulette McFarlin for running the projector and playing the handbells. Thank you to Ann White and Deane Rhoadarmer for helping with Santa and Pam Loverin for providing special refreshments.



When the Fire Burns Out

By Judy Lowery

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.” Isaiah 40:28-31



After Al and I moved to our country home in the summer of 1987, we realized that the main source of heat was a large wood stove in the living room. When it came time to use the stove, we quickly found out that the wood stove was a lot of work, including the necessity of cutting, splitting and stacking the wood beforehand.

Unless he ordered a cord of wood, Al did most of the cutting and splitting himself. I only had to do the stacking. It was a hard, time-consuming job.

After building the fire each evening, the challenge was in keeping it going through those winter nights when the temperature dropped below 35 degrees. There were a few times when it went out completely and had to be started up again from scratch.

I remember feeling dismayed at opening the door of the stove only to find ash, not wanting to build a new fire in the middle of the night. It was tempting to just pile on another blanket and go back to bed.

Then the ash and soot had to be cleaned up periodically, a dirty job. Piles of ash had to be scraped through a grate in the bottom of the main compartment into a pan below. The leftovers were shoveled into a bucket.

After the heavy bucket and metal pan were emptied, the area inside as well as outside the stove had to be swept. More ash and mess. The glass window, blackened with soot from many fires, also had to be cleaned off. When the project was finished, we'd sit back and

enjoy seeing the crisply burning fire through the clear window—until it was time for the next cleaning!

Burnout seems to sneak up on me easily during this time of year with much to do for the holidays. When I get tired out physically, emotionally, spiritually, or all of the above, one thought seems to play over and over in my mind: “This is just too hard.” That thought only generates more burnout, making it even harder for me to face the demands of life.

When I read the verses above from Isaiah 40 one morning this week and remembered that the Lord doesn't grow tired or weary, my soul began to feel comforted. If I could just rest in the Lord, facing each new moment of the day with Him, things wouldn't seem so difficult.

The rest of that passage was also comforting: “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” *

What a wonderful promise! Strength to the weary, power to the weak! Rather than focusing on the thought, “It's just too hard,” putting my hope in the Lord and trusting in Him brought a sense of renewed strength, just as Isaiah said it would.

Tired and uncomfortable, ready for a long rest after their

journey and maybe a shower too, Mary must have been disappointed when she and Joseph finally reached their destination, but couldn't find lodging. No place to stay, with a baby due at any time?

After traveling all of the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem on the back of a donkey, I wonder if the thought “This is just too hard!” came to her mind? But then, not long after their arrival in Bethlehem, came the birth of her baby, Jesus—the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to her through the angel Gabriel. With Jesus came renewed hope and joy.

God brings renewal, strength and joy to each one of us as we put our trust in Him.

May the Lord bless you in the New Year!

“Ashes”

Lord...

*When ashes have collected
in a gray, powdery pile
and the flame of love
has died out in my heart,
help me remove the ash and
bring in more fuel.*

Then, Lord....

*Ignite my heart with
the spark of your Spirit
that it might always burn
with love for You.*

Revised 12-21-21 JLL

January 2022 Prayer Calendar

Saturday, January 1 - Pray for this first day of the new year 2022. Pray for a year of new beginnings and faith, hope and love.

Sunday, January 2 - Pray for the **Combined Worship Service at GAUMC at 10:00 a.m.** and following *Soup and Pie lunch*.

Monday, January 3 - Pray and read and reflect on Bible verse 2 Corinthians 5:7 *“Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*

Tuesday, January 4 - Pray for all the members of the church committees. Pray as they make decisions for our churches.

Wednesday, January 5 - Pray for the Online Bible Study led by Pastor Tom at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Thursday, January 6 - Pray for our community of Porterville.

Friday, January 7 - Pray for the health and well-being of our church families.

Saturday, January 8 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Romans 12:2 *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

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

Monday, January 10 - As we experience different situations this week, pray that we will know God is with us.

Tuesday, January 11 - Pray for the ones who lead and participate in the prayer groups.

Wednesday, January 12 - Pray for the Online Bible Study led by Pastor Tom at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Thursday, January 13 - Pray for the ones who are not feeling well. Pray for strength and healing.

Friday, January 14 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon for Sunday Worship Service.

Saturday, January 15 - Pray for the Greeters who will welcome all to Sunday Worship Services.

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

Monday, January 17 - Pray and thank God for our many blessings.

Tuesday, January 18 - Pray and reflect on Philippians 4:6-7 *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Wednesday, January 19 - Pray for the Online Bible Study led by Pastor Tom at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Thursday, January 20 - Pray and reflect on Galatians 3:22-23 *“But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.”*

Friday, January 21 - Pray and reflect on Ephesians 1:18-19 *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe.”*

Saturday, January 22 - Pray and read Colossians 3:9-10 *“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its*

practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

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

Monday, January 24 - Pray and reflect on Titus 3:4-7 *“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”*

Tuesday, January 25 - Pray for Melody and Ryan as they serve the children and youth of our congregations.

Wednesday, January 26 - Pray for the Online Bible Study led by Pastor Tom at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Thursday, January 27 - Pray and reflect on Bible verse 2 Corinthians 3:18 *“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

Friday, January 28 - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare for Sunday Worship Services.

Saturday, January 29 - Pray that we have the desire to continually seek Spiritual growth.

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

Monday, January 31 - Pray and reflect on 2 Thessalonians 3:5 *“May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”*



First UMC

Wayne White • January 1
Mildred Billiou • January 18
Jean Spry • January 28

Grand Ave UMC

Mark Wright • January 9
Linda Taylor • January 12
Nancy Baird • January 24
Jack Egorov • January 30

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.



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*

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*

Announcements

Open House Birthday Party

Ann White invites you to an open house, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 1, 2022 for Wayne's 83rd Birthday. Please contact Ann for address information 559-920-0977. Members from both churches are invited.

Clothing Closet at First UMC

Clothing Closet will be open by appointment only in January. Please contact Ann for appointments and 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 February 2022 Messenger is **January 20**. Thank you.

Thank You to First and Grand Ave

Thank you to the First and Grand Ave congregations for your generosity and end-of-the-year gifts. We appreciate your tangible display of love, your faithfulness to both churches, to the Lord, and to our community. Your sacrificial gifts to us are humbling and we stand in awe of your ability and desire to bless us.



Your church staff,

Pastor Tom

Ryan, Rodel, Melody, Melissa, Christine, Judy

Tithes and Offering

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

First Staff

Senior Pastor • *Rev. Tom Buratovich*
Counseling Center Director • *Joy Semple*
Administrative Assistant • *Melissa Sutherland*
Music Coordinator • *Christine Klippenstein*
Children/Custodian • *Melody Burkhart*

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*