

Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave

United Methodist Churches

Porterville, CA

March 2021

The Lenten Glide

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

The season of Lent offers a spiritual journey unique to everyone. We want to provide you, the body of Christ, with as many opportunities as possible to squeeze every ounce of growth out of this season.

To adequately launch the season we have provided a Lenten Devotional for you to navigate your way. This devotional may be used daily weekly or when you feel so moved. However, you may get the most out of it by covenanting with someone to go through it with you at whatever rate of regularity you agree on. Particularly, a family can use these devotions as a time of vespers before bedtime or after dinner. A person may use it at work during the morning break as a way to center oneself. The applications are limitless.

Second, we are holding a Zoom Bible study during the season of Lent (Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.) to help you process the intense nature of the season to prepare you to celebrate the resurrection. It is called *Leading to Easter* and it provides a long look into the passion and sacrifice of Jesus in a way that individual study would make difficult.

We plan to celebrate Easter outdoors together on April 4. We

also plan to hold a sunrise service in the parking lot of Porterville Nazarene Church. We are moving from the park because of city's hesitation when gathering on city property. So, an additional change is in order!

I am encouraged to hear of so many of you who have received vaccinations. I think of the cross and how it is the vaccination from hell and eternity without Jesus. I think of all the ways pre-conceived notions of what the church should be are shattered in the face of this pandemic. We are learning a new way to be the church, a new way to be the people called to new life.

The season of Lent truly has given us a unique opportunity. I hope you will take part in it.

It is very important during this time that we emphasize communication, both receiving it and giving it. Therefore, I beg you to practice vigilance and consistency when you receive communications in the form of emails, texts and mailed

newsletters. Please read everything carefully and do not neglect to open messages that we sent you earlier.

I also want to give a special thanks and challenge for those of you who knows someone who feels less than fully connected. We have a wonderful group of people who have been sending cards, calling people they have not seen in a while. If you have benefitted from one of these, you have one of our dear Saints to thank. If you have not, or you know someone in need please let us know. Another option, is for you to be the one to reach out by sending them a card, calling them, or stopping by and talking on the front lawn with a mask on. We are social creatures, and the gift of our presence is truly a gift we will never take for granted again.

Let us bless one another as we grow our devotion to Jesus and embrace the cross.



Outdoor Worship Service - Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
Grand Ave and First meet together Sundays at 10:00 a.m. in the Courtyard of First UMC. Bring your own chair, Bible and face covering. A video of the Outdoor Service is available by Sunday evenings on www.grandavenue.org.

Youth Ministry March

We made it to March and that means we are in middle of the Lenten season. This is one of my favorite times of the year as Lent presents to all believers an opportunity for spiritual growth and renewal in our daily walks with Jesus. The traditions of Lent come to us from the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert and during that time he faced temptations from Satan. It is a time of prayer and fasting and helps prepare our hearts for Easter.

During Lent many people will be making the decision to give something up that is important to them in the hopes that God will fill that now empty space with His presence. I like to call this, "Give up to receive." The items and activities vary from person to person on what each of us may choose to give up. Some people may give up watching television, participating in social media, restricting their diets, playing video games, coffee (yes, coffee), and many other things. Some people attempt to give up certain attitude issues they struggle with such as negative outlooks, worry, and selfishness. Regardless of what we give up, I am confident that God works in our hearts to guide us deeper into our relationship with Him through our fasting and through His love.

I had a friend who chose to give up soda for Lent many years ago. About halfway through the 40 days of Lent I asked him how his fasting from soda was going. I said to him, "How's the no soda going buddy?" He replied, "Well, it was going really good, but on Saturday I slipped up and had to have a cup of

grace." I always loved how my friend referred to a cup of soda as a cup of grace. It makes me laugh every time. You see, he gave into temptation and broke his fast. He was not happy about it, but he did not let it derail his journey during Lent. Instead of focusing his heart on his actions, he focused his heart on God and his rich grace that is better than any soda.

The youth and I are working together during the Lenten season to offer each other support and encouragement in our fasting of what we each have chosen to give up. I recommend that each of you also have someone you can turn to during your fasting to share your experiences with. The youth are also celebrating the work that God is doing in our hearts as He prepares us for Easter. We are learning in our Youth Zoom Hangouts about the temptations Jesus faced in the desert and how he responded to these temptations and how his experiences are examples to each of us that continue to bless our faith and builds our trust in him. It is truly a fascinating time for believers.

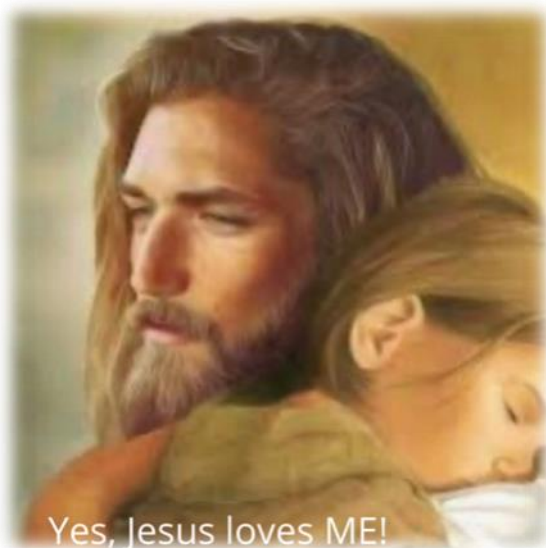


This Lenten season I pray that if you choose to fast in some form, or if you do not, either way, may God bless each and every one of you on your journeys. I pray that the eyes of your heart will be planted firmly on Christ Jesus and his life, death, and resurrection and what that means for each of us. During the moments when fasting becomes tough, may we remember that our savior faced temptations and he understands our struggle and may this truth give us peace and encouragement. Blessings to each of you during this special time of year.

God is Love,
Ryan Ridenour



Jesus Loves ME



***Jesus loves me
This I know
For the Bible tells me so
Little ones to Him belong
They are weak
But He is strong
Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
The Bible tells me so.***

I think we all know the words to this song. Both young and old alike have cherished the simple truth in this song. This is the foundation that our whole world should be set on. “Jesus Loves me”. That is what matters.

How many of us sing the words to this song or listen to it but never really think of the meaning behind the words. The simple truth in this song, do we even pay attention to it? “Jesus loves me, this I know, because the Bible tells me so.” Yes, the Bible does tell us so. But just because the Bible says so, do we really believe it? Have you ever really thought about how much Jesus loves you? I mean, how much

He REALLY loves you? It is something that we hear all of the time but does it go in one ear and out the other or do we let that simple truth settle within our souls? Now, stop and think about it for a minute. I mean it. Really search your soul. Can you honestly say, with every ounce of your being, that you really believe that Jesus loves you so much, that you can say “Jesus loves ME”? I sure hope so. Because He does! If you don’t know it, you need to start telling yourself it.

Actually, I think it is good practice for all of us to repeatedly tell ourselves that “Jesus loves ME” many times every day.

Jesus does love us all. He loves us so much, that we will never be able to fully understand how much He does. He gave up everything He had for each one of us. He removed His crown and came to Earth for US. To show us the way to live, to show us how much He loves us. To give us hope. He freely suffered for all of our sins. He willingly endured mocking and ridicule, was beaten and broken. His precious blood was spilt and His life was given, so that we would have the gift of eternal life. He suffered so, that we might live. If that is not love, I don’t know what is. For someone to endure all of those things for me, for you, I would, and you should, definitely say “Jesus loves ME”. I hope you know this truth with all of your heart. If you don’t or you have any doubt, I would encourage you to seek Jesus and discover the beauty of His love

for you.

I encourage everyone, to begin saying every day “Jesus loves ME”. Write sticky notes with this sweet phrase on it and stick them all over your house. Put it on your bathroom mirror, on the dashboard in your car. Everywhere you look. Add this to your worship during Lent. Try to say it as many times as you can, every day. Even sing it. Reaffirm this truth and take it into your heart. Believe it with everything that is in you. Cling to this truth every day and strengthen your love for Him.

Blessings,
Melody Burkhart
Children’s Sunday School



Online

Join Melody online for
Children’s Sunday School
every Sunday morning at
www.grandavenue.org



**See you on
Sunday!**

Support Groups ...

By Judy Lowery

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 15:5-6 NIV

Riding a bike on the Appalachian Trail? It sounds like a risky adventure, doesn't it? Just hiking along the trail would be enough of a challenge for most people. According to our friend, Paul, who is a seasoned hiker, it is even more difficult and dangerous than the famous Pacific Crest Trail.

Well, husband Al is doing just that...sort of! He was invited to join a group of friends known as “Dawn’s Team” on a Virtual Appalachian Trail mission and began “riding” the trail in mid-December.

For an entry fee, he was guaranteed a medal at the end of the 1,968.3-mile trail along with everyone on the team. No losers on that race! Some members were going to walk and/or jog; however, there were several different ways to earn miles. Snow shoveling was even listed as one of the accepted activities. A good thing with the inclement weather experienced recently in Michigan!

The people in the group began logging their miles and followed their progress on an online map. Dawn’s team started at Springer Mountain in Georgia and went northward to Mount Katahdin in Maine. Every time another 20% of the trail was covered, each member received an encouraging email from the Virtual Mission organization and a notification that a tree had been planted somewhere around the world in honor of their progress.

This has been a great incentive for Al to ride his bike daily, helping him stay motivated through the long winter months. Having his bike on a “trainer” in his office is convenient; and the competition generated among some of the members to see who can log the most miles makes it

fun. Using conversion factors, the types of activities done are changed to miles hiked making it fair for everyone.

“What else would I be doing?” he quips, after logging over 286 miles on his bike since the beginning of the mission!

How long would it take for them to complete the entire trail? With thirteen people participating on the team, leader Dawn thought they could finish in March. Eighty percent of the distance has already been completed, making it possible to reach Mt. Katahdin in two or three more weeks!

Leader Dawn, a former “coach” for Al’s weight loss program here in Michigan has been extremely supportive and encouraging. Every so often he receives a hand-written postcard from her in the mail rooting him on. Twice a week she has a zoom conference, connecting people to each other, giving out good information and sharing struggles as well as victories.

At Christmas she even held a drawing on one of the online sessions for all participants who dressed up in Christmassy outfits. Al decorated his weathered outback hat for the occasion! One of the participants had crocheted a beautiful blanket for the grand winner and for everyone else a tea towel holder plus tea towel!

Generating enthusiasm, keeping people involved, lifting spirits, inspiring them to set high goals and staying with them, cheering them on until their goals are reached... these are things that Dawn does very well.

Now that her team is approaching the end of the Appalachian Trail, it will be

interesting to see what new things she will introduce to her group of friends. Since many of the folks are getting their COVID vaccines, perhaps some will want to go their own direction. However, for this time, the team and its coach have been a wonderful source of support for each other.

Being part of a supportive team is a great thing. We all need encouragement and at times assistance from others who care about us.

A friend who was having struggles recently told the members of a group from church that she was feeling down and discouraged. They kindly reminded her that she should have called them! Not only “on call,” this group of “sisters” also have committed themselves to contacting each other once a week outside their regular meeting time. Our friend was extremely thankful that God had brought these special ladies into her life to give her support when needed.

As God gives us endurance and encouragement in our journeys with Him, may we support, encourage and walk hand in hand with each other. Help us O Lord to be united as Your people in this endeavor. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Al riding his bike.

For more information, please visit www.goodnewswithjudy.blogspot.com

March 2021 Prayer Calendar

Monday, March 1 - Pray that during this Lenten season, we will have spiritual renewal.

Tuesday, March 2 - Pray and reflect on Isaiah 60:1 *“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.”*

Wednesday, March 3 - Pray for the Online Bible Study each Wednesday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Thursday, March 4 - Pray for our community of Porterville.

Friday, March 5 - Today, pray for those of us who are grieving a loved one.

Saturday, March 6 - Pray for the Clothing Closet today at 9:00 a.m. and for those who will make appointments during March.

Sunday, March 7 - Pray for the Outdoor Worship Service at First Church at 10:00 a.m. Please bring a lawn chair and face covering.

Monday, March 8 - Pray that God will be with us as we go about our week.

Tuesday, March 9 - Pray for the ladies of Linda Circle at Grand Ave.

Wednesday, March 10 - Pray for the Online Bible Study each Wednesday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Thursday, March 11 - Pray for Melody and Ryan as they plan lessons for the children and youth.

Friday, March 12 - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon for this Sunday's Outdoor Worship Service.

Saturday, March 13 - Pray for those who will set up for Outdoor Worship Service tomorrow morning.

Sunday, March 14 - Pray for the Outdoor Worship Service at First Church at 10:00 a.m. Please bring a lawn chair and face covering.



Monday, March 15 - Pray for the ones who are ill and pray for strength and healing.

Tuesday, March 16 - Pray for all the committees of First Church and Grand Avenue.

Wednesday, March 17 - Pray for the Online Bible Study each Wednesday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Thursday, March 18 - Pray and reflect on Revelation 21:6 *“He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.’”*

Friday, March 19 - Pray that today you can find a few moments to count your blessings.

Saturday, March 20 - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare for Sunday Outdoor Worship Service.

Sunday, March 21 - Pray for the Outdoor Worship Service at First Church at 10:00 a.m. Please bring a lawn chair and face covering.

Monday, March 22 - As we start a new week, pray and reflect on John 14:6 *“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”*

Tuesday, March 23 - Pray for the hungry and the homeless in our community.

Wednesday, March 24 - Pray for the Online Bible Study each Wednesday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Thursday, March 25 - Pray for Judy Buratovich who organizes the newsletter every month.

Friday, March 26 - Pray for our church families.

Saturday, March 27 - Pray for all who will be involved in the Sunday Outdoor Worship Service tomorrow.

Sunday, March 28 - Pray for our Sunday Outdoor Worship Service as we celebrate Palm Sunday. The day when Jesus rode on a donkey triumphantly through Jerusalem as the crowds laid palm branches down on the path in his honor.

Monday, March 29 - Pray for this Holy Week. Read Matthew 21:12-19 when Jesus cleanses the temple.

Tuesday, March 30 - Pray for Holy Tuesday and read about Jesus as he criticizes the Pharisees in Matthew 21:23-46.

Wednesday, March 31 - Pray for Holy Wednesday. Read Matthew 26:1-16 when Judas betrays Jesus.

Need Prayer?

Both churches have people who come together to pray. One prayer meeting is Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. Please call Pastor Tom or Ann White at 1:30 p.m. to be included in the prayer meeting. Maybe you have another time of the day you would like to gather a group to pray. It could be a quick meeting of 10 or 20 minutes to share prayer requests and pray for one another. Let's make 2021 the year of constant prayer!

Pastor Tom

First United Methodist Church Grand Ave United Methodist Church

Weekday Meetings are via Computer Connection
**Grand Ave and First UMC will meet together for
an Outdoor Worship Service Sundays at 10:00
a.m. in the Courtyard of First UMC (344 E Morton Ave)**
www.grandavenue.org or
www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC or
www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC



First UMC

Michael Martin • March 4
Paul Klippenstein • March 11
Patty Dumas • March 17

Grand Ave UMC

Amy Buratovich • March 1
Hope Overholt • March 4
Judy Buratovich • March 6
Briana Kehoe • March 8
Maxine Itzenhauser • March 15
Garrett Borges • March 15
Sandy Young • March 16
Liam Fleming • March 18



**Move your clocks
forward ONE HOUR on
Saturday night
March 13.**

Grand Ave Staff

Senior Pastor • Rev. Tom Buratovich
Director of Youth Ministries • Ryan Ridenour
Worship Administrator • Judy Buratovich
Treasurer • Rodell Lipumano
Custodian • The Congregation

Grand Ave Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

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Announcements

Lenten Devotional

The online Lenten Devotional is available on the website. Each day has a scripture, prayer, online reading and reflections questions. Find the file at www.grandavenue.org.

Wednesday Online Bible Study

The Online Bible Study meets 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. each Wednesday. We are studying Leading to Easter. Contact Pastor Tom for a link to the zoom online meeting, tburatovich@gmail.com.

Clothing Closet

The Clothing Closet will be open Saturday, March 6 at 9:00 a.m. Other times are available by appointment in the month of March. Please call Ann at 559-920-0977 for further information.

Next Newsletter Deadline

Please send information for the Messenger Newsletter to Judy at judy.bur87@gmail.com. The deadline for the April 2021 Messenger is **March 17**. Thank you.

Holy Week—March 28 to April 4

During Holy Week we will provide video online meditations daily during the week. Watch the website for updates—www.grandavenue.org

March 28 • Palm Sunday
April 2 • Good Friday
April 4 • Easter Sunday



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

First Methodist Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

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