

# Messenger Newsletter

First and Grand Ave  
United Methodist Churches  
Porterville, CA

May 2021

## While We Sleep

by Pastor Tom Buratovich

Things happen while we sleep. A wilted plant refreshes in the morning. There are signs of wildlife around my house that I never see during the day.

Ideas also emerge, germinate, and migrate while we sleep. Sometimes these ideas take hold in the form of activities, actions, and finally habits. We give you one example – germs. The pandemic has made our relationship with germs exponentially more complicated.

Before the pandemic, most of us believed we needed germs in a fragile balance. Bacteria on the inside and outside of our bodies actually outnumber cells. These germs help us digest food, absorb micronutrients, fight infection, coexist with our immune system to help fight harmful germs, viruses, and other predators that seek us harm.

But then the pandemic came, and we were awash in anti-germ, anti-bacterial, antiviral, liquid, lotion, solution, aerosol, wipes, masks, gloves, etc. we declared war on germs, all germs. It did not matter if they were helpful because we did not know how to kill one and not the other. So, we killed them all. But we cannot live this way forever. We must reestablish a healthy relationship with germs. We won't start eating food off the floor or rolling our facemasks in dust before wearing it. But it means carefully evaluating our over-sanitized, over-disinfected lives.

Fear has played a primary role in

our current state. People are afraid of disease, germs, vaccines, people, and other people's germs and disease. However, we are finding we cannot live this way either. So, we have a choice. We can continue over sanitizing everything and suffer the consequences. There are many mostly bad. Or exert ourselves in reconstructing a healthy relationship with our germs.

Do you realize what I have just described is exactly like the church? When a church community functions as it should, care, encouragement, challenge, accountability, healing, examination, grace giving, faith building, service, sanctification, and worship, are among the things that happen regularly. People in need receive prayer. People are inspired toward generosity beyond their current capacity.

Our normal methods of hospitality are suspended until further notice which is left some wondering what else is there to do? If we cannot high-five, shake hands, hug, have potlucks, or coffee hour, what is the point? The point is we do not exist to be a church to hug, high-five, and have potlucks. We

exist to be the hope of the world for our community by teaching them "to observe all that Jesus taught us." We are here to make disciples. We send cards, we call, we record and post, we do Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, snail mail, or smoke signals if you live in Balch Park - just kidding.

The point is our mission does not stop simply because our present means is no longer available. We simply come up with different means. That is why we have the Clothing Closet, Mental Health First Aid Training, participating to support the Porterville Welcome Center, the Rescue Mission, Zoom Bible study, prayer meetings, taking prayer requests, and a worship service that can finally gather inside.

This also means getting back into the practice of doing some things that you may have already found replacement activities for. If you do not want to come to church because you would rather do your laundry, I understand. But, will doing your laundry bring you closer to God, convict you of sin, help you

*Continued on Page 2*

### **Indoor Worship Services**

**Grand Ave • 9:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary**

**First UMC • 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary**

Children's Sunday School at both Services

Bring your face coverings.

A Worship Service video will be available by  
Sunday evenings on [www.grandavenue.org](http://www.grandavenue.org).

# Youth Ministry

Proverbs 31:25-31—*Bold power and glorious majesty are wrapped around her as she laughs with joy over the latter days. Her teachings are filled with wisdom and kindness, as loving instruction pours from her lips. She watches over the ways of her household and meets every need they have. Her sons and daughters arise in one accord to extol her virtues, and her husband arises to speak of her in glowing terms. “There are many valiant and noble ones, but you have ascended above them all!” Charm can be misleading, and beauty is vain and so quickly fades, but the virtuous woman lives in wonder, awe, and fear of the Lord. She will be praised throughout eternity. So go ahead and give her the credit that is due, for she has become a radiant woman, and all her living works of righteousness deserve to be admired at the gateways of every city! (The Passion Translation)*

During the month of May, we will take time out of our busy schedules to recognize and celebrate the amazing women in our lives. Some of these individuals are mothers, or they may be wives, others may be grandmothers, sisters, friends, or someone who has played a vital role in our lives that has made a lasting impact like many of you here in our congregation.

Growing up, Mother’s Day was always a fun time. My brother and I would pick out a special gift and search diligently until we found the right card and present these gifts to our mother. My mom would open her gifts and read her cards then she would smile and joyously exclaim how my brother and I had found the perfect gifts and that she is so touched by the cards. She would always put the Mother’s Day cards in a location that all visitors would see as they entered our home. My mom’s reaction always made my brother and I smile as we knew in our hearts that we made our mom happy. We would also go to grandma’s house and have a big family meal with all the relatives. I always thought it was funny that the women always had to prepare these meals and served everyone, especially on the day when we were celebrating them. But this goes to show that sometimes a women’s love and service to those in their care does not take a break, even on Mother’s Day.

Each of us have memories of women in our lives that have played big roles in helping develop who we have become. Some of these

memories are simple ones, yet they mean so much to us. For example, every time I drink tea, and it must be sweet tea, I think of my grandma because that is what we would drink at her house. Even the faintest smell of the tea in the air brings memories of joy rushing into my heart. You may be thinking, it’s just tea. Well, yes, and no. Yes, it is just tea, and anyone can make tea, but my grandma’s tea was the best because she made it. Her hands touched the tea bags. She poured and mixed the tea and sugar and made sure it was just right for her family. Now that my grandma has gone home to be with Jesus, the tea I drink is a little bit more special

because as I drink it, I feel as if a part of her is with me.

God, in all His amazing and mysterious ways, has put a vast array of women in each of our lives that throughout the years have continued to bless us in many unforgettable ways. Mothers, grandmas, sisters, and many of you here at Grand Avenue have been a source of love, wisdom, and guidance for so many of us through our lives. All of you have been examples of patience, diligence, faith, and many of you have been a source of hope and inspiration. This Mother’s Day, I thank you for being all you can be for each of us. Thank you for the example you have set forth for us and for the generations to come. Thank you for the memories that last a lifetime. Thank you for the hope you bring into our lives. And thank you for simply being you, a wonderful creation from the hand of God. Happy Mother’s Day to each of you and may God bless you in all his wondrous ways.

God is Love,  
Ryan Ridenour

## While We Sleep ... • [continued from page 1](#) by Pastor Tom Buratovich

examine your heart, quench your often hidden need for Christian community and more? No. It will not. Is it easier? Well of course. But a life well lived is often not easier than the one we would choose if left to ourselves. We cannot be left to ourselves that is why we have the church. Those who think ‘Jesus and me’ is enough understand neither.

Yes, I know the service is too early, or late, or long, or short, or faraway, or close, or loud, or soft, too crowded, too sparse, too relevant, too irrelevant, too traditional, too contemporary. I do not write this to make fun of anyone, except myself. I lie in bed in the morning with the same excuses on my lips. But, I have two very important accountability partners, you, the beautiful church, and the Holy Spirit. Both of you make sure I get my lazy, sinful, selfish, backside out of bed. I hope you will join me in getting out of bed to serve our Lord and join with the people of God in worship.

If you have a condition and hurt in the morning, I pray God would give you a special measure of grace, a spring in your step, an extra measure of longing to see us. This is a church that strives to work and a church that in the same way is deciding how to fit germs back into our lives in a healthy way, and is deciding how to pick up the torch and re-enter the race of faith before us. Let us run so that we might long to hear the words, “Well done you wonderfully beloved faithful servant! Bring you (and your germs) into my kingdom!”

# Seeing Everyday Miracles

The Bible contains stories of many wonderful miracles. First off, the story of The Creation is truly, an awesome miracle. The flood destroyed all life, except for what Noah's Ark contained. Lot's wife was turned to a pillar of salt. Sodom and Gomorra were destroyed. God revealed himself to Moses in the form of a burning bush. Moses's staff became a snake, the plagues of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. Water came forth from a rock and manna was sent from heaven, for the Israelites. The wall in Jericho fell and the sun and moon stood still for Joshua. Elisha brought a dead boy back to life. These are just a few of the miracles that God orchestrated before Jesus was born.

Jesus performed many miracles also. He healed many people of incurable illnesses. The blind were able to see, and the lame were able to walk. He cast out demons and turned water into wine. He even brought Lazarus and a little girl back from the dead.

After Jesus died, Peter and John cured a man at the temple that could not walk from birth. Peter raised Tabitha from the dead. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and with Him flames over the people's heads and the understanding and speaking of foreign languages so they all could communicate. This lists just a few of the amazing and wonderful miracles from the Bible. All are proof of God's existence.

Wouldn't it have been great to live in Biblical Times? To see with our own eyes, just one of these amazing miracles. A once in a lifetime event, that would surely make a believer out of anyone, right? But is that what we need, to be a believer? A BIG miracle? Is that what it would take to know that God is there?

We do see miracles every day and sadly we take them for granted. For instance, The sun. It comes up and goes down every day with majestic beauty. Sometimes those sunrises and sunsets are not even noticed. It shines its life giving light and warms us. That is a miracle we see every day and it is not a small miracle by any means. But do we ponder that and say "Wow, today I saw a miracle from God." Do we? Or do we just wake up and push through our day without a thought about the wonderful miracle of the sun? All the while, ignoring proof of God's presence.

Trees. How about trees and plants? We see them every day. Do we even take notice? Do we ever ponder the miracle of plants and trees? That they need us just as we need them to live. They breath carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen. We inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Truly amazing! We support each other. Without one the other cannot survive. Are we jaded to this or do we take notice of His amazing miracle?

Animals. There is another miracle. They provide us food, clothes, and companionship.

The stars. Every night, we are able to take a seat under God's Jewels. Another truly amazing miracle. Their beauty is beyond words. They also provide us light at night.

I don't think that there is anywhere that we can look and not behold a wonderful miracle from God. After all, seeing is believing, right? But do we truly believe what we are seeing?

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.

### Bible Quiz

After Jesus raises Lazarus from death, what does his family do to thank Jesus?

- A. They host a dinner for him.
- B. Martha serves the meal.
- C. Mary anoints Jesus' feet with an extravagant amount of expensive perfume.
- D. All of the above.

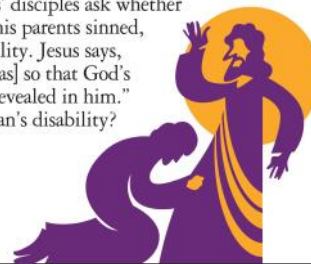


Answer: D (See John 12:1-3)

### Bible Quiz

In John 9, Jesus' disciples ask whether a certain man or his parents sinned, causing his disability. Jesus says, "Neither. ... [It was] so that God's works might be revealed in him." What was this man's disability?

- A. Deafness
- B. Lameness
- C. Blindness
- D. Epilepsy



Answer: C (See John 9:1-7)



### Online

Join Melody online for  
Children's Church at  
[www.grandavenue.org](http://www.grandavenue.org)

# An Easter to Remember

By Judy Lowery

*“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.” John 7:37b-38 NIV*

For many months, a typical Sunday morning has consisted of meeting with our grandsons Nate and Elliot virtually for Sunday School, then watching the livestreamed worship service from church and finally a time of prayer—sometimes alone in the quiet of our home and occasionally a video conference with the pastor as well as a small group of people from the congregation.

It has been similar to Sundays in “America past” when people attended church from 9:30 to noon, with the exception of church socials or potlucks afterwards! Al and I have been encouraged, inspired and spiritually challenged by the online services and meetings, appreciating all of the support received as well as the opportunities to connect with each other.

One of my goals, however, was to make it back to church in person for the Easter worship service. The building had already been open for a couple of months, following prescribed guidelines, but we decided not to attend services until after receiving our vaccinations.

With those being completed before Easter Sunday, the timing seemed right for a return to worshipping in the sanctuary with our church family. After being away for so long, it seemed strange to think about what to wear. Did we still have shoes and clothes suitable for an Easter celebration? Attendance at our online church functions didn’t require much preparation. We only had to wake up on time, get dressed and turn on the computer. It was fine to wear slippers or be barefoot!

I wondered if I should go shopping the week before the holiday, but then reminded myself 1) that we were in Michigan and that a warm coat would still be needed inside the sanctuary, so it wasn’t crucial to buy new clothes and 2) not to waste time worrying about what to wear, keeping the focus where it should be—on Christ and His resurrection.

We woke up on Easter morning with great anticipation. It would be our first time back in over a year. What would it be like? Al and I even arrived a half hour early, waiting in the car until the doors were unlocked and people started arriving.

With a warm welcome from the greeters at the entrance and some long-awaited hugs, we settled into a couple of chairs. Looking around, a wooden cross wrapped in a mantle of white was standing in a prominent place in front of the sanctuary and Easter lilies adorned the stage where half a dozen musicians were getting ready to begin.

Rows of chairs had been separated into configurations for singles, couples and families. Not all of the chairs were filled; only about fifty people were in attendance that morning, with just a few children. It was a smaller number than usual—most likely many people were watching from home as we had been doing previously.

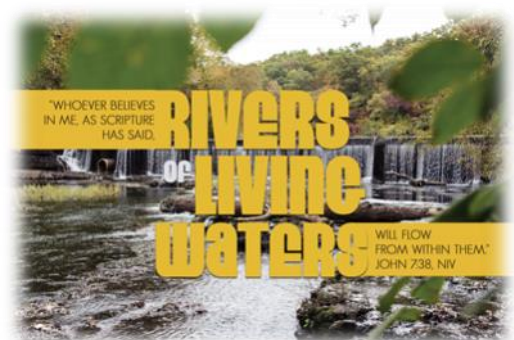
There was great joy in being together with other believers, joy that was compounded by once again celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Not only did it touch the

lives of those who were witnesses to his resurrection, it also has touched the lives of myriads of people—all who have believed in Him over the past 2,000 years!

Easter was especially meaningful this year after experiencing so much pain and difficult changes in our lives. Many of us lost friends and family, had health crises and felt the frustration of being isolated from loved ones. Some were laid off from work, others suffered financially... tough times for all.

Resurrection...the resurgence of life...overcoming death and rising to live again...This resurgence of life can be seen all around us as spring is well underway, perhaps a little earlier than usual here in Michigan. Pansies that were covered by snow, frozen and withered are producing tiny green leaves. Pink buds are opening on the bare branches of the tulip tree outside our living room window; and once dormant bulbs are now starting to bloom—crocuses, daffodils and tulips. New life!

Thirsty for something more? Jesus invites us to “come to Him and drink,” to experience life together with Him. May we respond to His call, come to Him and find resurrection life through the power of the Holy Spirit.



For more information, please visit [www.goodnewswithjudy.blogspot.com](http://www.goodnewswithjudy.blogspot.com)

# May 2021 Prayer Calendar

**Saturday, May 1** - Pray for the Clothing Closet at 9:00 a.m. at FUMC. Pray for the GAUMC Yards Sale that will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Sunday, May 2** - Pray for Sunday Worship Services.

GAUMC at 9:30 a.m.

FUMC at 11:00 a.m.

**Monday, May 3** - Pray for Ryan and Melody as they prepare lessons and activities for the children and youth of our churches.

**Tuesday, May 4** - Pray for the Prayer meeting on Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. It is a time of prayer and prayer requests.

**Wednesday, May 5** - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom—10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

**Thursday, May 6** - Pray for all the church meetings this month.

**Friday, May 7** - Pray for the Praise Team as they prepare for Worship Service this Sunday.

**Saturday, May 8** - Pray for the Greeters of tomorrow's Worship Service.

**Sunday, May 9** - Pray for Sunday Worship Service. Pray for Sunday Worship Services.

GAUMC at 9:30 a.m.

FUMC at 11:00 a.m.

**Monday, May 10** - Pray for our church families.

**Tuesday, May 11** - Pray that we can be encouraging and uplifting to one another.

**Wednesday, May 12** - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom—10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

**Thursday, May 13** - Pray for the homeless and the hungry in our community.

**Friday, May 14** - Praise God today for all of our many blessings.

**Saturday, May 15** - Pray for the ones in our congregations that are ill or rehabilitating.

**Sunday, May 16** - Pray for Sunday Worship Services.

GAUMC at 9:30 a.m.

FUMC at 11:00 a.m.

**Monday, May 17** - Pray and reflect on 2 Corinthians 5:7 *"For we live by faith, not by sight."*

**Tuesday, May 18** - Pray for the ladies of Linda Circle meeting today at 11:00 a.m.

**Wednesday, May 19** - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom—10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

**Thursday, May 20** - Pray and reflect on 2 Timothy 1:7 *"For the Spirit of God does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."*

**Friday, May 21** - Pray for Pastor Tom as he completes his sermon for the Sunday's Worship Services.

**Saturday, May 22** - Today, give thanks to God for Spring. Spring is a time of beauty, new beginnings and growth.

**Sunday, May 23** - Pray for Sunday Worship Services.

GAUMC at 9:30 a.m.

FUMC at 11:00 a.m.

**Monday, May 24** - Pray as we start a new week that God will be with us in all the many different situations we face.

**Tuesday, May 25** - Pray for the children and youth of our congregations.

**Wednesday, May 26** - Pray for the Bible Study via Zoom—10:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you would like to join, please email Pastor Tom at tburatovich@gmail.com.

**Thursday, May 27** - Pray and reflect on Bible verse 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

**Friday, May 28** - Pray for the community of Porterville today.

**Saturday, May 29** - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Psalm 62:1-2 *"Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from Him. Truly He is my fortress, I will never be shaken."*

**Sunday, May 30** - Pray for Sunday Worship Services.

GAUMC at 9:30 a.m.

FUMC at 11:00 a.m.

**Monday, May 31** - Pray and reflect on Bible verse Isaiah 43:18-19 *"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."*

## 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 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 UMC**

- Loretta Sonksen • May 5
- Adam Garrett • May 11
- Margie Mylander • May 20
- Ethel Anderson • May 26
- Linda Rhoadarmer • May 27
- Stacey Farquharson • May 28
- Dare Quatacker • May 30

**Grand Ave UMC**

- Jason Buratovich • May 1
- Electa Wright • May 5
- Shirley Gutierrez • May 10
- Fernando Gutierrez Jr. • May 23

**Linda Circle**

On Tuesday, May 18, the Linda Circle group will have a meeting at Grand Avenue at 11:00 a.m. Please bring your own lunch and there is no host for this meeting.

**Next Newsletter Deadline**

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

**First United Methodist Church  
Grand Ave United Methodist Church**

*Weekday Meetings are via Computer Connection*

- [www.grandavenue.org](http://www.grandavenue.org) or
- [www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC](https://www.facebook.com/PortervilleFUMC) or
- [www.facebook.com/GrandAvenueUMC](https://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.

**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*

**Announcements**

**Church Yard Sale**

*Grand Avenue Missions Yard Sale*

Friday, April 30 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Saturday, May 1 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Donate, Shop, Help** - Contact Lenora for more information 559-942-0995

**Clothing Closet at First**

Clothing Closet will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on **Saturday, May 1**. Masks and gloves are still required. We will continue to be open by appointment during the month. Call 559-920-0977 for more information. We are in need of children's clothes sizes 6-10.

**Grand Ave Work Day**

Save the date! **Thursday May 20**, 9:00 a.m. to 12 p.m. is a new twist for our Spring Cleaning. The Trustees believe a mid-week work day might be a good alternative to our traditional Saturday work day.

Please plan on helping us maintain our campus, and shaking off the dust, and cobwebs, after a year of shut down. Please contact the Church Office or Ray and Patricia Holdsworth for more information. Thanks and God Bless. Ray H for the Trustees  
Grand Ave Office 559-784-3791  
Ray 559-202-9010 • Patricia 559-202-8130

**Wednesday Online Bible Study**

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