



ST. LUKE'S UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH  
DENTON, MD

# THE VOICE

JULY/AUGUST 2021

## MUSINGS FROM PASTOR DAN

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Some time ago, during the Children's message, I asked the question: "How do you know something is true?" Using a simple mathematical equation to illustrate the point, I posed this question: "How do you know  $1 + 1 = 2$ ?"

Waiting for an answer, and not knowing what was going through their minds at that time, I was certain I would not get an answer, if only because the question is rarely asked.

I said, "The reason we know this equation is true is because every time we try it, it works. Every time I take one of something (I used stones to illustrate), and add another one of something, I have two of something. Every time I try it, it works." Then, connecting this to the Bible, I stated, "This is how I know the Bible is true; every time I try it, it works."

For a children's message, such illustrations are exquisitely useful and satisfactory. The statement, "every time I try it, it works," applied to the Bible and Mathematics is true to my understanding and experience; however, mathematics and theology differ in a very crucial way.

In the mathematical world,  $1 + 1 = 2$  is an absolute certainty. It never changes, it never deviates, it is not subject to the whims of cultural fancy or "new understandings." Math-

ematics is one of the rare aspects of human knowledge that seems to remain constant. However, there is only one reason that such formulas work, despite its veracity. It works because we all agree on the meaning of the symbols. Even if the symbols are different, we still have agreement. For example, the equations,  $5 + 5 = 10$  or  $V + V = X$ , are both true because the 5 and V and the 10 and X represent the same quantity and the symbols "+" and "=" carry the same meaning.

However, what would happen if suddenly we disagreed upon the meanings of the numbers and thought that the symbol for 2 actually means one and the symbol for 1 means five and the symbol for 5 means three. Suppose someone else disagreed and assigned a different value to the symbols. It does not take long to realize that the constancy of mathematical equations would disappear and great havoc would be reaped upon our world, which functions in so many ways with numbers.

When it comes to the Bible though, it seems to be different. In too many instances and in too many ways, the Bible is understood subjectively— That is, understanding is based on what the reader wants it to mean. This, of course, is perhaps as substantive a problem as disbelief in God. If I make the Bible say what I want, then I become god. If someone disagrees, I would simply say they are wrong.

In essence, one's opinion upon a matter that conflicts with another can only be resolved by a preponderance of evidence and facts. In our time, of course, even the so-called evidence and facts as presented by far too many aspects of the culture, and even in the church, are patently false or are spun in a way to make them seem true. Going back to the math example, one might argue that if I take one glass of water and pour another glass of water into the same receiving glass, I will only have one glass of water, thus,  $1+1=1$ . This is both true and false. Yes, there is only one glass of water, but you have twice as much water. Spin, spin, spin. The lunacy continues unabated and we have to keep trying to discern what is true and what is false. Frankly, I think this is why so many give up trying to find the truth.

So, how are we to approach the Bible? As I have noted in several ways over the last year, and will continue to teach and illustrate, its literary structure compels its understanding. This is the key starting point to grappling with what God, the author, intended. While I have illustrated this in some of the biblical narratives, we also must understand that there are similar symmetrical patterns in books such as Psalms and Proverbs, and these structures help us to make meaning of the text. For example, Psalm 25 is formatted in a "*chiastic*" arrangement that features matching sections on pleas for help, divine instruction, and forgiveness. The centerpiece of the Psalm focuses upon the declaration that God is a gracious, loving, and forgiving teacher and guide. Its literary structure would look like this:

**a. Introductory plea for Help. (25:1-3)**

- Do not let me be put to shame.
- Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame.
- Do not let my enemies triumph over me.

**b. Pleas for divine instruction! (25:4-5)**

- Show me your ways, O God.

**c. Plea for forgiveness. (25:6-7)**

- Do not remember...my transgressions.
- For the sake of your goodness, O God.

**d. Literary/Theological Center:**

God's good and gracious character.

"Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant." (25:8-10)

**c. Plea for forgiveness. (25:11)**

- Pardon my guilt.
- For the sake of your name, O God.

**b. Pleas for divine instruction ! (25:4-5)**

- He will show them the way.

**a. Concluding plea for Help (25:15-21)**

- Do not let me be put to shame.
- I wait for you.
- Consider how many are my enemies.

What an amazing book! The Bible's wisdom and knowledge can never be exhausted. The more we read and study, the more we see the grandeur and glory of God within it. By the way, Psalm 25 is also an acrostic. That is, each successive line begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order. The awe of God's Word, even in its literary structure, compels its understanding and our desire to study it. Add God the Holy Spirit who grants us wisdom and knowledge and one would wonder why we need anything else in this life other than a perfecting relationship with God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

Peace.

Pastor Dan



## **The Ignite Praise Team** **is Looking for New Talent!**

The Praise Team at St. Luke's is looking for a few new members. We are looking for a keyboard player, someone to run sound, and someone to run live video during the contemporary service.

If God is leading you to this ministry, please reach out and contact Alicia Weippert (410-463-7461 or [flicka62001@yahoo.com](mailto:flicka62001@yahoo.com)) or call the church office (410-479-2171).



### **Join the Cookies & Cards Ministry**

Cookies and Cards is a ministry to members and friends of our congregation. We do our best to remember birthdays and anniversaries and send along “get well” cards as well.

Once we get back to normal in the fall, we will meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 10am in the hospitality room to write “thinking of you” cards to residents in senior living centers, and to send birthday cards to the residents at those centers.

If you can write, we would love to have you join us!

Lastly, we accept all card donations (except at this time we have plenty of Christmas cards.) Sometimes you get cards along with a letter asking for donations and if you don't need them, please pass them along. (Birthday, get well, thinking of you cards are needed at this time.)

We hope to see some of you at 10:00 am at our first meeting on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> to help write encouraging cards.



By Bette Shull



## Notes From United Methodist Women

Submitted by: Becky Schoonover

Congratulations to our high school and college graduates who were recognized at our June 13 services! We wish you the best!

**Save the Dates!!** We are looking forward to having our **Church Picnic, August 29th.**  
Join us on **October 24, as we celebrate Anniversary Sunday.**

We will not have Vacation Bible School this summer. There has been low attendance in the past few years and we did not have the time to find volunteers for this year.

*Have a great summer!*

### Elementary Sunday School

As previously announced, the Elementary Sunday School class is now adjourned for the summer and will **resume on September 12, 2021**. Additionally, Mr. Jim is retiring as teacher of this class, and therefore we will need two teachers for the 2021-2022 school year.



In the past, we have found that our children are better served if elementary is divided into two classes: One for the younger children (K, 1, 2) and one for the upper elementary (3, 4, 5). Jim shared recently, “Both elementary classrooms are well supplied, have a curriculum and the kids are always awesome.” Jim also shared that he is willing to assist in getting things started, by regular planning meetings with new teachers, as well as access to past files and examples of crafts.

Those interested can contact the church office (410-479-2171) and/or Jim Orr (jto327@yahoo.com) for further information and/or questions.



### **Prayer Concerns.....**

Charlene Robbins, Betty Pickard, David Hagel, Heather Burris, Patricia Morrison, Garry Griffith, Judy Allen, Ruth Dore, Christy and Layla Russell, Tim Dayton, Taylor Moody, Rob Cohee, Cricket and Glenn Williams, Patti McPeake, Beth Homesley, Cricket and Glen Williams, Michael and Ryan Alexander, Ed Perry, Vicky Winter, Mike Benny, Kurt Plinke, Helen Vogt, Robyn Smith, Hollis Cantwell, Rea Poore, Pastor Rick Vance, Brooke Schroder, Sharon Eaton, Renee Barringer, Colleen MacFarland, Tarry Griffith, Robbin Ritter, Herb Granger, Wendy Bradley, Rev. Alex Slonin, Archie Carroll, Brooke Drawdy, Susan Bunker, Josh Breeding, Gary Simpson, Sylvia Holland, Anne Jusell, Alan and Gloria Vandam, Robbie Lister, Pat Browne, Lisa Barge, Jim Johnson, Carol Stockley, Hayden Semans, Conrad Rosemere, Elaine Friel, Sarah Price, and our country and its leaders. Praise for recovery of Jana Dean, Dolly Smith, and Elaine Orme.

**Sympathy to the family and friends of** Larry Carrow, Su Jussell-Lappin, Phyllis Harrison, and Ann Justice

**Prayers for those serving in the U.S. Military:** John Biddle, Jake Brown, Chelsea Bunker, Sean George, Seth Gill, Brockman Harris, Jr. Mann, Mitchell Mann, Justin Moore, Andrew Robbins, Dale Tuel, James Wright, and Matthew Parker.

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To add names to these lists, we ask that you either call (410-479-2171), e-mail ([stlukes@goeaston.com](mailto:stlukes@goeaston.com)), or drop-off/mail to 100 South 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Denton. Please be sure to include your name and telephone number so that we can contact you regarding the status of the person needing prayer; otherwise the name will be removed after a couple of months.

Thank you to all who remember those named on our prayer lists. Only God knows how many are blessed because you care enough to pray.

*Do not be anxious about anything,  
but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.  
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*~Philippians 4:6-7*

## Sharing our Stories



Not sure if many of you have had the chance to watch the new series about Jesus' life called "The Chosen" (I highly recommend it!), but in one of the episodes, Jesus asks a lame man to share his story and explains that sharing stories is what God's people do. This scene is not in any gospel and is fictionalized, but I agree with the writers that it's a biblical idea – God's people tell the stories of "Who God is" and what He has done in human history, as well as our own personal stories of how God is working in our lives in the here and now. It connects us one to another, to God's People of the past, and can be the source of both joy and inspiration.

I had one of those story-sharing, inspiring experiences recently in the St. Luke's office when I heard the story of two people whose gestures of kindness and faith blessed not only one another but me as well. So I thought I would share their story... (with their blessing, of course!)

A man made a generous donation to our church, and we discovered that we did not have his address to send a thank you note, so I called to get his address. He explained that he now lives in Florida and that the donation was in honor of one of the members of our church. With his permission, I shared with that person that a donation had been made in her honor because she had had such an impact on his life, so much so that it changed its direction. And she shared the rest of the story with me.

You see, that man was once an addict and his life was dark and out of control, and her sister was his girlfriend who shared in his addictions and troubles. In those days she prayed for them, spoke hope to them, and he eventually grew in ways that helped him escape that life – He is now married, has several children, is healthy and has a career. Her sister was not so lucky – She did not escape and passed away two years ago, still an addict.

In this man's journey as a former addict, he decided it was time to make amends, and one of those wrongs he needed to right was to confess to her that he had stolen her engagement rings years before and to offer to pay for it. When he called, she was delighted to hear about his new life and his health, and forgave him for his offense against her. She then asked that he donate the money to St. Luke's Church. She had no idea until that phone call of the impact she made on this man's life, and I can only imagine how important it was for him in that dark time to have a living example of a what a loving Christian "looks like." It is also my hope that their phone conversation may have provided solace to her as she continues to grieve for the loss of her sister.



Such beautiful gestures – A woman praying for people in a dark place, a man confessing his sins, her forgiveness, his gesture of generosity, her gesture of generosity – Their story touched me and made me ponder anew the workings of the Lord and the ways he weaves such beautiful stories into the fabric of our lives.

So if you hear about or experience one of those "God stories," share it. Maybe we can even start a regular column in The Voice and share those beautiful stories of God working in our lives. If you're not thrilled with the idea of writing it down, you can tell the story to someone who can get it on paper. But sharing those God-stories is a wonderful practice of God's people going back a long, long time.

*Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.  
One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.  
They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—and I will meditate on your wonderful works.  
They tell of the power of your awesome works—and I will proclaim your great deeds. Psalm 145:3-6*

God's Peace,  
Carrie Soldano



**IMPORTANT  
DATES**

- **Sunday, July 4th - Communion Sunday**
- **Monday, July 5th – Office Closed for observance of July 4th Holiday**
- **Wednesday, July 7th – Sarah’s Circle 7:30 pm, HR**
- **Sunday, August 1st – Communion Sunday**
- **Wednesday, August 11th – Delmarva Blood Bank 12 pm – 6 pm, FH**
- **Thursday, August 19th – Leadership Meeting 7:30 pm, Chapel**
- **Fri & Sat, August 20th & 21st – Denton Summerfest**
- **Sunday, August 29th – St. Luke’s End-of-Summer Picnic 11 am (One service at 10 am)**
- **Monday, Sept 1st – Cookies & Cards 10 am, HR**

237<sup>th</sup> Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference

June 10-12, 2021



Another Annual Conference gathering feeling the effects of Covid restrictions. Sessions were presented through Zoom or live-streamed on Facebook.

The Laity Session featured clips of various churches in our Conference creatively adapting ministries for their own congregations and specifically reaching out to others in the community.

“Heal Us, Lord”, the theme of this year’s Annual Conference reminds us that brokenness abounds and sin is evident everywhere we look. How are we, as Christians, dealing with current issues in our world?

Through video presentations, guest speakers encouraged our congregations to examine and address issues related to immigration, minorities, the poor, racism, biases, political tensions, mental health, and hospital ministry.

Committee reports were presented throughout the day. One of note for our youth is the Higher Education & Campus Ministry report reminding us of Conference Scholarships. Do we encourage our graduates to apply???

The next Youth Rally, “Find Your Piece”, will be held January 7-9, 2022.

Resolution Snapshot:

Financial: Treasurer’s report, Conference budget, minimum salary & compensation for retired & serving pastors; all passed

Disaffiliation: Congregations from 11 churches within our conference plan to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. Each followed the procedures required through the Taylor Disaffiliation Plan, established by the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference, and were approved by the voting members of Annual Conference. Disaffiliation will be finalized as each congregation meets its obligations (deadline December 31, 2023).

Celebrating the lives of those in ministry:

Joe Smith retired and Rev. Ray Graham is “re-retiring” after 50 yrs. of service in the ministry!!

Our friends, Rev. Arthur George and Julia George were remembered during the Service of Remembrance where a bell was tolled for each clergy or spouse who passed away during the last year.

The Service of Ordination celebrated those individuals who are answering God’s call to serve in ministry.

St. Luke’s contributed \$50 to each of the Conference Appeals: Board of Ordained Ministries Scholarship Fund (for those preparing for the ministry); Central Congo Partnership (clean water, education, health care, self-sustaining agricultural program); and Justice for Our Neighbors (a United Methodist non-profit providing legal assistance to immigrants).

This year, recordings of the Business Sessions, Service of Remembrance, and Service of Ordination are all available on Facebook at “Peninsula Delaware Annual Conference”. All guest speaker presentations and voting records are accessible there.

Please continue to keep St. Luke’s and the United Methodist Church in your prayers as we try to live into the lives God has planned for us!

Linda Parsons, Lay Representative to Annual Conference



# St. Luke's United Methodist Church Treasurer's Report

For Period January through December 2021 as of May 31, 2021

Description	Annual Budget 2021	Actual Income or Expense To Date	Variance	% Budg Used
<b><u>Income</u></b>				
Offerings	242,307.00	87,724.29	154,582.71	36.20%
Offerings - Sunday School	100.00	39.00	61.00	39.00%
Interest Income	25.00	12.57	12.43	50.28%
Building Use	3,000.00	2,130.00	870.00	71.00%
Administrative Building Use	0.00		0.00	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>245,432.00</b>	<b>89,905.86</b>	<b>155,526.14</b>	<b>36.63%</b>
<b><u>Expenses</u></b>				
<b>Pastor Expenses</b>				
Salary	58,000.00	24,166.65	33,833.35	41.67%
Travel Reimbursement	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%
Cable TV at parsonage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%
Hospitalization/Dental	18,180.00	8,500.00	9,680.00	46.75%
Bishop's Retreat	0.00		0.00	0.00%
Continuing Education	0.00		0.00	0.00%
Pension Plan	9,512.00	3,963.35	5,548.65	41.67%
Pastor Expenses - other			0.00	
<b>Total Pastor Expenses</b>	<b>85,692.00</b>	<b>36,630.00</b>	<b>49,062.00</b>	<b>42.75%</b>
<b>Staff Expenses</b>				
Staff Salaries	71,400.00	29,971.32	41,428.68	41.98%
Wage and Tax Expenses	7,140.00	2,632.57	4,507.43	36.87%
Worker's Compensation	1,428.00		1,428.00	0.00%
Expenses - other			0.00	
<b>Total Staff Expenses</b>	<b>79,968.00</b>	<b>32,603.89</b>	<b>47,364.11</b>	<b>40.77%</b>
<b>Other Operational Expenses</b>				
Accounting & Legal	400.00	365.61	34.39	91.40%
Annual Conference expense	500.00	0.00	500.00	0.00%
Christian Education/Sunday School	1,200.00	63.47	1,136.53	5.29%
Conference Apportionments	22,379.00	5,594.75	16,784.25	25.00%
Easton District Office	1,343.00		1,343.00	0.00%
Janitorial Supplies	1,000.00	145.64	854.36	14.56%
Electricity/Oil	12,000.00	7,242.18	4,757.82	60.35%
Equipment Rental & Maintenance	6,500.00	2,324.21	4,175.79	35.76%
Kitchen/ParsonageFuel	4,000.00	1,957.07	2,042.93	48.93%
Grass and Shrubbery Maintenance	1,800.00		1,800.00	0.00%
Insurance	10,300.00	9,255.00	1,045.00	89.85%
Maintenance and Repairs	5,000.00	1,305.00	3,695.00	26.10%
Miscellaneous	100.00		100.00	0.00%
Music Committee	1,200.00	338.00	862.00	28.17%
MYF Program	200.00	312.29	(112.29)	156.15%
Office Supplies	3,000.00	179.45	2,820.55	5.98%
Postage	1,300.00	725.00	575.00	55.77%
Pastor/Organist, Substitutes	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%
Pastor's Moving Exp Escrow Acct	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%
Stewardship	1,300.00	769.57	530.43	59.20%
Telephone	2,000.00	1,579.24	420.76	78.96%
Water and Sewer	1,500.00	595.91	904.09	39.73%
Spiritual Life	1,750.00	935.44	814.56	53.45%
Worship Materials	1,000.00	215.01	784.99	21.50%
<b>Total Operational Expenses</b>	<b>79,772.00</b>	<b>33,902.84</b>	<b>45,869.16</b>	<b>42.50%</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>245,432.00</b>	<b>103,136.73</b>	<b>142,295.27</b>	<b>42.02%</b>
<b>Net Income over Expenses</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>(13,230.87)</b>	<b>13,230.87</b>	

# The Voice

of St. Luke's

July/August 2021

**St. Luke's UMC Staff:**

**Rev. Dan T. Gedman- Minister**

Administrative Assistant: Carrie Soldano

Director of Music: Rebecca Zinser

Christian Education and Youth Ministry

Director: VACANT

Nursery Coordinator: Alex Penn

Sexton: Dennis R. Weaver, Sr.

Voice Editor: Stacey Reid

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