

# The Methodist

Burnt Hills United Methodist Church News

May 2020

Greetings! I hope this newsletter finds each of you doing well, adapting as needed and looking forward to (hopefully) being able to come together again soon. It seems an appropriate time to ask that standard question John Wesley had his classes ask each other: "How is it with your soul?"

I know that these have been difficult days, but I am happy to share that my soul is doing well. It has been uplifting to see how BHUMC has continued to be an active church through this challenge, even if we are not able to gather in one place. Last month, Pastor Holly's article shared a number of ways that leaders and congregation were looking to stay connected, to reach out and continue being the church in the face of the new challenges we faced. In a way, it reminded me of Isaiah 41:19, where the prophet tells us that God says "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" I am happy to share it seems we were perceiving and responding as a body in new ways to those challenges.

In addition to all those new ways we have been keeping in touch, I am happy to share with you that we are also continuing to move forward with new ways to be the body of Christ and be in ministry with our community; not just in response to Covid, but in ways that were already in process before.

**Discipleship Plan:** You may have heard that each church in Upper NY has been challenged by the Conference to consider its Discipleship Plan. For many, including BHUMC, while there are various ways to be in Discipleship, when churches received this challenge, they realized they did not have a specific "plan" in place. To respond to that challenge, Church Council has been gathering information and considering just what it means to be a Disciple. At the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, Council approved the following as our definition as an important step in developing that plan:

*Discipleship is a shared way of living where followers of Christ welcome others who are curious into the community of faith: To grow spiritually together and to go into the world to reflect God's love through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. This definition will help us focus on the next steps as we seek to reach the goal of "creating a structured process of continuous learning in a community of maturing Christians, ever growing in faith, who are prepared to go into the world to serve as disciples."*

The next step in this process is to look in more depth at what we are already doing, and what we may start doing to reach that goal. We are seeking anyone who may be interested in that process or may have ideas to share to join a small team that will be leading that effort. Please contact Pastor Doug or Pastor Holly if you are interested.

A second "new way" that is moving forward is the creation of a **Social Holiness Team**. Responding to a number of voices in our church, a small group began looking at how we could respond to important issues in society. The UMC Book of Discipline identifies the need for General and Annual Conference and District-level "Church and Society" or Social Holiness teams to support work in local churches that "favors measures that aim at decreasing or eliminating inequity; promoting inclusiveness of diversity; and establishing environments that are supportive of all people." Currently, BHUMC did not have a team specifically focused on this goal, but this small group prepared a detailed request to Council that such a team be approved to look at these issues, and provide educational and action opportunities for the congregation. That approval was received and now this team will be looking at how to organize itself and how to carry out their ministry.

I rejoice in these efforts that show BHUMC to be an active, worshipping, growing and seeking portion of the body of Christ, filled with a broad diversity of disciples. Hoping to see you all soon.

*Pastor Doug*

## **In General Conference 2020 Delay, Leaders See Needed Pause**

**By Heather Hahn and Sam Hodges, writers for *United Methodist News***

With COVID-19 upending General Conference plans, proposals to split the denomination are on hold. However, the work of the church goes on — perhaps needed more than ever. That's the assessment of a number of church leaders following the announcement that public health concerns require postponement of the denomination's top lawmaking assembly that was scheduled for May.

"I hope the delegates can use this time to completely forget about General Conference for a while, to be honest. That is certainly my plan!" said the Rev. Andy Bryan, Missouri Conference delegate and lead pastor of Manchester United Methodist Church in Missouri. "I hope we use this time to do ministry, share the love of God and continue to be the church that God is calling us to be," he added.

Bryan and other delegates who spoke with UM News agreed the postponement was necessary, given the global health emergency and related travel restrictions. However, they also spoke of the need to prayerfully use this slowdown in church decision-making.

"The postponement of the General Conference for me is one of disappointment and blessing," said the Rev. George K. Weagba, a veteran General Conference delegate and vice president at the United Methodist University of Liberia. The disappointment, he said, is that it likely delays decisions about staying or leaving the denomination, and he worries that could lead to paralysis of ministry. Yet, he also sees the possibility that God has something better in mind for the people called Methodist. "Let us remember," he said, "it is in our crisis time that the 'still voice' of the Lord speaks to our troubled hearts and if we listen, it saves us."

The Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, a Michigan Conference delegate, shared a similar sentiment. She found it instructive that the upcoming General Conference takes its theme from Psalm 46, which describes God as a refuge when the world falls apart. "We're told at the end of the psalm, 'Be still and know that I am God,'" she said. "That is what I hope delegates would do."

For much of this year, United Methodist leaders have been preparing for possible church separation to resolve the denomination's intensifying dispute over same-sex marriage and LGBTQ ordination. In recent weeks, three different groups of United Methodists have met to discuss plans for what a separate future might look like. Now church leaders across the theological spectrum see more immediate concerns, and the spread of COVID-19 puts large gatherings out of the question.

In many parts of the global church, people are under lockdown. The Rev. Lilibeth Balagan, the delegation head for the Northeast Philippines Conference, said even visits to the market in her area require permission from authorities. She supports the strong measures as well as the General Conference postponement. But she called on the church to "help the most vulnerable."

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, who is the incoming Council of Bishops president, said the pause in church proceedings can help with priorities. "This is a time to care for one another even at a distance," said Harvey, who also leads the Louisiana Conference. "Neighboring has never been more important."

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Bishop Kenneth Carter, Council of Bishops president and leader of the Florida Conference, said the denomination continues to face a time in the wilderness. “The wilderness is a time when things are stripped back to their basics,” he said. “The rabbis called it the school of the soul, and I think it’s a time when the church rediscovers what we are.”

Bryan, the Missouri Conference delegate, sees the potential in this time of social distance that church members will rediscover what binds them together. “I pray that this pandemic helps us to realize that our theological differences are not as significant as they may have seemed,” he said. “Maybe we will figure out after this that we really are all one in Christ Jesus, like Scripture tells us we are.”

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### Upper New York Annual Conference

The Eleventh Session of the Upper New York Annual Conference has been postponed due to concerns of the Coronavirus pandemic. On October 3, 2020, there will be a one-day session to allow the necessary business of the Annual Conference, as outlined in the *Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church, to be cared for. In addition, the 2020 Clergy session will be held in the afternoon of Friday, October 2, 2020, followed by the Service of Commissioning and Ordination that evening. The sessions will be held at Oncenter in Syracuse.

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### News from Staff Parish Relations Committee

We have both good new and bad news to report. We are so blessed to have Charles Hartmann working with us as our Audio/Visual Technician. He has been a godsend in this upheaval, helping the pastors and music directors transition to online services and music. Charles comes with wonderful skills to fulfill this challenge. An additional interesting fact to know is that Charles is an offensive tackle for the Troy Fighting Irish Adult Amateur Football Team. So, he is tackling this new worship challenge and helping us reach our goal!

That was the good news above. The other news is regarding our Financial Secretary position. Peter Prany has been doing an amazing job for the last 3 years and now is stepping away. Historically, this has been a job held by a church member and has been a paid position. Peter chose to treat his work as a volunteer service to the church. We realize that it is very important to replace him with someone willing to devote their time and expertise, and so we plan to offer payment as in the past. If anyone is interested, please let us know by contacting the church by phone or email. Peter has graciously offered to train a new Financial Secretary. This role involves tracking and acknowledging the pledged giving to the church. It requires a commitment to confidentiality and a facility with computerized record-keeping.

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Do you receive **A Word from BHUMC** emails, that have been going out regularly during this “Pause” time? We would really like to reach everyone we possibly can. Please drop a note to Pastor Holly at [hn@nycap.rr.com](mailto:hn@nycap.rr.com), so we can put you on the distribution. And please tell others who may have missed this.



We would like to thank our wonderful and amazing Church Family for all their support during Jane’s illness and recovery. So many prayers and acts of compassion and kindness sustained us during this difficult time. The generous meals and food delivery at our door certainly nourished both the body and the soul! We are so blessed! —With sincere gratitude, Erik and Jane Smith

## College Scholarships



College around the corner? We urge high school seniors to apply for Memorial Committee Scholarships. Call the church office at 399-5144 and ask for an application to be mailed to you. The deadline is Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup>.

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**Caregiver Support Group** The May 2nd Caregiver Support Group meeting has been canceled due to the closure of the church. I am available by phone (399-8838) or email (hlchristie@aol.com) to discuss any caregiver matters you may have. — Lynn Christie

**Lunch Bunch** The May Lunch Bunch gathering has been canceled. It is suggested that you keep in touch with Lunch Bunch friends by phone during this stay-at-home time.

**Community Lunch** In the coming months, we hope and pray that Community Lunch will return to its full mission of providing social interaction and hospitality, as well as food! In the meantime, the team is seeking to serve others in the ways we can. With the extension of the stay at home order, we will not be holding an in-person lunch in May. We are happy to provide a home-delivered lunch to those who would wish one, and we are trying to ensure our church members have what they need. Do you need a grocery delivery? If so, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

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### Crop Walk *Ending Hunger One Step at a Time*



The annual Crop Walk on Sunday, May 3, was recently changed to a virtual walk. Sponsors and teams are now invited to walk on their own, in their own space, and request donations online. Paula Miller is leading a team, called "BHUMC Team." To read Paula's message, as well as to consider the opportunity to donate, please click on the following web address: <https://www.crophungerwalk.org/schenectadyny/Member/MyPage/3993044/Paula-Miller>

