Pastor’s Message

Pastor Lou Grettenberger, Senior Pastor

Sanctuary

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.
With thanksgiving, I’ll be a living sanctuary for You.

words and music by John Thompson and Randy Scruggs

The words from that song remind me that though we call a certain place our “sanctuary,” sanctuary is so much more than a room in a church building. The Holy Spirit, the presence of God, resides in the topography of the human heart and community. Our hearts and lives are God’s sanctuary. When we identify sanctuary as a specific physical location within a building, we sometimes lose track of the Spirit of God who is wind, fire, and still small voice. The reality of our world is that safety, escape, and protection are things only afforded to those with privilege, though the desire for these things is universal.

As I prepared to write this article about a safe way back to in-person Bible studies, committee meetings, use of our facility, and especially corporate worship, the world started to fall apart around us. I felt like the task of creating logistics for return to our building paled by comparison with our common task of building a safer world for all God’s children. The Bible invites us to worship together in spirit and in truth with very little definition around how. As your pastor, I have been working with staff and volunteers to keep you worshiping and grounded even as we are physically separated. And yet, I have to acknowledge with you how much I miss being with you in body, not just in spirit.

I have grown in exile. I hope you have as well. I pray that when we safely return to our building, we will come with a sense of renewed desire to experience and share the presence of God. We are called to provide, not just inhabit, a sanctuary. There is a practical reality to all of this, which includes a way forward for our nation, our world, and our church. As your pastor, it is my role to take care of the flock and guide us on a path home. I am holding firm to our church’s founder John Wesley’s instruction to “do no harm.”

Last week, our Administrative Council met via Zoom to discuss our church’s present circumstances and our next steps forward. We acknowledged the many ministries of the church that have continued altered but unabated, including: worship, Bible study, congregational care, and mission. Others have become very difficult—food fellowship, circle meetings, Vacation Bible School, Sunday School, youth group, and camp programming, just to name a few.

Recently, the Council acted to create a temporary task force which is working—beginning this week—to create a plan, which will outline strategies for slowly and safely reopening. We will depend on staff, individual volunteers, and appropriate committees to accomplish the work outlined in the emerging plan.

All that being said, the Council has agreed that we will not be having in-person worship of any kind during the month of June. We will keep the church updated via video worship announcements and direct e-mail or snail-mail correspondence. Please, understand that this does not mean that we will necessarily immediately open for worship in July. It simply means that we know for certain that we will not be meeting in June for Sunday in-person worship.

I expect that the plan devised by the committee will include such things as staff re-entering the building, smaller groups being able to meet with provisions for social distancing, followed by larger group meetings, including worship, without the benefit of choral music and congregational singing at the outset. In the meantime, Church of the Dunes continues to build sanctuary in our hearts, homes, through online engagements.

I pray that each of you will be asking how we make this world a safe place for all God’s children, and then work with me and others to create such a place.

Blessings, Pastor Lou

CONNECT

Staying Safe, Staying Connected

Church of the Dunes is staying connected in many ways during these challenging times. Adult Council will send Care Cards to Church of the Dunes military members and college students, as it does each year at about this time. Participants in Bible study groups, along with those from Adult Council and Finishing Well Ministry joined together to stay in contact with church members known to not have internet access to church. Each week, Pastor Lou’s sermons are transcribed and mailed, along with a copy of the bulletin, to these members. Finishing Well Ministry is reaching out to members and friends age 55+ to participate in a fun and reflective “Life Story” writing project. There are Bible studies and discussion groups meeting online. At least one church committee and one supportive social group hold email round-robbins where participants exchange friendly updates. Bible lesson and devotion videos are produced and provided for children and youth and their families. If your group is meeting online or your ministry is doing its work in new ways and you’d like to let others know about it, please send details to communications@umcdunes.org.

June Scripture Readings

Sunday, June 7
Matthew 28:16-20

Sunday, June 14
Romans 5:1-8
Psalm 100
Matthew 9:35—10:1

Sunday, June 21
Matthew10:24-39
Romans 6:1b-11

Sunday, June 28
Genesis 22:1-14
Psalm 13

Online worship is available
Sunday mornings, beginning at 8:30 a.m. at www.umcdunes.org
MINISTRY STAFF UPDATES
Children’s Ministry

Greetings from Mister Dan and the Children’s Ministry Team. While we have been social distancing, staying home, and worshiping online, we have been offering the students at Church of the Dunes opportunities to learn and show Christ to others. We have been emailing and Facebook-posting video lessons every Wednesday and Sunday, and Sunday video lessons will continue through the summer. We have dropped off Easter goodie bags for Church of the Dunes pre-K–grade 5 students and sent out Mother’s Day gifts for the mothers of the children in our programs. It has been a great time keeping the students engaged with God. Thank you for all your support and kindness as we keep striving for the goal God has set for us.

During the summer months we are going to invite children and families to participate in a Flat Jesus activity. Flat Jesus is paper cutout shaped like Jesus. Like Flat Stanley has helped children with literacy and geography, Flat Jesus helps children stay plugged into their faith throughout the summer months—giving families a unique opportunity to continually engage in their faith development all summer long. Kids and their families are invited to include Flat Jesus in backyard and playtime adventures this summer, and take pictures of Flat Jesus on those adventures to share with all of us in Children's Ministry emails and on the church’s Facebook page. The students will receive an email from Mister Dan with a Flat Jesus page for them to color. Everyone is invited to participate. If you would like to receive a Flat Jesus, please email dmalseed@UMCDunes.org.

Daniel Malseed
Director of Children’s Ministries (pre-K–grade 5)
dmalseed@UMCDunes.org

Youth Ministry

Like all ministries at the church, Youth Ministry has been busy adapting to these unusual times. Traditionally, Church of the Dunes celebrates graduating high school seniors with a card shower, a special recognition during worship, and a reception with cake. Despite all the changes in day-to-day life, two out of three of these traditions were successfully completed—graduation cards were sent and received, and the graduates were honored during online worship on May 31. While the reception with cake could not be held this year, Youth Ministry staff created a large, personalized “Congratulations” banner that stood next to the church sign on Sheldon Road.

Special devotion videos, created just for youth and their families are provided on the youth ministry Facebook group page. If you would like more information about those resources, please email Ashley at aboersma@umcdunes.org

Ashley Boersma
Director of Youth Ministries (grades 6-12)
aboersma@umcdunes.org

Music and Worship Arts Ministry

I hope this finds you all well. I miss making music with you! Had you told me three months ago that I would be learning the challenges of producing worship videos instead of leading rehearsal, we probably would have had a good laugh about it!

In the time the building has been shut down I have focused my attention on putting worship together, recording music for the services, receiving and editing all kinds of video and audio clips and putting it all together and getting it online. It has been a daunting process, but I have loved learning! It takes many hours to put together our online worship each week.

I have had many requests for some sort of virtual choir, and I am still trying to figure out how to make that happen with the technology the church currently has. I have loved having many others join us virtually (liturgists, staff, guests, previously recorded songs from kids’ choir, etc.) in our online services, but I will be so happy to see all of you when we get back to worship.

Please know I am missing each one of you and look forward to the time when we can again worship together in God's house.

Megan Horist
Director of Worship Arts
mhorist@umcdunes.org

WALK IN FAITH
The Prayer Labyrinth

A prayer labyrinth is nestled in the woods behind the Church of the Dunes building. This beautiful place is open to all and could be used as a spiritual part of outdoor exercise times. The winding path, outlined with stones, gently leads to the center of the labyrinth and back out again, allowing time for quiet contemplation and walking prayer. It is open to the Church of the Dunes family and the public.

This labyrinth was dedicated in September 2016 to honor and remember Joni Lee Starkey, a beloved member of Church of the Dunes.

If you visit the labyrinth and encounter others from outside your household while you are there, please practice social distancing.

IMPORTANT NOTE
At the Church

Currently, the church building is closed and in-person gatherings continue to be suspended until the recently formed task force makes further recommendations. Please continue to join us for worship online at www.umcdunes.org; Sunday services are available beginning at 8:30 a.m. Offering may be given by mail or online.

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