

NEWSLETTER

Urbana First Methodist

October & November 2022

A Message from *Pastor Bob*

It's just around noon time in downtown Urbana and rush-hour in New York City. The streets, alleys and sidewalks were jammed with well over 1,000 people, but aside from the familiar sounds from the clarion ringing from the courthouse and from Urbana First, it was eerily quiet. Persons were conversing with the crowd they came with, and vendors and community groups were interacting with their prospective clients, but still it seemed quiet. Maybe it was quiet because this was the first time the Pride Celebration was in our backyard of Urbana First. People were pressed in together, shoulder to shoulder, but occupying a hundred different worlds.



If a recent national study holds true, about 43 of those people feel isolated. Almost half of them would say they are sometimes or always lonely, and about 47 of them would say they don't have meaningful face-to-face interactions with others daily. Dr. Roger Ross spoke with our Turbo Small Groups Team, and he states that Sunday morning worship can be the most isolating place for many. He says the gap between the people and God can become greater because people tend to feel as if they cannot measure up or do what God is asking of them.

The younger people would most likely express the greatest struggle in this area; it's no longer older Americans, but young adults between 18 and 22 who claim the title of the loneliest generation.

These are a few snapshots from a survey of 20,000 Americans conducted by Cigna, one of the largest health insurers in the country. The company called the results "alarming" and joined a growing number of voices speaking out about a "loneliness epidemic" with dire consequences. Christians of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and income levels are struggling with loneliness, from the small towns, without a traffic light to the big city of Chicago.

We have crowded loneliness," says James Roberson, lead pastor of The Bridge Church in New York City. "We're around people, but no one is connected." "We have crowded loneliness. We're around people, but no one is connected."

Just because someone is extroverted, or people that you think are social does not mean they are not lonely. Here me, the art of being able to create close friendships is not determined by how many people you have around you. It's actually by how many people you are intimate with, who can see inside of you.

Our community of faith has grown, through our online giving, and in person worship this past year. But for the Church's ability to find and nurture those intimate friendships is "a dying art." To help bring it back to life, I am encouraging our church to make this commitment: "I'm going to search for relationships like I would water or food. We must find ways for us to find small groups or life groups we can connect with one another and grow in our faith.

There's good reason to treat meaningful relationships like basic necessities. The effects of loneliness can be extreme, and evidence of a public health crisis is mounting.

A 2018 article in the Public Policy & Aging Report listed one study after another linking loneliness to a slew of health problems and even early death. Depression, dementia, high blood pressure, inflammation, and decreased immunity are all more prevalent in men and women who are lonely. In fact, an analysis of multiple studies involving hundreds of thousands of people found loneliness is as deadly as chain smoking, and deadlier than obesity.

We were created for connection and community.

As a community of faith, we pray for strength and wisdom to resist the cultural tides that lead to isolation, there are abundant opportunities to be light in a dark and lonely world. Here are three of them:

1. Help people connect to God.

Slowing down and seeking God is counter-cultural. Encourage individuals and families to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).

2. Talk about loneliness and mental health.

It's strange to me how the people who will say, 'Don't take medication for mental illness' are the same people who will get immunization shots before they go to India on an international missions' trip. God made medicine. God has equipped people with the necessary skills to help. And it requires a community to do this."

3. Do life together.

The early church followers were inseparable. They didn't just see each other once a week; they were in each other's homes, at each other's dinner tables, sharing what they had and learning together (see Acts 2:42-47). This is our blueprint for community.

We here at Urbana First don't want to take pictures of the food; we really want people to eat with us. We seek to develop Life /Small Groups to help bridge that gap in people's lives. We will begin with a Turbo group who will help plan, develop, and implement with our leadership to create places for persons to connect, grow and be welcomed. We know people can go anywhere and attend any church and mess up and be left out. We all can be cancelled anywhere. The church is different because we commit to broken people. Our task or purpose is to help people get connected to God, to one another and to the world.

CELEBRATIONS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



October

01-Ryker Huffstutler	15- Ruthann Shurts
02-Adelle Fritz	16- Bob Stahl
02- Darla Kvidera	19- Jerry Meyer
09- Laura Orr	20- Rich Govert
11- LaMar Schlabach	29- Marjorie Mead
15- Barbara Lyon	

November

05-Libby Himelick
07- Dick McGuire
08- Emma Kolakowski
09- Dollie DuMontelle
17- Rick Borup
23- Mary Frederick



Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Please let us know so we can celebrate you!



Thanksgiving Meditation

As we enjoy the abundant blessings of family, food and security, we should be mindful of another road many travel that leads to poverty, homelessness, fractured families, abuse, hunger and despair. Thanksgiving is a wonderful holiday to gather to celebrate the blessings God has given to us, but the spirit of the holiday should call us to action throughout the year. Our Thanksgiving must become ThanksLiving. The giving and living part of our thankfulness to God is found in

compassionately serving those on the beaten path. Hebrews 13:16 urges, "Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices." Sometimes, we become so focused on thanking God for being the recipients of God's blessings — and we should — that we forget the giving aspect of Thanksgiving. God has blessed us so that we may multiply God's blessings by our giving of blessings to others.

-Rose Taylor, *Ministry Matters*

FALL & ADVENT SERMON SERIES

Not Ashamed

Sunday, October 2.

October is an odd oasis in the liturgical rhythms of many churches. Some focus on stewardship; but for many, October is the last breath before the holiday season to come and the changing of liturgical seasons and years. To fill this space, then, we present a worship series titled “Not Ashamed” based on the Epistle readings through the month of October. The lectionary walks through the second epistle to Timothy, giving us some of the highlights of this powerful but short letter.

This October can be the perfect time to help the congregation along the discipleship path by shoring up their faith with a worship series designed to help declare that we are not ashamed.

Face to Face With Jesus

We continue to work our way through Luke’s gospel with a new series on **Sunday, October 30.**

Every encounter with Jesus brings transformation. At the very least, we see ourselves in a new light, in all our humanness. And we can either weep or laugh. When we weep, we might pull into ourselves and run away from the source of pain and shame. But if we can laugh, then we might be able to stay and find healing and a new way of being alive in the world.

Through these encounters, these face-to-face moments that individuals and groups had with

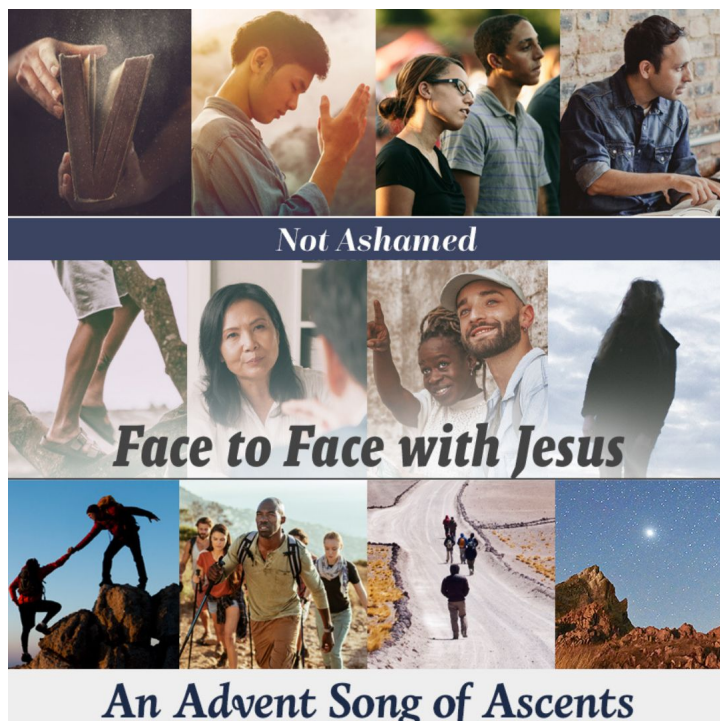
We begin our first fall series on

Jesus here in the gospel of Luke, we can find a way to new life and new hope if we’re willing to be honest with ourselves and with him.

We too here at the end of our liturgical year want to be face to face with Jesus.

An Advent Song of Ascents

Beginning **Sunday, November 27**, we will start our Advent series! Isaiah is our anchor text for this Advent worship series. But Psalms gives us the mood, theme, or even soul. “I was glad when they said to me ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” The opening line from Psalm 122 captures something of the Advent spirit this year. From “I was glad” to “go to the house of the Lord.” We are singing a song of ascent this Advent season.



(continued on the next page)

COMMUNITY NEWS & VIEWS

Christians Fighting Christians!



It should not surprise anyone that the followers of Jesus fight each other. An honest look at the New Testament scriptures reveals the sobering

fact that even before the Holy Spirit descended and gave birth to the church, the followers of Jesus were already fighting.

They fought over popularity, position, and power. They fought and argued over the use of money, managing access to Jesus, and the very character and nature of Jesus. I believe it is fair to say that just like two of the pre-Christian ancestors (Jacob and Esau), the church was born fighting.

Jesus' last Upper Room prayer with the disciples was a prayer for unity among the disciples and those subsequent followers. Jesus prayed that we would become united and function as one. There have been brief moments and sample-sized examples of Jesus' prayer coming to fruition but overall, sad to say, unity has not become the norm among Christians.

Martin E. Marty wrote an article in October of 2015 titled, Christians fighting Christians. Martin made the statement, "Cynics, but not only cynics, like to observe, not always inaccurately, that Christians are never happy unless they are fighting -- each other."

Shortly after becoming a District Superintendent, I was asked, "What do you do?" My response was quick and simple, "I referee church fights!" Even as a Bishop, I spend an awful lot of my time, assisted by the Cabinet and a very gifted staff, trying to settle church fights.

Christians fight over the dumbest of things! Churches argue and split over things that have absolutely little or nothing to do with them personally or locally. There are times that I want to say, as Jesus did to the disciple John, "What is that to you?"

I believe if we focus on the ministry needs that are right in front of us, we would be so busy and so overwhelmed that we would have no time to get caught up in how others are engaging their respective areas in a different manner. Much like Nehemiah, we would be consumed by our own work, and we simply would not have time to stop our important work to engage in the affairs of others. In short, we would trust the Lord of the harvest to know how and when to separate the weeds and the wheat.

Christians fighting Christians is always a costly battle and there are no winners. Everyone loses when we fight. The results are always negative:

- Credibility is tarnished or shattered
- Ministry is hampered or hindered
- People laugh at and mock us as hypocrites
- Our community witness and influence diminish and becomes irreparably damaged
- Mission and ministry take a back seat and is often ignored altogether

- The body of Christ is saddled with shame
- We assist the enemy of our faith in the war against the spreading of Christianity

Fighting seems to be built into our DNA as Christians. Fighting, however, is not what Jesus desires. Jesus calls us to love one another and to be at peace with each other. This is only possible when we become individually committed to the pursuit of Christlikeness. Jesus did not demand that it be, “my way or the highway.” Jesus emptied himself and offered himself in service to others. Jesus listened carefully to the voice of God and did that which was costly and uncomfortable to himself so that others might be spared eternal pain and everlasting defeat.

I have noticed that in our current church “battle royale” each “side” is claiming and crying foul and unfair play on the part of others. I have not heard anyone say, individually or church-wide, “I’m sorry and I am regretful and repentant for any harm that I have caused you or the body of Christ. Please forgive me, I have sinned against God and against you.”

It is only when we become personally invested in stopping the fight, that armistice will come. I am convinced that we are all running out of time and that our attention and focus needs to be on seeking, serving, and saving this dying world, and not on Christians fighting Christians. My prayer remains hope-filled, “Let there be peace, and let it begin with me!”

God bless,
Bishop Beard

YOUTH ACTIVITIES



Trunk-or-Treat Car Sign Up

If you would like to participate by decorating your car trunk or donating candy for the kids, please contact the office!

office@urbanafirstmethodist.org



CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2022

OCTOBER

Sunday, October 2, World Communion Sunday

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)
5:00 pm—Community Communion Service @
New Covenant Fellowship, *Champaign IL*

Sunday, October 9

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)

Tuesday, October 11 & Wednesday, Oct 12

5:00 pm—Community Health Clinic (*Parlor*)

Thursday, October 13

6:00 pm—Dulcimer Group (*Parlor*)

Sunday, October 16

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)

Saturday, October 22

10:00 am—UWF Meeting (*Perkins Bakery*)

Sunday, October 23

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)

Tuesday, October 25 & Wednesday Oct 26

5:00 pm—Community Health Clinic (*Parlor*)

Thursday, October 27

6:00 pm—Dulcimer Group (*Parlor*)

Sunday, October 30

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)
11:45 am—Trunk-or-Treat (*East Parking Lot*)
12:00 pm—All Boards Meeting (*Library*)

NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 6, Communion Sunday

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)

Tuesday, November 8 & Wed. November 9

5:00 pm—Community Health Clinic (*Parlor*)

Thursday, November 10

6:00 pm—Dulcimer Group (*Parlor*)

Friday, November 11, Veteran's Day

Sunday, November 13

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)

Sunday, November 20

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)
12:00 pm—All Boards Meeting (*Library*)

Tues., November 22 & Wed., November 23

5:00 pm—Community Health Clinic (*Parlor*)

Wednesday, November 23-November 25

Office Closed

Thursday, November 24, Thanksgiving

Saturday, November 26

10:00 am—UWF Meeting (*Perkins Bakery*)

Sunday, November 27

9:15 am—Church School & Fellowship
10:30 am—Sunday Service (*In-Person & Online*)

Weekly Recurring Events

Wednesdays, 10:30 am—Bible Studies

6:30 pm—Sanctuary Choir

Thursdays, 10:00 am—Men's Discipleship

11:00 am—Exchange Club (*Parlor*)

6:00 pm—GSA Meeting (*FH*)

Saturdays, 8:30 am—United Men of Faith





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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1—Note from Pastor Bob
- 3—Celebrations!
- 4—Fall & Advent Series
- 5—Community News & Views
- 7—Church Calendar

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