

MVLP Gather Round E-News - Issue #13

April 29, 2020

This is the thirteenth issue of our E-newsletter, “Gather ‘Round,” to call us together through the internet to share news and needs and stories with each other. If you have a tale to tell or a perspective to share, please send it on for the next issue! *Since it’s spring, I would love to receive some stories about putting in a garden or cleaning up the yard, sprucing up an out-building or digging a fire pit, painting the barn or building a tree-house. Surely someone has something to share with all of us! (You don’t need to be a great writer to send me something for “Gather ‘Round.”)*

The Buildings Are Closed; The Church Is Open!

Shalom: Rev. Betsy Reflects

When Bob Salisbury died a week ago today, the Moosup Valley Church community was stricken! Emails flew back and forth, telling stories about Bob and what an important part of the community he was. More often than not, people remembered how he would greet people after church with a handshake and “Shalom.” As his pastor, I would visit him at Coventry Health Center, and whenever I would ask him what he’d like to pray for, he would say “peace.”

Now we might think that Shalom *means* peace, but that’s only partly true, because Shalom has a deeper and broader meaning than the absence of conflict. The kids stop bickering in the yard, the neighbor stops complaining, the sirens stop wailing, and we breathe a sigh of relief, “*Peace!*” I believe Bob understood that, when he prayed for peace, that he was wanting more than quiet. He wanted people to get along with each other; he wanted the politicians to stop throwing mud at each other, the gun-owners and gun-control advocates to listen to each other, the nations to work out their differences, the world’s religions to recognize what they have in common. Bob wanted more than the cessation of conflict; he wanted *Shalom*.

Shalom appears 237 times in our Bibles with various meanings, primarily tranquility, security, and especially “wholeness.” In the Old Testament, when Numbers 6:26 says, “May God lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace,” the word “peace” is *Shalom*. In the New Testament, in Luke 2:14, when the angel says, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace,” the word “peace” is *Shalom*. And while Shalom may be a greeting for an individual, it also may be a blessing for the entire community as in these two situations. So Shalom is not just peace, but peace with justice for all.

In fact, there can be no Shalom without wholeness and justice, its foundation. Wholeness for everyone. I am not whole until *everyone* is whole. These days we might think of Shalom as working for the common good. This may not always sit well with our American spirit of independence and entrepreneurial spirit. We rush to the store to stock up without thinking about those who come after and find the shelves empty. We rally to liberate our states without thinking about those who will die if we open up too soon. We lose sight of the common good, of wholeness for *everyone*, of Shalom.

Although we never talked about this specifically, I believe Bob Salisbury understood this. He trusted his Creator. He lived simply and honestly. He cared about people and was wise and kind. We pray that he has found the Shalom in death that he lived in life. He will be missed!

Before you know what kindness really is

By Naomi Shihab Nye

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness...
Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

The Great Coronavirus Divide

Years ago I saw a film titled “Who you are is where you were when.” The idea is that we are shaped by the world we grew up in, our family circumstances, the experiences we have had, what has happened to us along the way. People who grew up during the World War and rationing, for example, are savers; a person who is loved as a child grows up to feel that she is lovable and capable; another person who grew up with an alcoholic parent, has had to learn to be sensitive to moods and to take more responsibility at home; a child who grew up in a home with books and has a good education is at an advantage in the marketplace. You get the idea. We all are different, and we view the world differently. Even children in the same family grow up differently because the birth of each new child means that they are born into a new family.

So what will COVID-19 mean to us? Are we restless because we are cooped up? Are we experiencing PTSD because we have to report for work every day? Are we out of work and afraid we will lose our homes? Are we so ill that we pray to die? I wonder if it isn't a matter of this: who we are and where we sit (and stand) as we live through this

pandemic. Robert Reich, former US Secretary of Labor, writes about four new classes of people emerging, and I wonder how you and will come out of this crises and how we can help each other. They are:

The Remotes: People like me who can work from home – professionals, managers, teachers, technical workers – about 30-35 % of the workforce. We are inconvenienced, and some of us may even have lost some income. But we are trying new things, learning new things. We will be okay.

The Essentials: People like my children who provide dispatch and warehouse services, health care workers and pharmacy workers, farm hands and food processors, truck drivers and police officers, firefighters and sanitation crews – about 30% of the workforce, many of them women. They go to work at great risk to themselves and their families, often without the supplies and support they need. Many, not all, do not have adequate income, health insurance, and paid sick leave to begin with. Many have historically been under-appreciated in the workforce. We depend on them. I pray that they will be able to depend on *us* when this is over to advocate for better working conditions for them.

The Unpaid: People who have lost their jobs because they have been furloughed or have used up their paid leave – about 25% of the workforce. Almost half of adults have lost their jobs or someone in their families has, and that means health care, too. They are the retail and restaurant and hospitality workers, the hairdressers and massage therapists. They are getting desperate and would rather risk going back to work (“reopen the economy”) to put food on the table long before it’s safe. What can we do for them?

The Forgotten: People most of us don’t see – in prisons, homeless shelters, nursing homes, on Native American reservations – people already in poor health. Because they are often living in crowded conditions and health care resources are scarce, they are likely to become infected disproportionately, and it will be harder to contain the virus for months, if not years. How can we advocate for services for them?

We are all in this together. The pandemic will impact us differently, for sure, depending on which of the groups we are in. But we are interconnected and dependent on each other. COVID-19 has made that clear! Either we look out for each other – or we fail as a society. This is a pivotal moment for America as we know it. This is a moment that tests our faith.

For your reflection, I am attaching a prayer, *Poverty Amidst Pandemic: A Moral Response to the Pandemic – A Litany*, from the Poor People’s Campaign, endorsed by the UCC with participation by our much loved Rev. Traci Blackmon.

This just in from Carol at Foster DHS

DHS can use the following items to keep pantry shelves stocked: soup, pasta, cereal, coffee, canned proteins (tuna, ham, Spam, chicken) and canned fruit. They are located at Foster Town Hall, 181 Howard Hill Road, Foster, RI 02825.

Special Prayers: Please hold in your heart and prayers...

The Sroka family – Jane, Ronny, and Randy – who have COVID-19 and are very ill, for strength and breath and support.

Rose's relatives, the Pierre family, who have lost four members to COVID-19, including her cousin's wife, a nurse practitioner and mother of three little ones.

Pat and Carl's son, Peter, who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

Joanne who is recovering nicely physically but having trouble with the isolation. She will be in ICU for a few more days, then hopefully home or rehab.

The residents of Woodpecker Hill Health Center, all of whom, so far, are virus free!

Claire's son, Jim, who continues to recover from COVID-19.

Window on Wildlife

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, and after I send this "Gather 'Round," I'm going for a walk. And I'm going to look for ravens with this hint from Sonja: "Have you seen some large "crows" lately but noticed their voice seemed unusual? It was not the usual "caw, caw, caw." We have ravens locally. It is hard to tell the difference visually, though a raven's beak is heavier and you might notice shaggy throat feathers. The voice is the notable difference. A raven is several inches longer than a crow and in flight they "flap and glide" while a crow "flaps."

Gather 'Round for Bible Study

Both Rev. Betsy and Pastor Bob are leading Bible Study by Zoom. To participate, ask to be invited or check for the Zoom meeting notice.

Psalms: Tuesday & Friday mornings at 10:00 a.m. with Betsy, reading and discussing selected psalms and the Easter scriptures. Contact BetsyAldrichGarland@gmail.com.

Gospel of John: Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. with Bob, resuming on April 29, when they will look at Chapters 19-20. To join the Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82510374020?pwd=bEp6eC9PNFpqV1prL3ViZytMRDkydz09>

Meeting ID: 825 1037 4020

Password: 028468 Phone number if you need it: +16465588656

Mt. Vernon Streams Sunday Service

Worship Sunday, May 3, will be on Facebook Live on the Mount Vernon Larger Parish page at 12:30 p.m. Pastor Bob will look at “Popularity, Wealth, Kindness, Security,” <https://www.facebook.com/MVLPspirit/?ref=bookmrks>).

We give because someone gave to us

By Alberto Rios

We give because someone gave to us.
We give because nobody gave to us.
We give because giving has changed us.
We give because giving could have changed us...
Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,
Mine to yours, yours to mine.
You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.
Together we are simple green. You gave me
What you did not have, and I gave you
What I had to give—together, we made
Something greater from the difference.

Weekly Offerings may be mailed for:

Mt. Vernon to Ron Allen (116 Barbs Hill Road, Greene, RI 02827),

Moosup Valley to Pat Safstrom (76 Moosup Valley Road, Foster, RI 02825),

Rice City to Phyllis Dexter (53 Moosup Valley Road, Foster, RI 02825).

Reverend Betsy can be reached at BetsyAldrichGarland@gmail.com or 401-463-8697.
Pastor Bob can be reached at revbobh@gmail.com or 401-440-7831.

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