

MVLP Gather Round E-News - Issue #4

March 28, 2020

Mount Vernon Streams

For Pastor Bob's live service from Mt. Vernon Church tomorrow at 12:30 p.m., go to the MVLP Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/MVLPspirit/>) where you will find MOUNT VERNON STREAMS pinned close to the top of the page. You also will find music there as Pastor Bob explores "Amazing Grace"! If you want to follow the readings or don't have Facebook, you will find the **service as an attachment to this email.**

The Birds of the Air: A Reflection

When Sonja suggested we add a wildlife corner to this newsletter, I immediately thought of Jesus' words, "Look at the birds of the air,..." and the "lilies of the field,..." from passages found in both Matthew and Luke, included in their gospels to assure us that our life is more than food, the body more than clothing, a good message for us in this time of quarantine and sheltering at home.

It is not unusual to find images of birds in our scriptures where there are nearly 300 references to wings and feathers and flying. How does Noah know the flood is over? He sends out a dove, and God sends a dove at Jesus' baptism. The Psalmist asks for God's care with, "Hide me in the shadow of your wings," and Jesus cries over Jerusalem, "Wish I could gather you under my wings like a Mother Hen." The ancient writer in the wilds of Arabia watches the majestic eagle soaring over his camp and writes, "As an eagle stirs up her nest, hovers over her young, spreads her wings, takes them up, bears them aloft on her wings: so the Lord alone [leads us]." The lesson was elementary and lucid; they, God's people, would soar above their troubles.

We modern folks have lost touch with much of God's creation because we spend so much time inside, preoccupied with our gadgets. Our "sheltering at home" is perhaps a blessing in disguise if we take the time to walk out of doors, breath fresh air on a daily basis, watch the birds from our windows. This is a time to get perspective, to see life as more than "stuff," to remember that we are part of God's creative order and rejoice in *all* of it.

Prayer: Dear God, remind me every time I see a bird that you love me. And remind me of what I love rather than what I fear. Amen.

Window on Wildlife

Sonja writes....

This winter our feeders (sunflower seed and suet blocks) have drawn quite a following of birds. We have enjoyed chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, sparrows, slate-colored juncos, and cardinals. The first three prefer to get a seed from the feeder and the latter three prefer the ground, settling for the castoffs of the birds on the feeder and what we scatter when filling it. However, Mrs. Cardinal has mastered the feeder as has a song sparrow.

We also have enjoyed woodpeckers coming to our suet blocks. We've had several pairs of downy woodpeckers, one pair of hairy woodpeckers and a pair (at least one) of red-bellied woodpeckers. Flickers do not come to the feeders though we occasionally see one under our hemlocks. Despite the fact that we are out in the open the suet draws them and, once here, they tend to stay. Now that it is warming up, we are confident there will be insects, grubs, etc., for them to eat.

Although robins have been around for many weeks, we had a flock foraging in the field where the green grass is poking through. Black birds (starlings, cow birds and red-winged blackbirds) have been back for a couple of weeks, but they are ground feeders. Now the grackles have arrived. Once the grackles master raiding our suet blocks, it will be so frustrating that we will cease putting them out. We will take in the sunflower seed feeder soon, as well. (*See also Sonja's story about "The Nesting Box," attached.*)

Betsy adds: In the meantime, what have *you* observed so far this spring? Kim and I walked at the Cooke Farm in Sandwich yesterday and saw daffodils in bloom in protected spots. I sat on a rock that had been nicely warmed by the sun and watched kids fishing as water spilled noisily over a dam. Vines in the woods are sprouting leaves, and Weeping Willows are looking light greenish. While we hunker down, Mother Nature is exploding in all her glory, *God's* glory. Don't miss this miracle, and please share what you are seeing and feeling and hearing with the rest of us! I'll put you in the next issue!

Gather 'Round for Bible Study

Both Rev. Betsy and Pastor Bob are setting up online Bible Study by Zoom, an internet conferencing resource. To participate, decide which virtual "table" you wish to gather around and **ask to be "invited,"** which means that, when Betsy or Bob sets up their Zoom meetings, they will invite you to join by your email. ***You must ask ahead of time to be able to join in.*** Although it takes a while to get the hang of it, it works! You can also join on your smart phone. Here are your options:

Psalms: Tuesday & Friday mornings at 10:00 a.m. with Betsy, reading and discussing selected psalms. Begins Tuesday, March 31. Contact (by Monday) BetsyAldrichGarland@gmail.com.

Note: Tracey suggests you google the song "You Have Searched Me and Known Me," sung by Esther Mui, based on Psalm 139:1-18.

Gospel of John: Wednesday evenings at 6:30. Begins April 1 – no fooling! Contact (by Wednesday morning) [Bob at revbobh@gmail.com](mailto:revbobh@gmail.com).

Sewing Medical Face Masks

Laila Bennett writes from Collierville, Tennessee...

With us all being home because of Covid-19, we are looking for things to keep us busy. My daughter-in-law Brittany told me that there was a quilt shop in Collierville that was donating cut material to make medical face masks. As we all know, there is a shortage all over the country. Because I sew, she asked me if I would make some. Of course I said sure, what else do I have to do?

My son, Ian, picked up the first ten masks for me to make. Then I had to figure out the pattern. My sister, Helena, had turned me on to DIYs on YouTube a few months ago. So I thought, well I will go onto YouTube to see what they have. There are a ton of tutorials on how to make face masks. Who would have thought! My first two attempts were a disaster. But then I got the hang of it, and now I sew about five a day.

There are people all over my community that are making these masks for health care workers. If you need something to do and you can sew, check with your local quilting supply shop. Maybe they are willing to help the cause by donating material.

Looking Ahead to April & Holy Week

❖ Next Sunday, April 5, is Palm Sunday, and we have palms for the Mt. Vernon Larger Parish and Holy Mother of God. Pastors Scott Knox and Bob Hollis will bring them to everyone who wants them and leave at your door. ***If you are a member of Moosup Valley, please ask Betsy to put you on her list to give to Bob and Scott.***

❖ Rev. Betsy and Pastor Bob are planning to gather us by Zoom for a Maundy Thursday Service, April 9, and an Easter Sunrise Service, April 12. You will receive the Order of Worship for Maundy Thursday and the Sunrise Service as attachments to “Gather ‘Round” Issue #5 that I will send out on Wednesday.

❖ Pastor Bob’s Easter Service will be streamed on Facebook as usual.

❖ Rice City’s Turkey Supper scheduled for April 25 has been cancelled. They hope to host a Strawberry Supper in June.

Special Prayers: Please remember...

❖ Tina Lavalley is at the VA Hospital for testing – but anxious to be home! Prayers, please, for diagnosis and healing!

❖ Rev. Betsy’s brother Bill Aldrich came through surgery well on Thursday and hopes to be home soon. He says it only hurts when he laughs!

Reach Out & Touch Someone by Phone

Before we hardly knew the extent of the virus keeping us apart, Jeanne Lavoie was on the phone early this week, checking in and connecting us to the rest of us. I was so glad to hear her message and to know that we are in this together. Some of the rest of you are doing the same. So let's all follow their lead and keep those phone calls coming, especially to those who live alone!

One Great Hour of Sharing

When you give to the One Great Hour of Sharing, your gifts do more than you can imagine!

Churches across the country are receiving offerings not only for themselves but also for One Great Hour of Sharing for disaster, refugee, and global sustainable development ministries across the world. Both the UCC and ABC participate. Heaven knows, our gifts are needed this year more than ever!

To contribute to the OGHS – and to send your regular offerings – mail your **Mt. Vernon** donations to Ron Allen (116 Barbs Hill Road, Greene, RI 02827), **Moosup Valley** donations to Pat Safstrom (76 Moosup Valley Road, Foster, RI 02825), and **Rice City** donations to Phyllis Dexter (53 Moosup Valley Road, Foster, RI 02825). *OGHS checks should be made out to the church which will issue one check to the denomination.*

Benediction:

May God bless you with the brush of soft feathers on your cheek.

May God carry you on outstretched holy wings, strong enough to bear all your anxiety, all your fear, all your sorrow.

May God teach you how to fly, even when body and mind grow timid and weak.

May you be lifted by God, today and *every* day, trusting in God's love, now and forevermore.

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