

# MVLP Gather Round E-News - Issue #9

April 15, 2020

This is the ninth 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!

*Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.* –John 16:20

## **Remember the Good: Rev. Betsy Reflects**

For weeks now, we’ve sheltered at home, kept our distance, washed our hands. For weeks now, we’ve ventured out only for groceries, avoided contact with potential carriers, weighed the necessity of a mask. Although governments had been warned by infectious disease experts for years, COVID-19 was an interruption you and I could not have imagined at the beginning of this one.

And here we are, uncertain and uneasy, but staying in touch, doing what we can to help. We are making masks and phone calls, teaching and learning on-line, checking on our neighbors, leaving meals on porches, telling stories of other difficult times. We wait impatiently to get back to “normal,” but there will be no “normal.” Just as lives changed after the World Wars, our lives will change after this one, too – World War “C.”

Some of us have lost jobs and income; others of us are considered “essential” and risk our lives to tend to the sick, to keep the economy going, to protect the public. I read that close living quarters has spawned an increase in domestic violence and fear spurred the sale of guns across the country. And that loved ones of all ages are dying alone, and we hunker down, mourning, afraid. This is nothing new, of course. Humankind has always suffered wars and pandemics and disasters. Centuries ago, the writer of Psalm 103 acknowledges with gratitude a merciful God, “You save us from the *snares* of fear,...” and indeed, we as a country, are *snares*. (See Psalm 103, attached.)

At the same time, there is “good” to be acknowledged and remembered. “Going back” is still weeks away, but I challenge us *now* to reflect on what is *good* now. When we are able to gather for worship under the same roof, will we remember how close we felt when we chatted by phone, studied scriptures by Zoom, worshiped by Facebook? This catastrophe has proved, even to those of us who have love/hate relationships with technology, that proximity and accessibility no longer mean the same thing; we no longer must be standing *next* to each other to be *with* each other. Today, no matter where we live and worship, even miles apart, we can still be sitting in the same pew.

When we are back to work and school and meetings, will we remember each other with the same commitment? Look out for each other with the same intentionality? Care for each other with the same sense of community? “Years ago,” Ira Byock writes, “anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked by a student what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture. The student expected Mead to talk about fishhooks or clay pots or grinding stones. But no. Mead said that the first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was a femur (thighbone) that had been broken and then healed. Mead explained that in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die. You cannot run from danger, get to the river for a drink or hunt for food. You are meat for prowling beasts. No animal survives a broken leg long enough for the bone to heal. A broken femur that has healed is evidence that someone has taken time to stay with the one who fell, has bound up the wound, has carried the person to safety and has tended the person through recovery. ‘Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilization starts,’ Mead said.”

So what of this time of trouble has been “good,” *too* good to let go? What will we save, what will we discard in our re-claimed busyness? What will we make time for? What will be essential in our new reality following the pandemic of our time? I pray that we save what is good in *this* time, for it is in the “good” that we find God, in the community that we find joy.

### **What Are You Up To?**

❖ Last Saturday, Cheryl Hawes, wrote, “I love old movies, and I saw they were showing the 1950 film, “The Next Voice You Hear,” so I watched it while I ate my breakfast. [It’s about the Voice of God broadcast daily all over the world for six days with a message to be kind to each other.] The movie moved me in many ways: so close to Easter, the world-wide pandemic, how fortunate I am with my family close and well, living in my own home, having a good job, being able to give some back to the Town I love, having a close church family, and just realizing how much I have to be thankful for! While it’s sappy, the message is the same whether it was then or now.” *Betsy asks: What are you watching that is moving you?*

❖ And, if you haven’t already done so, *please* complete your **2020 Census** form. I waited and waited to receive my letter before deciding that nobody knew a person was living at 210 Plainfield Pike – so I went on line and filled in a form (which took about two minutes, if that!). It’s important because the number of Representatives in Congress is based on our population – and RI is in danger of losing one – and because the allocation of resources for the next 10 years is based on population.

### **Special Prayers:** Please remember...

❖ Joanne had her MRI yesterday and is awaiting word from her doctor about next steps.

❖ Rose and Herold's son, Chris, and his fiancée are recovering from COVID-19 virus – fever down and aches and pains gone, but please keep them in prayer. Also, prayers for Rose and her Aunt Ermete Pierre whose husband Lifaito's service was yesterday.

❖ Claire asks for prayers for her son, Jim, who is not feeling well and is miserable, anxious to move to a group home, now delayed because of COVID-19.

### **Gather 'Round for Bible Study**

Both Rev. Betsy and Pastor Bob are leading Bible Study by Zoom. To participate, **ask to be invited** with your email or phone number to be included in the 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](mailto:BetsyAldrichGarland@gmail.com).

**Gospel of John:** Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. with Bob, **resuming on April 22** when they will look at Chapter 19. (No study tonight, April 15.) Contact Bob at [revbobh@gmail.com](mailto:revbobh@gmail.com).

### **Window on Wildlife**

It is mating season, nest-building season. As I walk our condo grounds in search of fresh air in the daytime, I see robins busy with worms. As I walk in the evening, a Great Horned Owl hoots to claim his territory, to call a mate. Soon we will hear coyotes hunting for food for pups, and walks will be taken with extra caution.

Sonja writes, "Have you seen a pileated woodpecker locally? They are here! There was a nesting pair in a dead tree across the road from Rice City Church several years ago, but they have moved. A pileated woodpecker is large, about the size of a crow, with a flaming red crest, black body and white under-wing areas. They are usually sighted in wooded areas." Kim and I walked along the shore of Santuit Pond last week, and on the way to the water, we found standing trees with big holes running up the bare trunks. Pileated? I will be listening for them!

### **Mt. Vernon Streams Sunday Service**

Pastor Bob will continue to stream his Sunday Worship on April 19 at 12:30 p.m. Go to go to the MVLP Facebook

Page <https://www.facebook.com/MVLPspirit/?ref=bookmrks>) where you will find MOUNT VERNON STREAMS pinned close to the top of the page, and click on that. I will attach the Order of Worship to Saturday's newsletter so you will be prepared to follow along.

**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).

**Pandemic**

*By Lynn Ungar*

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love –  
for better or for worse, in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

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Pastor Bob can be reached at [revbobh@gmail.com](mailto:revbobh@gmail.com) or 401-440-7831.

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