

MVLP Gather Round E-News - Issue #21

June 5, 2020

This is the twenty-first 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!

The Buildings Are Closed; The Church Is Open!

Back issues of “Gather ‘Round” E-news are available on the Moosup Valley Church website, thanks to our webmaster, Pat Safstrom. Go to moosupvalley.church and click on the tab at the top of the page.

Mt. Vernon Streams Sunday Service

Worship Sunday, June 7, will be on the MVLP Facebook Live page, streaming from the Moosup Valley Church at **9:00 a.m.** In the midst of all the struggles, Pastor Bob has decided to use the summer on virtual worship to look at and celebrate our favorite scriptures. This week, he will look at the 23rd psalm! Join us in celebration of “The Lord Being our Shepherd.” The Order of Worship is attached, and here is the link: <https://www.facebook.com/MVLPspirit/?ref=bookmarks>).

Mt. Vernon Hymn Sing

Next Sunday, June 14, we will continue Mount Vernon Streams at 9:00 a.m., but we will also have a virtual hymn sing. Pastor Bob will film Pastor Doug Tourgee who will play your favorite hymns in his Tennessee Mountain Gospel Style. You can sing along at home! Send Pastor Bob the names of the hymns you would like to hear! The time will be announced Sunday.

Mt. Vernon Church over the Years

Celebrating its 225th birthday in 2020, the building that currently houses the Mount Vernon Baptist Church has had a long and varied life. Originally built in 1795 as a Quaker Meetinghouse, the 20' by 30' building had a fireplace at either end and a partition in the middle separating the men's and women's sides. When membership shrank, the Quakers were disbanded in 1846 and the property was sold.

Changing owners over the next 50 years, the building served various uses including hay storage and dance hall. In the late 1880s an offshoot of the very strong Rice City Christian denomination was established and the property was donated to the group. Dedicated workers solicited money and devoted time, energy, and love to rebuild

the structure and furnish it with seating and an organ. A Sabbath school was established and a preacher engaged three Sundays per month. However, the "Christian" association was short-lived for the practical local farmers discovered the monies available under the Richard Waterman Trust which specified: "the interest of which is to be paid annually to a Calvinistic Baptist minister who shall preach within two miles of my dwelling house." A meeting was held in 1894 of four members of different churches, and it was agreed to form a Baptist church. The ceremony was held the same year, and officially the name was changed from the Mount Vernon Christian Society to the Mount Vernon Baptist Church in 1895. By 1905 the Waterman Trust Fund provided enough assistance that services could be held weekly. In the ensuing years the church built horse sheds on the east side of the lot, held harvest suppers and entertainments. Groups were formed and the pace was steady as was typical for country churches.

In the 1930's and 1940's small rural churches were having a difficult time. Richard Waterman's generosity led to the establishment of the Mount Vernon Larger Parish, an association of small churches whose existence was threatened by their inability to support a minister. An agreement was worked out whereby the member churches shared a pastor who was paid by the Waterman Trust Fund. Member churches in the Larger Parish have varied over the years, but the lynch pin is Mount Vernon, the only BAPTIST church that is currently a member.

Over the years, membership and services have withered at Mount Vernon, though it has been able to maintain hymn sings. On October 31, 2014, the church was knocked off its foundation and feared lost. However, the congregation voted to restore the building to its original design as a Quaker Meetinghouse and, between generous donations and insurance, it was reopened in July 2017. Recently attempts have been made to garner a following by offering "Open Mic" and Quaker services. Currently, in the midst of the pandemic, Rev. Robert Hollis is offering a service on-line by video streaming which will, hopefully, transition to a weekly worshiping congregation in the fall.

My Childhood Memories of Mt. Vernon Church

By Janice Reynolds

It's my belief that my brother and I started going to Mt. Vernon about the early 1950s. We lived on Waterman Hill Farm. We used to walk to church, weather permitting, about one-half a mile. We did look forward to church on Sunday.

Per Mrs. Elsie Paine, the door would always be unlocked early each Sunday. My brother and I would be the first over there; we'd go inside and the fun would begin. Michael would pretend to be the preacher. He'd go up and read from the big Bible. In between, I tried to play the piano. It was so crazy because I didn't know how to play it. All was make-believe. I tried to play some favorite hymns, and we'd sing at the top of our lungs. And, yes, once in awhile we'd get caught. But believe me, no one scolded us. Church and school was a special "out" for me. Looked forward to both.

Back to the farm and home, we had a pet dog, “Peggy.” My Dad always said she was my dog. He got her when I was very young. She also would attend church with us. One Sunday she went inside and settled down under a back pew. No one said anything until Rev. Waterman started his sermon and some of the youngsters started to laugh. You can guess what happened next. Why are you laughing? Because there is a dog in here. Rev. Waterman had the dog taken out. But she did stay in the hallway until we came out to go home.

Peggy was a smart dog. Our Dad would tell her to go get the “girls” for milking time. She always knew what he wanted. We had, on and off, cats and dogs, pet ducks, a pet rooster, “Oscar,” who liked to play basketball with us kids. Also, during cold weather, he slept in the dog house where the dog also helped keep him warm.

For now, the final pet story is we had a pet crow, “Jimmy.” Actually our Dad was his favorite. He’d sit on Dad’s shoulder while he was working in the garden. Also Jimmy would often fly up to my second floor bedroom window. I’d give him bright colored marbles and colored ribbons. One day Dad was coming home from the barn, and walking in the field between the barn and our house, he came across the nest with the colored items Jimmy had gotten from me. He would also for some Sundays fly ahead of us going to church. And he really would wait for us to come out of church. Everyone at this time was so amazed.

My finale to this story is, I’m proud to say, Rev. Waterman had married my husband and me on November 19, 1960, here in Mt. Vernon Church. A quote from Mr. Waterman: “Just remember, Janice, once a Baptist, always a Baptist.”

Early on a Sunday Morning

By Tracey Griffing

Sunday May 31, 2020

As usual, I’m up early in the morning. I’m a daily coffee-drinking news-watcher. Not just today, but all this week, the commentaries and the footage of the inexcusable killing of another black life, footage repeated again and again. The killing at the hand of a white man, an officer sworn to keep the peace, while other officers stood, watched, and did nothing.

The destruction of property, cars, buildings and churches ensued. Violence brought about by violence. This has been a terrible week for humankind, again. Another needless and senseless killing in this country because of ignorance and intolerance. This is only one of many instances reported this year alone. How is it that, in 2020, some still find this an acceptable way to treat another human being? The complete lack of listening and hearing of one another that is still happening in this country is disheartening. We can

successfully work together to send people into space for exploration of another world, but we can't meet each other half-way for humanity in this world.

I was emailing with a friend early this Sunday morning. He sent a song and a note about the need for more love. The song was "More Love" by Mark Miller. He talked about Agape love, the highest love, love that extends past all human understanding and emotion. It's the love that defines God's immeasurable love for us. A more parental, mature, sacrificial kind of love. A love that Jesus was willing to die for.

My friend is right, it is about the love. A few years ago my nephew was getting married. My brother's son. When Jim called me to tell me of the upcoming wedding, I don't know why, but right away I said to him, I would love to play my guitar and sing a song for Travis and Jill. He said, really? It's completely unlike me to offer something like that without even thinking about it. The Spirit was working. The song I played was "Love Can Build a Bridge" by the Judds.

It just so happens it was the same day as the Royal Wedding. The minister for the bride's family had preached that morning at the Royal wedding. All he kept saying was, It's about the Love. He was right. When I was in the hotel practicing that morning I knew it was all about the love. Of course the love between the couple getting married but also the Agape love is what I felt from him, because of the turmoil over the economic differences that surrounded the Royal wedding. More of that love needs to be spread across our nation.

Emotions that are running high in this country, on both sides of the aisle. Why have the lines between right and wrong become so blurred?

Creator,
We pray Your love comes in abundance
Abundance that only You can provide
Abundance given to us freely for the asking.
For the people of this country to start to listen, to start to hear one another,
To focus on Your love in our hearts, Agape love.
Love not focused on our physical differences but on our common welfare.
Leaving indifference and the fuel of hate behind, to come to a place of mutual respect.
To begin to heal our Land.
Amen.

New! Evening Prayer

We have begun holding Evening Prayer, Vespers, on Wednesday at 7:15 p.m. by Zoom, a brief (20 minute) time of scripture, song, meditation and prayer, a time to give thanks for the day just past and praise to God. Please let Rev. Betsy know if you are willing to read or sing. We will join in the ancient beloved prayer, "Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the

suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous, and all for your love's sake. Amen." It will be acceptable to come in your PJs! Here is the Zoom link:

Join Evening Prayer Zoom

Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4971608531?pwd=cVJlUmw1QndYcmtiakhDVjVmWDA2UT09>

Meeting ID: 497 160 8531

Password: 038040

Telephone if you need it: 1-929-205-6099

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

- For Michelle DiBiasio's daughter, Ayla, who is dealing with post-op complications.
- Joanne continues her slow but steady progress in healing from brain surgery with the help of doctors, therapists, loving family and prayers!
- Prayers of thanksgiving for a successful cardiac ablation for Carl's cousin, The Rev. Mindy Reed, and prayers for successful surgery for her partner, Ancilma Peters, who is going in for cataract surgery and possible corneal transplant.
- Phyllis Dexter was not able to have the cardiac stent inserted this week, and she is very disappointed. However, she hopes a new medication will help, and she thanks everyone for their cards and concern.
- Janice Reynolds is in need of healing and strength in her legs.
- Barbara Cederfield will have knee replacement surgery on Wednesday, and also asks for prayers for her brother Rev. Bob, a retired Episcopal priest, who fell and has bleeding in his brain.
- Pastor Doug Tourgee's sister and brother-in-law are both in the hospital in need of prayer.
- Pray for our nation following the tragic death of George Floyd, and that God may teach us how best to be agents of compassion, strength, witness, and justice.

Gather 'Round for Bible Study

Both Rev. Betsy and Pastor Bob are leading Bible Study. Here's how to participate:

Psalms: Tuesday & Friday mornings at 10:00 a.m. with Betsy, reading and discussing the lectionary texts and selected psalms by Zoom. Contact her at BetsyAldrichGarland@gmail.com.

Philippians: The Rice City Bible Study is focusing on Paul's letter to the Philippians on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. They have discovered that an old fashioned teleconference works just as well for them. (Send Bob your phone number, and he will call you.)

A Personal Note from Pastor Bob

This has been such a tough week for so many people. I want to respond but I am afraid to say or do the wrong thing! And so I pray.

I pray for the family of George Floyd. I pray for the officers and their families who seem to be complicit in his death.

I pray for the family of St. Louis City's Captain David Dorn, killed in the riot there.

I pray for small businesses who were rebounding from the virus only to be ransacked.

I pray for the peaceful demonstrators who want justice, not more violence.

I pray for black and brown people who have been put down for generations and who feel rage and use rage to bring things to the forefront.

I pray for people who take advantage of strife and chaos for their own gain.

I pray for our first responders, police, National Guard, and military who try to serve and protect in strained and confusing times.

I pray for our leaders who try to make decisions for protection, justice, safety, and order.

I pray for people who feel passionately and respond, and for folks who feel deeply but don't know how to respond.

I pray for our churches to say we are here to listen and learn, we are here to stand for justice, we are here to offer hands of compassion, we are here to try to figure out what we could be here to do!

I pray for myself and will gladly pray for all of you who want to be representatives of Jesus' call to love our neighbors!

Closing Reflection

Those of us who live in places like Foster and Greene think that life is peaceful everywhere, that justice prevails everywhere, that our country offers opportunity to everyone who is willing to work hard. But that is not the experience of many. For your reflection, I offer this poem by novelist, social activist, and playwright Langston Hughes:

Let America Be America Again

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love

Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

*Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?*

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings

In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home—
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
The millions shot down when we strike?
The millions who have nothing for our pay?
For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,
The millions who have nothing for our pay—
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where *every* man is free.
The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

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).

Mt. Vernon Larger Parish to Scott Knox (150 Foster Ctr. Rd., 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.

Reverend Betsy Aldrich Garland
210 Plainfield Pike
Foster, Rhode Island 02825
(401) 463-8697 (cell)