



THE FOCUS

WE HAVE SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”
Hebrews 12:1 (KJV)

Do you have a “favorite place,” that you go to calm your mind, and energize your spirit? If you have lived in different places, did each place have a “favorite place” there for you? Do you remember the TV Western series, “Bonanza,” with the Cartwright ranching family? For them, their favorite place was the banks of the scenic Lake Tahoe. When facing a major challenge in life, or in need of solace, the individual Cartwright member would go there. They would feel connected to their past, to nature and nature’s God.

When I was a member of the U.S. Army Reserve, Camp Atterbury was my second home. My favorite place on the military base, was the old Post Chapel built by the WWII POW. It is a simple wooden structure, with a traditional New England country church look. It blends in with the other Army buildings yet stands out because its steeple points to God. Its interior is as spartan as its exterior with basic wooden pews. There are no elegant stained-glass windows or statues.

What gives the Post Chapel its power of presents, is its history. For almost 80 years, tens of thousands of soldiers have sat in the chapel’s pews on the eve of being deployed into a combat zone. They knew they would be facing a hostile enemy whose goal was to kill them. They knew that they would be under constant stress. They knew that they would have to perform with little rest, when it was too hot, too cold, too windy, or too dark. This chapel is open 24/7 to soldiers. Sitting there, whether alone, or surrounded by other soldiers, I could feel the presents of those who were there before me. I don’t literally mean their actual spirits were there. There is no Biblical case or scientific evidence for ghosts (this is a topic for another article), rather, I felt their “cloud of witnesses” from the past, as we were connected by a common concern and mission. We prayed to the same Lord of Hosts, as fellow followers of the Lion of Judah.

In a similar way, our Bible presents a “cloud of witnesses” that have gone before us. They have experienced that same challenges and emotions, in this fallen world, as we have. Unlike other religion’s sacred writing, such the Koran or Hindu Vedas, the Bible tells the story of real people. Have you been widowed and faced race prejudice? So did Ruth (Ruth 1:3-4). Did all your siblings turn against you? This happened to Joseph (Genesis 37). Do you have to leave your home? So did Abraham and Sarah. Did a beautiful, but treacherous woman, lead you astray? The same thing happened to Samson (Judges 14) Were you born out of wedlock and not accepted by your half siblings? So was Jephthah (Judges 11:1-2)

Did you commit adultery and/or murder, and now feel repentant? This happened to David. Did your own beloved son, turn against you? This also happened to the same King David. Did you exceed the father figure, who mentored you? Now he is homicidally jealous? Again, this happened to the same David. Have you felt abandoned by God because you are being treated unjustly? You gusted it; the same thing happened to King David. This didn’t stop him from being the ancestor of Jesus.

Are you not sure you are up to performing your new job? Moses felt the same way when God said he will lead the Hebrews out of slavery (Exodus 4:1). Do you feel like you don’t fit in anywhere? Neither did Moses, as he was an Egyptian noble by appointment but knew he was not Egyptian. He knew his people were the slaves (Exodus 2:11). Do you feel your fellow workers are incompetent and not focused on the “company’s” mission? The same Moses felt the same way when his fellow Hebrews kept backsliding back into pagan worship. Do you cry out to God to heal your physically pained body? So did Job (Job 2:7-3:). Did you abandoned a friend in his time of need? Peter did this as well (Mathew 26:69). This didn’t prevent him from becoming a leader of the early Church and author of three books of the New Testament.

One must always remember that whatever we face, we receive comfort from and connection to the “great cloud of witnesses” whose footsteps we follow.

HIGHLIGHTS of the AUGUST CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING:

1. We will be doing a water test to see where the leak is around the cupola.
2. Carroll DeVries presented information on the 7th & Washington corner.
We are eliminating the landscaping timbers and putting up a new sign.
3. The church will responsible for the 8th & Washington corner.
4. Steve Sharon was the delegate for Annual Conference, which was virtual this year.
5. The Annex front of the building has been painted.
6. Sanctuary air conditioner has been fixed.
7. We have not yet rented the parsonage.
8. We are in need of a sound person, worship leader, and a video tech.
9. Charge Conference has been set for Monday, November 16th at 6:30 PM.
10. We're now utilizing PayPal for online giving.

Full report of the July meeting is on the bulletin board in the church office hallway

THANK YOU! How lucky am I to belong to such a loving and caring family. Thank you all for the prayers, phone calls and the thoughtful words. God bless all of you. *Betty Fletcher*

Church Spending Plan as of July 2020			
Monthly	July	Year to Date	
Income	\$17,034.35	Income	\$100,249.13
Expense	\$14,071.37	Expense	\$92,746.25

SHIRTS!! If you are interested in a FUMC T-shirt, we have some available. They are \$10 each and come in various sizes. Please see Carroll DeVries if you are interested in purchasing a shirt. There are a limited number in the church office, but we will be ordering again.



**There will no Coffee Hour
before the Morning
Service.**

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

3 Jeanette Renbarger	18 Christine Stanley
7 Ralph Pack	18 Jesse Camarillo
12 Jeannette Ball	20 Willard Rust
15 Pat Wickham	23 Joan Brown
16 Debbie Ivey	26 John Wood



SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

5	John & Kathy Boxell
25	Jim & Betty Fletcher

When we looked at Pentecost Sunday a few weeks ago, we noted that all disciples of Jesus were empowered for mission by the giving of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. On the one hand, this can be a very encouraging thought. You have the power of God working in you to make disciples of Jesus! At the same time, practical questions quickly arise. What does this kind of mission look like? What exactly are we called to do?

I think we understand that, in order to carry out God's mission to make disciples of Jesus, we need to pray and have biblical teaching. The big question comes with how we connect our times of prayer and biblical teaching to those who don't know Jesus. Do we just hold church services and say, "Come here"? Do we walk down the street with pamphlets, talking to everyone we can? What structure does our activity have to take? Are we maybe over-complicating things?

Kokomo Grace UMC has tried to make this work as simple as possible by starting "Fresh Expressions." As their pastor Brian Cook would describe them, these are essentially small churches. But they don't have the structure. In fact, anyone at the church can create a "Fresh Expression," and they will all probably look a little different. A "Fresh Expression" church gets started when someone pictures something they enjoy doing, and connect with others who enjoy the same thing. Then, they set a time and date to pursue that activity together, and add a time of praying and devotions. One example is a walking church, where people get together at the same time each week to walk, and they also take a moment to pray together and share a devotional.

Acts 2 provides a description of the ministry that the disciples started in verse 42: "[The followers of Jesus] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (NRSV)" They had biblical teaching. They spent time together. They ate together. They prayed together. While the calling of God might seem huge and dangerous, I really think that it could be just as simple as that.

Pastor Jason Stanley



First United Methodist Church
624 S. Adams St.
Marion, IN 46953

September 2020

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

***Making disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the
world.***

THE NEXT FOCUS
September 16, 2020

PASTOR—Jason Stanley
410 N Washington St
Swayzee, IN 46986
(765) 438-8107

Email address: jason.stanley@inumc.org

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT— Rita Forsythe

ORGANIST— Susan Seacott

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR— Donna Wiley

CHURCH PHONE — 765-664-5177

Email: info@marionumc.org

www.marionumc.org

H O P E

Receiving Hope

Living Hope

Sharing Hope

SERVICE TIMES

MORNING WORSHIP— 9:15 A.M.

SUNDAY SCHOOL— 10:30 A.M.

YOUTH GROUP— 6:00 P.M.