



**Quarterly Newsletter of Epworth United Methodist Church
September/October/November 2021**

Epworth Connecting Groups Ministry



We are excited to begin a brand, new round of Connecting Groups this year. Pastor Vicki has just completed a four-week session with our leadership team. The leadership team is tasked with leading new groups, mentoring potential leaders, increasing the number of groups, and building relationships within our Church community.

We are hoping to expand the scope of our groups beyond book studies to include other common interests such as kayaking, support for aging parents, and wellness. We welcome suggestions for new topics. We want to grow spiritually by connecting faith to our daily lives.

Watch for more information about specific groups to come in the following weeks. These groups will start throughout the year beginning with Rally Day, September 12.

Fall 2021 Worship Schedule

Sundays: In-house
9:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service
11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship Service

Both services are being streamed through Facebook and YouTube

September 5—Blessing of the Backpacks

September 12—Rally Day

September 26—500th anniversary of Soup & Love

October 3—1:30 p.m.—Blessing of the Animals



Pastor Vicki's Views



Recently, our Inviting All ministry team partnered with our food ministry team to offer a picnic for the skaters at the skate park. I enjoyed talking with two women and the eight year old daughter of one of the women, who all frequent our skate park. Sharing food and conversation with them offered me a chance to be blessed by their courage in learning new tricks on wheels and through their stories

of trying, falling, getting up, and trying again. Their honest sharing inspired me to take more risks and get up when I fall down. Ironically, as children we learn this vital life lesson, but lose it somewhere along the line as we become adults. (Special thanks to Bob Paulen, Reber Whitner, and Gerrie Boisjoly for their efforts to create and support this opportunity!)

The encounter also provided some food for thought. Because of COVID-19, we have been isolated from one another for up to a year and a half, now. Some people have chosen to return to participating in worship in-person again, and some choose to remain online for now. We support both decisions and want to help integrate the two to maintain a healthy community. However, this new form of community (you may hear us and the leadership team refer to it as hybrid ministry, including both in-person and online participants) will involve some risks, some falling, and some getting back up again. Certainly, this hybrid community will include some of the aspects we remember: a sense of belonging, building and deepening relationships, and participation in the experiences of Inviting All, Belonging, Connecting, and Caring. Yet, we will need to relearn some skills and strengthen some skills and learn new skills to form the most meaningful community we can.

We have grown accustomed to worshipping alone over the pandemic, so as we regather, we will need to remember and relearn some relational skills. To help us in that endeavor, Bo and I have adopted the theme of Community for this year's focus. We have designed our worship scriptures and themes around how to be and how to live as community, including sharing our giftedness, boundaries, forgiveness, practices, and relationships. We hope to examine our shared values, interests, and goals as we work to strengthen ourselves individually to participate in community.

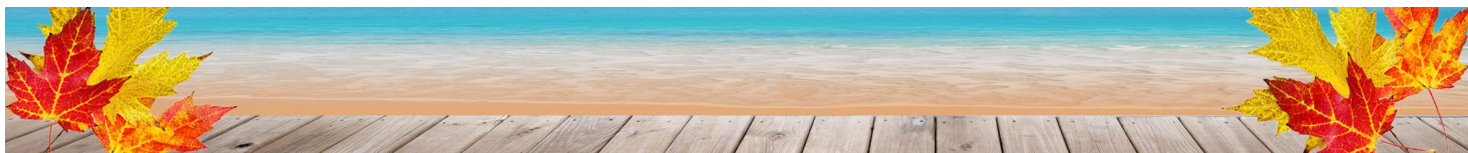
We also hope to reacquaint ourselves. Many of us have not shared in significant conversation with others in

our Epworth community for over a year. While we may have known some of our stories before, we have lost track of the current chapter in our stories. Yet our stories connect us and enhance our sense of belonging. So, we invite you to share your stories and invite others to share their stories. We hope to facilitate that sharing during fellowship in-person and in the chat online. We plan to include two questions for conversation starting, one which breaks the ice and another which goes deeper. These questions will be posted online each week to allow people to participate in story-telling in the way which meets their needs.

For our online worship, we plan to recruit "hosts" for each service. These hosts would welcome people and respond to any chat both during the live stream and during the week following the live stream. We hope that these hosts would facilitate further dialogue around the topics as well as the sharing of stories. For example, if we ask a question of the children during children's time, a host might ask the same question of the online participants, or adapt it to evoke stories as we deepen our relationships.

We also will deepen our relationships by offering hybrid groups this fall and spring. We had about 14 people participate in group leader training and encouraged the leaders to begin a group in the next several months. Some of these groups will not be able to be hybrid, for example a kayaking group. Others will be able to host both in-person and online gatherings. (We intend to purchase equipment to make this process much easier for the hosts.) I am excited about the variety of topics and types of groups we will offer. Eventually, we'd like to help all of our ministry teams become official "groups" as well, by fulfilling the purposes of groups, which we, at Epworth, define as: building relationships and community through belonging and intentional care, growing spiritually by connecting faith to our daily lives, nurturing leaders through mentoring and gifts development, and inviting others to join.

These efforts offer us a chance to feel more connected, to grow in meaningful ways, to work together to make a difference in our world, and to make belonging more fun. They will also help our community grow. Diana Butler Bass wrote that churches used to ask people to believe the right doctrine and behave the right way before they could belong. But, that process has flipped. People want to belong first, which will lead to them following the behavioral practices of the community, and eventually lead to belief. We want Epworth to be a community worth belonging to, where people can learn how followers of Jesus behave and come to believe in the amazing power of God's love. The pandemic has given us a chance to begin again with more intention toward fostering belonging, which involves the participation of everyone! So, let's help each other experience that sense of belonging!



Pastor Bo Gordy-Stith's views

Masks Again? Yup. We Got This

We were enjoying a wonderful reawakening from the long COVID-19 quarantine. People were gathering again, and we were opening everything up at Epworth once more. No, things weren't exactly the same as before, but after such a long and contentious shut-down, the rapid development and testing of not one but three versions of vaccines to combat the virus seemed to be an answer to prayer. And then (so the story we tell ourselves goes) just as we got used to going to concerts again, the CDC recommended masks for everyone, particularly in large public gatherings, whether vaccinated or not, because we're seeing a rise in infections and deaths again, particularly in areas with lower vaccination rates.

Last Sunday, our first requiring masks in months, I had a conversation with a friend in which we acknowledged knowing this drill well. Unlike March of 2020, this time we are veterans of masks in public, and we have an appreciation of how very much worse pandemic precautions can get. So, for the foreseeable future, we'll be wearing masks for in-person worship, meetings, team projects, and other activities at the church, as well as an increasing number of public places. When I served and lived in Yokosuka, Japan in 1988-89, I noticed people wearing masks from time to time on the subways and streets of Tokyo. When I asked what that was all about (Were they hypochondriacs?), people told me that people wore masks when they were sick to protect everyone around them. They were and are an act of love. A sacrament of grace.

So yes, I'll put up with my glasses fogging up for another season or longer. I've read that during the pandemic, flu and cold infection rates dropped because we were all protecting one another by wearing masks. And that's not so bad. Not bad at all. Once we start moving back inside more as the weather cools and turns cold, we'll need

all the protection we can get. Already, I experience putting on my mask as a form of prayer – thanking God for my health and praying for the protection of others, potentially from me! This time it's different. Many of us choose this act of love for our neighbors. We've noticed that since we opened the sanctuary to in-person worship in March, we've averaged 200 persons each Sunday in person – and 600 online (many of whom watch the recorded livestream later than our scheduled worship times). We are absolutely committed to continuing livestream worship at Epworth on YouTube and Facebook – including a four-person team (in addition to me) that makes sure everything goes smoothly. We're also looking into ways we can provide small group offerings via YouTube and Facebook, as well as Zoom. Every step of this journey involves a steep learning curve and experimentation that often needs adjustment. But we're getting good at this kind of thing together because we love each other. And that love in action is the way we bring God honor and glory and praise.

Pastor Bo

Stewardship Moments Matter

Written by Darlene Ford

We want to thank everyone who has made sure that Epworth continued and will continue to operate due to their giving and pledges made. Here are some current statistics:

Money Received 7/1/20-6/30/21:\$634,111

Families Pledged 2020—200

Money Pledged 2020—\$615,044

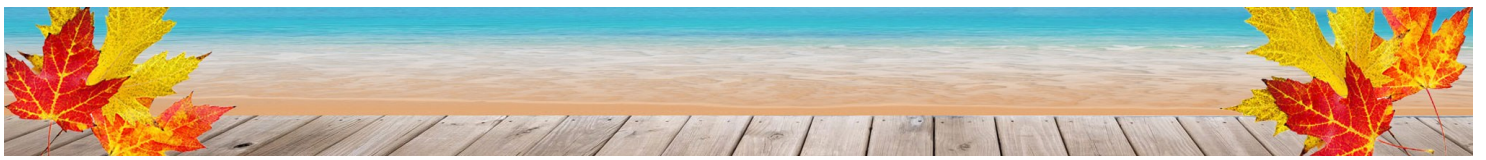
Families Pledged 2021—154

Money Pledged 2021—\$502,448



*Donations
are greatly
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**EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
19285 HOLLAND GLADE ROAD - REHOBOTH BEACH, DE 19971**



Sunday School Moments Matter

Submitted by Cathie Lewis

Back to Sunday School

We are thrilled to be back to in-person Sunday School for our children. Again this year we will have two groups; PreK to 1st grade and 2nd to 5th grade. Our goal is to help our children learn and grow in Christian faith through education, music, worship, service projects and fellowship. That is why this year we are so excited about our curriculum.

We will begin with the Deep Blue Rotation Stations with the first lesson called, The Servant Girl. The children will hear the story about how the wisdom of a lowly servant girl helped heal a powerful military leader (2 Kings 5: 1-14). This curriculum is divided into seven different areas to allow the children to experience the story through Art, Games, Cooking, Missions, Science, Spiritual Practices, and Storytelling.

We have a great group of volunteer teachers and assistants to guide the children through this story and other popular Bible stories throughout the year. They will learn how God's answers to our prayers often come in unexpected ways.

Please plan to join us for Rally Day on Sept. 12th at the Bayside portico at noon. The teachers and assistants will be available to meet with you and your children. The Belongings Ministry Leaders will also be available to answer any questions, share our Safe Sanctuary policy and get your children registered.

In addition, there will be a super surprise activity for the children you will not want to miss. We look forward to seeing you and can't wait for the children to "get back to (Sunday) school".

If you have any questions and cannot attend the Sept. 12 event, please contact Cathie Lewis 302-278-2965 or Teri Moore 302-249-8786.

Food & Love Moments Matter

Submitted by Penny MacLennan



On Sunday Sept. 26, the conversations and dreams of Penny MacLennan and Sylvia Walker will come true again for the 500th Sunday in a row. Yep, you read that right... On Sunday, September 26, 2021, the Food & Love Soup Kitchen at Epworth United Methodist Church will open its doors and distribute a "Good Meal" for the 500th Sunday in a row. Those Sundays include 10 Easters, 2 Christmases, 1 New Years, 5 Tropical Storms, countless Nor'easters and 1 very long pandemic. What began as a small group of cooks who wanted to "cook food & serve love" has expanded, multiplied and morphed into a large community of friends, neighbors and volunteers who believe "hungry? Not in our house!" Food & Love currently has 6 rotating teams including 1 from our dear friends Seaside Jewish Community Center, our neighbors on Holland Glade Road. There are over 100 active team members that rotate through the cycle creating healthy, nutritious, exciting and adventurous meals. The food rescue at Epworth, through generous donations from local grocery stores, restaurants, retail shops and individuals, makes all of this financially possible. What used to be a Sunday sit-down meal in fellowship hall has become a walkup/drive through mobile meal and the addition of delivery to shelters and centers has increased greatly due to our ability to get food to those in need. The Food & Love Soup kitchen at Epworth has taken John Wesley's words to heart "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." And they would love to have you join them In any way you can.

CHILDREN'S Sunday School



Inspirational Moments Matter— Seminary Graduation

By Kristin Weschler

Only In My Dreams.....



May 10, 2021....a day I thought would never happen. First, I never imagined I would be attending seminary (my dream was to be the next Dorothy Hamill); second, I had anticipated another year of study, graduating in May 2022; and third, the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the possibility of graduating in person. Yet, God's hand was in the midst of it all and I am delighted to have my Masters of Divinity degree from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. It was so awe inspiring to walk down the aisle of the National Cathedral, a majestic place where so many other graduates have walked and tourists come to visit from all over the world. I felt so many emotions – relief after of years of study and sacrifices, a sense of accomplishment and pride, excitement and joy, and anticipation of ‘what next’.

So what is next and how did seminary change me? Seminary taught me the importance of learning. Not just academic learning but being open to exploration, uncertainty, and other perspectives (different faith traditions, cultures, sexual orientations). This was critical for me having grown up in a home with high expectations and the inability to question. I had to appear strong and confident. Through my studies, a seed of mystery has been planted and many thoughts are being nurtured as I discern my call to

ministry.

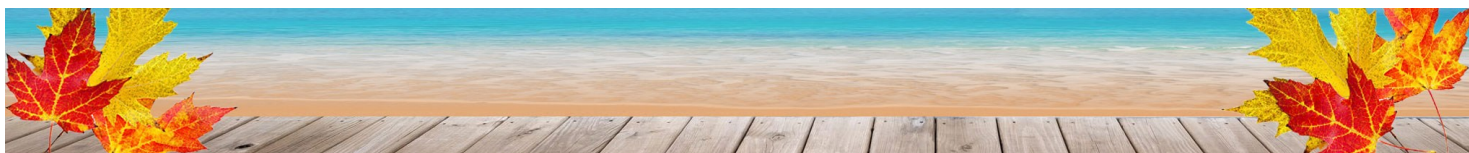
When I first started seminary, I thought I was to serve in women's ministry. I could easily relate to my own experience and felt a bond when sharing with other women. Yet, at the end of my first class at Wesley, I had a vision for an interfaith healing center. Already my plans were changing, but I felt such energy and excitement about what God had revealed to me. I started sharing the idea with others and found others were supportive and enthusiastic. However, how could I make this a reality while working full-time and at least 4 years of additional study? I continued classes, meeting with my mentor, and discerning how to find stability within it all. In time, another idea emerged....one that connected my professional experience, my commitment to justice, and was not as intimidating as starting a new non-profit. My ministry is now defined as bringing awareness to the importance of faith in healing from trauma. While I have not let go of the idea of an interfaith healing center, God has found a way to connect all my knowledge, skills, and experience at a time I am needing to find balance.

We never know what God has planned for us. Life is a journey that is filled with unexpected turns, surprises, and insights. However, we must be open to learning, open to listening, and open to change. I pray that you do not allow the fear of making mistakes or appearing unwise stop you from embracing the adventure we have been given. There are so many opportunities here at Epworth UMC to grow, learn, and engage. Whether you are a new member or been attending for twenty years, I encourage you to try something new. Step out in faith and confidence. God will not lead you astray.



Quarantine Moments Matter

By



Demonstrating Care Moments Matter

Submitted by



EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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Mother Earth Moments Matter

by Bob Paulen

BEE GOOD TO YOUR MOTHER-EARTH!

We are facing an environmental crisis: 43% of our nation's honeybee colonies collapsed over the past year, the second highest loss ever recorded! The science is in, and it leaves no room for doubt or delay. The world's most widely used class of insecticides--called "neonics"--is the key factor in this devastating die-off of bee colonies.

Acute exposure to neonics can kill bees directly. In fact, some of the neonics are 5,000 to 10,000 times more toxic to bees than DDT! Chronic exposure weakens bees, making it harder for them to forage for food, find their way back to their hive and survive winter. We depend on bees to pollinate 70 out of 100 major crops. Simply put: fewer bees = less food. Bees are also suffering from the loss of wildflower habitat, rapidly spreading diseases and climate change--all of which has left these vital pollinators even more susceptible to pesticide poisoning. This could lead to spiraling food costs and reduced access to healthy foods.

What can you do as an individual to help save the bees? Here are four suggestions:

1. BEE SAFE! Plant flowers in your garden using organic starts or untreated seeds to provide good food and a safe haven for bees. Good flowers for bees include: Aster, Black-Eyed Susan Caltrop, Creosole Bush, Currant, Elder Flower, Goldenrod, Huckleberry, Lupine, Penstemon, Purple Caneflower, Rhododendron, Snowberry, Sunflower, Wild Buckwheat, Wild Lilac and Woodland Sage.



2. BEE AWARE! Use alternative pest control methods, like landscaping to attract beneficial insects and eco-friendly pest-control products.

3. BEE VIGILANT! Read labels and steer clear of products containing neonicotinoids such as Acetamiprid, Clothianidin, Dinotefuran, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam.

4. BEE VOCAL! Tell your friends and family about the importance of bees and how they can help. Bees are "canaries in the coal mine" warning us of an imminent threat to our food chain.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. Psalm 24:1 & I Corinthians 10:26

MOMENTS
matter

EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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