

# MOMENTS matter



## Quarterly Newsletter of Epworth United Methodist Church

December 2021 - January & February 2022

### Reconciling Ministries Bible Study

Offered anew! Starting Thursday,  
Feb. 10, 2022

The 14-week Bible Study Course will be offered again beginning on February 10, 2022, and ending on May 19, 2022, with the exception of Maundy Thursday, April 14, 2022. We will meet on Thursday evenings, from 6:00 p.m. until 7:45 p.m. at Epworth United Methodist Church, 19285 Holland Glade Road, Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971.

The course is a study of the biblical passages and biblical principles that are the most relevant to the inclusion or exclusion of members of the LGBTQ community. It begins by analyzing the seven biblical passages that are most frequently cited as the basis for excluding LGBTQ people or limiting their participation. It then examines five fundamental biblical principles that support a policy of full and equal LGBTQ inclusion and participation. Our past classes have had Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, Methodists and other protestant denominations. Each of the past 7 full class sessions have had 15 or more participants. You may even re-take the class! Invite others to study, and bring your Bible!

Questions? e-mail Judy Moore,  
[jgkmoore@gmail.com](mailto:jgkmoore@gmail.com), or  
Scott Strickler,  
[scottstrickler@gmail.com](mailto:scottstrickler@gmail.com)



### Winter 2021-22 Worship Schedule

Sunday 9:00 a.m. Praise Worship  
Sunday 11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship

Sunday 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Online Live stream

On Epworth's YouTube page:

Epworth UMC Rehoboth Beach, DE

or Facebook Live:

([www.facebook.com/epworthUMC/live/](http://www.facebook.com/epworthUMC/live/))

Links are also on our webpage:

[eumcrb.org](http://eumcrb.org)

Tuesday, December 21

7:00 p.m. Blue Christmas Service

Friday, December 24 (Christmas Eve)

5:00 p.m. Praise Worship Service

7:30 p.m. Traditional Worship Service

10:00 p.m. Special Worship Service

All Christmas Eve services are  
candlelight and communion

Beginning Sunday, December 26, 2021  
through the end of February, 2022,  
there will be one Blended Worship  
Service at 10:00 a.m.

Starting March 6, 2022, two services  
will start again at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

## Pastor Vicki's Views



Thirty-five years ago, Bo and I moved across the country to Coronado, California to report to our ships homeported in San Diego. We attended a school before we reported to our ships, so we had a bit of time to get settled. We knew we wanted to connect with a local church and began to visit some options. After a few weeks, we visited St. Paul's UMC, and stayed. Randy Bogus, an usher and greeter, met us at the door and, once he realized we were visitors, introduced us to some people. The people invited us to sit with them. They heard us sing and told the choir director, who invited us to join the choir. Randy invited us to go sailing on his sailboat on a free Saturday afternoon, and soon we had several friends in the church. We had visited larger churches and smaller ones, but none of them helped us connect as quickly and meaningfully as St. Paul's.

Three years later, we moved across the country again, this time to Middletown, Rhode Island, to serve in Newport. Again, we visited churches. When we entered Calvary UMC, an older couple in their 80's invited us to sit with them and took us out to lunch after church. They had met another young couple and introduced us to them. We became fast friends, forming a group to study the Bible and share a meal weekly, and we remain in touch with them today.

Almost a decade after that, we had graduated from seminary and been ordained in The United Methodist Church. We had been appointed to co-pastor a church in Wilmington and attended a gathering to get to know the congregation. When we walked into the room, we discovered several "holy huddles," groups of close friends who were catching up with each other. When I approached one of these groups, all conversation stopped. When I introduced myself as one of the co-pastors, they nodded their heads but made no attempt to engage me in conversation. I asked a few questions, but their body language made it clear that they just wanted to return to their "holy huddle." Without me.

Of course, the people had close friends, and we wanted to encourage the development of friendship as part of the community of the church. However, sometimes we become so focused on catching up with our friends, that we fail to invite new ones into the circle. We have heard from a few people that Epworth does not feel welcoming to them. So, what can we learn from the first two experiences?

First, all of us have the responsibility for welcoming people. It cannot simply be assigned to staff or leaders. Although Randy had an official role, the older couple in Rhode Island did not. They simply loved their church and took it upon themselves to help incorporate people into the community.

Second, the way we welcome others communicates to them our experience of God. We experienced a warmth of God's presence in these two churches because of the way we felt welcomed. When we help someone connect, we express God's love towards them. We communicate that they belong to God and that we want them to be a part of us. We demonstrate that God sees them and we see them, too.

Third, in order to see people, we have to be intentional. Most people decide whether to return to a church before worship even begins. If someone greets them before the service, they feel less like strangers. If someone offers to sit with them, they feel like they might even be able to find a place here. The older couple helped us feel like we belonged just by asking us to sit with them.

Fourth, people took time to get to know a little bit about us. Then they used that knowledge to help connect us to either people or ministries within the church. This step probably involves the most risk. We might introduce ourselves to someone who is a long-term member, and risk embarrassing ourselves. Yet, if someone sits alone, member or not, they probably would appreciate the invitation to sit with others. Plus, in God's economy, nothing gets wasted. Your introduction may simply be an act of kindness someone needs that day. Compared with the risk of not greeting newcomers, the risk of introducing yourself to a member you do not know seems small.

Finally, none of the welcoming we received took place in an "official" passing of the peace or meet and greet time. Most visitors do not experience the passing of the peace in a positive way. They typically report that someone will initially speak and then walk away to connect with their friends. Although COVID took away our passing of the peace, we do not intend to reinstate it. Instead, we will make some new traditions.

You have seen that we have begun a tradition called, "Take Five," where we invite you to reserve the first five minutes after worship to speak to someone new to you. We also have emphasized our welcome area, where the WINGS (Women IN God's Service) serve as welcomers and information people. Yet, we need everyone to be a part of the unofficial welcoming team. God wants to use you to help someone else connect. Will you answer the call?





## Lots of Good News for the Holidays

Bo Gordy-Stith, Pastor of Community & Communications

We live in the Information Revolution, yet in spite of our technological wizardry, we find it difficult to keep up with the most basic information in the daily tidal wave of spam and 24-7 connectivity. From August, 1991 to 2018, the number of websites increased from 1 to over 1.5 billion, and the number of internet users swelled to half of all the people in the world, according to internetlivestats.com. In 1989, the Washington Post reported that the torrent of data produced in the previous three decades exceeded the amount of data cranked out in the previous five millennia. That 30-year-old assessment almost seems quaint now, when we wear the phones that connect us wirelessly to the internet, and data has become a commercial bonanza as well as cultural and international weapon.

Algorithms curate this information to our email accounts, web browsers, and social media feeds, yet we are waking up to the kind of manipulation we suffer from this kind of exposure reinforcement. Commercially developed algorithms exacerbate our blindness; we crave discernment and some boundaries on this flood of information signifying little. Remember when we used to leaf through photo albums? Now we cannot hope to find a specific photo memory in the avalanche of digital photos lost in some cavernous hard drive or internet cloud.

**Is it any wonder that we find it hard to keep up with information in our faith community at Epworth?** One of my least favorite games is trying to remember on what platform I received a digital message. Was it via Facebook IM? Or a text message to my cell phone or office voice-over internet protocol (VIOP) system? Was it an email? If so, on which of my several work and personal email accounts? Maybe it was a LinkedIn message? Or a comment left on the church website, Facebook site, or one of my personal blog sites. Was communicating with each other always this hard?

I don't know about that. What I do know is that



we persist in this gold rush of information and information channels to find ways of connecting and communicating with each other. Thanks to the tools that did not exist a decade or less before, we managed to worship, meet, and minister for over a year without meeting together in person during a global pandemic. And long after we returned to in-person worship, we continue to use Zoom, Livestream channels, websites, email, text messages, and the Cloud to make connections and share information – our stories, opportunities, and perhaps a bit of wisdom.

**Thank you for hanging in there in this confusing jungle of information – to keep the ties that bind our community of faith strong.** Thank you for your patience and persistence in figuring out how to connect via many of these channels for worship, giving, missions, discipleship, and fellowship. Thank you for sharing information through the church office about your mission, group, appeal, or gathering so that we can launch it on our primary channels to the congregation: our website and calendar, and weekly bulletin and email. Thanks also for understanding that we must limit the number of verbal announcements during worship to prevent the kind of overload that prevents anything from getting through. And never forget the value of a personal, on-on-one contact to share the good news!



# EPWORTH

## Legacy Society Moments Matter

Written by Lauren Stayton

You can help keep Epworth strong well into the future!

Would you like to help continue the mission of our church even after you are gone? You can do so by contributing to the Epworth Legacy Society, also known as the Planned Giving and Endowment Fund.

You may make a planned gift by specifying it in your will or Trust. Or, you can make a donation now. The funds do not flow directly to the church but are fully invested in a Vanguard FTSE (Financial Times Stock Exchange) socially responsible index fund that meets requirements of the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church; investing in companies involved with alcohol, tobacco or firearms is not permitted.

As background, an endowment is a gift of money or property to the church to be invested in income-producing assets. The interest derived from the Vanguard fund goes toward supporting Epworth on an annual basis. Each year, the Legacy Society gives the church 5 percent of the account's value as of Aug. 31. This year, that amounted to almost \$9,500! The principal in the fund cannot be spent and must be maintained for future generations. Your tax deductible gift will continue to provide blessings for generations to come!

The Legacy Committee, currently made up of 10 members of the Legacy Society, meets periodically to determine how to grow the endowment fund to provide future financial support for the church. We are committed to making our congregation aware of the fund and planned giving opportunities.

Nearly 50 members and friends of Epworth have committed gifts and bequests to our endowment. When fully vested, these commitments will total well over \$2 million. The value of certain assets, such as a percentage of an estate, cannot be calculated until those assets are sold.

The Legacy Society also sponsors educational sessions occasionally on topics everyone should know about, such as estate planning, wills, taxes, gifts, Medicare, and guidance about investing. Pizza and cookies are served!

Please consider making a difference ... invest in Epworth's future! If you have questions, please contact Lauren Stayton, Legacy Society chair, at [laurenstayton@gmail.com](mailto:laurenstayton@gmail.com) or at 302-593-5552.

## Blessing of the Animals - Moments Matter

Written by Mickie McManamon

### Blessing of the Animals



When October pops up on my calendar, I know the tell-tale signs of fall begin to make themselves come alive: signs like the leaves changing to identify the change of seasons; pumpkins in the fields being prepared for decorations; jack-o-lanterns, pumpkin pies and all the pumpkin spice lattes, cookies, bisques that frequent fall menus. For me, my "boys of fall" return to the high school and college football fields, time shared with family traveling to new and old places to watch our boys play, girls cheer, family members coach, tailgating and celebrating this wonderful time together. Signs also begin appearing in various places in town announcing services for the Blessing of the Animals.

While many of us have pets that we love dearly and pray for, especially when they are sick, Epworth church offers a specific service for the purpose of blessing our animals. No one seems to know when the first services happened in a church setting; however, here at Epworth, the date of our service coincides as closely to the Feast of St. Francis of Assis, which is October 4. Over the years, we have blessed all manner of animals at this event: dogs, cats, birds, fish, goats, horses, bearded dragons, turtles, snakes, guinea pigs, hamsters and mice. There's a place here for all God's creatures. Our Leashes of Love Ministry uses dogs to minister to those in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Epworth UMC began to follow Francis's lead, taking seriously God's love for all of creation and eventually organizing services whereby they bless the pets of our congregation and members of our surrounding community. One of our pastors requests the animal's name and offers a special blessing for their health, safety and ministry.

Please join us next year, the first Sunday in October, for Epworth's Blessing of the Animals.





## Stephen Ministry Moments Matter

Written by Valerie Linder

### The Ministry of Listening

Think of a time when you really felt cared for. Chances are someone focused on what you had to say, was attentive to your needs, and listened to how you felt instead of telling you how you should feel or what you should do.

Listening is one of the most powerful ministry tools at your disposal. It demonstrates that you care about the other person. In Stephen Ministry, a great deal of time is spent in teaching and practicing listening skills because of its importance as a caregiving tool. Here's a sample of what Stephen Ministers learn in their training about listening:

1. Listening is active. It takes energy and commitment to listen really well. Focus your attention on what the other person has to say instead of thinking of what you'll say next. Look at him or her while you listen, and give verbal or physical cues from time to time so the person knows you're tuned in.
2. Listening takes patience. Often you need to build trust before someone will open up to you. Constant, patient listening is a key.
3. Listening involves more than just words. Pay attention not only to what is said, but to what is not said—or to what is said with a smile or a sigh. Pay attention to body language, too. Does it agree with or contradict a person's spoken words?
4. Good listeners aren't completely silent. They restate key thoughts or ideas to be sure they understood correctly, and they ask focused questions to encourage the person to reach a little deeper.
5. Listening happens over time. One conversation might build upon an earlier one. As you listen over several

conversations, are there any recurring themes or patterns in what the person has said? Are there any contradictions from what was said earlier? These are signs there may be more to explore underneath.

6. Listening is confidential. A great way to build trust and show the person you really care is to maintain confidentiality and not to share with others what was told to you in private conversation.

Jesus was the model of a good listener. Much of his ministry was listening to people. By listening to what people had to say he demonstrated how much he really cared about them. Remember the stories of the woman at the well, Nicodemus, or the disciples on the road to Emmaus. All were times when Jesus showed his care and concern by first listening to people and then giving them what they needed.

Our Stephen Ministers at Epworth UMC Rehoboth follow Jesus' model as a listener and caregiver, helping to make this a caring place where members and guests truly feel people care about who they are and how they feel. Just as our Stephen Ministers use good listening skills to communicate how much they care, so can you. Listening is a great gift we can give to one another, and one we can all use in our everyday caring and relating.

If you might be interested in becoming a Stephen Minister or if you want more information about Stephen Ministry at Epworth, please contact the church office ([302-227-7743](tel:302-227-7743)) and leave your name and phone number. A Stephen Minister will return your call to answer your questions.



Christ Caring • For People • Through People



# EPWORTH

## Turkeyville - Moments Matter

Epworth continued to provide Thanksgiving meals for those in need, just a little differently this year, because of COVID. We prepared Thanksgiving boxes for families to pick up. They called to reserve their meal for pick up on one of three days, Thursday, November 18 from 2—5 p.m., Sunday, November 21 from 1—3 p.m. and Tuesday, November 23 from 10:00 a.m.—noon. The dinner kit included the following:

Turkey breast or Roast Chicken  
Mashed Potato mix, Stuffing mix  
Yams, Canned Vegetables, Gravy, Pie



## New Member Class Moments Matter

Please join us in welcoming our newest members of Epworth UMC. They were welcomed into our family October 10, 2021.

Dan & Barb Hoffman  
Dorothy Smith  
Marilyn Pate  
Debra Leiss  
Dan Potts  
Todd & Alicia Popham

Here are some pictures taken during their Belongings Class.





## Rally Day— Moments Matter

Rally Day

September 12, 2021

Kick-off for

Children's Sunday School



Children had fun with painting, games and fellowship

# EPWORTH



## Social Justice—Moments Matter

Written by Bob Paulen

### LOVE YOUR MOTHER -- EARTH!

Most of these articles on our planet's health have focused on what the individual can do to live a greener life. It has become increasingly clear, however, that the individual alone can not address the depth of this problem. Climate change is the defining issue of our time. It affects you. It affects me. It affects our families. It affects everyone. Therefore, I am suggesting that we consider using the holiday season to engage others through our gift giving to support institutional change to protect our planet. Membership in any of the following organizations, among many, would accomplish this goal by sharing information and ideas for action.

1. Environmental Defense Fund: <http://www.edf.org>
2. Friends of the Earth: <http://www.foe.org>
3. Green America: <http://www.greenamerica.org>
4. National Resources Defense Council; <http://www.NRDS.ORG>
5. National Parks Foundation: <http://www.nationalparks.org>
6. Ocean Conservancy: <http://oceanconservancy.org>

Best wishes for a blessed holiday season and a rebirth of faith!

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

