



97 Main St. Vincentown, NJ 08088
609-859-2161

Rev. David L. Ledford, III - Pastor
pastorvumc97@gmail.com

11:00 Worship Service in-person and on Facebook Live.
All are Welcome!

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

February 2021

Transitions

It was announced in worship on January 31st that Bishop John R. Schol and the Cabinet of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference have appointed me to serve as the pastor of the United Methodist Church in Absecon, effective July 1st.

As the church leaders and I began to digest this news, we realized that this church has not lost its pastor to another church in over twenty years. As we begin the transition, we know that this one will be different than the last several transitions. One of my favorite pastoral care books is "All Our Losses, All Our Grief". The main point of that book is that our lives are filled with different kinds of grief, not just the grief that surrounds a death. Each time something ends, there is grief. So, my message for us this month is that it is ok to grieve this news. I am too. The healthiest thing we can do is acknowledge our feelings and feel them fully.

I was extremely surprised to get that phone call. I was not expecting it this year. Actually, I was hoping I was only half done with my time here. As soon as our District Superintendent spoke those words, I was instantly thrown into grief. That doesn't mean I will never be happy in Absecon. It doesn't mean I won't put my whole heart into my future ministry. It is simply an acknowledgement that this news produces a sense of loss in my heart. Our time as pastor and congregation will end on July 1st, and that is something worth grieving. As with any kind of grief, we all will grieve this in different ways, in different intensities and in different amounts of time. And that's ok.

"All Our Losses, All Our Grief" teaches us that there is power in calling these emotions "grief". And that lesson applies to any situation in life where loss is experienced. We certainly grieve the loss of a friend or loved one to death. We may grieve the ending of a relationship when a friend moves away. We may grieve when our babies become toddlers, our toddlers become children, our children become teens and our teens become adults. We may grieve when our adult children move out of the house. We may grieve the loss of a job, a sentimental artifact or a pet. Grief even appears when we lose an ability we once had, but no longer do. By calling it grief, we acknowledge the deep emotional pain the loss is causing us, whatever that loss is. It is not to be ignored; it is not to be made fun of.

If you are like me, you knew this day would come, but weren't prepared for it so soon. I guess I never would have been. The reality is, this is who we are as United Methodists. With our roots in the circuit riders of the 1700's, we are appointed by the bishop to serve a particular community until the bishop and Cabinet discern it is time to bring our gifts and graces to serve another community. I am not concerned at all about the future of this church. While we do not yet know who my successor will be, I do know that the same process and the same bishop that brought me here will bring another pastor here. I have full confidence that Bishop Schol and the Cabinet follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in these decisions. This church has been here for 193 years and in that time has had 91 different pastors. The Vincentown United Methodist Church has lived through 90 pastoral transitions, the Civil War, two world wars, several wars overseas, a Great Depression, the Civil Rights Movement, September 11th and now COVID-19. In that time, this church has proven itself to be resilient, willing to grow and ready to serve. That same spirit will get you through this transition as well.

We now enter into a changed relationship. In an instant, I become the "outgoing" pastor, yet I still have all the responsibilities I had before. Nothing changes in my role, except that now we know its expiration date. I take very seriously the responsibility that I have to my successor to make their transition as smooth as possible. So, we've got 4 more months together to do good ministry, and no pastoral transition should ever get in the way of a church's ministries. So, we will do the best ministry we can as we always have. As a sports fan, I feel a bit like I've been traded, but am being asked to help my current team win the championship before I go to my new team. While this begins a new chapter of our relationship, I am going to take every opportunity I get to enjoy doing ministry with all of you, and will take every chance I get to let you all know how thankful I am for each and every one of you.

Grace and Peace, Reverend Dave

WE'RE STILL OPEN!

On Sunday, OCTOBER 25TH, we returned to the sanctuary as approved by the Reopening Team and the Church Council! Back in June, we announced that we would require 3 things to happen before our church reopens: First, that indoor gatherings of a church our size be permitted by the state. Religious gatherings are exempt from Governor Murphy's recent crowd restrictions. We may worship 35% capacity, which for us is about 108 people. Second, that we purchase and receive the necessary cleaning supplies, masks and gloves. We now have all of those. And third, that we see no considerable rise in COVID-19 cases in our area. While cases in New Jersey are rising, Southampton's numbers have been pretty low and we feel confident that our safety measures are enough to keep worshipping in person while also keeping everyone safe. Our worship services are also live on Facebook, so there are a couple different ways to worship with us on Sunday mornings. Please check our Facebook page, website or phone message if you plan on attending worship in person on a Sunday morning. With cases rising quickly, it is possible that a decision to return to virtual only worship could be made during the week. Either way, we love worshipping with you!

VINCENTOWN UMC WORSHIP, MISSIONS & SMALL GROUPS

SUNDAY: 11am Worship (in person and Facebook Live)

THURSDAY: 11am & 7pm Bible Study on Zoom

FRIDAY: 7:30pm Youth Group in person outside in good weather, on Zoom in bad weather

SATURDAY: 1ST Saturday of the Month: Food Pantry

EVERY DAY: We worship, serve God and pray with you!

You may find our live worship services by going to our Facebook page (facebook.com/vumcnj) at 11am on Sunday morning. To find the Midweek Prayer Services, you may go to our Facebook page and click on "videos", or go to our website, vincentownumc.org, and follow the links at the top of the page. If you have a ministry idea, we'd love to hear it!!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Nancy Blazewick, 6 Surrey Court,
Mt. Holly, NJ 08060

3 Jeffry Thomas

6 Bianca DeMunguia

14 Billy Bruno

15 Sara Bowker

17 Dorrance Hall, Michelle Stiles

21 Deborah Irion

22 Frances Raines

24 Andrew Monastero

27 Carole Simon

29 Tom Sweet

If you would like an address for anyone on this lists, or wish to add to it, please reach out to the pastor at pastorvumc97@gmail.com.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, this year's community Ash Wednesday service will be virtual. Reverend Dave is working with the other pastors to plan the service. All are encouraged to be creative and be prepared for that service by gathering some ashes or by gathering some dirt from outside to impose upon yourself. The service will be posted to Facebook and our website by 11am on Ash Wednesday.

Food Pantry

Thank you for your generous donations to the Food Pantry. The next Food Pantry Date is: Saturday, March 6th from 10am-12pm.

The best practices for dropping off donations during the pandemic include arranging a drop off time, and then once the donations are there and the donors have left, church representatives will bring the donations inside. Stay safe and healthy!

If you have any questions or donations, you may contact Deb Barton, Carole Simon or Reverend Dave.

January Finance Report

Funds:

Bastedo Estate: \$110,427

Cemetery: \$20,337

Capital Improvement: \$36,338 (up \$1,890

Stocks: \$25,906 (up \$574 December)

Operating Funds: \$37,834

January Operating Funds:

Total Income: \$12,361

Total Expenses: \$8,473

Overall Total: \$3,888

However, Shared Ministries and the Billings to Conference have not yet been billed for January.

~ The Church Misses Seeing each of You.

Offertory Prayer

Living God, your love for us is so unfathomable. Open our ears to hear the cries of your neediest children. Open our eyes to see human injustice. Open our minds to think about compassion in all circumstances. Continue to increase our willingness to give so that we may lead lives fully focused on ministry to others. We place these offerings upon your altar in gratitude for your guidance and love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

Frank Hicks, Finance Chairman

Conference Finances

A few weeks ago, Reverend Dave and our Lay Member, Frank Hicks, attended a virtual Special Session of the Annual Conference. Our Treasurer, Russ Thomas, also watched the meeting as a visitor. The purpose of this special session was to vote on an updated 2021 budget for the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. The updated budget was made necessary when some mistakes in conference billings were discovered. The new 2021 budget, which was approved by the Annual Conference, addresses a \$6 million budget shortfall and approved healthcare billings from \$15,000 to \$16,500. Bishop Schol and the leadership of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference are committed to being transparent and address the issues that led to the budget shortfall. While we do not know the answer to every question yet, an investigation is well under way and has already helped to answer many questions that you may have. Below, you will find a link to the conference website where you will find a frequently updated collection of questions that people have been submitting to the conference. If you have a question, it is likely someone else has had that same question and you might find an answer there. Reverend Dave, Frank Hicks and Russ Thomas are also available to answer questions to the best of their ability. Bishop Schol and conference leadership thank all of us for our patience and understanding as they work on this. Here is the link that was previously mentioned:

www.gnjumc.org/january-2021-special-session/frequently-asked-questions/

Online Giving is Here!

What are the benefits of online giving?

- o Recurring payments can be set up one time, and then they happen automatically from that moment on.
- o No more worrying! Some of you might grow concerned throughout the year that you have fallen behind. But with online giving, you will always know that you are right on track!

Online giving will never be the only way to give, it is just an easier way to give for some. If cash and check work best for you, stick with that! You can sign up any time! See Rev. Dave for more info!

LOOKING FORWARD TO EASTER

Our Church Council is determined to hold safe, in-person worship on Easter morning. Details are being finalized, but we expect to use some sort of "sign-up" process. Limits for houses of worship in NJ recently went from 25% capacity to 35%. For us, that is about 108 people. A sign-up process would help us ensure that we do not exceed that number. More info will come in next month's newsletter.

To receive your newsletter online, email the church administrative assistant at vumcsec@gmail.com

Pastor's email: pastorvumc97@gmail.com Website: vincentownumc.org

On Facebook and Instagram, search "Vincentown United Methodist Church"

Vincentown United Methodist Church

LAMPLIGHTER, FEBRUARY, 2021

97 Main Street, Vincentown NJ 08088 (609) 859-2161

E-mail: pastorvumc97@gmail.com

Rev. David L. Ledford III, Pastor

(732) 632-7613

VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR SERVICES

OR

VISIT IN PERSON SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 11:00 A.M.

(MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIRED)

Food Pantry, 1st Saturday

Lay Leader—Beverlee Adams

Church Council Chairperson—Frank Hicks

Organist—Susan Mansfield

Administrative Assistant—Peggy Thomas vumcsec@gmail.com

Vincentown United Methodist Church

97 Main Street

Vincentown, New jersey 08088

Prepared especially for:

A Spirit-directed Christian community of faith, based on scripture and prayer, where God invites all to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to serve, care and love, in the name of Jesus Christ.