

# The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

April 2021

## I Believe In Miracles

**W**hen I was in seminary, I was once asked the question if I ever experienced a miracle.

Upon consideration, and juxtaposing that notion of what I thought a miracle should look like, my initial response was, “No, I never have.” Over the years, and as I grew older and more mature in age and faith, that perspective has changed considerably. Let me explain by providing a few examples.

I once stood in the hallowed room of the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome. I always had a propensity toward art since I was a child—so, needless to say, I stood in absolute awe at the artistry of all the huge pieces of work that adorned the walls and

ceiling of that incredible space. I kept thinking that centuries before, the genius of Michelangelo was on full display in the very space I stood. A miraculous work indeed that one could take a paintbrush and some paint and create such a masterpiece.

Then, I was watching a documentary on the evolution of the automobile. The very mode of transportation that we don’t give a second thought about as we turn our car’s ignition key in our driveway. From the early days when production line workers assembled Model T’s by hand to modern day assembly lines in Detroit where the parts of the vehicle are assembled by robotic arms—I sat and watched in awe at the miraculous advances we have made in such a short period of time.

Not to mention that after I visited the Wright Brothers’ Museum in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina—I was speechless just thinking how we were able to move from a rickety flying machine whose first flight only lasted 12 seconds and covered a mere 120 feet to today’s Boeing Airbus A380 that travels at a cruising speed of 727 MPH, can remain in flight some 9,500 miles without

**Continued on Page 2**

## WORSHIP IN APRIL

**Apr. 4**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 12:12-19

**Apr. 11**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 20:19-21

**Apr. 18—Attended worship resumes**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, 1 John 3:1-7

**Apr. 25**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, 1 John 3:16-24

Attended worship with Covid restrictions will resume on Apr. 18. There are no other church activities with the exception of Food Pantry.



## Circle of Concern

### Greiving

The wife, Inez, and family of **Guido Morales**, on his death from liver cancer. (Pam Queen)

Family and friends of **Harold Ezzone**. (Kathy Halliwell)

Family and friends of **Marilyn LaBuda** (Jenny Kartz)

### Healing

**Andrew Acerra** who was recently diagnosed with liver cancer and for his wife Danielle. (Pam Queen)

**Joshua Bundra** who had surgery to repair his collarbone which was broken in a serious snowboarding accident. (Pam Queen)

**Said Mirzaali** who suffered a stroke. (Suzie Conte)

**Penny and Rob Weber** have been diagnosed with Covid. (Charlene Schultz)

**Lisa and Billy Barry** both have Covid. Prayers that their son who has Down Syndrome and other underlying issues doesn't get it. (Kathy Halliwell)

**Kathy Maier** who is recovering from hip surgery and broke her femur. Also has lung issues. (Bob Prince)

**Brenda Klingel** who will begin rehabilitation for her vocal cord which was injured during her surgery. (Ed Klingel)

### Joy

**Katie and Abby Weber** are feeling better. (Charlene Schultz)

### Concerns

**Kiesha Pearson**, a Captain in the Air Force, currently in Afghanistan, and all the troops that are in dangerous territory. (Lenny Pearson)

All the **caretakers** that have no respite during this unprecedented season in our lives. (Pastor Chuck)

**Justin Zimmerman** who is in his interview process EMT and scheduled for his Medical exam. (Diane Zimmerman)

For all the **small business and restaurant owners** that are suffering financially during this pandemic. (Pastor Chuck)

**Healing for our nation**, prayers that all levels of government can work together and people can come together and live by the values that our nation was founded on, bringing back peace to our land. May God's wisdom increase cooperation in spite of differences.

(Pastor Chuck)

### Continued Prayers

Anita Helfst, Mary Reider, Paul Weissman, Joe Calzone, Fred Reider, Bob Mayrose, Ed Rose, Debbie Merrell, Beverly Schiffrin, Maryellen Comacho, Suzanne Dalton, Arlene Hurre-Schwergerling, Kurt Watkins, Travis Gentile, Kimberly Helfst, John Rocco, Megan Coonery, Nancy Schaff, William Schaff, Suzanne Tierney, Richard Rubino, Felicia Fuentes, Liz Smith, Bruce Kirschner, Joyce Gabrinowitz, Pastor Dwight Wolther, Linda Coleman, Travis Gentile, Tom King, Kevin Kearns

—**Compiled by Kathy Halliwell**

*Please email Kathy—*

*keats1002@gmail.com with any additions or deletions.*

### These in Rehab or Nursing Care

**Geri Sheridan, Robert Krawzak** in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzola Dr., East Patchogue, NY

## Miracles (From Page 1)

refueling and can carry close to 900 passengers and their baggage. All this in a span of one century. That is miraculous to me.

I was reminded of another example of a miracle when Maritza sang a solo in our church in Spanish. As she sang in Spanish, I quietly sang along in English the words: "I believe for every drop of rain that falls a flower grows. I believe that somewhere in the darkest night a candle glows. I believe for everyone who goes astray, someone will come to show the way, I believe, I believe. I believe above the storm the smallest prayer will still be heard. I believe that someone in the great somewhere hears every word. Every time I hear a new born baby cry, or touch a leaf or see the sky, then I know why, I believe."

If that person in seminary who posed the question of whether or not I ever experienced a miracle asked me that same question today—my response would be, "Where do you want me to begin? There are miracles around me every single day." And the greatest of them all was that Jesus went to the cross just for me (and everyone else). And because of his death, burial and resurrection, I have been given a new life in Him. And everything I have ever done that may have been contrary to His will was forgiven and washed in His precious blood. Now, that is a miracle of miracles.

Wishing you all a blessed Resurrection Sunday, I remain In His Grip,

—**Pastor Chuck**

# United Methodist Church of Patchogue

## April 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 <b>Easter Sunday</b> 10:00 a.m.— Livestream YouTube Worship	5 <b>Office Closed</b>	6 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry	7	8	9	10
11 10:00 a.m.— Livestream YouTube Worship	12 <b>Office Closed</b>	13 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry	14	15	16	17
18 10:00 a.m.— Church open for regular worship.	19 <b>Office Closed</b>	20 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry	21	22	23	24
25 10:00 a.m.— Church open for regular worship.	26 <b>Office Closed</b>	27 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry	28	29	30	

## Sing A New Song

**R**ecently, I came across my copy and notes of a service we held in May 2002. The theme is the title of this article and also the theme of the 2002 United Methodist Women's Assembly in Philadelphia.

It struck me, here we are, Spring 2021, just beginning to emerge from our year long pandemic “winter” of anxiety, loss, and isolation, not to mention the brutal conflict of election and cultural strife, maybe singing a new song is just what we need to do. So, what could this new song be in this season of Easter? Is it temporary or eternal?

I have this slightly irreverent (but never disrespectful) image of the Creator sitting down at the celestial piano and tinkering with the eternal melody or maybe trying a new arrangement for the music of the spheres. But does God really have to compose a new song? Was there something off-key or out of tune with the old one God had been trying to impart in our hearts since time immemorial? Or could it be we just didn't listen? We heard the melody, but failed to learn the words. Or—typically human—we substituted our own lyrics for God's.

So, when God's lyrics said we should be loving, just, merciful, humble and ethical, we sang of power, status, control of others and of the natural world. We hummed the tune, but replaced the eternal words with legalisms, and religious dogma, and arrogantly insisted that each religion (depending on who's singing) is the only right one. So much for love and

compassion. The song, in our hands, became full of dissonance and disharmony.

Yet, God, with infinite patience and unconquerable benevolence, sent us a new singer to teach us the old song in a new way. The way embodied in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what an upheaval that caused!

For Jesus “sang” that we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27) and that we should love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, pray for those who abuse us (Luke 6). In Matthew 5, Jesus' lyrics included, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth, and, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

What kind of crazy music was this? For what Jesus vocalized was a complete upheaval of human society, its structures and values. He taught that the way to God was through a community founded on love of God and of each other, not of power and wealth. So, of course, they had to kill him.

The world of the 21st century, in many ways, is vastly different than that of the 1st. Yet, in other ways, it is still the same. We're still humming the tune, and forgetting the words. The theologian, Raymond Brown once wrote that if Jesus were to return to earth, we would probably crucify Him all over again. Sadly, that rings true, for we humans, while continuing to long for God, still want to sing the song in our own way. But, what if we truly listen to Jesus? Yes, that's really hard to do in the face of

of the cacophony of noise from society, and the ambivalent system of values we have to negotiate. But, the wonderful thing about God's song through Jesus is that it is full of hope. Hope that even when we stumble and fall, we can get up and keep trying to sing that eternal song in God's way. Peace and Blessings to you.

—Barbara Becker

## Easter Dinner Prayer and Blessing

**D**ear Heavenly Father, We offer you gratitude for the ability to gather for this Easter Dinner Prayer. We recall how your son gathered with his disciples when he walked the earth. He broke bread with them and enjoyed their company. We thank you for his example as we come together to do the same.

As we ask you to bless our food and conversation, we remember why we celebrate Easter. The sacrifice of your son's very body for our sin was costly. Jesus willingly subjected himself to suffering so that we could be forgiven and free. While the cross symbolizes his death, it also symbolizes the promise of new life—a life that can only come from You.

Make the resurrection personal to us—help it to inspire and change the way we live each day beyond Easter. Make us agents of your hope by what we do for others and claim for our lives. Strengthen our belief so that we might continue enjoying spiritual treasures from your hand as we rest in the promise of the life to come.

We pray this Easter Meal Blessing with confidence in Jesus' victorious name, Amen.

—Noelle Kirchner. Christianity.com

## Black Caucus: Racism Still Challenges Church

One pandemic kept The United Methodist Church's black caucus separated for its first-ever virtual membership meeting, March 19-20. But another "pandemic" brought that dispersed membership together around one topic: the relentless scourge of racism that still vexes this centuries-old denomination.

Black Methodists for Church Renewal convened for its historic 54th General Meeting in a nine-hour weekend webinar on Zoom. Members viewed a keynote address, two panel discussions and several caucus business sessions — all presented live from participants' homes — plus three pre-recorded worship services with sermons and 15 video reports from jurisdictional leaders and co-sponsoring agencies and conferences.

Almost all components of the program addressed the challenge to dismantle racism that many U.S. denominational leaders, conferences and local churches have focused on for the past year. While that campaign, launched in mid-2020, is still new, the intractable problem it addresses is as old as Methodism's American roots.

"Racism: The Unfinished Agenda — BMCR Calls Our Church to Fulfill Its 1968 Promise" was the meeting theme. Indeed, many spoke of that unfinished agenda as an unfulfilled promise in sometimes bold, candid statements.

Retired Bishop Forrest C. Stith keynoted the meeting with an impassioned racial history and sociology lecture that recounted American

Methodism's early struggle over slavery, which founder John Wesley opposed, and the resilient growth of Black churches despite the challenges of slavery and segregation. However, Stith began and ended focused on the current struggle over racial inequity and the journey toward justice and greater inclusiveness that has progressed, regressed and digressed in its course toward an uncertain future.

"To stay in this church, we have to renew the church," Stith said, recalling the controversial naming of the new caucus in 1968. He was among leaders then who prepared for the gradual abolition of official racial segregation in a newly formed United Methodist Church.

Stith cited the stubborn resistance among many white church leaders, despite the new denomination's initial progress in developing church-wide programs, benevolences and leadership opportunities to benefit Black members.

Despite the church's stated goal of inclusiveness, "achieving an anti-racist society is so difficult in this church," he said. He recalled from childhood the practice of vigorously shaking a new bottle of milk to evenly distribute the cream resting at the top and thus, make the milk whole. But that home homogenization result can be short-lived, he said, if the bottle is left unattended and the cream soon rises back to the top.

"If you're not careful, no matter how much you do, how many laws you pass or rules you make ... the cream will still rise to the top, leaving the rest of the milk at the bottom."

Expressing admiration for the social impact and diversity of the Black Lives Matter protest movement, Stith urged the caucus to keep shaking up the system by becoming a larger, stronger and more outspoken organization. He urged members to recruit and develop more and younger Black leaders, to collaborate more with allies and to reclaim its early activist role as a "gadfly" demanding lasting institutional progress across the denomination.

Mississippi Conference Bishop James Swanson ended the meeting with a closing sermon that delved more into the theological and political aspects of institutional racism as a sin and stain on the church's character, requiring earnest repentance.

Preaching from Joel 2:12-14, he called for "a ripping and rending of our hearts" that leads to real change and transformation. "It's not enough to just put it on paper."

Echoing Stith's theme of the illusion and temporary nature of superficial change, Swanson contended that the denomination's decision to desegregate in 1968 might have been spurred emotionally by the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. a month earlier and a desire to signal a new era of justice in the church.

"That's good, but what did we do to make it happen," he asked, questioning the sufficiency of denominational diversity that resulted in programs, employment and legislative resolutions.

"We paint a real good picture of what we want the world to believe about us," he said. "But have we

**Continued on Page 7**

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Please email your copy to [gbhoag@optonline.net](mailto:gbhoag@optonline.net).

## Racism (From Page 5)

done what Joel asked us to do: to rip our hearts in true repentance so the Lord can wash this sin and stain from us. ... We're not driven by a desire to please God but a desire to look good to the rest of the Christian community and to the world."

Both bishops were also gently critical of African American leaders who value individual gains in success and power but have not pushed for progress that more broadly benefits Black churches.

"There needs to be a repentance of the heart on the part of us, too," Swanson said. "Sometimes we've forgotten our first love and in many ways, we have traded in our own hunger for a reconciliation and true sharing of who we are in Christ Jesus."

He also complained of the delusion some have that "things are getting better when many times we know they aren't" and lamented that "materialism and racism often go together like hand in glove, as causes of oppression that stop us from realizing our dream of being the beloved community."

Other voices were heard in two back-to-back panel discussions, both moderated by M. Garlinda Burton, interim top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race. Burton informed members of several efforts being waged around the connection related to the U.S. church's Dismantling Racism campaign, which was launched jointly by the Council of Bishops and several general agencies.

Burton shared from Religion and Race's monitoring that many conferences were getting a slow start — offering anti-racism education in book studies and dialogues but not yet "dealing with real systemic concerns." She said caucuses representing people of color need to work at "holding their conferences' feet to the fire" to spur more progress.

Two caucus members shared a panel to report on what their conferences are doing. The Rev. Denise Smartt Sears, a New York Conference district superintendent, described efforts to "de-center whiteness" through anti-racism education and training, listening sessions, accountability measures and advocacy for reparations.

The Rev. Cody Collier, a retired member and clergy coach in the Missouri Conference, has helped his conference stimulate deeper awareness and greater accountability in combatting racism, while increasing equity in hiring, clergy appointment-making, financial decisions and other intentional practices.

Another panel discussion featured three co-authors of the popular new book "I'm Black. I'm Christian. I'm Methodist." The Rev. Rudy Rasmus, the book's editor and pastor of St. John's Downtown Church in Houston, was joined by two young pastors and cowriters: the Rev. Tori Butler, pastor of Good Hope-Union United Methodist Church in Silver Springs, Maryland, and the Rev. Erin Beasley, associate pastor of Germantown (Tennessee) United Methodist Church, a cross-racial appointment.

The clergywomen spoke about their encounters and efforts to help white and Black United Methodists gain a better understanding of the history and current challenges of racism in the denomination. Both cited a need for more connection and support for young Black United Methodists that could bolster their recruitment into pastoral ministry, a goal that is widely acknowledged as a dire need for the church.

Rasmus observed that racial injustice and protests incited a "great Black awakening of 2020" and shared concerns from his recent doctoral study on "Millennial Culture and Institutional Religion." He said the book is intended "to spark conversations that need to happen" about racism across generations in the church.

"The church has the unmitigated gall to be discussing laws around the issue of human sexuality but has not sufficiently addressed the longstanding problem of racism in the denomination," he said, echoing a complaint of many Black leaders.

"Racism is definitely still an unfinished agenda that the church needs to deal with," said the Rev. Antoine "Tony" Love, Black Methodists for Church Renewal chairman. "We need to grapple with our history and understand what is in the church's own constitution and stated beliefs that it's not living up to."

Love said the caucus is "not calling for revolution or reparations necessarily," rather that it is committed to the renewal of church values.

—John W. Coleman, UMNS

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## The Easter Message of Hope For All

**A**s we share with the Christian world their Easter celebration, let us also share in the sense of hope which is one of the most important messages of Easter – the others being peace, atonement and renewal of life.

The word Easter is believed to come from the word "Eastre", an annual pagan celebration to worship Eostre, the goddess of offspring and springtime. She was associated with fertility and rebirth. This festival in her honor was held at springtime, the period when the Earth renews its life.

Today, Easter is both a celebration of the gift of Spiritual Rebirth and at

the same time a reminder of the constant renewal of life here on Earth.

It doesn't matter whether we are Christians or not or whether we are believers or not. This message of hope should be meaningful in our desire towards living the fullness of our lives.

We live in a wonderful but deeply wounded and wounding world that is at times uncaring, unforgiving, cruel, and devoid of second chances. Easter offers the assurance that the many difficulties and challenges that threaten to overwhelm us will be overcome.

Despite the desertion of his disciples, the cruelty of the soldiers and the despair of the women, Jesus offered them, as he offers us, new life, forgiveness and hope for the future. We can find healing and hope in

Him who came that we might have life in all its fullness. The risen Christ, in His profound love, makes possible for all of us to have second chances, new beginnings, new life.

Jesus says to frightened disciples, "Do not be afraid." To us he says, "Do not be afraid." Whatever it is that causes you to fear, Jesus the risen Christ will be with you and will go ahead of you and continue to be with you.

He offers you joy and peace, forgiveness and hope. Most of all, he offers you Himself. You need not fear. He has overcome the world.

—Cathrine Margit Moller,  
[selfgrowth.com](http://selfgrowth.com)