

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

February 2022

A Change of Atmosphere With an Unchanging God

Have you ever needed a change of atmosphere? Now, I am not talking about the gases enveloping and surrounding the earth. We hear meteorologist on TV talking about atmospheric pressure. No, not that atmosphere. I am referring to the pervading tone or mood of a place. Yes, a change of atmosphere.

Just when we thought we were getting through a tough year in 2021—guess what? We got hit with the infamous Omicron variant of COVID. I will tell you one thing—this virus from hell really knows what survival means. Just when we think a vaccine or pill is snuffing out this demonic presence—it mutates itself into another variant.

Will we have to live with COVID forever? I don't know, but we will leave that for another time and another discussion.

Back to a change of atmosphere. I am ready for a change. How about you? We turn the corner of January and it looks like Omicron is on a downturn. Praise the Lord! Now, we are entering a brand-new month of February.

February, for some reason, always reminded me that we were close to the season of Lent and Easter—two of my favorite times of the year. A time of reflection and seeking to go deeper in my whole understanding of discipleship. However, this year, Lent arrives a little later than normal on Ash Wednesday, March 2. Nevertheless, I am still anticipating in making that turn—making that change of atmosphere.

What is celebrated in February, however, is Valentine's Day—February 14. What is the first thought that pops in your head when you hear someone say, "Valentine's Day?" For me, the first thought that comes to mind is LOVE. Everyone should have that special someone we can call our Valentine. So, guys, don't forget the flowers and box of chocolates—or is that old school? Well, I am just

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY

Feb. 6—Rev. Kurt Watkins, Luke 5:1-11

Feb. 13—Barbara Becker, Luke 6:17-26

Feb. 20—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 6:27-38

Feb. 27—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 9:28-36

Worship is still with some Covid restrictions. Masks are required.



Circle of Concern

Bereavement

The family of **Paul Rice**, his wife Betty, children Steven, Kevin and Janet along with their grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The family of **Debra Baker** who died of complications from bronchitis and Covid. Debra was only 62. (Kathy Halliwell)

The family, friends and police family of the two New York City police officers, **Jason Rivera** and **Wilbert Mora**, killed in the line of duty.

Healing

Christopher and Ariana who are expecting their first baby. Ariana is at 31 weeks gestation. Due to health issues, she will be hospitalized until her baby is born.

Frankie Carroll who is hospitalized with Covid and was recently put on a ventilator. (Bob & Eleanor Prince)

Concerns

US Marine **Steven Rice** will be deployed to Japan next month. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

Special prayers for **Pastor Chuck and MyongCha** as they vacation in Florida.

Continued Prayers

Carol Janssen, Rob Conforti, John Hefferman, Tim Hollowell, Brianna Maglio, Richard Pryor, Ulla Ziegler Pereira, Maryellen Comacho, Kimberly Helfst, Nancy Schaff

Compiled by **Kathy Halliwell**

Please email Kathy—
keats1002@gmail.com with any
additions or deletions.

In Nursing Care

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

Birthdays In February

- Feb.10** Jonathan Alvarado
- Feb. 15** John Yarshuck
- Feb. 18** Robbie Pearson
- Feb. 20** Lilianna Angelina Mangano
- Feb. 21** Valerie Ward
- Feb. 24** Lili Rogers

Atmosphere (From Page 1)

an old school kind of guy and make no apologies for it. Not that you were asking for one.

When I think of love I can't help not only thinking of my lovely wife, but Jesus also comes to mind. John 3:16 states that God so loved the world, you and me, that he gave his only Son, Jesus. And, whoever believes in him will not perish, but have life eternal. Can you get your head around the whole idea of "ETERNAL?" That means lasting or existing FOREVER!

When I was a kid in Jr. High School and the science teacher mentioned the whole concept of infinity and that space travel would go on forever from one solar system or universe into the next, it almost exploded my brain. I mean, if you get in your car and drive west you will eventually come to the end where the Pacific Ocean begins for our continent. Even

if you continued west and traveled around the circumference of the earth—you would eventually wind up back in the place you started.

But the idea of infinity—traveling forward from our planet out into the abyss and never ending still boggles my finite mind. Well, the Gospel of John and the words of Jesus says to us that love is also unending and through our Lord we will have life that never ends, even when these mortal bodies of ours cease to function. That, my friend, is unbelievably powerful. Don't you agree?

Yes, I am ready for a change of atmosphere. A new chapter. A new month. A new beginning. So let us say goodbye to 2021 and even January and look forward to God doing mighty things in our lives in this brand-new month while always keeping in mind the ultimate Valentine, Jesus—who promises to make all things NEW. I can hang my hat on that one. How about you?

In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck



United Methodist Church of Patchogue

February 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.—AA	2	3 7:00 p.m.—AA	4 10:00 a.m.— ESL 7:30 p.m.— Pentecostal	5
6 10:00 a.m.— Worship	7 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.—AA	8 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.—AA	9	10 7:00 p.m.—AA	11 10:00 a.m.— ESL 7:30 p.m.— Pentecostal	12
13 10:00 a.m.— Worship	14 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.—AA	15 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.—AA	16	17 7:00 p.m.—AA	18 10:00 a.m.— ESL 7:30 p.m.— Pentecostal	19
20 10:00 a.m.— Worship	21 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.—AA	22 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.—AA	23	24 7:00 p.m.—AA	25 10:00 a.m.— ESL 7:30 p.m.— Pentecostal	26
27 10:00 a.m.— Worship	28 Office Closed 7:00 p.m.—AA					



Thanks to Catherine Weber for this great photo of our church. It was taken during the November service for Navy Fireman 3rd Class Kenneth Jayne. An uncle of Catherine's father, Ken Schultz, he was killed at Pearl Harbor and his remains returned to Patchogue 80 years later.

Debate About Church Future Heats Up

Two years after a diverse group of United Methodists introduced a proposal for separation, a global pandemic continues to keep the denomination uneasily together.

However, with General Conference scheduled for later this year, preparations are accelerating for the future United Methodist Church and the theologically conservative group that plans to break away. Meanwhile, a theologically progressive group that announced the launch of a new denomination in 2020 is re-evaluating its plans.

Amid all these preparations, long-simmering disputes over LGBTQ inclusion — that led the proposed split in the first place — have started boiling up again.

Council of Bishops President Cynthia Fierro Harvey acknowledged that

anxiety is running high for many in the church. She said she often reminds herself of Paul's advice in Philippians 4:6-7 not to be anxious but to bring prayers and petitions to God.

"We need to navigate this season with love and care for one another and not heap more harm on one another and The United Methodist Church," she said.

It's been a busy season. Recent developments include:

The bishops sharing their vision for the continuing United Methodist Church.

The North Central Jurisdiction approving a covenant for the future that welcomes and affirms LGBTQ people, and that covenant facing a challenge under church law.

Iowa Conference leaders facing a backlash after opening the way for same-sex weddings.

The East Zimbabwe Conference removing its lay leader because of his involvement with an advocacy group. Both theological conservatives and progressives making plans for their futures.

Tensions reached a breaking point with the 2019 special General Conference, which, by a vote of 438-384, strengthened bans on same-sex weddings and "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy. The relatively narrow vote did not settle the debate, but instead sparked widespread resistance and hastened discussions of a denominational divorce.

But for the past two years, much of the denomination has been in a holding pattern waiting for action by General Conference — now twice postponed by the pandemic.

The coming legislative assembly faces multiple proposals for division along theological lines. The most endorsed of these is the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation, negotiated

by a professional mediator with a theologically diverse group of United Methodists.

Under the proposal, churches and conferences that support restrictions on gay marriage and ordination can vote to leave with church property and \$25 million to form a new traditionalist denomination. The protocol also sets aside \$2 million for any other new Methodist denominations that form.

The Wesleyan Covenant Association, a theologically conservative advocacy group, has worked toward forming that traditionalist denomination — now named the Global Methodist Church. However, General Conference delegates have the final say on whether the protocol takes effect as written.

The Commission on the General Conference, which organizes the international assembly, expects to decide by the end of March whether the big meeting can go forward as scheduled Aug. 29-Sept. 6 in Minneapolis. The commission is looking at not just delegates' access to vaccines but also the availability of visas. While visas are an issue for every General Conference, the pandemic has caused more difficulties. The commission has been clear that this coming assembly must have a reasonable level of global participation.

The commission met Jan. 26, mostly in closed session, and did not announce any final decisions about whether General Conference can go forward.

Even with General Conference still up in the air, United Methodists are

moving ahead with plans to go in different directions.

In November, the Council of Bishops offered a vision for the continuing United Methodist Church as a big-tent denomination that is rooted in Scripture, centered in Christ and welcoming to all churchgoers — whatever their sexual orientation or theological outlook.

“Our best witness is to love each other as Christ loves us, to show the world the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to bind us together despite our differences,” the bishops wrote in “A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church.”

Harvey, who also leads the Louisiana Conference, said she sees United Methodist congregations, conferences, agencies and individual followers of Jesus who are already living into the narrative.

“By that I mean, they are being faithful to God’s call to create space and embrace people from the left, the right and the in between,” she said.

As the bishops were developing their narrative, an ad hoc group of United Methodists urged bishops not to wait for General Conference but allow congregations that want to do so to leave with property now. The group’s open letter, titled “A Call to Grace,” garnered more than 2,030 signatures.

The special online session of the North Central Jurisdiction — representing 10 conferences in the U.S. Midwest — offered a statement that shares similarities with both the bishops’ narrative and “A Call to Grace.”

By a vote of 135-32, the delegates approved a “Covenant to Build Beloved Community” that calls on the jurisdiction to work to end racism and to create a culture that welcomes and affirms LGBTQIA+ people. The covenant also encourages conferences to accommodate local congregations and clergy seeking disaffiliation.

John Lomperis, a delegate from the Indiana Conference and advocate with the conservative Institute on Religion and Democracy, asked for a decision of law on whether the covenant violates the Book of Discipline. Lomperis specifically questioned the section that requests bishops “dismiss charges related to LGBTQIA+ identity or officiating same gender weddings.” That section goes on to say, “We will not restrict God’s calling based solely on a candidate’s sexual orientation or gender identity.”

Bishop David Bard, who was presiding when Lomperis asked for a ruling, decided that the section is aspirational and therefore does not violate church law. The section “asserts important values and encourages consideration of how one might live into those values,” wrote Bard, who leads the Michigan and Minnesota conferences. All bishops’ rulings of law must go for review by the Judicial Council, the denomination’s top court, which recently has begun deliberations on its fall docket.

Invoking both the bishops’ narrative and the North Central Jurisdiction’s covenant, Iowa Conference Bishop Laurie Haller announced that

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Your coat's gonna look good on me, Joseph!
 ha ha ha

Well, well, well, ain't this the pits! ha ha

Cris

This was the moment that Jerry and his "fabulous monochromed piano necktie" began to get worried.

Don't Forget Your Pledge

The deadline for the March issue of **The Link** is February 18.
 Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

Church Future (From Page 5)

the conference would not wait to live out the documents' vision. While no one would be compelled to violate their convictions, the conference vision statement said, the question of same-sex weddings would be up to local congregations starting this month.

"To put it clearly, pastors will be able to choose which weddings they officiate, as long as it is two consenting adults who have been counseled," the statement said. "Likewise, church leadership, in consultation with their pastors, will be able to determine their own policy regarding weddings."

Many bishops have quietly held complaints related to homosexuality in abeyance as requested by the protocol. Both the Wesleyan Covenant Association and Good News, another theologically conservative advocacy group, argued that Haller's statement went further and violated church law. "If Bishop Haller and her cabinet permit this policy countenancing defiance of the Discipline to go into effect, I think they risk returning the UM Church to the level of conflict witnessed at the 2019 General Conference," warned the Rev. Keith Boyette, WCA president.

In his Perspective column for Good News, the Rev. Thomas Lambrecht wrote that the announcement could have significant consequences.

"Local churches and laity have power, too," he wrote. "They have the power of purse strings. ... And secular courts might be inclined to say that, by this action, the Iowa conference

has repudiated its status as a United Methodist conference, breaking the trust clause that holds churches hostage to the whims of a wayward church leadership. Who knows where this road of rule by power could lead?"

Members of the Iowa extended cabinet told UM News that the cabinet took the lead in developing the conference's vision statement in response to false rumors and fears being spread about the future United Methodist Church.

"In this statement by the cabinet, we have been clear — and this is our truth — that for anyone who wants a future in The United Methodist Church, they will have a home," said the Rev. Lanette L. Plambeck, assistant to the bishop and director of clergy and leadership excellence.

Living that vision right now, Plambeck said, gives United Methodists the chance to make decisions based on facts, not fear. "There is a difference between a truth that is asserted and a truth that is observed and experienced," she said.

Iowa is not the only conference seeing changes. At a virtual session Dec. 4, the Zimbabwe East Conference resolved to relieve Simon Mafunda as its conference lay leader following the WCA hiring him as its Africa coordinator.

Delegates from the seven districts unanimously passed a vote of no confidence, asserting that his new employment presented a potential conflict of interest with his voluntary conference position as lay leader.

Mafunda called the vote flawed, saying it did not follow any established procedure.

"It is very key to be careful how we follow procedures so that it validates the outcome of the results," Mafunda said. "I still respect and appreciate those who elected me to office but feel that they were all cowed down by this process."

He added that he does not see a conflict of interest. "My appointment as a consultant had nothing to do with my role as a conference lay leader," he said. The conference has not yet named a new lay leader.

Amid these disputes, the WCA continues its planning for the Global Methodist Church. In December, the WCA Sexual Holiness, Wholeness, and Brokenness Task Force released a 22-page report on proposed teachings around sexuality and gender. WCA members are now taking feedback and plan to bring the report for adoption at its Global Legislative Assembly on May. 7. The WCA continues to prepare other documents on sacraments and other aspects of church life for the still-being-formed Global Methodist Church.

The WCA also announced plans to pay for General Conference delegates in Africa, Europe and the Philippines to travel to receive vaccines with the intention of ensuring General Conference goes forward. However, bishops, General Conference organizers and others criticized the move for helping only delegates from the central conferences and not the community at large.

—Heather Hahn, UMNS

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A Valentine's Day Prayer

Eternal and Loving God,

In your very being we discover the essence of relational, triune love. You are the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love that Flows Between Them. As one created in your image, empower me today to be a person of deeper love, encompassing heart, soul, mind, and strength, both for you and for those around me.

- Teach me to love those dearest to me, those with whom I am most vulnerable and most guarded. Help us to rebuild trust and authenticity with each other.
- Enable me to forgive and to ask for forgiveness, that I may share in the reconciling work of Jesus. May the impact of hurtful memories wane

over time, along with ill will and resentment of others.

- Grant me deeper friendships with those who can help me be the best version of myself. May they help me be accountable for my actions, offer me godly advice, and speak the truth to me without judgment.
- Sharpen my awareness of those who feel unloved and unlovable. Strengthen my resolve to be an agent of hospitality to the lonely, of comfort for the frightened, and mercy for the hurting.
- Open my heart to a greater sense of your love for me. A love that is tenacious, patient, and unconditional. Remove the barriers that I have erected in my spirit that block the free flow of your love in my life. Work through my doubt, do not be deceived by my

pride, and heal me of my guilt and shame.

Loving God, in you I find my truest and best self, as one created in your triune, relational image. Thank you for your grace, and thank you for your love.

In Jesus' name,
 Amen.

—The Rev. Magrey deVega
 Senior Pastor, Hyde Park United
 Methodist Church

