

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

January 2023

A Great New Year

Happy New Year! What a blessing it is to see another year; thank you Jesus. Goodbye 2022! Hello 2023!

I'm expecting great things to happen for us as a church and a community through the power of God this year. Here are a few nuggets to take with you as you continue your journey in the faith throughout this new year.

• Be Strong in the Lord

Ephesians 6:10, "...*be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.*" This is a reminder of our source of strength. Sometimes we look to others as our source of strength, but any good Christian leader should be pointing us back to the Lord as the source of strength. It is God's mighty power that we rely upon. So, as we continue

our journey in the faith, let me remind you that the Lord is Your strength. Be strong in the Lord.

• Rejoice in the Lord

Philippians 3:1, "...*rejoice in the Lord!*" The Lord is not only our source of strength but our source of Joy. If you have trusted in Jesus for salvation, you have something to be joyful about. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. To rejoice in the Lord always is an attitude of contentment and hope that transcends circumstances. Don't keep waiting for something tomorrow to make you happy. Have you heard that saying that life is what happens while you're waiting for something else? Don't wait for something else to be joyful. You have the Lord today. So, as we continue our journey in the faith, let me remind you to rejoice in the Lord!

• Focus on the positive

Philippians 4:8, "...*whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*" You've got to get your perspective right.

When Goliath came against the Israelites, the soldiers all thought, "He's so big we can never kill him." However, when David looked at the same giant he thought, "He's so big I can't miss."

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN JANUARY

Jan. 1—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Psalm 8

Jan. 8—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Psalm 29

Jan. 15—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Psalm 40:1-11

Jan. 22—Kathy Halliwell, Psalm 27:1,4-9

Jan. 29—Rev. Dr. Debbie San Pablo, Psalm 15



*He has shown you,
O mortal, what is good.
And what does
the LORD require of you?*

*To act justly and to
love mercy and to walk
humbly with your God.*

MICAH 6:8 NIV

Circle of Concern

Bereavement

The daughters of **Joseph Morris**
(Kathy Halliwell)

Healing

Nolan Horn, a 13 year old boy who was brought to the hospital with a mass which was blocking fluid from draining out of his brain.

George San Pablo, brother of John, with Covid. (Pastor Debbie)

James McHugh will be having a tumor removed from his brain.
(Dave Hollowell)

Jason after spinal surgery

Jim Pew, a longtime member of our church, is currently on life support in Florida. (Dave Hollowell)

Concerns

A 6 year old girl that has been abused on her bus is hospitalized with trauma. (Suzanne Tierney)

Joy

Ronald Lyons's scan came back clear. (Barbara Lyons)

Jason Zimmerman has been elected for a second term as the Chief of the Medford Ambulance Co. (Diane Zimmerman)

Continued Prayers

Claudia Mirzaali, Marcus Lucy, Danielle, DeAnna D'Amelio, Johanna Zeigler, Chantelle, Jim Brown, Louis Lopez, Joanne, Brenda Gibbs, Clinton Nared, Gracie, Kerry, Joe Tuzil, Kevin Clifford, John, Helga Janning, Allison, Cindy Gunnerson, Kimberly Helfst, Suzanne Tierney

—Kathy Keating
Keats1002@gmail.com

Prayer For The New Year

We ask that you would provide for our needs, we ask for your grace and favor. We pray for your blessings to cover us, we pray that you would help us to prosper and make every plan that you have birthed in our heart to succeed. We pray that others would take notice of your goodness and could not help but to say, "These are the ones that the Lord has blessed."

Shine your light in us, through us, over us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. Set your way before us. May all your plans succeed. We may reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing. In Jesus Name, Amen.

—Christianity.com

Thanks

As always, our church this year was beautifully decorated for Christmas .

Thanks to everybody who helped and a special thanks to Bob Prince who for many years has made possible our Poinsettia display. We had 48 plants this year. Thanks also to everybody who purchased them.

Birthdays In January

Jan. 1 Helen Smith
Jan. 3 Florence Carde
Jan. 8 Lorice Belmonte
Jan. 19 Abagael Weber
Jan. 19 Thomas James Farrell
Jan. 27 Michael Jansson

New Year (From Page 1)

There was a shoe manufacturer who decided to open in the Congo market. He sent two salesmen to the undeveloped territory. One salesman cabled back: "Prospect here nil. No one wears shoes." The other salesman reported enthusiastically, "Market potential terrific! Everyone is barefooted."

So, what are you going to dwell on? Let's not dwell on what's disappointing and confusing or negative but on what is good, what God has done and is doing. So, as we continue our journey in the faith, let me remind you to focus on the positive.

● Pray for us (Our Church)

2 Thessalonians 3:1, "...pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you." Pray that we embrace the opportunity to do good ministry, to share the good news about Jesus and see Him lifted up. So, as we continue our journey in the faith, let me remind you to pray for us.

As your Pastor, I pray God's blessings upon each of you as we continue our journey in the faith. 2 Corinthians 13:11, "... brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you." 2 Corinthians 13:14, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." God's grace through Jesus Christ is what I pray for you. Have a blessed New Year!

—Pastor Debbie

United Methodist Church of Patchogue

January 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10:00 a.m. – Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	2 Office Closed 7:00 p.m. –AA	3 10:00 a.m. – Noon–Food Pantry 7:00 p.m. –AA	4	5 7:00 p.m. –AA	6 10:00 a.m. – ESL 7:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	7
8 10:00 a.m. – Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	9 Office Closed 7:00 p.m. –AA	10 10:00 a.m. – Noon–Food Pantry 7:00 p.m. –AA	11	12 7:00 p.m. –AA	13 10:00 a.m. – ESL 7:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	14
15 10:00 a.m. – Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	16 Office Closed 7:00 p.m. –AA	17 10:00 a.m. – Noon–Food Pantry 7:00 p.m. –AA	18	19 7:00 p.m. –AA	20 10:00 a.m. – ESL 7:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	21
22 10:00 a.m. – Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	23 Office Closed 7:00 p.m. –AA	24 10:00 a.m. – Noon–Food Pantry 7:00 p.m. –AA	25	26 7:00 p.m. –AA	27 10:00 a.m. – ESL 7:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	28
29 10:00 a.m. – Worship/ Sunday School 6:30 p.m. – Pentecostal	30 Office Closed 7:00 p.m. –AA	31 10:00 a.m. – Noon–Food Pantry 7:00 p.m. –AA				

Taking Stock On A Season of UMC Disaffiliations

Much is in flux in The United Methodist Church as 2022 draws to a close.

What's clear is that the denomination's long, gradual numerical decline in the U.S. has accelerated due to local church disaffiliations.

Yet even as they mourn these departures, a number of United Methodists also see signs of hope and opportunities for growth in what is still the second-largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. and a global church with members spread across four continents.

Just as fire tempers steel, Council of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton said he sees the current struggles refining The United Methodist Church to be stronger in faith and sharper in mission and ministry.

"Are we going to be less than we were before? Yes," said Bickerton, who also leads the New York Conference. "But that's not a bad thing. I believe we are beginning to discover what it means to reframe and reset this denomination."

No question the denomination is already undergoing significant change. As other Protestant denominations in the U.S. have done previously, The United Methodist Church is experiencing its own separation after decades of internal division about the role of LGBTQ people in church life.

So far, a UM News review has found that 2,003 churches in the U.S. have cleared the necessary hurdles under church law to leave the denomination with property.

That translates to about 6.6% of U.S. congregations withdrawing since 2019 when the church's disaffiliation provision took effect. Many of the congregations that have left are small, but the denomination also has seen the departure of some mega-churches. The withdrawals still leave more than 28,500 United Methodist congregations in the U.S.

Suffice to say, the vast majority of congregations are sticking with The United Methodist Church at this point.

As for the disaffiliations, it's not yet known how much membership loss they represent. That's in part because some members of exiting congregations are opting to remain United Methodist by transferring to other churches or, in some cases, planting new United Methodist faith communities.

Pat Luna, a lifelong United Methodist and a leader in grassroots efforts to persuade people to stay, said she is already seeing a more committed laity eager to share why they want to be United Methodist.

"We're going to see some losses, and in some places significant losses," Luna said. "But there's new, exciting efforts popping up everywhere to create churches centered on being disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

The people called Methodist have been through breakups before.

"It's one of those things that have been characteristically Methodist," said the Rev. Russell Richey, noted historian of Methodism and consulting faculty member at Duke Divinity School. "We've found a need from

time to time to distance ourselves from one another."

The most notable instance came in 1844 when Northern and Southern Methodists divided into different denominations over the question of whether a bishop could own slaves. Many historians cite it and other big denominational divides around the same time as signs that the U.S. was heading to civil war.

The Rev. Lovett H. Weems, an emeritus church leadership professor and longtime observer of the church's shrinking numbers in the U.S., said the current splintering is nowhere near that scale.

"The 1844 division over slavery has been the playbook for separatists," he said. "By that standard, this movement is a poor imitation, though equally misbegotten."

One thing is certain: The rising tide of disaffiliations has at least another year to go.

Tensions reached a breaking point at the special 2019 General Conference, which by a relatively narrow 438-384 margin voted to reinforce already existing church bans on same-sex weddings and "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy.

The same legislative assembly approved a new church law — the Book of Discipline's Paragraph 2553 — that offers a pathway for churches to leave with property. The provision is set to expire at the end of 2023.

The special General Conference did not end the rancor. In early 2020, a diverse group of church leaders unveiled a proposal for amicable separation that would have theological conservatives who support the LGBTQ

restrictions leaving with church property and funds to start their own denomination. But COVID-caused delays of General Conference from 2020 to now 2024 have kept the plan from being considered and kept the current bans in the Discipline.

In the meantime, organizers launched the breakaway theologically conservative Global Methodist Church in May. Backers of the new denomination have been recruiting United Methodist churches to join since then.

That has left many traditionalist churches turning to Paragraph 2553 to exit. The provision has a number of requirements including at least a two-thirds vote for disaffiliation by the congregation and majority approval by its annual conference — a regional body with voting members from multiple congregations.

An exiting church also must pay a fair share of its annual conference's pension liability as well as two years of apportionments — shares of church giving that support ministry beyond the local church. Paragraph 2553 also allows for conferences to add requirements.

Still, most conferences seek to do what they can to accommodate church exits. Since late summer, 17 annual conferences have held special sessions to vote on church departures and more have scheduled special sessions next year. So far, most have approved all the disaffiliations on the agenda.

The one exception was the Arkansas Conference, where a majority of conference voters approved 35 churches for disaffiliation but blocked

three others. The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reports that the pastor, lay leaders and many of the members of one denied congregation — Cabot United Methodist Church — have since decided to walk away and start a new church.

The number of disaffiliations has varied greatly by region, with conferences in the southern U.S. so far seeing the most church departures. Perhaps not surprising in a denomination whose history so closely aligns with that of the United States, the disaffiliation map is similar to the red-and-blue maps on Election Day — with the more conservative red areas seeing more church disaffiliations compared to the more progressive blue areas.

The Texas Conference, stretching from the Houston area to the eastern part of the state, on Dec. 4 approved the highest number of disaffiliations — 294, or nearly half of its 598 churches.

The Northwest Texas Conference, voting on the same day, ratified the highest percentage of disaffiliations — 74%, or 145 of its 196 churches. Only 51 congregations remain and some are in discernment to potentially leave later. Campus ministries in the conference, which covers the Texas Panhandle including Texas Tech University, also have disaffiliated.

Nevertheless, the Rev. Jeff Fisher — the conference's director of transitional ministries — said he's seeing new United Methodist faith communities begin to form. He's optimistic that The United Methodist Church can still have a strong witness in West Texas.

"We are confident that folks are not going to have to drive an hour to get to United Methodist worship," he said. "That's our goal. We don't have it all mapped out yet, but we're confident that's easily manageable."

The Texas Conference also has new faith communities beginning in areas where the United Methodist presence is suddenly diminished or nonexistent.

"Some might call it a reset. Some might call it a restart," the Rev. Morris Matthis, a district superintendent, said during the conference's special session. "I choose to call it a revival."

In the meantime, the departures clearly have financial implications. The board of the General Council on Finance and Administration, the denomination's finance agency, has already started work on what will be the denomination's lowest budget sent to General Conference in nearly 40 years.

Christine Dodson, the board's vice president and treasurer for the North Carolina Conference, also is dealing with budget adjustments closer to home.

The North Carolina Conference on Nov. 19 approved 249 disaffiliations, representing 32% of the conference's congregations and around 22% of its membership.

"The conference leadership is keenly aware of this process' impact on churches, with some members choosing to leave even if the church does not," she said. "At the same time, some churches are reporting bringing in new members who are

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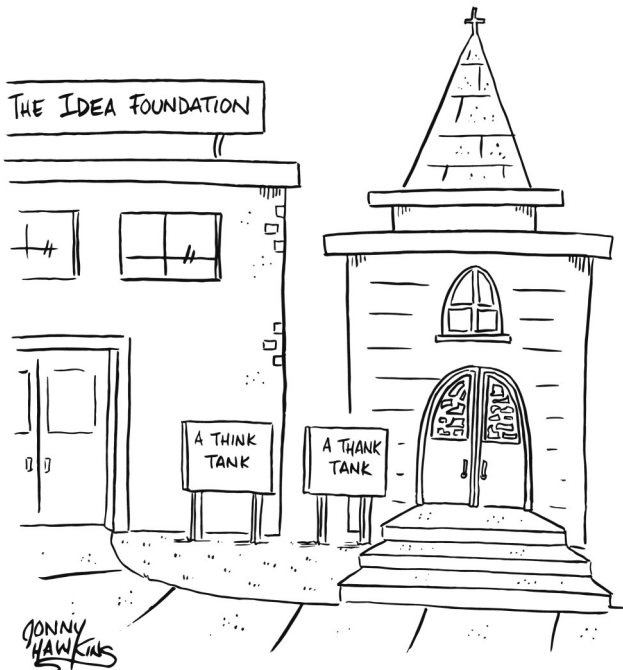


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Dave Hollowell would very much appreciate your saving the magazines you have read and passing them on to him. He takes them for the enjoyment of adult and nursing home residents and shut ins. They can be dropped off in the church office.

The deadline for the February issue
of **The Link** is January 20.
Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

Disaffiliations (From Page 5)

excited about the direction of the church in their area. Discussions of budgets and conference apportionments include these multifaceted concerns and opportunities.”

Even amid these new realities, Dodson can testify to how the denomination can still swiftly and effectively address ministry needs. When an intentional act of vandalism left more than 40,000 people without power in North Carolina, the conference’s disaster ministries immediately jumped in to provide generators and solar-powered disaster response trailers where people could plug in.

“The team was ready and deployed quickly to help alleviate suffering and show the goodness and love of Jesus Christ to those impacted,” Dodson said. “This type of response is available through our shared connectional ministries and is a never-ending example of how we reach more people through our connectional relationships.”

Not all departing churches are opting to go with the Global Methodist Church. Some are going independent or joining another denomination in the Methodist movement.

Top staff of the Global Methodist Church declined a UM News request for its current church membership number.

In a Thanksgiving Day message, the Rev. Keith Boyette — transitional connectional officer for the Global Methodist Church — wrote: “Hundreds of churches have already joined and hundreds more are in the pipeline to join the GM Church before the end of the year.”

One of the largest United Methodist congregations, White’s Chapel in Southlake, Texas, near Fort Worth, recently voted to disaffiliate and announced plans to create a cooperative of “like-minded, common-hearted congregations and ministries” called the Methodist Collegiate Church. White’s Chapel still must be approved for disaffiliation by the Central Texas Conference.

The 3,500-member First United Methodist Church in Pensacola, Florida, is an example of a church that plans to stay. The congregation, which is the mother church of Methodism in Florida and recently celebrated its bicentennial, has weathered denominational divisions before.

The Rev. Geoffrey Lentz, the church’s senior pastor, said the congregation has discussed disaffiliation a bit. Some of its neighbors in the Alabama-West Florida Conference are leaving. Still, no one thinks the “big-tent” Pensacola congregation has the two-thirds support necessary to withdraw.

“We are having a different conversation,” said Lentz, who also is chairing the Alabama-West Florida Conference’s new task force on church planting and revitalization. “Our theme is ‘Practice Resurrection.’ Our church is experiencing new growth during this season, and we believe that we’re called to get back to this kind of Easter work. Our congregation is praying for and working toward revival and renewal in the UMC.”

—Heather Hahn and Sam Hodges,
UMNS

Where Are We Going?

As a child, when my parents told us we should get ready to go out, my first question was, of course, ‘where are we going?’ I didn’t need to ask how we were getting there, because we always went by car. Most of the dads in our Queens neighborhood, many of them WWII vets, had cars as a point of pride. A confirmation that they too shared in the American Dream that they’d fought for.

Of course, the inevitable question once we were underway was the favorite of kids everywhere, ‘Are we there yet?’ The answer might be, ‘Soon’, ‘Not yet’, or ‘Stop bothering your father while he’s driving.’ Fathers always drove, most moms did not. (In fact, my mom did not learn to drive until many years later, when my father had health problems.) When we went anywhere with my mom, we would walk. To the A&P with saw dust on the floor, the playground, the bakery with magical decorated birthday cakes behind glass or, joy of joys, to the ice cream parlor for a milkshake or ice cream soda. Whether walking or riding, we knew where we were going, what our destination would be.

So, when I asked myself the title question on the cusp of the New Year, in relation to our country and our church, my immediate response was, “I haven’t a clue.” A lot of shrugging and head shaking followed. How could I or anyone know the ultimate destination for either nation or church?

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Where? (From Page 7)

So, I changed the question. I asked myself, where would we like to go? That was a little easier to answer.

Our country—I would like us to arrive at a place where we fulfill our ideals, where all are treated equally under the law, where people are judged on the content of their character, rather than on the color of their skin, religious beliefs, country of origin, gender or life style. Where differences of opinion do not engender pernicious, blistering conflict. Where Profit is not king. Where decency, kindness, generosity of spirit are respected and encouraged in all aspects of daily life. Where schools are fully funded and children are taught to think critically, to analyze information before forming opinions.

Where fear and ignorance do not poison the national discourse.

Our church —we already have a church family with strong bonds to each other. We have a church family that exhibits care for the community through the Food Pantry, Wesley Dinner, Thanksgiving Dinner, ESL classes and innumerable other ways.

But I would like to see us work with the larger community to solve major problems such as homelessness. Admittedly, a complicated problem, but one to which real solutions can and should be found. I would love to see us have regular conversations about new ideas, new missions. And, of course, restart Bible studies, build up children's ministries and more. But, most of all, I would hope that we can arrive at a point where our faith is manifested

through our behavior, through our every action. As the hymn goes "They will know we are Christians by our Love". That we see the face of Christ in all we meet.

Are we there yet? Not Yet.

Dear Sisters and Brothers my wish and prayer for you all in this coming year is that you experience joy, hope and peace through God's love, and that you share that with all with whom you come in contact.

— Barbara Becker

