

THE PULSE

MCFARLAND UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

a church with heart - weekly newsletter

"I will put my teaching in their minds and write it on their hearts..!"
Jeremiah 31:33

January 6 - January 13, 2022

HAPPENING EVERY WEEK

You can find brief descriptions of these weekly programs on our website:

mcfarlanducc.org



SUNDAY Morning, 10 am Zoom Worship

Password: *betgether*



SUNDAY Morning, 12 noon Zoom Bible Study

<https://zoom.us/j/262314649>



MONDAY - FRIDAY, 8 am Morning Devotion

<https://zoom.us/j/94276813637>



WEDNESDAY Eve., 6:30 pm Midweek Inhale Spiritual Practices

<https://zoom.us/j/123020606>

Happening This Week

**Sunday, January 9th, 10:00 a.m. Sunday Morning
Worship On Zoom Only** <https://zoom.us/j/97010988439>

Password: *betgether*

Greetings McFarland UCC family,

Well yes, **we are now back to zoom**



only worship. Our SaLT (Servant and Leadership Team) group met last night and made the decision that because of the COVID surge we are now experiencing we will keep our building closed to all groups and worship only on zoom at least until our next SaLT meeting on February 3rd.

I know that this is a difficult time for all of us, and it is frustrating and disheartening to have to take what feels like a step backward in the process of moving through the pandemic. We WILL get through this, but as we have all learned, we are not in control of the pace and nature of this pandemic journey. As a sign I once saw said, "We may not be able to control the direction of the wind, but we can adjust our sails." And so we are.

As always our faith commitment compels us to do what we feel is best for all of us and especially for those most vulnerable and at risk. And quite simply that is why we've made the decision to close the building and meet online once again. Thanks so much to all of you for your cooperation and good attitude as always, and please do your best to join us for zoom worship. It really does make a difference to be in community together for worship, even if it is in cyberspace.

Also--my apologies for the last minute decision last week to not have in person worship. The combination of a daunting winter weather forecast and the COVID surge caused us (SaLT) to make that decision at about 8 p.m. last Saturday. I know at least some of you did not see the email message sent out Saturday night or check the website before venturing out in the cold and snow to our church building on Sunday morning. Your commitment and enthusiasm for being present for worship was and is appreciated, and I'm really sorry you made the trip only to be greeted by a sign on the door letting you know that the building was closed. Thanks so much for trying!

Pastor Bryan

Upcoming Events

January 14 (Friday) Younger Youth Meeting Canceled



Well it's a bummer I know, just when we're getting on a good roll together, but SaLT and I agreed we should not meet in person in our building this month. At this point let's assume that we're on for the second Friday of February (2/11/22). I'll be in touch as that time approaches, and if the pandemic is going to keep us from meeting in person then we'll have a zoom meeting again for the younger kids in February.

Teen Youth: Pastor Bryan will be in touch with you all through email to figure out our next steps.



***Sunday, January 23rd,
Congregational Annual
Meeting***

On Zoom Only Once Again

As we did last year, we will have a shortened 30 minute zoom worship on the 23rd and then begin our annual meeting immediately. Please plan on being with us for the meeting so that we have a quorum of members present. Visitors and friends are more than welcome to stay for the meeting but you can also feel free to jump off zoom once our worship is over and our meeting begins.

All of our annual reports are available on our church website, and ***here is a link if you would like to read them.***

If you would like a printed copy of these reports please let Pastor Bryan know, though of course you can print them out yourself from the website.



***A Few
Words From
Pastor
Bryan***

One of my favorite

days in the Church calendar year is January 6th--the day of "Epiphany." It's the story of the wise ones from the East--sometimes referred to as the "three kings"--following a brilliant star in the sky to the manger. You remember the story. They brought gifts to Jesus and paid him homage.

This story is so full of poetic and metaphoric imagery, and it is a powerful "statement" with profound political and cosmic implications. I'm going to preach more about it this coming Sunday, so I won't say too much here now.

Instead I just want to invite you to connect a few things in your minds and imaginations.

First, January 6th marked the one year anniversary of the insurrection in Washington, D.C. I was sobered and saddened as I watched the news this past Thursday and listened to people recount the events and experiences of that day. The loss of life, the traumatization, and all that the events of the day represent are a bit overwhelming to try to come to terms with. I am disturbed as I watch the forces and the "big lie" that fueled that insurrection continue to gain traction and dominate the political leadership (or lack thereof) that made that all possible. It is time to stop dancing around the simple truth that a large portion of our society is embracing a posture that is nothing short of fascist. These are dangerous times and they are getting more dangerous. We are going to need to find our voices and our collective voice as a congregation and come up with creative responses that reflect who we are as followers of Jesus. We will, and God will guide us.

Second, January 6th is also the day of Epiphany. For me, this has been the most meaningful Epiphany of my lifetime. Why? Because Epiphany is when we remind ourselves that the Light of God broke into human history, and the darkness will never overcome it. That's what our faith tells us. And it is when the darkness of the world is most overwhelming that we most need to look for the Light, and follow where it leads.

Third, I am strangely comforted and encouraged that the story includes how the wise ones from the East--the Star followers--were warned in a dream not to cooperate with a lying, manipulative, insecure king who was threatened to the point of being willing to sacrifice the lives of thousands of innocents--simply because he was told that someone else had been chosen to lead the people. Once again, as theologian Karl Barth once put it, "the Bible and the newspaper need to go hand in hand." (Karl would have to update that to include digital news, cable TV, and social media).

Brothers and sisters, let's look for the Light of Epiphany. It is there. In the sky, in the actions of the many who are responding to the events of this world with truth, justice, and love, and in each of us as we do our best to live out what that babe in the manger was all about. It may seem like a flickering flame now and then, but the Source of this Light will never be overcome.

I hope to see you in zoom church this Sunday. We'll reflect a bit more on this Light and on the wisdom of the wise ones from the East who, as songwriter Christopher Grundy put it in a brand new song that we'll hear in worship, "took another way Home."

Epiphany's Light to you all,

Pastor Bryan

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