

# PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



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PILGRIM CHURCH A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATION

June 2nd, 2022

## PRIDE INTERFAITH WORSHIP FEATURES TRANS FAMILIES

By Pastor Paul Eknes-Tucker

June kicks off Pride Month in Birmingham and the very first event is an *Interfaith Pride Worship service, hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4300 Hampton Heights Dr. Birmingham, 35209 at 6PM on June 2.* Pilgrim, Covenant and Beloved UCCs will join other faith communities from across the area to mark this year's *Pride Month with a special tribute to families with trans kids.*

The Alabama legislature passed an awful law this past year targeting families with trans kids, their healthcare and their privacy. A successful challenge to this law was mounted with several victories. Unfortunately, the State of Alabama is appealing the verdict to the 11th Circuit, so the battle continues. Because of the hateful rhetoric – including from some elected officials – Pilgrim and dozens of other faith communities are featuring our support for families with trans kids at this year's Pride Interfaith Service. I encourage you to be part of this historic moment and to be part of the antidote to the poison that has been perpetrated against families, doctors, health professionals and clergy over the last

campaign season. Please also invite your trans, non-binary and queer friends to be part of this event. Our voices and our solidarity with the entire LGBTQI+ family is important for just such a time as this.

Another event that I encourage you to visit is the *AIDS Memorial*

Quilt exhibition at Woodlawn United Methodist Church. Pilgrim and several other congregations are co-sponsoring this event with Woodlawn, June 1-5. The Quilt was a powerful teaching tool for millions of Americans during the difficult early years of the AIDS epidemic. Because of the power of its witness, new treatments were cre-

ated, support services were developed and millions of lives were saved, including my own. The display at Woodlawn includes several local panels. These artful witnesses continue to keep their names in our hearts, so that we never forget what has been lost for thousands of families. A special treat that is part of this year's Quilt presentation is a concert by world-renowned singer, Marsha Stevens. The monies raised by the concert will fund a scholarship created in honor of the life and ministry of Rev. Marge Ragona. *See the ad in this newsletter for all the information (Back page).*

It feels great to slowly regain a sense of normalcy again in our world. Although COVID is not finished with us, Pilgrim continues to demonstrate a resiliency and witness to the power of grace to heal our world and hold us close during difficult times. I am so grateful to the people of Pilgrim for your steadfast love and witness that make such a difference for just such a moment as this.



*Quilt exhibition at Woodlawn United Methodist Church.* Pilgrim and several other congregations are co-sponsoring this event with Woodlawn, June 1-5. The Quilt was a powerful teaching tool for millions of Americans during the difficult early years of the AIDS epidemic. Because of the power of its witness, new treatments were cre-

# "...ISN'T IT IRONIC, DON'T YOU THINK?!"\*

By Teresa Moran

*"... As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." Joshua 1:5*

Remember the film "Trading Places"? Dan Aykroyd and Eddie Murphy? Dan's character is a rich, arrogant Wall Street type. Eddie Murphy's role is as a panhandler with as little scruples as the Wall Street guys. The bosses finagle so that Dan is locked out of all his financial and personal assets and Murphy becomes a stock trader with all the perks.

## Lessons are learned...

Until we started leaving goodie bags for people living on the street on the garden fence at church, I had declined having my own key to the building. But it seemed that often the times available to me to restock the fence were times when no one else was in the building. So, I recently got a key.

It is to be noted that two or three weeks before the time I'm about to describe, I went by to see what was needed and found the library door to the garden ajar. We learned the hard way that the door must be intentionally closed to really shut and lock.

Knowing that, we proceed to my story. On a Wednesday evening I was meeting friends for dinner at a restaurant in the church's neighborhood. Jim and I had some tee shirts for the houseless and so Jim rode with me to the church to help carry them in. Then he planned to walk home for exercise. I would leave my car at church and walk over

to eat. We got the big box of shirts inside the church and soon Jim decided I didn't need his assistance and walked on. I assembled a few bags and went out to attach them to the garden fence. I had brought in

with me my handbag, phone, etc.

As I was about to walk out the library door, I envisioned the problem that would occur if I accidentally got locked out. I thought I probably should take the keys with me but then decided the door would stay open **unless** I really pushed it shut so I left the keys inside, one less thing to carry.

As I walked out, one of those summer evening thunderstorm patterns started to develop. The trees swayed in the sudden wind. I took note that I might need to take shelter shortly. I went on with my task and turned to go back in. To my horror I could see that the door had fully closed itself. **The wind was moving more than trees.** I stopped in my tracks to consider my options.

I had no phone. My car was in the parking lot with the birthday gift I was taking to dinner for my friend inside the car. But my car was locked, and my car key was on the same ring as the church key. I have

training in handling emergencies, so I didn't exactly panic but realized I had few possible choices.

I decided to go to the next-door restaurant neighbor and ask to use the phone. In general, we've had friendly relations with them so I thought they would probably help me. I walked around to the front and opened the door. (Oh, it was during a pandemic and I had no mask. My mask was locked in the car.)

The hostess was at her station. I briefly told her my plight and asked if I could use the phone.

"Of course," she said, and showed me the land line.

That's when I realized my other problem: I don't know people's phone numbers anymore. The one I know is Jim's and he's on his way home...walking and probably not carrying his phone. Oh well, since his is the one I know, I called it. Voicemail: "Hey. This is Jim Taylor. Please, leave a message."

I left a message and then figured what to do next. The message I had left was asking Jim to try to get Pastor Paul to see if he could come let me in so I thought I should stay at the church. I sat down in one of the chairs out front to wait. That's when it started to thunder. It was a little early for my dinner, but I decided to walk on over before the bottom fell out. I could use one of my friends' phones to try calling Jim again.

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Continued from Page 2.

Sure enough, I was the first one there. We had planned to eat outside for COVID reasons, but the sky looked threatening. I decided to sit out anyhow so I could catch my friends when they arrived. A waiter asked me about seating and warned that if I didn't move inside immediately the place might be full if we needed to come inside for weather. I took my chances on the porch and boldly ordered a glass of wine. **Keep in mind I had no purse...no money.**\*\* Somebody would pay for it...

My friends arrived and I told them the predicament. I used one of their phones to call, "Hey. This is Jim Taylor..." again. I told them he likely was home by now and sitting on the porch with a cocktail and his phone inside the house. So predicable...

A covered table on the porch opened up, so we moved there. The waiter was really accommodating and *cute-blue hair, earrings...* We ordered food. My friend now realized she was buying me her birthday dinner...

Finally, my friend's phone rang and it was Jim. He had interrupted whatever Paul was up to and Paul was on his way to let me in. Jim said he told Paul I was at the restaurant. So, I left my friends and stood by the street watching for the black Chevy.

As it would happen, a houseless person, walked up. I regularly engage with folks on the street unless they look like talking to me is the last thing they want to do so I made eye contact. *Did he ask for money?* Not yet. *What he asked is, "Are you married?"* I was getting propositioned by one of the folks I got into the predicament I was in trying to help... **Ironic...**



*I told him I was married but he asked me anyway if I wanted to get together later. I told him I was married and faithful.* Then he asked for money for food. I honestly could say, I had none.

He moved on, trying to find someone with more to offer than me. An emergency vehicle stopped right in front of me. **Did I look that desperate?** But, they were just picking up carry-out. They moved on and I stood, looking for the Chevy. I gazed down towards church to see a skinny white man in Bermuda shorts walking my way. *No proposition from this guy. It was Pastor Paul. Whew...*

I apologized for needing his help. We walked back down to the church. He let me in. I got my stuff and drove my car back to the place I was eating. The birthday gift was still there in my car, no break-ins. When I got back to our table the food was there. Life as I usually know it, resumed.

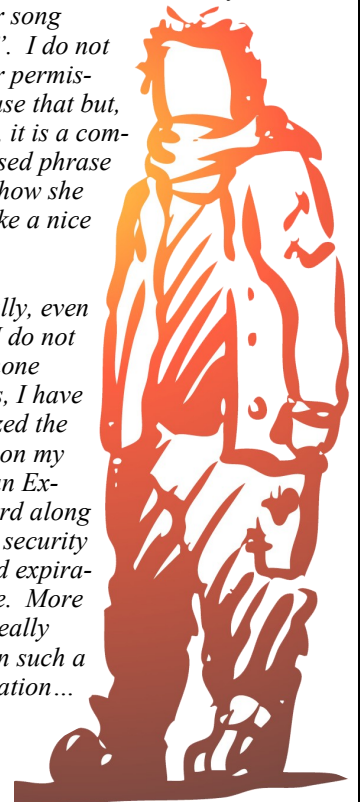
**But, isn't it ironic?** *I was where I was because I wanted to care for people who have nothing and nowhere to go but the street.* For a little while I had a taste of the power-

lessness of those who have not. I knew it was temporary. Can we imagine what it's like day-after-day to depend on someone else to be kind, helpful, generous? **No.** Most of us cannot. I know I don't even like asking for help. I am so lucky. Jim says we shouldn't say lucky but, I don't believe God blesses me more specifically than God blesses any of us, so I say "lucky." *I have money, a car, a house, a job, friends, a phone... I am thankful.* I pray that moments of enlightenment spur us on as we try to serve the best we can.

*By the way, Jim did not shame me. Thank you.* Paul said he would remember that I owe him. **Thank you? Maybe I should memorize more phone numbers...** *Ah for a phone book for cell phones!*

*\*Credit to Alanis Morissette for a line from her song "Ironic". I do not have her permission to use that but, after all, it is a commonly used phrase and anyhow she seems like a nice person.*

*\*\*Actually, even though I do not know phone numbers, I have memorized the number on my American Express card along with the security code and expiration date. More ways I really wasn't in such a bad situation...*



# COVENANT & FRIENDS PICNIC!!!

KICK~OFF TO PRIDE!  
SATURDAY, JUNE 4th

FROM 11~2 PM!  
RAIN or SHINE!!!

HOT DOGS & HAMBURGERS  
CORN HOLES & HULA HOOPS  
FOOD, FUN, & FELLOWSHIP!!!

UNITED CHURCH CENTER

2817 6th Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35233

[www.CovenantBirmingham.org](http://www.CovenantBirmingham.org)  
[www.facebook.com/covenantbirmingham](https://www.facebook.com/covenantbirmingham)

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!**

"Please Bring A Folding Chair If You Have One & Please Park On The Street If You Are Able!"

**LOVE**  
IS PATIENT & KIND  
IT DOES NOT ENVY, IT DOES NOT BOAST  
IT IS NOT PROUD  
IT DOES NOT DISHONOR OTHERS  
IT IS NOT SELF-SEEKING  
IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED  
IT KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS  
LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL  
BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH  
ALWAYS PROTECTS, ALWAYS TRUSTS  
ALWAYS HOPES, ALWAYS PERSEVERES  
**LOVE NEVER FAILS**  
1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

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THE MICHAEL CONWAY ANNUAL DISPLAY OF THE

# AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT

JUNE 1-5, 2022

WOODLAWN UMC  
139 54TH ST N  
(1 BLOCK OFF 1ST AVE)

SPONSORED BY

Saturday, June 4  
6PM

Woodlawn UMC  
139 54th St N  
(1 block from 1st Ave)

## Marsha Stevens

IN CONCERT

A LOVE OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN FOR THE MARGE RAGONA SCHOLARSHIP FUND

FREE ADMISSION

THIS SCHOLARSHIP IS AWARDED TO QUEER FOLX STUDYING EDUCATION, MINISTRY OR NURSING

Marsha is a contemporary Christian singer & the driving force behind BALM, Born Again Lesbian Ministries.  
[www.balministries.net](http://www.balministries.net)

### PILGRIM BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE

Lily Lawson ~ June 7th  
John Williams ~ June 17th  
John Owen ~ June 24th  
Donna Milton ~ June 30th

### PILGRIM ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE

Aaron & Kista Hamilton  
June 12th

**IF WE HAVE MISSED YOUR BIRTHDAY, WE APOLOGIZE!  
PLEASE LET US KNOW & WE WILL GLADLY ADD IT!**