

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



Volume 2, Issue 01

PILGRIM CHURCH A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATION

January 1st, 2021

HAPPY~HAPPY~HAPPY 2021!

By Pastor Paul Eknes-Tucker

I have never been so happy to have one year over and another one started. It feels a bit weird to say such a thing. Time is precious, even when it is difficult. And yet, a new year holds such promises and unknown possibilities... and the last year was such a mess.

Have no doubt, we have much ahead of us that will be difficult, complicated and most likely completely unnecessary! Plus, 2020 was a remarkable year for Pilgrim. I know that we have been overwhelmed by COVID and elections and impeachment. But, also, 2020 was the year Covenant sold their Center Point property and moved into the United Church Center to partner with Pilgrim in a new way to be church. We had no idea what this would eventually look like, but no sooner were Covenant and Pilgrim getting into the rhythm of shared worship space and joint use of this church home than the pandemic hit and everything went still. Out of that stillness, the Spirit of God moved us to discover new things about ourselves and our ministry.

With social distancing and widespread virus flooding our world, Pilgrim's worship team -- Mark David Jackson, John Williams and me -- began putting together virtual worship. The Pilgrim Book Club created a virtual Sunday book discussion. Barriers to community and togetherness began to morph into new ways to be "church" in a pandemic world. The heartbreak of missing each other's physical presence was tempered by the greater outreach that worship had on our world. Those watching our worship services on line multiplied well beyond our group to dozens and sometimes hundreds of viewers not only in Birmingham but across the nation. We added the "Stump the Pastor" series on line and began receiving questions from across the United States with weekly broadcasts of

my responses and musings. We had never considered if providing these virtual experiences was possible before the pandemic.

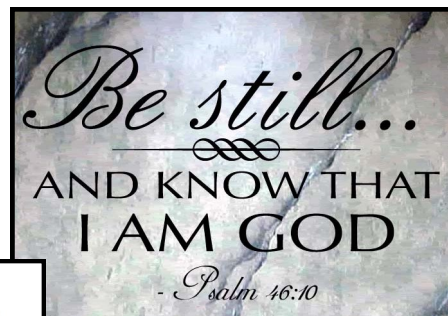
Another change came to our Firehouse ministry. Our Pilgrim team was unable to cook at the Firehouse facility after February. In years past, this would have stopped our



outreach. But, because Covenant joined us here and installed ovens for their regular Wednesday night dinners, we had access to cook at the United Church Center and could deliver our meals to the Firehouse. This serendipitous moment was possible because of our shared ministry. The outreach has continued and several new volunteers from the community have joined our Firehouse team.

All these possibilities happened because the congregation of Pilgrim remained flexible and committed to our presence in Birmingham. The viability of our ministry was not diminished, only different. The challenges have been hard, but the commitment of Pilgrims is steadfast. And I am grateful to be one of the Pilgrims who has been on this journey with you.

The other momentous event for Pilgrim in 2020 is the loss of Ethel Owen. Ethel and her family joined Pilgrim when she was 8-years-old. She died right before Christmas at age 97 and her death was felt by all Pilgrims. For decades her passion for Pilgrim pushed us toward perfection. She offered her leadership, her ideas and her time for fundraisers at the Blue Roof, Christmas poinsettias and Easter



lilies, and her non-wavering presence in worship. She was an advocate for quality in worship, in outreach and making Pilgrim a better community of faith. You never had to wonder what she thought but you never had to doubt that Pilgrim was precious to



her. She and her husband raised their two sons, John and Norton, in the church. Her grandchildren and great grandchildren have been part of Pilgrim's life and history from their births. She lives on in their smiles, their laughs and the character she helped instill in her family. We miss her greatly and are honored that we were among the lucky who had the chance to know her.

And, so it is that we move into 2021. God is not finished with us yet. We have no idea what this year will bring, but I am grateful that we are in it together and I can't wait to see what surprises grace has to reveal.

MODERATOR'S REPORT ~ 2020

By Teresa Moran

Yep. It's me, again. What can I say? It has been a year. You let me stay on as moderator until the Covenant move-in was accomplished. Robert Young was set to take over as council moderator when the pandemic hit. Since then, we've all just tried to keep on keeping on.

Pastor Paul and the other UCC ministers quickly set up our Stages of COVID-19 response. Then we got stuck in the same, restrictive Stage. John Williams rescued worship by setting up the equipment and recording, editing, and posting meaningful services every week.

Events were cancelled left and right. We were able to contribute to Pride but we didn't get to enjoy the parade or the Sloss-fest because they didn't happen. The roof was fixed. The floors were polished. The air conditioner was repaired. Thanksgiving dinners were cooked and served. We interacted with houseless people living in the neighborhood. Lee had a baby.

Many suffered losses. Sharon Austin left this life just as everything shut down. The usual rituals that accompany death were curtailed so mourning had to be at a distance. Our friend, Andy Wehrenberg, passed from unexpected circumstances. Then we lost our matriarch, Ethel Owen. Everyone has lost someone or something this year.

Going forward continues to be a struggle but more people know about Pilgrim thanks to COVID and our recorded worships. Things are rolling along to get great signage for the property. Art shows will resume, remote, at first, but a welcome hint of normalcy coming back.

Now, more than ever, we need everyone to stay connected. The council has brainstormed ways to survive and grow. Please, help us by sharing your ideas for a bright and enduring future.

Ethel Owen ~ Friend and Mentor

By Jane Philips

"A mentor empowers a person to see a possible future and believe it can be obtained."

Shawn Hitchcock



I met Ethel in 1981, when I first attended Pilgrim Church. It was Summer, and she was in major Blue Roof Gala mode. Even then, I was impressed with her stamina and the force of her personality. She exuded confidence and authority and demonstrated the organizational chops to pull off that Godzilla of a church yard sale. She led a battalion of workers, none of them younger than sixty, who organized the donations according to a carefully crafted plan and put them where they needed to go. The enormous fellowship hall was the designated clothing area, which they cordoned off with clothing racks, draping sheets in the church narthex for privacy in case someone wanted to try something on. Each article of clothing, and there were thousands upon thousands of them, was sorted, inspected, folded, or placed on a hanger, and pinned with a color-coded sticker

to indicate the price. Ethel did not suffer fools, and this was her event. She barked orders left and right, extra loud if you were screwing up. No man, woman or child dared defy her. Each room in the church was stuffed with kitchenware, art, household items, toys, tools, books, records, and every other oddity and paraphernalia one could imagine. If you were assigned to that room, you had better be up to the task. Aprons were handed out and the amount of change you got was counted and recorded. A picnic area was set up on the patio and Ethel herself made Reuben sandwiches to sell to the crowd. It was an extravaganza that netted several thousand dollars for the church every year and was a summer highlight for the entire community. Cars filled the parking lot, and lined the streets, with off-duty cops directing traffic. People peeked in windows and pressed against the doors by seven in the morning. When Ethel finally opened them at eight, all manner of humanity from rich to poor, flooded into the building like a pack of starved dogs. Ethel, all five feet of her, was in total control. It may as well have been a field hospital in a war zone as far as she was concerned, and by-god, it was going to be run right.

Over the years, Ethel never changed. She was the strongest, most determined,

spunkiest woman I have ever known. When she got to the gourd-basket making stage, I took classes, and when she suggested I join Alabama Designer Craftsmen, I signed on the dotted line. She never seemed to tire out or run down. Whether she was identifying butterflies in the Amazon river basin, logging bird species in the Galapagos islands, or backpacking into the Sipsey wilderness for the annual Audubon bird count, she lived her life to the fullest. On one occasion, Ethel asked

Churchwide YARD SALE

Live
Every Moment
Laugh
Every Day
LOVE
Beyond Words

me to collect the offering plates on Sunday because she would be on one of her backpacking trips. She was well into her eighties by then, so I sheepishly asked if she slept on the ground in a sleeping bag on those hikes. Her response:

"No. I cheat. I got myself a cot!" No

surprise, I guess, for someone who still climbed up a ladder and cleaned her own gutters.

If you knew Ethel, count yourself among the lucky. She was a force of nature, and a mentor for me in her life and in her death. I shall never, ever, forget her.

She was unstoppable.

I shall never, ever, forget her.

HOME AT CHRISTMAS...

By Teresa Moran

For as long as I can remember, on Christmas Day, I wish I could just stay home with my new toys. When I was a kid, we opened Santa presents early Christmas morning then gathered gifts and casseroles and went to Tennessee for a family holiday. Don't get me wrong; I loved being with my Aunt Laura and cousin, Stevie, and in later years, with his offspring and my step-cousins. Those times are ones I miss every year. Most of those folks are no longer living or at least no longer living in my realm.

After growing up, there was a time when Christmas still meant going to my parent's home which was good since I was a lonely student. But, once home, we still packed up and went to Tennessee.

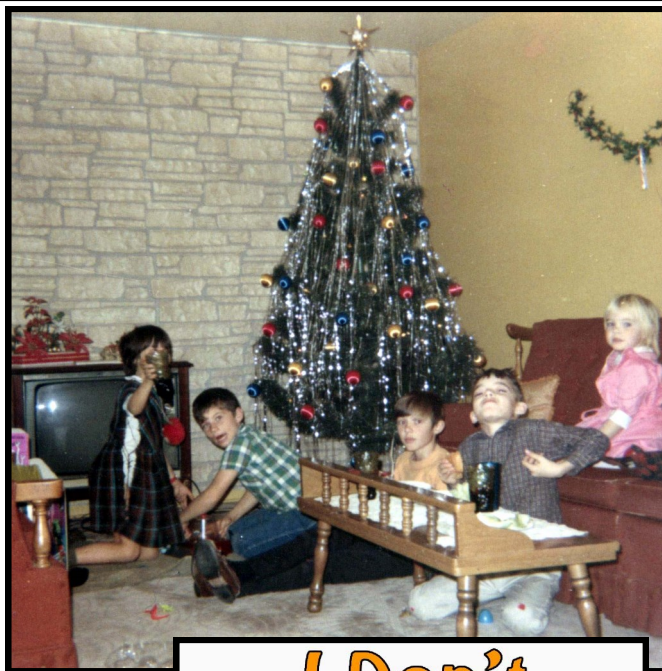
Then marriage happened. Whole new game, In-laws... yearly decisions of which family got us on the actual Christmas day. For years one in-law was south and the others were north. When I still worked at the hospital I used to volunteer to be on call for Christmas. None of the family could be angry - I had to work and I was taking care of children and making rounds in a Santa suit was fun. Then I could hang out the rest of the day.

At least, the second time around with marriage both families were north of us. Then the challenge was getting two adults, two large dogs, overnight bags, and gifts into a small Japanese car leaving all the torn wrapping paper

and new underwear to deal with when we got back. Of course, we would come back with more stuff to find places for.

Well, this year, we were home on Christmas day. Good news, I cooked only my favorite holiday foods. Yum! No pink frozen dish with cherries, no ham, no coconut... I slept till nearly 8 and I had boiled custard for breakfast. The gifts were stored right after breakfast with wrapping paper in the recycle tub. After lunch, taking a long walk and knocking on friend's doors to wish them Merry Christmas wearing festive face covering with elves and stuff on them. It's a nice holiday. Restful... No hurry... No packing... But, no greedy Santa with all the nephews and nieces, no coffee with my sister, no visit to my parent's old church, no Bloody Marys with the in-laws...

As in everything, I can't have things more than one way at a time. Like I wish I could do this and that...



I Don't
Wanna
Grow Up
I'm A
TOYS R US
Kid



This year a virus made my choice for me. Next year, who knows? I am not counting on anything. My Mother told my husband that she thought I never grew up. Maybe she was right. So, maybe 2021 is the year for me to finally accept adult life, embrace it...

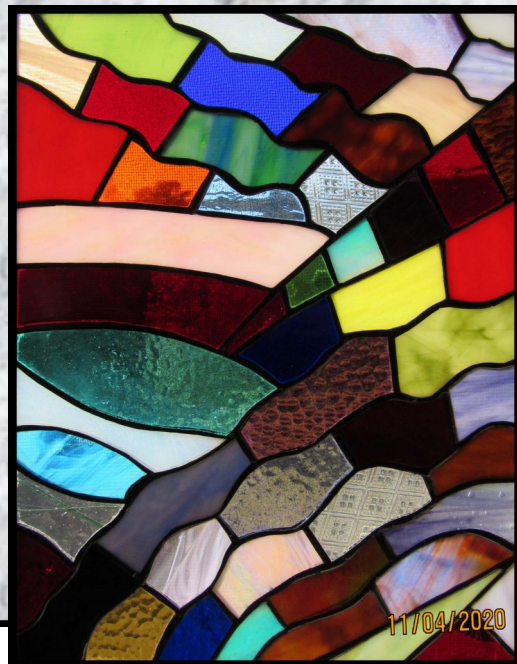
*Nah, probably not.
I'll still always want it all.
Happy New Year!*

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021!

MY NEWEST PIECE, ENJOY

STAINED GLASS BY RON VANDER SCHAAF

This is one of my newest pieces of stained glass. I just wanted to share it with you. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed making it. God bless you all.



Answers To Live By...

By Rev. Ron Vander Schaaf

As Christians ponder what is happening to the church and its message recently, this article may offer some insight that is helpful for all of us to consider. It has been provided to us by Rev. Ron Vander Schaaf.

Excerpts of an interview by Nicholas Kristof of Rev. Jim Wallis, an evangelical pastor:

Q: *What is it with the modern evangelical movement... Unlike the past, the big cause of many evangelicals has been the philandering politician who rips children from their parents at the border.*

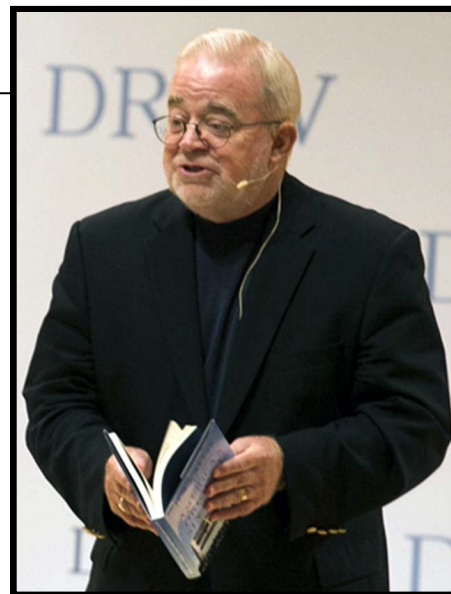
A: *The word “evangel” comes from Jesus’ opening pledge to bring “Good News” to the poor and let the oppressed go free. Trump evangelicals have turned Jesus’ message upside down... We’ve seen the conversion of too many white evangelicals to the narcissistic and nationalistic cult of Trump, where the operative word in the phrase “white evangelical” is not “evangelical” but “white.” ...And we believe that any gospel that isn’t “Good News” for the poor is simply not the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Q: *Do you consider Jesus to have been a person of color?*

A: *Of course he was a person of color given where and when he was born. Blue-eyed Jesus’ exist only in American churches.*

Q: *Why does the scripture seem to lead leaders to cut funds for the homeless?*

A: *Because they aren’t reading those Scriptures with over 2000 verses in the Bible about the poor and oppressed.*



***Many Blessings To ALL
This New Year!!!***

It's All About the FISH!

Pilgrim Arts Ministry (P.A.M)

By Rev. Pamela A. Canzater

Have you been to the garden in the back of our church? I took a great deal of interest in the conversion of the space from playground to garden space for many reasons.

One, the room so graciously allotted to the Pilgrim Arts Ministry (P.A.M.) enters and exits on that space. **Two**, I love both playgrounds and gardens. **Three**, I was discouraged by some discussions I heard by adult members of our congregation concerning our space.

There was apprehension that once the playground equipment was replaced with a garden, it would no longer be "child friendly." Yet, to my eye, this garden invited all ages to come in and swing their cares away in yes, a new swing. Children and adults alike could follow the new path of the "sidewalkFISH" symbolizing the ancient anagram/acronym for "Jesus Christ God's Son, Savior." I encouraged children and youth in P.A.M. to cover the FISH with chalk drawings of what THEY envisioned the FISH to mean in their lives. I also asked them to explain how the FISH path led to a fountain, crowned by a stained glass image of Christ with children.

Those teaching moments began years ago, and now, in these times of stress and pressure brought on by the plague of



COVID-19, more children of God find the love of Jesus, beckoned by our garden FISH. For example, I recently learned two homeless men named Shane and Rick have been using this newer fountain at the end of this garden path to keep their bodies clean. So even unknowingly, we have provided a gift of Christian love and joy to those we have yet to meet, following the dictate of

Jesus that we, "Be fishers of men..." ...and women AND children.

There is a lesson here for each of us as we start 2021. Sometimes, being Christian means looking to what the future can be - at the end of a pathway outlined by FISH; Jesus Christ God's Son, SAVIOR."



"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Matthew 4:19

Attitude is Everything!

By Tammy & Jennifer

Attitude is the way you think. Your attitude is something other people can actually see. They can hear it in your voice, see it in the way you move, feel it when they are with you. Your attitude expresses itself in everything you do, all the time, wherever you are. Positive attitudes always invite positive results. Negative attitudes always invite negative results. Attitude makes a difference every hour, every day, in everything that you do for your entire life. What you get out of each thing you do will always equal the attitude you have when you do it. Anything that you do with a positive attitude will work for you. Anything you do with a negative attitude will work against you. If you have a positive attitude, you are looking for ways to solve the problems that you can solve, and you are letting go of things over

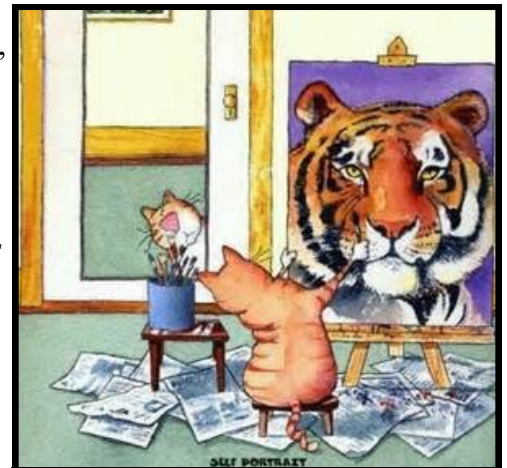
which you have no control. You can develop a positive attitude by emphasizing the good.

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. The remarkable thing is, we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. An old friend of mine, Peg S., said in a sermon once, ***“There is one thing that God will never take away from you, and that is the ‘reaction’ to the ‘actions’ that happen in your life.”*** She also said in the same sermon,

“Never ‘Should’ on yourself.” Meaning that old stinking thinking of... *“I ‘should’ have done that...”* or *“I ‘should’ have said something different...”* We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people are people and have their own set of problems and baggage that will cause them to act a certain way or react to life. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can change, as individuals, the one thing that we can control is our attitude. Science and psychology states that life is 10% what happens to you



and 90% how you react to it. One anonymous quote is somewhat refined in saying,



Positive attitude! When you paint your portrait what do you see?

“Our lives are not determined by what happens to us, but how we react to what happens, not by what life brings us, but by the attitude we bring to life. A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events & outcomes. It is a catalyst, a spark that creates extraordinary results.”

Positive attitude can be contagious, but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier!

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING.
LIFE IS 10% OF WHAT YOU MAKE IT & 90% OF HOW YOU TAKE IT.

PILGRIM CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING

January 17, 2021 ~ 11 AM via Zoom

Zoom info has been sent to all members. If you need help accessing it, please let Pastor Paul know and he will help you. (612/386-0645)



DISCRIMINATION
IS NOT
A RELIGIOUS
VALUE



MONTHLY QUOTE:

“We can COMPLAIN because ROSE bushes have THORNS, or REJOICE because THORN bushes have ROSES.”

By Abraham Lincoln

There’s Magic in Your Smile

Submitted By Tammy and Jennifer

This is an article we read recently and wanted to share it with all of you. Hope you enjoy it as much as we did.



SAY cheese! It turns out that a single smile goes a long way toward cheering up LOTS of people!

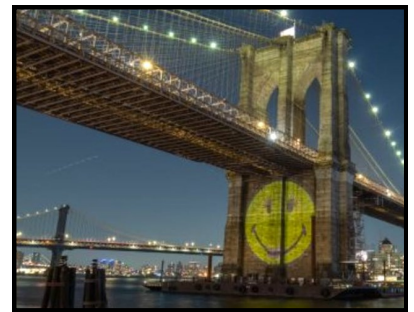
Of 2,000 Americans surveyed, half said smiling was important to ‘stay positive’ during the pandemic - and when they needed something to smile about, they looked to other smiling people for inspiration!

Many of them say they have been making more of an effort lately to find reasons to be cheerful, and 56 percent report they get a big boost just from seeing other people with happy faces.

“The research proved how often people enjoy smiling and the difference it can make to both self-confidence and overall moods,” says Charlotte Knight, founder of Ciate’ London, which commissioned the survey from OnePoll.

“Particularly at times like this it’s important to stay self-confident, emotionally aware and see the positives in everyday moments by sharing smiles.”

Respondents listed the reasons they smiled most often, from hearing good news (52 percent) and hearing a joke (40 percent) all the way down to enjoying a good meal (32 percent).



PILGRIM BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY



- Lance Simpson ~ Jan. 5
- Bud Precise ~ Jan. 6
- Dee Dee Lyons ~ Jan. 12
- Memphis Hamilton ~ Jan. 18
- Trina Vines ~ Jan. 21
- Kista Hamilton ~ Jan. 30



PILGRIM ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

- Gary Abel & John Williams ~ Jan. 4

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