

SENIOR *Spotlight*

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Recently, in the middle of a conversation with a friend, I intended to make a reference to how long it had been since all of us have had our lives change so dramatically in response to this COVID pandemic. When I got to that point in my sentence, I had to stop and think for a moment. Initially, I couldn't even estimate how long it has been going on. The number of days have somehow managed to accumulate into weeks, and the weeks have turned into months, and it all sort of seems like a blur.

Eventually I looked back into my calendar. After wading through various entries that were evidence of when my daily activities and appointments changed drastically, two particular calendar dates sort of jumped out at me. One was the Ides of March, the 15th, the date in 44 BC on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in the Roman Senate. For many years of my adult life I have taken note of the fact when the Ides of March rolls around, remembering the words in Shakespeare's telling of the story when the soothsayer warns Julius Caesar to "beware the Ides of March."

The other date on my calendar that comes close to the beginning of our isolating because of COVID-19 is my mother's birthday, March 16. The thought that I could use either one of these two dates to remember when the quarantining began suggested to me that I had a choice, that it was in fact a choice I should make between the two. Which would you choose – the day Julius Caesar was assassinated or your mother's birthday? No-brainer, right? This COVID thing is a bad thing and an assassination is a bad thing, so that's the one to remember it with. Easy-peazy. Sure, except...

Do you remember, beginning around the middle of March how we were almost ALL staying home as much as possible, and not using our cars, and a lot of the factories temporarily shut down, and all that. If you did get out and about you discovered that the price of gas had plummeted to nearly a dollar a gallon because so few people were buying any. Planes weren't flying. Buses weren't running. And reports were coming in from all over the place that air quality was better than anyone could remember, and lakes and oceans were looking clearer and cleaner. For a while, we all got a glimpse of what nature looks like when we aren't flooding it with the burning of fossil fuel. My mother would have liked that.

Stephen's message continued

She wasn't an off-the-wall radical environmentalist, but she was very much a nature-lover. She loved the birds, knew their different kinds by name, fed them and kept the bird bath filled and clean. She was the first one to spot the wisteria and dogwood when they began to bloom. From her I learned that the red bud trees were one of the first signs of the end of winter, and that the pecan trees wouldn't put out any growth of leaves until there would be no more freezing weather come our way. She would have liked hearing about cleaner skies and clearer water.

Today, many people talk about wanting things to "get back to normal." Well, I hope we can overcome the threat, the danger, the devastation that this novel coronavirus has brought upon us. I'm counting on vaccines and medical research to work their wonders. But "back to normal"? In every way? – not for me, thank you very much.

We've learned some things from this pandemic, about ourselves, about others, and about this one-and-only planet we share. I'm hoping and praying that when history records our response to what we have the chance to learn here that we came out on the other side of it as wiser and kinder than we were before. Can you imagine that! I hope you can, and I hope you'll join me in praying for it.

Stephen



Last month's Senior Spotlight ran an interview with our new pastor, Rev. Joe Stobaugh. We neglected to include a picture of Joe and his family. In case you haven't had the chance to meet them in person or perhaps not even see them on video, here's a family snapshot.

Joe, Sarah, Ellie, Sam

NEW! SERMONS-BY-PHONE

University Park UMC
SERMONS-BY-PHONE
Now Available.



On the go & tired of the news on the radio? Sitting around with nothing to do and bored by the internet and TV? What if you could simply sit comfortably, close your eyes & give them a rest (if you're not driving), and listen to the most recent sermon by our new pastor? Well now you can. It's as easy as dialing eleven numbers on your phone. UPUMC has engaged the services of Sermon By Phone to make listening to Sunday's sermon as easy as pie. Just dial 1-214-271-5195. No further buttons to press. No bothersome directory tree to wade through. You'll hear University Park UMC's latest sermon straight through. No interruptions, no ads to endure. How great is that! Try it. Let me know how you like it. It's just one more way we're hoping to "stay connected" during these strange days of social distancing.

Poetry, Prose & Ponderings

Our first installment in this ongoing section of **The Senior Spotlight** comes from Bob Munroe. He has chosen a free verse poem by Kahlil Gibran from his collection **The Madman**. It is entitled “My Friend.”

My friend, I am not what I seem. Seeming is but a garment I wear — a care-woven garment that protects me from thy questionings and thee from my negligence.

The “I” in me, my friend, dwells in the house of silence, and therein it shall remain for ever more, unperceived, unapproachable.

I would not have thee believe in what I say nor trust in what I do — for my words are naught but thy own thoughts in sound and my deeds thy own hopes in action.

When thou sayest, “The wind bloweth eastward,” I say, “Aye, it doth blow eastward;” for I would not have thee know that my mind doth not dwell on the wind but upon the sea.

Thou canst not understand my seafaring thoughts, nor would I have thee understand. I would be at sea alone.

When it is day with thee, my friend, it is night with me; yet even then I speak of the noontide that dances upon the hills and of the purple shadow that steals its way across the valley; for thou canst not hear the songs of my darkness nor see my wings beating against the stars — and I fain would not have thee hear or see. I would be with night alone.

When thou ascendest to thy Heaven I descend to my Hell — even then thou callest to me across the unbridgeable gulf, “My companion, my comrade,” and I call back to thee, “My comrade, my companion” — for I would not have thee see my Hell. The flame would burn thy eyesight and the smoke would crowd thy nostrils. And I love my Hell too well to have thee visit it. I would be in Hell alone.

Thou lovest Truth and Beauty and Righteousness; and I for thy sake say it is well and seemly to love these things. But in my heart I laugh at thy love. Yet I would not have thee see my laughter. I would laugh alone.

My friend thou are good and cautious and wise; nay, thou art perfect — and I too, speak with thee wisely and cautiously. And yet I am mad. But I mask my madness. I would be mad alone.

My friend, thou art not my friend, but how shall I make thee understand? My path is not thy path, yet together we walk, hand in hand.

Bob Comments: *This poem always had meaning for me before the pandemic with our typical isolation in today’s culture, especially cities. How much do we know about our fellow human when we see them on the street or at church and ask, “How are you?” Do we really want to know? Do they feel at ease telling you about their pain? We have been isolated in so many ways before this pandemic, and now it may be worse as we are having to face that isolation and cannot ignore it by being busy at something. The Church is where we can find true Love because there is One who truly cares and will always listen.*

Send your submission – a poem or an excerpt of prose, short enough to be suitable for printing here – accompanied by some reflection on what it has meant to you and why. Understand that it may be edited to accommodate available space. Mail submissions to “Senior Spotlight Poems & Prose; 4024 Caruth Blvd.; Dallas TX 75225,” or email “sfleming@upumc.org,” subject line “Senior Spotlight Poems & Prose.”



Stay Connected to UPUMC

WORSHIP SERVICES by Digital Video Disc

UPUMC is expanding its worship ministry to provide for those who do not have access to the internet, or who for any reason are unable to view the recorded Sunday worship services online. We are exploring the idea of providing portable digital video players and pre-recorded discs (DVDs) of our entire Sunday morning worship services to persons for whom this would be a welcome and helpful option.

NO INTERNET REQUIRED! If you are such a person or you know someone who is, call me or drop me an email along with some information about the circumstances. If you like this idea and wish to support it financially, please earmark your gift "Senior Adult Ministry – DVD Fund." Thank you in advance!

Building Hours

University Park UMC is as eager as can be to safely resume regular worship services in the church building. Decisions about how we will utilize our building and when we may return to it are being made by a special church committee who are following federal, state, local, and denominational directives and guidelines. At the present time, the building remains closed for use by any group meetings or activities. An exception to this is the use of restricted areas of the buildings for videotaping of worship and other programs posted on our **upumc.org** website. Thanks for your patience and understanding.

Senior Life Online

Don't forget that there is always something new to see on our website! Not only the weekly worship services, but newly-added presentations by Sunday School classes, weekly Bible study and reflections, and continuing updated programming for seniors. We have a brand new website up and running, and if you haven't explored it, you may be missing something you would really like! And, oh boy!, I am especially pleased to report that Charles Hosch will be recording new material that will soon be posted to our website. Honestly, it's not as good as actually physically being with each other and learning from each other as well as from our leaders, but second-best is the wealth of material found at **upumc.org**. Much work, dedication, and energy has been invested in the on-line programming. I'm sure there is something there especially for you.

www.upumc.org

By the Way -- by Dede Casad

When was the last time you had a good deep-down laugh? No, I mean it. When was the last time you laughed so hard it was hard to breathe? Well, as they say, that's too long.

I remember Norman Cousins, the editor of Saturday Review and author of numerous books, who literally cured himself of cancer with laughter. After he received the diagnosis, Cousins bought all the Abbott and Costello and other funny movies he could find and laughed his way to health.

So during these 'down' days of summer and other distractions I recommend you find a CD of Jeanie Robertson and listen to it. Jeanie is from South Carolina and is known for her sense of humor all over the United States. I promise you will laugh out loud at her real-life stories in spite of yourself. It might even cure you of loneliness or boredom. So, have a good laugh on me!

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FIND US ONLINE: To view detailed information about our Senior Life Ministry, please visit our website at **www.upumc.org/seniors**