



NEWSLETTER

OF THE

Estancia United Methodist
Church

600 Williams, Estancia, New Mexico

<http://www.estanciamethodist.org>



JANUARY, 2016

Estancia United Methodist Church

www.EstanciaMethodist.org
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From the Desk of...

Pastor Bonnie

We come to Worship anticipating God's Presence

One of the Healthy Church Initiative's 'prescriptions' for the Estancia congregation is to REDESIGN the WORSHIP SERVICE. If you are interested in participating in this effort, please contact me.

But before we start redesigning, there are some critical aspects of the worship experience that we should ALL consider...

Worship is the single most-cited spiritual practice in which the faithful report encountering God in meaningful ways. So, no matter how our Worship experience may change in the coming months, it's imperative that the experience of God's presence be enhanced for everyone. Toward this end, the United Methodist Hymnal contains The Basic Pattern of Worship (see page 2 of your hymnal) – Entrance, Proclamation and Response, Thanksgiving and Communion, and Sending Forth. An Order of Sunday Worship Using the Basic Pattern appears on subsequent pages. It's important that as we redesign our worship, that we don't "throw the baby out with the bath water." With this in mind, I offer some comments from Sarah Young, author of Experiencing God's Presence:

Consider It. God is present with you. Do you believe that? Do you believe it *in theory*, or do you **experience God's Presence**? God yearns to spend quiet moments with you and help you grow more and more aware of His Presence as you seek Him.

in God's Presence, hearing His voice as He speaks through the Scriptures? The Proclamation of God's Word and our response to His Word, is at the heart of Worship. I have some questions for you...

1. *Have you ever really experienced God's Presence? If so, what was that like? If you never have, do you believe God wants you to experience His Presence when you hear His Word?*
2. *What draws you to this exploration of God's presence?*

“Come to Me with a teachable spirit, eager to be changed. A close walk with Me is a life of continual newness. Do not cling to old ways as you step into a new year. Instead, seek My Face with an open mind, knowing that your journey with Me involves being *transformed by the renewing of your mind*. As you focus your thoughts on Me, be aware that I am fully attentive to you. I see you with a steady eye because my attention span is infinite. I know and understand you completely; My thoughts embrace you in everlasting Love. *I also know the plans I have for you: plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future*. Give yourself fully to this adventure of increasing attentiveness to My Presence.”

52 Messages of Hope! Pastor Bonnie is preaching a sermon series on HOPE. Every Sunday we hear another reason for us, as Christians, to be hope-full! Following is a *very brief synopsis* of the Hopeful Message preached in December.

Date	Sermon Notes	The Reason for Our Hope
12/6/15	<p>Zechariah, like Abram’s wife <u>Sara</u> so many generations before, couldn’t believe a son would be given to them at such an advanced age. He and Elizabeth were OLD. But God’s WORD is POWERFUL!</p> <p>God SPOKE and creation sprang to life. God SPOKE and there was light. God SPOKE and a great fish swallowed Jonah. God SPOKE and all that had been lost was restored doubly to Job. God SPOKE and the sun stood still for Joshua.</p> <p>No doubt John, Zechariah’s promised son, was well-acquainted with the lesson of listening when God speaks, most likely learned at his father’s knee! So when God SPOKE to John (the Baptizer) he listened and took action. He was THE ONE to prepare the way of the Lord. He wasted no time! He pursued his work with great vigor... no matter what the good town’s people of Jerusalem may have thought.</p> <p>But what about us? When God SPEAKS, do we listen? Do we take action? Are we ready to give our all to prepare the way of the Lord? Or do we scoff, like Zechariah and lose our voices?</p> <p>I can hear some of you right now, saying, “I’ve never heard God’s voice. He’s never spoken to me!” Maybe you weren’t listening when He spoke. Maybe you were distracted. Maybe you were sleeping. Maybe his voiced was drowned out by the noisiness and business of life. Maybe you heard Him, but didn’t recognize His voice.</p>	<p>Here is the reason for our hope: Someone took a message for you. They wrote it all down! 66 letters to you... now compiled in a book. It’s called the Bible. Want to know what He said? Take a look! And here’s a hint – you’ve got work to do. We ALL do. Like John the Baptizer, we’re still preparing the way of the Lord! He’s coming back one day; and it’s our job to make the world ready to receive Him!</p>
12/13/15	<p>Max <u>Lucado</u> tells a story about a crippled lamb. This lamb is shunned by the other lambs. He can’t run and jump and play like the other lambs. His coat is not pure white like the other lambs, but spotted. When the shepherds lead the flock to a distant valley, full of fresh grass, the crippled lamb is left behind. He and his friend, a wise and compassionate cow, remain in the a stable.</p> <p>The crippled lamb feels abandoned, ashamed, worthless, and hopeless. And we can feel the same way. Not as good as others. Not as capable, unloved, abandoned.</p>	<p>But here is the reason for our hope: As the story unfolds, we find the crippled lamb is in just the right place... the stable where Jesus would be born. It’s the crippled lamb’s coat that would warm the newborn Jesus! It would be the shepherds who left the crippled lamb behind, who would return to worship the King!</p> <p>God always has us in just the right place. It is HE who draws near to us! Immanuel, God with us, HAS COME, and WILL COME AGAIN. So let us also rejoice as we offer prayers and thanksgiving <i>without anxiety</i>. The powers and principalities of this age have been overcome. Rejoice!</p>

12/20/15	<p>Mary is pregnant. She's young. Unmarried. Naive in the ways of the world. Betrothed to an older man who runs the local carpentry shop in their dusty little town.</p> <p>The neighbors will talk. Her parents will most certainly cast her out. Her future is ruined. A cloud of doom hangs over Mary's head... Perhaps her misery will be cut short by stoning.</p> <p>This is how life can feel to us. Some of us are wandering. Some are lost. Many are feeling hopeless. Shortchanged by life. We find ourselves the subject of malicious gossip and ridicule. Judged unworthy by those unworthy to judge. Praying for a quick end to our ordeals.</p>	<p>Well, here is the reason for our hope: Mary had the seed of God, the source of all hope, growing within her. As Jesus took form and grew within her womb, so did her sense of well-being, confidence, hopefulness, and overwhelming joy.</p> <p>If we invite Jesus into our hearts, that same sense of well-being, confidence, hopefulness, and overwhelming joy begins to grow within us! Just as the baby Jesus took 9 months to develop in her womb... so does the sense of God's presence within us take time to develop in our <u>lives</u>. But it <i>will grow</i> – day by day – until desperation is eradicated and replaced by overwhelming joy!</p> <p>Love came down at Christmas. Let that seed take root and grow in your heart today.</p>
12/27/15	<p>All three of this week's lectionary readings (<u>1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52</u>) are about growing up.</p> <p>First we read about the boy Samuel. His mother Hannah, and father Elkanah, dedicated him to the Lord and gave him to the chief priest, Eli, to be raised in the Temple. Each year, Hannah made Samuel a new, larger robe and delivered it to him in Jerusalem during their annual pilgrimage. Luke writes to us about the boy Jesus, who at the age of 12 was accidentally left behind in Jerusalem when his parents began their return to Nazareth after their annual pilgrimage. Jesus was in the process of leaving his childhood and growing into the man God called Him to be. And finally, Paul writes to us about how WE are supposed to grow into Christ-likeness by clothing ourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love.</p>	<p>Here is the reason for our hope: The promise of Christmas is that PEACE is more than just a good wish. TEACHING is more than an academic exercise. The practice of habitually clothing ourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love results in our growing into Christ-likeness – maturity in Christian faith! So let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. Invite God's word to take root within you. And daily you will grow up, just as Samuel and Jesus and Paul did – into the person God has called you to be.</p>

Someone asked the other day, 'What was your favorite fast food when you were growing up?'

We didn't have fast food when I was growing up, I informed him. All the food was *slow*.

'Seriously. Where did you eat?' 'At home.' I explained. 'Mom cooked every day and when Dad got home from work, we sat down together at the dining room table; and if I didn't like what she put on my plate I was allowed to sit there until I *did* like it.' I didn't tell him the part about how I had to have permission to leave the table.

But here are some other things I would have told him about my childhood if I figured his system could have handled it:

Some parents NEVER owned their own house, never set foot on a golf course, never traveled out of the country or had a credit card. In their later years they had something called a revolving charge card. The card was good *only* at Sears Roebuck. Or maybe it was Sears & Roebuck. Either way, there is no Roebuck anymore. Maybe he died.

My parents never drove me to soccer practice. This was mostly because we never had heard of soccer.

I had a bicycle that weighed probably 50 pounds, and only had one speed – slow. (Note from Pastor Bonnie – Santa Clause brought me my Schwinn when I was 6; and it was still my primary mode of transportation when I was 27 !)

We didn't have a television in our house until I was 9. It was, of course, black and white, and the station went off the air at midnight, after playing the national anthem and a poem about God.

I was 21 before I tasted my first pizza. It was called 'pizza pie.' When I bit into it, I burned the roof of my mouth and the cheese slid off, swung down, plastered itself against my chin and burned that, too. It's still the best pizza I ever had. Pizzas were not delivered to our home... but milk was.

I never had a telephone in my room. The only phone in the house was in the living room and it was on a party line. Before you could dial, you had to listen and make sure some people you didn't know weren't already using the line.

All newspapers were delivered by boys and all boys delivered newspapers. I delivered a newspaper, 7 days a week. It cost 7 cents a paper, of which I got to keep 2 cents. I had to get up at 6AM every morning. (Note from Pastor Bonnie – there were NO Newspapers delivered where I lived... just milk!)

There were no movie ratings because all movies were responsibly produced for everyone to enjoy viewing, without profanity or violence or most anything offensive.

Growing up isn't what it used to be...

Following are the Revised Common Lectionary readings for January. If you read each week's recommendations consistently, over the course of three years, you will have read nearly the ENTIRE BIBLE! Try it!!

January 3, 2016 Epiphany Sunday	January 10, 2016 Baptism of the Lord	January 17, 2016 Second Sunday after Epiphany	January 24, 2016 Third Sunday after Epiphany
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isaiah 60:1-6• Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14• Ephesians 3:1-12• Matthew 2:1-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isaiah 43:1-7• Psalm 29• Acts 8:14-17• Luke 3:15-17, 21-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isaiah 62:1-5• Psalm 36:5-10• 1 Corinthians 12:1-11• John 2:1-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10• Psalm 19• 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a• Luke 4:14-21

Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant Sunday, Dec 20





Authentic Christianity in a Place of Pain, by Stephen Arterburn from The God of Second Chances

Some Christians act as though they are “first-class” Christians who have found the secret to a near perfect life, devoid of pain. This concept is not only wrong; it is toxic.

The authentic Christian life doesn't involve false pride of perfection, and it doesn't mean living free from struggle; instead, it deals head-on with the issue of pain. Rather than trying to avoid pain, as authentic Christians we allow struggle to shape our hearts and our faith. We allow humility to draw us farther out of ourselves and closer to God. It is not an easy life, but it is a rich life, full of growth and tough moments that remind us of who we are and how far we have to go in our spiritual journey. In the face of pain and struggle, our faith will give us comfort, guidance, and hope.

The biblical view of life is that it often gets worse before it gets better. Salvation, the free gift of God, is sometimes painful. Listen to the apostle Peter address the value of suffering: *Now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. — 1 Peter 1:6-9*



In the book of Romans, Paul also described this refining process of suffering:

We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us. — Romans 5:3-5

This, of course, does not mean we should act happy when we find out a leg has to be amputated or we have a terminal illness. It does mean that one day we will rejoice at the adversities we faced and the way Christ brought us through them. No matter what the circumstances, God is still in control and will act according to His eternal plan. Isaiah 30:18 tells us the Lord is a God of justice for those who wait on Him. He will not abandon us in our times of helplessness. We must trust that He is able to change the worst situation into a time of hope and joy.

Donna lived with her husband and two babies on the tiny pension he received from the navy. Their rent was more than half of their income. Needless to say, the money often ran out. One month, their financial situation was so bad that Donna literally had no money left to buy laundry soap to wash her babies' dirty diapers. Donna got on her knees in the kitchen and prayed, "God, I've never needed You like I need You now. I have nothing, and I need You to provide soap to wash these diapers."

...Continued on back...



January



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					January 1 	2
3 Epiphany Sunday Altar Color – White	4	5	6 7am Pastor’s Breakfast, ABQ	7	8	9
10 Baptism of the Lord Altar Color – White	11	12	13 <input type="checkbox"/> 7am Pastor’s Breakfast, ABQ <input type="checkbox"/> 11:30 Faith @ Work in ABQ <input type="checkbox"/> 1:30 Prayer @ Moore’s (303 N Walker)	14	15	16
17 Altar Color – Green	18	19 2-6pm Promised Land / Road- runner Food Bank	20 7am Pastor’s Breakfast, ABQ	21 11-2 AMA – Pastor Bonnie	22	23
24 / 31 Altar Color – Green	25	26	27 7am Pastor’s Breakfast, ABQ	28	29 Pastor Bonnie at Bloomfield UMC teaching @ Lay Servant’s School. 30	
31 Altar Color – Green						



Sent with a prayer to:

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*...Continued from Page 8... **The God of Second Chances***

Hearing a noise at the front door, Donna got up and went to open it. Someone had left a sample of soap in a plastic bag on her doorstep. It was a promotional giveaway. But Donna knew better. In utter helplessness she had cried out to God for help. Some would call the provision a coincidence, but Donna knew it was an act of God.

God wants you to see Him as your only **real hope**. He will act to show you that He cares for you personally and deeply. Rather than give up on Him, surrender faith in yourself, so you can tap into God's divine power instead! When things appear to be most impossible, God can show us He is in control. Our trials can become landmarks on our spiritual journey.