

FPC Press

First Presbyterian Church of Turlock

July 2020

newsLETTER



Rev. Dr. Craig J. Wright

A Message Our Pastor

Presbyterian pastor and film critic Edward McNulty provides discussion questions for the acclaimed film “Just Mercy”

by Mike Ferguson | Presbyterian News Service

The Rev. Dr. Edward McNulty, a Presbyterian pastor and film critic, has new study questions for the 2019 film “Just Mercy,” which Warner Brothers is making available for free viewing during the month of June.

LOUISVILLE — With news this week that Warner Brothers is providing its 2019 film “Just Mercy” free for viewing on platforms including YouTube, the Rev. Dr. Edward McNulty, a Presbyterian pastor and film critic, has developed discussion questions and provided a review of the film.

McNulty, who reviews films about faith and other films and frequently provides discussion questions in his online journal “Visual Parables,” said in an email that he wants Presbyterians and others “to take advantage of a major film shedding light on systemic racism.”

The Rev. Dr. Edward McNulty

According to McNulty, “Just Mercy,” directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, tells the true story of the first case of long-time civil rights advocate Bryan Stevenson, who in the late 1980s became the head of Alabama’s Equal Justice Initiative right after graduating from Harvard Law School.

Seeking to overturn the falsely obtained conviction of Walter McMillian, the African American lawyer runs up against a thoroughly racist justice system, starting with the police, the district attorney, the prison guards and the judges. Only by a persistence like the widow in Jesus’ Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge does Stevenson emerge victorious at last. The faith of the advocate and of the African American family is well depicted, with the lawyer’s words near the ending possessing a biblical ring: “We all need justice, we all need mercy, we all need unmerited grace.”



Pastor's Message Continued...

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Here's a portion of McNulty's review of "Just Mercy":



After a short prelude in which we see student Bryan Stevenson (Michael B. Jordan) easily bonding with an imprisoned black man, the story jumps ahead to the late 1980s, when Stevenson has just graduated from Harvard Law School and is visiting his mother before heading south to head the Equal Justice Initiative, which was set up to defend blacks sentenced to death.

He is ably aided by a courageous white woman, Eva Ansley (Brie Larson), married and with children.

Stevenson himself suffers humiliation upon his first visit to client Walter McMillian (Jamie Foxx) when the prison guard forces the lawyer to strip off all his clothes for a search before letting him into the secured area of the prison.

McMillian, Stevenson discovers, was put on death row as soon as he was arrested and accused of the brutal 1986 murder of 18-year-old Ronda Morrison at a dry-cleaning business in Monroeville, Alabama. Neither the police nor the D.A. paid attention to the testimony of family and friends that Walter had been at a church fish fry when the murder was committed. His conviction rested entirely upon the testimony of the white Ralph Myers (Tim Blake Nelson), a convicted felon, whose testimony was probably coerced by the police.

But before he can probe deeper into the case, Stevenson must convince McMillian to reopen his case. The prisoner has been so beat down and disillusioned by the blatant racism of the system that he has given up hope, other lawyers having come and made promises they could not keep. Undeterred, Stevenson visits the family on their farm. After some hesitation, Walter's wife Minnie McMillian (Karan Kendrick) and her relatives are convinced that Stevenson is the real deal and agree that the case should be pursued. With this Walter is persuaded to give his permission, especially after Stevenson informs him there will be no cost to them, and the lawyer proceeds.

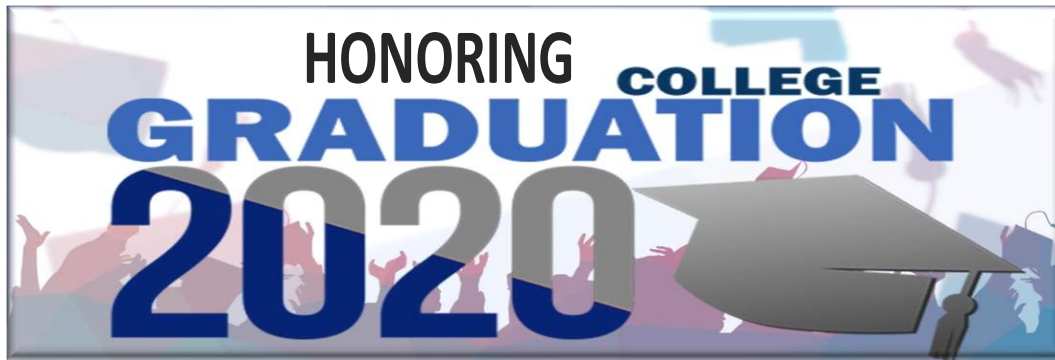
It will, of course, be an uphill battle, beginning with the lawyer's visit with the local sheriff and D.A. Tommy Chapman (Rafe Spall), who are upset by his activities. Stevenson is harassed by the local police, and an anonymous caller warns Eva that a bomb is about to go off at her house because she is lodging the lawyer there. Even when Stevenson gathers the overwhelming evidence that Walter could not have committed the crime, he runs up against the embedded racism in the Alabama court system. What to do?

Please contact the church office and let us know if you are interested in participating in this very timing discussion in understanding our nation's current crisis. Kindly watch the movie at least one time during the next week and review the discussion questions provided on the following page.

We will then plan an all church zoom meeting or two if needed to interact with one another concerning this powerful movie that tells a true story. Feel free to join us on your own time frame and be part of what may be the most important conversation we've had in generations. As we learn together and converse with one another, we begin to seek the understanding of our journey toward peace in our nation.

Discussion Questions

- Describe the protagonist Bryan Stevenson. As a Harvard Law School graduate, what could he have done with his law degree? Amos 5:24 was a favorite of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. How do we see that it is at the heart of Stevenson's world view as well?
- How are the fears of Stevenson's mother borne out? What is the purpose of the prison guard's strip search of Stevenson? How do we see that the purpose of the Alabama justice and prison sentence is not justice but absolute control of the African American populace?
- How rare was it in the South for a white person such as Eva Ansley to advocate the cause of racial equality and justice? Who were some others who were doing so, and what price did they pay? Some names to look up: Charles Morgan, Jr., lawyer/activist; the Rev. Ed King, minister/activist; Lillian Smith, author; P.D. East, journalist; Clarence Jordan, clergy and founder of Koinonia Farm; James W. Silver, academic and author; Juliette Hampton Morgan, Montgomery librarian and protester.
- Can you blame prisoner Walter McMillian for refusing Stevenson's help at first? What is it that he lacks that is essential in a fight against injustice? How is hope tied in with a person's imagination? A good example would be the prophet Isaiah who graphically pictures a world of harmony in Isaiah 11:6-9.
- What does Walter's being placed on death row even before his conviction reveal about Alabama's justice system? Although paying lip service to justice and equality, what instances of similar injustice have you heard about in northern cities? See such films as "Detroit," "When They See Us," "If Beale Street Could Talk," "Queen" and "Slim."
- How did you feel when the court, despite all the evidence proving Walter McMillian could not have committed the crime, turned down his plea for a new trial? Does this help you understand why black rage erupts from time to time?
- What does the tie-in with "To Kill a Mockingbird" contribute to the story? Compare the fictional Atticus Finch and the trial in the novel with the real-life Bryan Stevenson.
- What does the inclusion of the case of Herbert Richardson add to the film? Given his mental condition, do you think he deserved his fate, even though he admitted his guilt? What does his execution say, if anything, about capital punishment?
- What do you think of D.A. Tommy Chapman's decision in the climactic trial? How does it bear out King's insistence that nonviolent resisters should appeal to the conscience of the oppressor?
- Where do we see faith as a part of the lives of some of the characters? How can it sustain us in fighting injustice? At what points in the story do you see God at work?
- Many of those protesting the police murder of George Floyd speak of structural racism. What does this mean? How does this move beyond the 20th Century view that all we need is better education to eliminate racism?
- How are some people trying to use the violence and lootings of the few to divert attention from the basic problem? What can we do about this?
- What signs of hope do you see in news reports? For example, CNN published the story "Police officers are joining protesters for prayers and hugs in several US cities" with photos of friendly exchanges between the police and protesters.



Ryan Enoki

Graduated from CSU Stanislaus
BS in Physics, Math Minor
Attending University of Nevada to obtain a
PH.D. in Experimental Physics and
Employed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant



Brian Keesey

Graduated from CSU Stanislaus
Major in Communications,
Minor in Journalism



Trevor Santiago

Graduated from UC Santa Barbara
Major in Math; Minor in Statistics
Continuing his Master's in Data
Science at USF



A Journey of Faith

I recently graduated and was asked to tell a bit about my journey that got me to this point in my life, as well as tell you a bit about myself. Those that know me, know what a difficult task it is to talk about myself, as a mother, I learned (as many do) it's not about me anymore. When we found our way to First Presbyterian Church, I knew this church would change a lot in our lives, I just didn't realize how much it would change us as people. I began to see more value in myself, and even expect more from myself and my family. I knew that I had to work hard to gain all that I wanted and to be able to set a good good example for my kids, both in my career and in life. So, even when I felt exhausted and ready to quit, I pushed through and did the best I could to achieve the goals we set, because giving up was not an option for me. Our family knows that with hard work, and the Lord, all things are possible. Let me tell you a little about me.

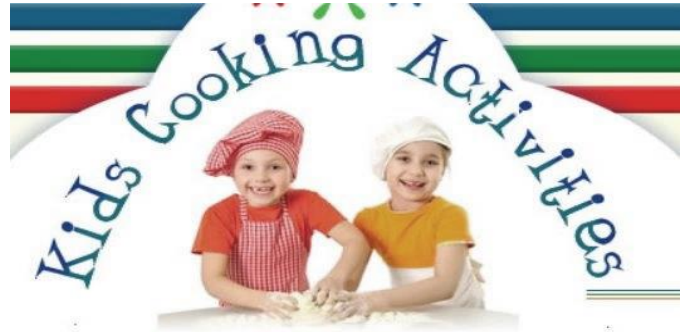
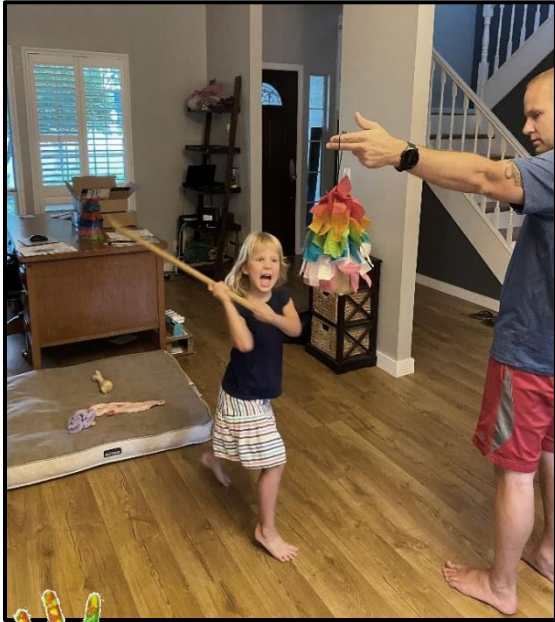
I am a proud mother to 5 beautiful children that came to me from all different directions and I am a busy wife to hard working husband. I have been working more on making a place for myself in between all that, by maintaining a career and getting my degree. I work in the education system and I LOVE my job! Not everyone gets to say that, but I am finally at a point in my life where I can, and it feels great. I recently graduated from Ashford University in San Diego, with my bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. I truly believe that my faith in the Lord put me on a path that led me to where I am and I know that all those very late nights and insane amounts of homework, topped with stressful home life and work that piled up would not have been possible if I did not have faith in myself and the Good Lord.



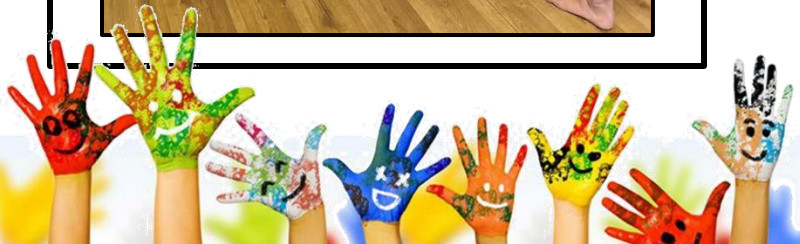
THANK YOU

A big thank you to everyone who turned in their Family Feud responses! The youth had a great time playing. If anyone would like the power point and directions for play, or help setting up the game, contact Stephanie Anderson.

Big Wednesday Kids Cub, we will look closely at Abraham and his heirs and their example of obedience.



We are in the middle of our cooking unit,
"Obedience – the Recipe for Life."
We will continue to cook our way through lessons of obedience.



JUNE 15TH – JULY 10TH

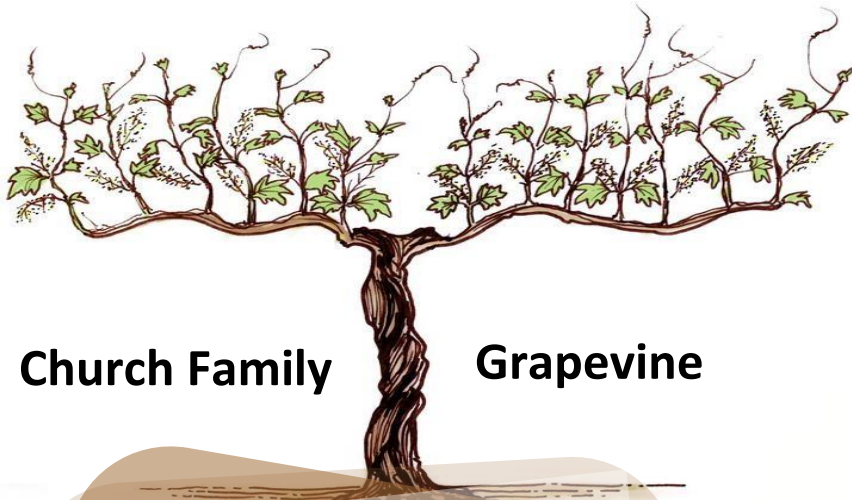
Our Summer Reading Program is going strong.
Keep up the good work and **KEEP READING!**



*Hide 'em
in your
heart*

Bible memory verse program

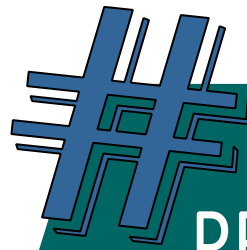
**We are down to two months.
Get those final verses
memorized!**



Church Family

Grapevine

Brugger, Betty (H)
Bob Brunton (H)
Castillo, Aislyn (P)
Drescher, Helen (H)
Lansing, Del (H)
Lipe, Ron (H)
Runsten, Tricia (Darlene's Daughter) (H)
Sargis, Mabel (H)
Charles Wickwire (S,H)
ALL Residents @ Covenant Living



PRAY FOR HEROES

In Philippians 4:6, the Bible tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

During this very difficult time, please keep all individuals, families, communities, first responders, medical personnel, scientists, and government officials who are most at risk in your everyday prayers.



Birthdays

July 1 Wendy Warner
July 5 Polly Peterson
July 6 David Arakelian
July 7 Bob Phillips
July 13 Helen Drescher
July 14 Gabriel Njock
July 20 Ron Lipe
July 23 Glenda Jameson
July 24 Paul Anderson
July 24 Isaac Wright
July 30 Breeann Stigile-Wright
July 31 Eleanor Huskins
July 31 Elaine Neely
July 31 Wilma Wright

Anniversaries

July 10 Craig & Marcy Wright
July 25 Wayne & Elizabeth Kidwell

This list is compiled by the information that you filled out. If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.

FPC SESSION



Session has been meeting monthly since March 2020 using the Zoom online meeting platform. The committees of Session continue to meet via zoom, by email, text message and by word of mouth. Session is committed to ensure the business of the church is monitored.

Recent action items include:

- Application and approval of a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan through the Small Business Administration.

- Approved clean up of AV cabling, mounting speakers, and installing a low wall around the sound booth in the sanctuary.
- Approved to re-seal/paint the peak and replace several missing shingles on the sanctuary roof.
- Approved a Vito's fundraiser to benefit the Tutoring ministry at a date to be determined.
- Accepted, with regret, the resignation of Elder Bob Phillips, Class of 2020. John Sims, elected as an alternate at the January 2020 Congregational Meeting, will finish out the term.

Please know that you are all in our prayers. We miss seeing your faces and smiles. We long for the time we will be able to worship together in a safe way. Take good care and be safe.

In service,

Pat Wallace

Clerk of Session



faith and finances



FOR IT IS IN GIVING THAT WE RECEIVE

Giving to First Presbyterian Church of Turlock has been getting easier and more flexible! Not only can you mail or drop off your cash/check, but you can also give online thru the church website by clicking the "Online Giving" tab and follow the easy instructions. You can also download the

QR Reader App on your phone and simply by clicking on the image to the right, you can give to the various FPC ministries.



We thank you all for your continued support!

FINANCE UPDATE

Income & Expense Year to Date

Ending May 31, 2020

YTD Income:

Contributions	\$117,954.36
Other Income	\$ 22,616.29
Interest	\$ 150.99
Total Income	\$140,721.64

YTD Total Expenses \$145,622.09

Income / Expense Difference (\$ 4,900.45)

Church Cash Assets:

Funds Unrestricted	\$127,355.93
Funds Restricted	\$ 58,737.05
Total Funds	\$186,092.98

Dear Church Family,

We just wanted to give you a small update on what is going on down here in Guatemala. We are still very much under strict quarantine measures with all non-essential businesses closed, borders closed, inter-departmental travel prohibited, no gatherings allowed, and a curfew from 6pm-5am every day. However, we are counting our blessings that as an NGO that distributes food and medical equipment, our wheelchair shop is allowed to be open and we can continue helping those around us. Our main focus these last couple of months has been to get as much food to those in need as possible, and we anticipate this being the biggest need we come across for the rest of the year. The number of hungry people here in Guatemala has multiplied tenfold since the country shut down in March and has just been increasing the longer that people are unable to work. We have faith that we will be able to continue helping those in need, but it has proven difficult as more and more of our teams have had to cancel because of COVID-19. So we ask for your prayers, Church Family: that the ministry would continue to have the necessary finances to help the needy, that we would all stay healthy so we can continue to work, and prayers for all of the people in need of aid, especially those who have to wait. We love you all and are praying for you.

Blessings,

Ben, Emily, and Lily Mooney
Bethel Ministries International



Turlock Gospel Mission Update



In accordance with State and local regulations, TGM opened back up for their church meal ministry in June. FPC volunteers prepared and served seventy-five meals on June 14th to TGM, the first meal since March.

FPC will continue to prepare the meals at the church on the second Sunday of each month and take the meals in to-go containers to TGM where the TGM staff will distribute the meals to the men, women and children. TGM is still in need of donations of cash, food and personal care items. If anyone would like to help prepare the meals on the second Sunday of each month, please contact any member of the Mission Committee.

Martin Purdy

Together, we can get through this crisis and put an end to summer hunger!

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN MINISTRY

The last lesson in this year's Bible study is about the Tenth Commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." The study rephrases it as, "Don't Fixate on What You Don't Have." Like earlier lessons, we find that the commandment is not simply a memory verse; it speaks to modern life in unexpected ways. We will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, July 15, at 9:30 a.m. If you are not already receiving Presbyterian Women e-mails, or if you have not yet met with us on Zoom, call Candace Peterson at 634-3393 for an invitation. In addition, we want to include members who cannot meet on-line. If you are in that group, contact Candace to discuss how we can make that happen.

It is our hope that we will be able to resume the **P.W./Horizons Bible Study** meetings at the church by September. Whether you attend a Bible Study meeting in person, or by using the Zoom platform, Candace Peterson will be facilitating the study, and the 2020-2021 study is: **INTO THE LIGHT: Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament**, by P. Lynn Miller. There are many things in our world that remind us that God's reign has not yet come. Current practice turns these and other controversial issues into a fight between "us" and "them", resulting in little movement toward addressing the issues.

Our faith offers another option: lament, an emotional statement of sorrow or grief. Biblical lament often includes a statement of trust that God will change the situation, or right the injustice. Lament provides a form for conversations with God. Laments spoken to God are prayers. They bridge the space between our faith in God, and the reality of living in our world. The psalms of lament were sung prayers. Lament is not whining or complaining. It is not venting or blowing off steam. Lament is not appropriate for situations over which we have control.

Early followers of Christ would have used the laments from Psalms and other scripture in their worship and devotions. Jesus spoke aloud the words of a psalm of lament in Matthew 27:46. We will be reminded that even God laments, but lament does not have the last word.

The goal of the study is not only to *learn about* lament, but to help us reclaim lament *as a practice*. When we lament, we move from suffering to faith. In our faith there is hope. Go slowly, take time, and have faith. We lament in order to hope. Lamenting releases the "blues" and lifts us; allowing us to move on to hope, and to the day when there is no more mourning, crying, pain, or death.

For those of you, who have not already ordered the P.W./Horizons Bible Study combination, **July 15, 2020 is the deadline to notify Vivien Huntley that you would like to participate in this Bible Study.** She will order copies of the Bible Study for those who would like to be in this group. You can expect to receive your copy of the study around 8/15/2020, when your payment of \$10.00 will become due, and can be paid to the PW Treasurer, Elaine Neely, by mail. PW will cover the cost of shipping.

Contact person – Vivien Huntley.

How many of us have realized only when it is too late that we wish we knew more about our family's stories? For most of us, when we are young and busy with our own families and lives, we don't think to ask what life was like for our parents and grandparents, or what some of their most memorable experiences were. We're forming a new group focused on telling our family



stories, and we invite you to join us. Writing prompts will be offered to help participants get started. It doesn't matter if you're a skilled writer or someone whose grammar is a tad on the shaky side. No one will be correcting your work! It's the content of the stories and the fact that they're told in your voice that makes them special. Whether profound or just plain hilarious, that content will be fun to share and a treasured gift to your loved ones. While we look forward to the time when we can gather in person to share what we've written or stories we're still working on, this is an activity that can be done on your own, so physical distancing won't be a problem! Assuming there are enough participants, we'll hope to pair writers up so one person can encourage another.

For more information and/or to receive a starter packet, please contact the Church Office (209/632-2324) or Priscilla Peters (209/632-5284 or by email at peters.priscilla4@gmail.com).

🎵 Notes from the Music Room 🎵

**"This is my Father's world, and to my
listening ears
All nature sings and round me rings the
music of the spheres!"**

What a wonderful hymn for Father's Day last Sunday! And a great arrangement and choir to perform it! But the text has also stuck with me during these days. As I find more and more time to spend outside in my garden, nature has indeed been singing to me! The birds calling to one another – sometimes quite loudly! And even the simple hum of the bees in my sage. The blue jays have their own music to contribute as they try to open the pecan seeds on my roof!

Listen – world! Listen and hear the joyful sounds of God's great world around us! Take the time be filled! It is different than we are accustomed to – these days of a slower pace, of different activities, of checking on neighbors and friends.

Be thoughtful as we have the opportunities to ponder the Word of God each morning and evening – and then again on Sunday mornings!

There will be a time when we are able to gather once again in person, even if we need to wait a while to ensure the safety of others. Let us not be impatient, as I am on some days! I am so ready for our choir to be back together singing with jubilant voices. I am ready for our bells to ring out the praises of our God! I am ready for all of you to sit in your pews with big smiles on your faces as we gather as God's beloved children once again.

But be patient, and it will come. At the right time it will happen. And until then, we can see each other in our minds eye as we keep in touch in the many ways at our disposal. So call each other, email, text, say Hi in the grocery, keeping safe distance from each other to help keep us all safe!

And may God's peace keep us safe and healthy in each of these days ahead!

Rev. Wendy Warner
Director of Music

Ka-Boom!

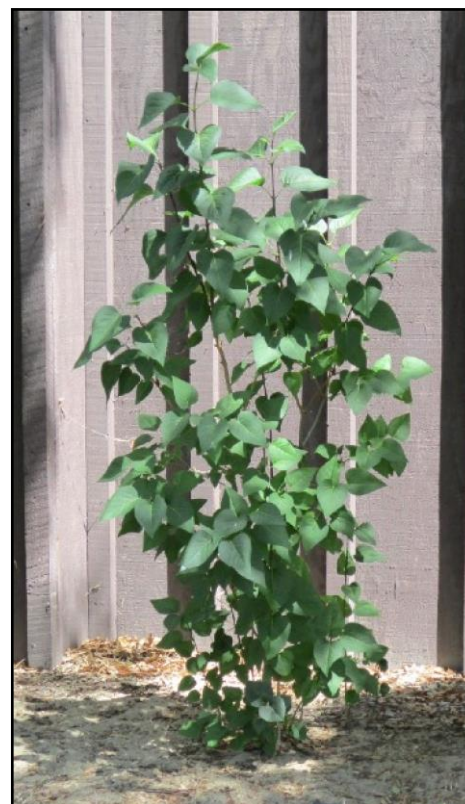
During our May heat wave, a main branch split from a mulberry tree in the picnic area. Dave alerted HIS Tree Service to remove the branch and trim other trees on campus.



Above: Very (!) vibrant lantana near the Narthex.

Left: A sunflower signals summer in the vegetable garden.

Below: Our enormous (!) hydrangea blossoms are absolutely showstoppers.



Coming Attraction ... A Spring Bloom?

The slim start of a lilac bush (above left) in 2016 is today a taller and leafier feature along the sanctuary's south wall. Fingers crossed for blossoms in Spring 2021. Thanks, Robby!

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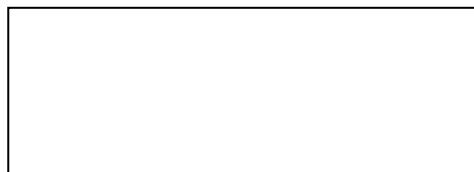
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Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Craig Wright
Parish Associate: Rev. Wendy Warner
Children Ministry Director: Marcy Wright
Youth Ministry Director: Stephanie Anderson
Tutoring Ministry Director: Meredith Lawrence
Director of Music: Rev. Wendy Warner
Administrative Assistant: Polet Yonan
Bookkeeper: Russell Limprecht
Accompanist: Dr. Wayne Kidwell
Organist: Barbara Bort
Child Care: Ester Salgado

ELECTED DEACONS AND SESSION OFFICERS

Elders

Class of 2020

Glenda Jameson
Candace Peterson
John Sims
Martin Purdy

Elders

Class of 2021

Marilyn Hoobyar
Priscilla Peters
Pat Wallace
Michael Yonan

Elders

Class of 2022

Robby Avilla
Dan Hardesty
Joey Reyes
Adria Sanders

Deacons

Class of 2020

Diane Arakelian
Bill Bishop
Vivian Huntley
Kathy Mendonca

Deacons

Class of 2021

Susan England
Valerie Keeseey
Lynn Posluch
Darlene Runsten
Cyndi Sims

Deacons

Class of 2022

Lynnai Badal
Lynette Betts
Sheila Josh
Mary Peterson
Rebecca Staley

