

A Message from Pastor Bob

“Not Our Plan, but God’s Plan”

As the New Year approaches, it is the habit for many people to come up with New Year’s resolutions. I think about what I was able to do and what I failed to do in 2020. For example, thankfully, I studied Spanish a little bit every day and read the Bible regularly. However, instead of losing weight, I gained more. Well, we all can blame the pandemic for it, right? We tend to transfer those resolutions we failed to keep up to the New Year’s agenda. Starting from January 1, we promise that we will eat healthier, exercise more regularly, or read more. We often feel guilt and shame for discovering our weak will and justifying ourselves by coming up with good excuses.

There were many things I wanted to accomplish for our shared ministries at Living Faith. One of the projects was our youth group trip to White Mountain in New Hampshire in May. I had already spoken with a United Methodist congregation in North Conway to allow our youth group to stay overnight at the church. We were also planning to host a music concert with an organist from Korea to support the music program at Haven United Methodist Church in East Providence. I felt disappointed that all these events had to be canceled. However, we cannot automatically transfer them to 2021 because we do not know when the pandemic will come to an end.

Dr. Sophie Lazarus, a psychologist from the Ohio State University, argues that 2021 would be a good year not to be obsessed with the resolutions. After going through a time of uncertainty and prolonged stress, she believes, “This is an especially difficult year that we don’t really want to set ourselves up for that kind of disappointment and stress that makes it even harder to cope.” Although we often come up with New Year’s resolutions, Dr. Lazarus believes that they could be counterproductive arousing shame and guilt when we fail to keep the promise to ourselves. Instead, she says that the year 2021 could be a time that we are gracious with ourselves and others.

For the believers in God, we could also consider this time of uncertainty as a time to wait actively and discern the plan of God for us. After the southern kingdom of Judah was defeated by the Babylonians in 587 BC, many people, including the king and royal family were taken as captives to Babylon. The temple was destroyed. People scattered all around. In such a time, Jeremiah sent a letter to the captives in Babylon declaring the words of God, “For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11) Although we cannot predict the future with any certainty, we believe that God holds the future for us with a plan of restoration and hope.

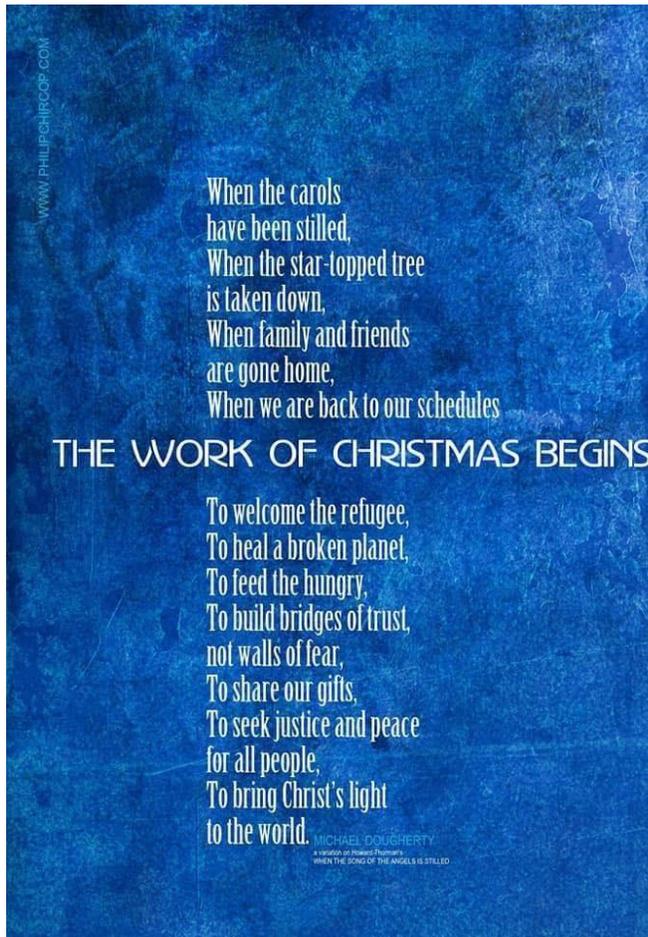
So, what can we do as we face the new sun in 2021? Adam Russell Taylor, the president of Sojourners holds that we could begin the new year by celebrating the affirmations instead of heavily focusing on new resolutions. For example, although the pandemic is not over yet, we affirm that two highly effective vaccines for COVID-19 are available for distribution. It is like we finally see the light at the end of the long tunnel. We have also learned through the pandemic that our lives are interconnected globally. While the vaccines are being distributed in wealthy countries first, we will not be able to control and finish the pandemic unless we care for all God’s children in the world.

In the same way, my prayer for Living Faith is that we open the New Year with our affirmation of what God has done for us in 2020. Despite many challenges, we are grateful that God continues to do many amazing things in our church, nurturing our children, gathering to study the words of God, and reaching out to our community to feed the hungry and comfort those who grieve. I trust that God has a plan for redemption and restoration. Our call is to be open to the Holy Spirit who might surprise us with an unexpected plan of God in a new way for the next year. And I am here to pray, discern, and work together with you.

--Pastor Bob

Worship Support Team

If you haven't volunteered to read and record the Scripture lesson or Children's story, it's not too late!!! Just let Pastor Bob or Bev know. Thanks so much!



BLESSINGS ON YOUR BIRTHDAY

January 2	Meredith Konesni
January 6	Francela B. Diaz
January 8	Kerensa Konesni
January 9	Nico Tracy
January 10	Kenny Goloski Kelley & Ryan Wade Anniversary
January 12	Becca Eriksen
January 13	Anja Wade
January 17	Bev Shaw
January 19	Doug Ewing
January 22	Moises S.-Flores
January 26	Bruce Weaver
January 27	Jenifer Rukstela Stefanie Sudol
January 28	Matt Parker



STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Bob (Song Bok) Jon
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SPRC Chair: Marvin Wilbur
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Finance Chair: Shawn Johnston
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Christian Ed Chair: Lorna Wade

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The 5th MLK Jr. Breakfast
 January 18 (Monday) 2021 10 am



Keynote Speaker: Bill Dyson

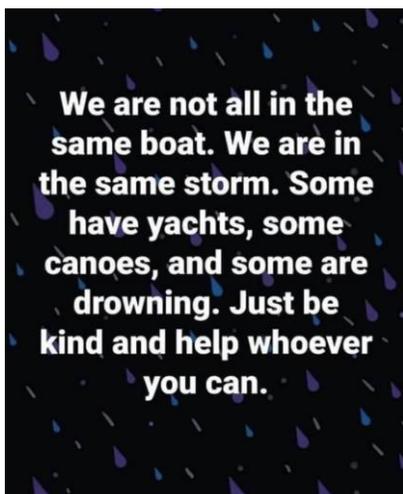
- State Representative for CT
- chair of the CT Racial Profiling Prohibition Advisory Board



Hosts: Living Faith United Methodist Church
 Greater Putnam Interfaith Council

This gathering will be take place via Zoom.

Zoom ID and password will be sent out before the event.



2021 Offering Envelopes

Will be ready for pick-up next Wednesday. If you absolutely cannot pick them up, please let me know and we can mail them to you or drop them off. Alternately, you may just put your envelope # on your check on the memo line until things improve!