

# THE SPIRIT

The Monthly Newsletter of Totowa United Methodist Church

## FROM PASTOR'S DESK



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
Some things are just too good to hurry-like a “yummy” chocolate cake or ice cream. They deserved to be savored. That’s why we have this season of Eastertide. We take time-up to seven weeks—to savor the richness of Easter.

The Easter Event is the richest, most powerful event in history.

Our resurrection faith is the most powerful force in our lives. It is like a tidal wave. That is how Glen E. Rainsley puts it. He describes its tidal qualities:

It breaks upon us as waters upon the shore, molding and shaping. Sometimes it smooths our tough and jagged edges and at other times it pulls at us to expose new sharpness. It uncovers what has previously been hidden.

Faith brings surprises, laying them before us as though they were dropped by an outgoing tide. Its offerings connect us with people in far-off places; its gifts include living things such as hope and charity.

Faith tells us about power and grace, both ever in motion as the seas, both ever present whether we are at high or low points in our lives.

Faith constantly beckons. It seems to stretch toward us as the waters of a new-broken wave reach out to the walker on the shore. (from Touch Holiness)

During this Coronavirus crisis and social distancing we are not able to gather to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ in our church buildings. Never in my 62 years of life, did I see Church being closed for worship on Sundays, especially on Easter Sunday.

Yet COVID-19 pushes us hard to rekindle our Easter faith to see God's intervention in overpowering the disastrous effect of coronavirus. Family members worshipping online and praying together in their homes is also the real Church, the Body of Christ, confirmed by the resurrected Christ when he said, 'For where two or three are gathered together in my

name, there am I in the midst of them.' (Matthew 18:20)

A call to pray from home transfers greater responsibility to all Christians, both clergy and laity. Praying from home will bring in a faithful realization that all can have access to God through the resurrected Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:18), and all have the priestly responsibility of interceding for other people to God (1 Peter 2:9).

Resurrection faith makes our lives Easter-Tidal! During this Eastertide, let us open ourselves in a conscious and grateful way to God. Our resurrection faith opens us to a God who changes us, surprises us, informs us, and draws us. Let us affirm our Easter faith anew. Let us proclaim our Easter Gospel. Let us reach out to our neighbors and those in need. And let us continue to uphold those affected in prayers.

May God bless you and keep you safe and healthy!

Pastor Andrew

## CHURCH NEWS



### **May Birthdays**

**May 25 – Carol Van Houten**

**May 29 - Joyce Fulton**

**May 29 – Linda Hackett**

**May 30 - Ryan Paul Wendolowski**

### **From Linda Hackett -Easter Baskets**

We had no volunteers this year so only Allyson,  
Maria and I made the baskets.

We were able to do around 3,000  
before we had to stop.

**Doug Dunlop has designed a new banner to replace the current sign in the metal case outside the Church. It was ordered through Staples. Please see the new sign below.**



**MESSAGES FROM OUR CHURCH MEMBERS DURING THE PANDEMIC****Mary Meszaros:**

I am doing my Zumba classes on Zoom 3 times a week. Also attending Weight Watchers in Zoom. Barnes and Noble has the book club on Zoom as well as different authors talking about their latest book.

**Linda Hackett:**

My house is getting to be sooooo clean. I have scrubbed woodworks, windows, floors (on my hands and knees) just to keep busy, we also after scrubbing the woodwork paint them. Next project to rake the yard and reseed.

I have even lost a pound doing all the extra work. But I miss people oh boy do I miss my church friends and work friends. I can't wait until I get put on a dress, stockings and go to work.

**Barbara Cioletti:**

I have to say being at home has been pretty lonely for me. I do however, get things done. So far, I have cleaned some drawers, swept out and reorganized the garage, cleaned curtains and windows, baked, cook all the time, go for walks, visit my kids and grandkids (outside 6 ft. apart) on nice sunny days and watch movies and series. I have to say, I have never washed my hands so much and now I've uncovered a nightclub stamp from 50 years ago.....LOL I'm hoping this virus goes away so we can get back to our normal lives. But this is very sad!!!

I miss going to church and seeing everyone. I do know this, as soon as this is over I'll be at the diner with my friends. Everyone take care and be safe.

**From Barbara Cioletti:****Recipe for Beer Bread**

3 cups self-rising flour  
1/2 c sugar  
12 oz can of beer (I use Bud)  
Mix together and put it in a greased and floured loaf pan for 55 minutes at 375

**Maureen Grant:**

I feel there is some joy, sadness in being isolated. While quarantined, I have reached out to family and old friends that I haven't talked to due to our busy lives. Love being able to Zoom with my children and grandchildren, and seeing them on a surprise outside visit with tulips in their hands. How wonderful for me to be able to connect to all my churches during Easter season via FB Live and YouTube. I belong to Notre Dame Parish where I made full communion into Catholicism in 2005, was baptized in the Eastern rite Orthodox Church as an infant, and being part of TUMC as an Admin. Asst. I am so grateful to see and hear all the services I have been part of. Spring has beauty with birds singing, flowers starting to bloom and this brings me to one of my favorite hymns "How Great Thou Art." As for most of the time like others, reading, watching TV, computer games, exercising, walking, FB, emailing, cleaning/organizing closets, and looking at old pictures.  
To all of you stay well, be safe and enjoy the beauty of nature.  
Peace and God's Blessings, Maureen

**“VANTAGE POINT” MAY 2020**  
**“FOLLOW YOUR HEART”**  
**(COMPASSION AS A BIOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE)**

**BY DOUG DUNLOP**

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” Proverbs 4:23

In the month of May we observe several important events, Mother’s Day, Memorial Day, beginning of summer, and hopefully the end of the Covid-19, or Novel Corona virus pandemic.

Continuing on with my theory that everything is connected somehow I would like to explore how the ability of humans to have compassion and care for each other has shaped our evolution and survival!

The Zoologist/Anthropologist Desmond Morris in his book The Naked Ape, speaks of the “Biological Imperative” as the need for living things to reproduce and continue their species. This was in fact God’s first commandment to mankind to “Be fruitful and multiply”.

I have been reading some articles on how compassion is another “Biological Imperative”, our need to care for each other and help each other survive. Jeremiah says “The heart deceives, but the heart is closely connected to the portion of the brain that controls emotion, the Amygdala. As Jesus said, the body has many parts, and all must work together. I remember an anthem from choir “Hear Thy weakest child’s prayer” so long ago I couldn’t find the music but alone we are the weakest of God’s creations but together we are “Heir to All”

The first chapter of Genesis outlines God’s plan for the Earth, like any artist God created the Earth in stages or “Days” and at each stage God said it was “Good” (Please note that I am trying to avoid the male pronoun “He”, God said to Moses “I am that I am”, our tendency to give God human characteristics is part of our problem.) The ancient Greeks fashioned their

gods in their image and gave them human traits. They used their gods as metaphors for anger, jealousy and other human characteristics. Our God is above all that!

But if God created everything “Good” and there is only one God, then where does evil come from. This is a debate that I hear constantly from people who say “Why should we worship a God who allows war, sickness, cruelty and death” Is God punishing us until we pray to God so we can be healed. Perhaps this question is addressed in the book of Job where God tells Job “You have no idea what my plan is for the Universe, have faith and deal with it” (“Gird up your loins like a man” is the literal translation).

I believe God does have a plan for us, everything in the Universe is in a state of balance. God created “All Things Great and Small” as Coleridge wrote in the “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”!

If the balance is upset, bad things can happen. In the Bible God allows the people to make mistakes but somehow makes things come out alright.

Darwin’s theory of evolution is often misinterpreted into phrases like “Social Darwinism” or “Survival of the Fittest” this is not what Darwin was saying. He said that individuals who had the ability to adapt to a changing environment would survive. “Natural Selection” meant that all individuals had different skills and those that helped them survive would be passed on to the next generation. In Biology that is the definition of survival. In the case of humans, each individual contributes to the survival of the species as a whole. Just as now we see Doctors, Nurses, and others, working together against the virus pandemic.

The Bible says “The race is not always to the swift, or the battle to the strong.

Working together is our strength, as we try to restore the balance of nature as God commanded us!

## HYMN OF THE MONTH

### HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW

(The Faith We Sing, No. 2146)

By Civilla Martin

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,  
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,  
When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

I sing because I'm happy,  
I sing because I'm free,  
For His eye is on the sparrow,  
And I know He watches me.

“Let not your heart be troubled,” His tender word I hear,  
And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;  
Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,  
When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,  
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;  
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

“His Eye Is on the Sparrow” is a Gospel hymn written in 1905 by lyricist Civilla D. Martin and composer Charles H. Gabriel.

Civilla Martin was born in Nova Scotia and lived most of her life in Atlanta (1866-1948). She was the daughter of James N. and Irene Harding Holden, and was a schoolteacher with modest musical training. Her husband Walter was a Baptist minister and evangelist who traveled all over the United States. She accompanied him and they worked together on most of the musical arrangements that were sung. Together they often wrote gospel songs for revival meetings. “Be not dismayed” (UM Hymnal, No. 130) is an example of their collaboration.

In 1904 Civilla and her husband were visiting an ill, bedridden friend. Although discouraged and sick, her friend remembered that God, her Heavenly Father, was watching over each little sparrow and would certainly watch after her from Matthew 10:29-31: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

The beauty of this simple expression of boundless faith gripped the hearts and fired the imagination of Martin. She jotted down the idea and by the end of the day, had completed His Eye is On the Sparrow

which turned out to be one of the most influential and often-recorded gospel hymns of the 20th century. The entire poem was sent to a well-known composer, Charles Gabriel, who wrote a tune for it.

Notable versions include recordings by Shirley Ceasar, Marvin Gaye, Kirk Franklin & the Family, Mahalia Jackson, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Dottie West and Barbara Mandrell. Jessica Simpson included this song in her album *Irresistible* (2001). The most stirring renditions of this song are associated for many with actress-singer Ethel Waters, who loved this it so much that it became the title of her autobiography (1950). Whitney Houston recorded a version for the soundtrack of the 2012 remake of the 1976 musical film *Sparkle*.

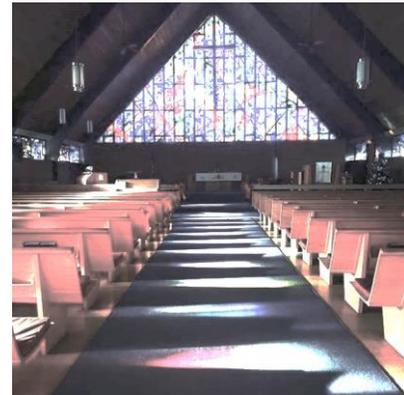
The themes of solace in spite of sorrow, and a profound sense of being under the watch-care of Jesus, who is a “constant friend,” offered us comfort and hope. During this time of COVID 19 Pandemic crisis and also throughout life, we may feel discouraged and down. But always remember that God is by our side and watches over us through it all. Just like the lyrics of 'His Eye Is on the Sparrow' remember that God is with us in all that we do. Do not be troubled because we have the King of kings on our side! Therefore, “I sing because I’m happy, I sing because I’m free!”

## A MATTER OF LOVE

### Pancakes for Breakfast

Six-year-old Brandon decided one Saturday morning to fix his parents pancakes. He found a big bowl and spoon, pulled a chair to the counter, opened the cupboard and pulled out the heavy flour canister, spilling it on the floor. He scooped some of the flour into the bowl with his hands, mixed in most of a cup of milk and added some sugar, leaving a floury trail on the floor which by now had a few tracks left by his kitten. Brandon was covered with flour and getting frustrated. He wanted this to be something very good for Mom and Dad, but it was getting very bad. He didn't know what to do next, whether to put it all into the oven or on the stove (and he didn't know how the stove worked)! Suddenly he saw his kitten licking from the bowl of mix and reached to push her away, knocking the egg carton to the floor. Frantically he tried to clean up this monumental mess but slipped on the eggs, getting his pajamas white and sticky. And just then he saw Dad standing at the door. Big

crocodile tears welled up in Brandon's eyes. All he'd wanted to do was something good, but he'd made a terrible mess. He was sure a scolding was coming, maybe even a spanking. But his father just watched him. Then, walking through the mess, he picked up His crying son, hugged him and loved him, getting his own pajamas white and sticky in the process. That's how God deals with us. We try to do something good in life, but it turns into a mess. Our marriage gets all sticky or we insult a friend, or we can't stand our job or our health goes sour. Sometimes we just stand there in tears because we can't think of anything else to do. That's when God picks us up and loves us and forgives us, even though some of our mess gets all over Him. But just because we might mess up, we can't stop trying to "make pancakes," for God or for others. Sooner or later we'll get it right, and then they'll be glad we tried.... Please pass some of this love on to others. . . . . Suppose one morning you never wake up, do all your friends know you love them?



**THE SPIRIT**

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Please send your contributions for the JUNE issue of The Spirit by May 20, 2020 to the editor at [reneevl@verizon.net](mailto:reneevl@verizon.net). Consider events, news, stories, poems, recipes, or photos. Thank you.

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