



Clergy Reports (March 2024)

Pastor Reggie

I have really been pleased with the Lenten Sermon Series, **The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus** from the book of the same name by Adam Hamilton. I think the messages and group studies have been applicable to our current time, and have really connected us to the path that Jesus took as He embarked on His ministry to the cross. It has been interesting to me how the concepts that Adam has used in this book are really relatable to where we are today. I think this book will prove to be timeless to future generations particularly as to the teaching we find sacred in the church. I am glad we did it, and I am looking forward to the final installments; we will have the last sermon on March 24.

I hope you have been able to listen/watch the Real Talk Podcasts. I have been extremely pleased with the topics and the fact that we have been able to have honest, authentic conversations about a number of different things. What I would really hope is that you would share these podcasts with others, particularly people in your circles of influence that are not members of our church. Especially with people that you know are struggling with faith questions or those that ignore them all together. These discussions have affirmed several things for me: we aren't perfect, there are many varied opinions based on many different faith experiences, and that people are willing to openly share their faith stories and perspectives in a vulnerable and authentic way. We plan to sit down after the final installment, and talk about what we have learned, what things we can do better, and how we can make this type of vehicle more useful as we work to build the Kingdom.

Finally, I really appreciate having Bishop Harvey preach to us in February. I always enjoy listening to her fresh expression of her vision for our Conference and for the United Methodist Church. She also devoted time (at her suggestion) to meet with our Church Leadership after the Worship Services, and provided answers to questions from those that were there. I for one was enriched by her visit, and I hope you were as well.

Easter is by far my favorite holiday, and I am really looking forward to the events of Holy Week and a glorious Easter Sunday! As we continue to live into newness in our church and in our denomination, I am excited about something I read in this fantastic book I have been reading and that we are currently using for our Wednesday Morning Bible Study. In **Multiplying Love: A Vision of United Methodist Life Together** by Paul Chilcote (a book I HIGHLY recommend by the way), the author has a chapter titled "The Opportunity Before Us". In this chapter, the author says **"Our apparent inability (particularly in our churches) to love others as Christ has loved us presents our most critical challenge. Or does it signal an exciting opportunity?"** I am looking

at all that we will be able to do in the near in extended future not as a challenge, but as a tremendous opportunity to live into the Resurrection and the newness that it presents us to love as Jesus loves us. I invite you to do the same!

Pastor Thea

Bishop Harvey's celebration of our current work and promise of God doing a new thing continues to affirm the work we agreed to tackle together in shifting our focus from inside the church disagreements to a listening ear of what God is doing right in our midst in families, neighborhoods and our city. Beyond the next new program, event or activity that will solve all our problems, let us continue to work toward a posture of both being present in our community as well as listening to the needs, desires and dreams of our neighbors. This is the why behind moving and hosting more gatherings outdoors, beyond the comfort and conveniences of our own closed doors and being present in the world where those who are seeking comfort, care and transformation live, work and gather with others searching for the same.

"Let's Taco-bout our Faith" held at Torchy Tacos proved to be an exciting and engaging opportunity to both discuss faith insights, differences and beliefs in an off site location, surrounded by delicious tacos and real life people overhearing our honest and not always agreeing conversations. With up to 20 people gathering weekly, our conversations ranged from the need for purgatory, actual spiritual practices and what happens if you don't believe in every piece of the Bible. A favorite and recurring question centered around our understandings of both heaven, hell and what it might actually look like to see God's kingdom reign, here and now as Jesus proclaims. Most were disappointed when the five-week gathering concluded, encouraging a guaranteed resurgence in May in multiple locations.

"Real Talk" podcast is proving to meet people where they already are with honest conversations about faith and doubt. With over 100 downloads and 300 views on YouTube, at minimum our own community is beginning to engage with real topics of what it means to be Christian, how relationships matter and what division really does to us as followers of Jesus and a society at large. With time being the greatest place of division today, I am thrilled to offer a way to reach people with gospel transforming messages on their own time, in individualized ways. **"Real Talk Podcast on the Patio"**, April 24th 6-8pm at Grace Pizza, will offer an opportunity for the individual listeners to come together for an exciting and interactive event to meet others craving real conversations about faith and doubt too.

Though "Outreach" may be seen only as hands-on-missions at FUMC Pearland, thank you for your willingness to stretch beyond this singular understanding to include how we meet, listen and begin to serve alongside our neighbors. I ask that you continue to pray, discern and discuss where God is calling this church to see, meet and walk alongside our neighbors, no matter our differences and unique experiences. How will we be better partners with our on-campus partners, like MOPS, Scouts and YoungLife? What community is already brewing within MCP and how might we learn from the trust so many parents have for this program, teachers and

vision? Where else is God inviting us to participate in new collaborations? These are questions I continue to ask, discern and invite you to join with your prayer, conversations and leadership.

Pastor John

Ministry at FUMC Pearland has been very busy in February. With Ash Wednesday, the Bishop visiting, and regular Sunday Services, that would be a lot. But the thing that we can never plan far in advance for is funerals. We had our share of funerals in January and February, but during all of this, our church continues to reach people in places that we don't know. We have done this just by being who we are and sharing Christ not just for one time but in our everyday lives.

We held a funeral at our church that was extremely well attended. The celebration of life was so well attended that we used all the chairs we had in the church. Through the crowd, there were many faces from the community, but one person stuck out among the crowd. I have seen this lady in multiple settings in town and have coached against her husband for four seasons at Pearland Little League. We have had many great conversations and have enjoyed getting to know them through the years. As she waited in line to pay her condolences to the family, we talked, and she asked questions about the church and all that we offer. I visited with them a little bit at the end of the service, and she was overwhelmed with the service itself and how we, especially Reggie, celebrated this man's life.

A week later, I ran into this family again at the ballpark. The wife grew up in Pearland and was a church hopper in High school. The Husband grew up going to church only at Christmas and Easter. Through our church's love for a family and all of their friends, this family decided to visit us for worship. They visited the week that the Bishop preached, and this mom of two said that she was moved to tears by our service. We also saw them two weeks later as they visited for a second time on the 10th of this month.

These actions are essential for many reasons, but the biggest reason we continue to reach God's people is that we are reaching outside our walls and inside them on days other than Sundays. It is such a blessing to be in a community where Jesus flows from their actions and the way we love people. It's even more encouraging that we realize that we are not yet where we need to be and are working so hard to get there.

What a blessing it is to serve with you all.