

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29.11

Stewardship 2021  
Spokane Valley United Methodist Church  
Consecration Sunday is November 1<sup>st</sup> 2020!

Dear Valley Methodist friends,

This Monday morning 9/28 I got to thinking about maybe putting an ad in the Spokesman Review. My heart and mind began to wonder about all the people in our community who have no church home. Some of them might be aware that they have a spiritual hunger, some of them might be looking for ways to cope with the stress or depression of this coronavirus pandemic wearing on. Some might feel as if their thought life all day long is like a tennis ball in a tennis match, being battered one way by this racket and the opposite way by an opposing racket. How to let the tennis ball fall to the ground and come to rest? How to hear the voice of God and not the racket?

We could help. It would be so easy for them to find us right now. All they have to do is point their smartphone or device, smart TV or computer, to our YouTube worship service – and there they would find spiritual leadership without hubris or political agenda, they would find great hymns and songs, old and new, they would find prayers and Bible studies and messages without any axe to grind; only a belief that the Word will do it. The living Word of God Jesus Christ himself can and will speak to them, and bless them every day, right where they live.

I'm confident, certain even that we have a lot to offer our neighbors in the City of Spokane Valley and beyond. I know that we do. People of all ages. Very young children all the way up through young adults, middle aged folks, aging and elderly – that's what we've always been. Spokane Valley United Methodist Church has always been a church for the whole city. Whoever needs a church, whoever's life would be blessed by the rhythm of Sunday morning worship, whoever would like to be launched out into a different kind of week because they began their week thanking and praising God in the company of others. Whoever would like to be part of the greatest purpose ever given to a body of people in this world: to invite people to follow Jesus, love others, and transform the greater community through the grace of God.

Some of you know this: a Methodist Church is just a plain old everyday church. John Wesley never wanted the people called Methodists to be known for special doctrines, or special quirky ways of worshipping, or a special priesthood, or new revelations arriving on earth through one particular flawed human being. He believed what the world needed most was the “primitive” (his word), original Christianity. Primitive meaning ancient, in other words as close as possible, as similar as can be practiced – just like in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

That's our DNA. Our city needs this expression of church just as much as it ever has, and even moreso. If a neighbor or friend who doesn't know anything about our church would tune into YouTube this week, they would find some of that original Christianity, a church with a message for today and tomorrow. All we want is for them to discover their own inward witness. Maybe an ad would help, what do you think?

In about 5 weeks, on All Saints Sunday morning November 1<sup>st</sup>, our church will celebrate "Consecration Sunday" – the morning we will (from our homes this time) put pen to paper and prayerfully write down our intention, our "estimate of giving" for 2021. You will receive cards in the mail to do that. Our hope is that many of you will mail those back to Susan Ingalls our Financial Secretary so that she can record your estimate as your 2021 pledge. The Finance Team will hear the totals from Susan in the early weeks of November. There will be an open Church Council Zoom meeting following that where we can vote on a 2021 budget.

People have asked how is our church doing financially in 2020? And the answer is astonishingly, miraculously well, actually great. We are one percentage point ahead of where we were at this same point in 2019 – and our cash balance heading into the fall is actually stronger than it was a year ago. We're giving more away to our community than ever before as well. Yesterday was the drive thru coffee chat, a benefit offering for Broadway Elementary School. Only a handful of you chose to drive-through, but several others added to your offerings, so that our donations to Broadway Elementary school yesterday totaled over \$2000.

Our allocations to staff salaries are more aligned with the needs of our mission in the future, with a new "Coordinator of Christian Education" and "Children's Sunday School Teacher. SPR and Finance teams meeting over Zoom have done a wonderful job and making key decisions for the future of our mission.

But clearly it is the individual faith and faithfulness of each and every Christian and each family which is sustaining our church in these very strange weeks in months. Month to month, week to week, through online giving and checks mailed in, you as a congregation are demonstrating the place God holds in your life. The tennis ball has blessedly stopped rolling (1<sup>st</sup> paragraph), you've lifted up your heart and there is God, and you're thanking Him for your faith and His love, and you're praising Him by giving.

Friends, let's say to one another: let's do this again in 2021! What do you say? What a joy in these tumultuous times to take a stand for the one thing that will last forever, "my church" as Jesus puts it. He said, "I will build my church and the powers of death will not prevail against it." Matthew 16.18

Our chair of stewardship, Paul Norris, has come up with a wonderful theme for us, Stewardship 2021:

"taking care of each other"  
"taking care of our church"

“taking care of God's world”

Truly you amaze me. You are a great congregation. I can't wait for better times (even though we may have to wait a little while). I anticipate with joy what will unfold for us in 2021. Thank you for your GENEROUS giving, Let's ALL look forward to All Saints Sunday, November 1st – Holy Communion and Consecration Sunday!

Gratefully, Your Pastor,  
Mike G