

A Message from Pastor Mary

The very first song I heard from Maranatha! Music (A Christian music record label which was founded as a nonprofit ministry of Calvary Chapel in 1971. The label is distributed by Capitol Christian Music Group, a division of Universal Music.) was As the Deer. Here are the words:

As the deer pants for the water
So my soul longs after You
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

[Refrain]

You alone are my strength, my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye

You're my friend and You're my brother
Even though you are a King
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything

When I heard it, I was excited because here was a song that said what I felt in my heart and soul. It is based from Psalm 42

- 1 As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?

This song explained the thirst and hunger I had for God, both then and now. Let me explain: I need time alone, in prayer, with God. Just like we all do. Life gets busy, we put so many responsibilities on our plates, and we go, go, go! The first thing that usually drops is our alone time with God. We say to ourselves that we will simply move that time to night before bed (and of course, we are too tired!) We then claim we will spend time during church (and then we remember the reunion, the trip to see children and grandchildren, and next week's project at work – all during church service). We end up forgetting last weeks' time with God and vow we will do better next week, next month, maybe during the next season of the year.

What happens? We get thirsty and hungry for something. Our lives don't seem to be full or happy or complete. But we can't figure out why. We are yearning for God time. And guess what...God is yearning for us as well.

The psalmist knew the longing and knew what it was for quality time in the presence of God. Times of prayer, times of worship, times of study and times of silence.

So, what do we do?

We make time with God a priority in our life once again.

GRACE NOTES

A NEWSLETTER FOR
MEMBERS AND FRIENDS
OF GRACE
UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH, MIDDLETOWN,
VA

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2023



Pastor: Rev. Mary Lock

540-303-1076

marylock@vaumc.org

Worship Services:

Sunday Worship:

8:30 & 10:30 am

Sunday School:

9:30 – 10:20 am

Address:

PO Box 61, Middletown, VA
22645

Street: 7882 Main St,
Middletown, VA 22645

Phone: 540-869-1008

Website:

graceumcmiddletown-va.org

Email:

graceumcmiddletown@
gmail.com

To that end, I will be starting **Nine Weeks With God**, beginning on **Friday, September 15, 2023**.

Each Friday, for 9 weeks, we will have time in the Sanctuary, for Communion, prayer (both silent and corporate), and reading of the scriptures and/or devotional readings.

The schedule looks like this:

| | |
|----------|--|
| 9:00 am | Devotion, Prayer and Communion |
| 9:30-2pm | Sanctuary open to receive Communion, prayer, and silent readings |
| Noon | Scripture reading and corporate prayer. |
| 2:00 pm | We close with corporate prayer and the Lord's Prayer. |

During the day, you can come and go as you would like. Communion and materials for devotions, prayer time, and reading will be available as you come into the sanctuary. As mentioned, we will begin on **Friday Sept 15 and continue every Friday through November 10**.

Are you hungry and thirsty for God? Here is just one way to satisfy that desire to be closer to God, to talk to God about your life and where you are going, to pray for others and the current state of our country and world. You can come around your schedule and begin to sing:

"You alone are my strength, my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You."

Let us worship God together and yield our spirits to God alone.

Blessings,
Pastor Mary Lock

(The song "As the Deer" was written by Martin J. Nystrom in 1984)

Bible Study

We are starting our next Bible Study using The 50-Day Bible Challenge: A Journey through Acts. We will begin reading Day 1 on **September 5th** and will cover Days 1-7 on **Tuesday, September 12, 2023**. We will meet every Tuesday from 1 pm to 2 pm at Wayside Inn OR at Grace from 6 pm to 7 pm. If interested see Pastor Mary for a book and a calendar of reading sheet.

Prayer Shawl Committee

Blessing of the Shawls: Pastor Mary recently blessed nine new shawls made from the hands of members of the Prayer Shawl Committee.

We are busy preparing for an **October** blessing of hats and scarves. We meet the second Thursday of the month at 10:00 in the church office. Do you knit or crochet? We would love to have you join us! If you would like to contribute but cannot join us in person, please let Michelle know. There is plenty of yarn available for you to use for shawls, hats, or scarves for us to give to those in need.



Lay Leader News

Pastor Sabbath:

The Sabbath is a day of rest. If you work on Sunday, you likely choose a different day of the week for your Sabbath. That's why restaurants and your hairdresser/barber are often closed on Monday or Tuesday! Well,

pastors work on Sunday, so Pastor Mary has chosen Friday as her Sabbath day. In order to respect that day, please try not to contact her on Fridays for church business unless it is a pastoral emergency. If you get her voice mail, leave a message and she will respond accordingly. You can also email or text but she might not respond until after the Sabbath. Thank you for respecting Pastor Mary's sabbath.

ABBA:

You may have noticed the baby bottles set around the church. Collecting donations for ABBA is an ongoing ministry of our church. If you have some extra change in your pocket, the baby bottles are a great way to put it to good use. There is literature about ABBA's services on the window ledge beside the Quest classroom.

September is National Hunger Action Month:

We are supporting the Society of St. Andrew and those with food insecurity in our community this month by donating to the Society of St. Andrew via the coin boxes or donation envelopes on the table outside of the music office. Please take a calendar and take part in the daily activities. If your budget is tight, the calendar activities and your prayers will help! We are working to set up a gleaning in September, which will be open to everyone. As always, we collect food for C-CAP and Bright Futures, too. Coin boxes and donations are due to the church for blessing on **October 1**.

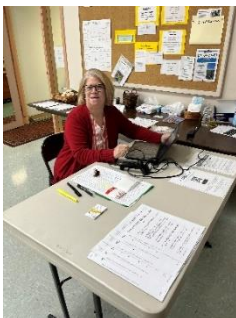
Thanksgiving food boxes:

We will be collecting boxes of holiday foods throughout the **month of October** for C-CAP and shut-ins. Watch for the display and food lists that will be out by the **end of September**. The food items are inexpensive non-perishable items that will go a long way in helping families with food insecurity at Thanksgiving. If you aren't able to provide an entire box, individual items will also be collected to assemble additional boxes.

PAST EVENTS

Joy Walker Retirement: On Sunday, July 9th Grace members gave Joy Walker a retirement reception with a cake, snacks, and drinks in between the morning's services. Joy sent a Thank You card stating, "Many thanks to each of you and all of you for your kind and encouraging words during my short time back at Grace. Your outpouring of hugs, gifts, cash, and gift cards at my retirement reception was overwhelming, totally unexpected, and sincerely appreciated. You are a lovely congregation and I pray God's favor will rest upon you."

A Successful Blood Drive: Save a life, give blood and that is what we did during our Blood Drive on Wednesday, July 19th! Our goal was to collect 20 units and we collected 18 units. This was the first blood drive Grace has had in many years. We were also surprised by having Scott Bradley of [The River 95.3](#) broadcast his radio show from 2 pm to 4 pm! Thank you to Diane Wittreich, GUMC Admin. Asst. & Blood Program Leader and Pastor Mary for setting this blood drive up. We also thank our volunteers: John Lock, Teresa Cutlip, Ray Steele, and Michelle Cissel for taking the time out of your schedules to help this event be a success! See **Save the Date** (below) for our next blood drive date!



Outreach

Church Service & picnic in the park: On Sunday, July 30th we gathered in Hamilton Fellowship Hall, instead of Middletown Park due to potential high heat and rain, at Grace at 10 am service and a picnic meal afterward. Everyone had a great time! Afterwards we were able to give 7 Grace families (unable to attend) meals at their homes! What a blessing!

The committee is working on having a luncheon in November or December so be on the lookout for more information.

We continue to collect items for Bright Futures and C-CAP. Look on the round table in Hamilton Fellowship all for current needs lists for both organizations.

Driver Volunteers

A big THANK YOU to the people who signed up to be volunteers for members needing transportation. They are Clifton & Sandy Good for the 8:30 am service and Tom Cirrani, Michelle Cissel and Dave Copeland for the 10:30 am service. If you need transportation, please speak with Michelle Cissel for contact phone numbers.

Thrift Shop

The Thrift Shop was able to donate \$1,000 to the Hawaii relief fund as well as \$500 to Bright Futures! Fall and Winter items are now out, so come and see us. Thank you to all the volunteers for their time and people who donate items to our shop! We so appreciate you!

Save the Date

Grandparents Day: September 10th we will celebrate Grandparents Day. You are invited to bring pictures of your grandparents or other loved ones to be placed on the table in the Garrett Room.

Children's Sabbath: Children's Sabbath is a day set aside by churches all over the world for the purpose of highlighting and affirming the gift and gifts of children in our midst. It is a day set aside to celebrate children as active participants in the life of the church. We invite all our children and youth to take part in the worship service on **October 22, 2023**.

5th Sunday Potluck Meals: We had such a good time during our church picnic, we are bringing back the 5th Sunday Potluck Meals! The next date is **Sunday, October 29th** AND we are planning on having special guests here that day! Keep an eye out for an announcement about that! There will be one service at 10 am and the potluck meal following the service. As it gets closer, we will have a sign-up form on the table outside the office. The next 5th Sunday is **December 31st** and to keep it simple (for those of us who have plans for NY Eve) we will have soup, sandwiches, and desserts!

Blood Drive:

Our next blood drive will be **Thursday, January 25th** from **11 am to 4 pm**. If you have any questions about the frequency of donating, please contact the local chapter of the Red Cross for further information.

Report of 2023 Virginia Annual Conference

I attended the 2023 Virginia Annual Conference June 15-17 at the Berglund Center in Roanoke. The theme was "United as One in Mission" with Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson as the officiating bishop. The conference theme was based on Acts 1:8b, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (NIV)

Opening Worship

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson preached on “Going Beyond the Walls of the City.” She reflected on the pressures in the world in light of Covid, war, and more as it creates exhaustion for individuals and the Church.

She said as followers of Jesus, it is our job to follow him outside the walls, where he waits for us. She reminded the body that Jesus is waiting outside the walls for us to join him. “If you want to find Jesus don’t look in your churches, don’t look inside the walls, go out to those who are suffering and burdened and you will find him there.”

Conference Business

Reports were received from the various Conference offices, Boards and committees.

Thirteen churches were closed including two in the Shenandoah River District:

- Ettrick UMC, Living Waters District
- Mt. Pleasant UMC, Living Waters District
- Vincent’s Grove UMC, Living Waters District
- Grace Oak Grove UMC, Mission Rivers District
- Mount Vernon UMC, Ruther Glen, Mission Rivers District
- New Town UMC, Mission Rivers District
- Bethel (Concord) UMC, Mountain View District
- Concord (Stuart) UMC, Mountain View District
- Leesville UMC, Mountain View District
- Watson Memorial UMC, Mountain View District
- Ashburn Korean UMC, Northern Virginia District
- Cedar Grove UMC, Shenandoah River District
- Saint Mark’s UMC, Shenandoah River District

Two new faith communities were announced: Provision Church, Northern Virginia District, and St. Andrew’s UMC, Three Notch’d District, will launch a Korean language faith community as a sister congregation.

Warren Harper and Rev. Lindsey Baynham Freeman, Co-chairs, General Conference Virginia Delegation, and Mark Elder, Lay Delegate to General Conference reported on the events that this delegation has worked with over the past few years since their election in 2019. Mr. Elder presented a plan that will be before the 2024 General Conference called “The Christmas Covenant Regionalization Plan”. This plan has been unanimously supported by the Virginia Delegation. The Virginia Annual Conference voted to affirm that the General Conference should support legislation to create regionalization for the future of The United Methodist Church.

Service of Remembrance

Seventy-five conference clergy and laity who died since the last Annual Conference were remembered.

The Rev. Gary Miller, retired associate member, Coastal Virginia District, preached for the Service of Remembrance with the sermon “Can These Bones Live” based on Ezekiel 37: 1-14. He reflected that the prophet Ezekiel was set in a valley of dried bones. Just like him, we might look around at our lives, at our churches, and wonder can the bones of our lives and these institutions have new life?

He said in closing “It is time to rise. It’s time for us to get up. It’s time for us to know we can have life. It’s time to celebrate who we are. God is not through with us yet. God has a mighty work for us to do as a people.”

Retirement Service Fifty-eight persons were part of the 2023 Retirement Class. These individuals have a combined total of 1,210.25 years of service.

Disaffiliation and Wrap-up stats

The Chairperson of the conference Trustees reported that since October 2022, the 107 churches have disaffiliated under Paragraph 2553 of the Book of Discipline. For these churches, the legal closing process had been completed for 70. The remaining 37 churches were to be completed in the weeks following Annual Conference. Once the process for these 107 churches is completed, the total consideration paid to the conference will be \$8.46 million.

The final called session to consider disaffiliating churches under Paragraph 2553 in the Virginia Conference will be October 7, 2023. At the time of Annual Conference there were approximately 107 additional churches seeking disaffiliation. Once approved these churches will have 60 days to close the process and leave the United Methodist Church.

David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and Statistician, projected by year-end the Virginia Conference would stand at 900 churches with 268,000 members and reported the projected effect of disaffiliations would be:

- 6.4% of local church revenues
- 10.7% of apportionments
- 9.3% of membership
- 13.2% of average worship attendance and
- 13.1% of professions of faith

The full impact of disaffiliations will not be fully known until 2025.

The 2024 budget was approved for \$27,362,000, a 1.33 % reduction from the 2023 budget.

Grace sent a total of 70 hygiene kits to Conference. The total number of UMCOR and hygiene kits collected was 14,745. In addition, 3,170 hygiene Kits and 20,000 Rise Against Hunger kits were assembled during Conference. Seventy-three blood products were donated with the Red Cross Blood Drive and approximately 1,000 pounds of food collected for food banks across the Conference.

Over \$95,000 was collected towards the Conference Offering. Grace gave nearly \$200. The offering benefits: Food Insecurity, benefitting food banks around the Commonwealth; Refugee Response which supports ministries engaged in refugee resettlement; and Partnerships of Hope Countries supporting Brazil, Cambodia, Mozambique, Native Americans, Haiti, and Vietnam.

Service for the Ordering of Ministry

One certified lay minister and 23 lay supply pastors were recognized. Sixteen local pastors were licensed, one provisional deacon and 12 provisional elders were commissioned. One associate member was recognized, one individual received recognition of orders and five elders were ordained.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to Pastor Mary and the membership of Grace for your support and the opportunity to attend Annual Conference.

Carolyn Bell
Lay Member, Virginia Annual Conference



Finances At a Glance

The finances of Grace remain stable with total offerings exceeding expenses. Communion Offerings for July to Camp Overlook and August to Bright Futures were \$253 and \$206, respectively. Many thanks to everyone who continue to support the church and various missions through their financial gifts.

New addresses for church directory:

Bardy Hinkle
Lynn Care Center
1000 N. Shenandoah Ave.
Front Royal, Va. 22630

Rev. Christopher (Kit) Morse
333 W 86th St, Apt. 803A
NY, NY 10024

Do you have a new address or know of anyone who might? Please let Diane know.



Grace United Methodist Church
PO Box 61
Middletown, Virginia 22645

Church Office:

Diane Wittreich, Administrative Assistant
Office Hours: Tues, Wed, Thurs 10 am – 2 pm
Phone: 540-869-1008

Prayer Requests during the week: Call or email the church office or call Barbara Steele 540-869-2430. Please leave a message if prompted.

Grace Thrift Shop Hours: Thursdays & Fridays, 10 am – 3 pm; Saturdays, 10 am – 1pm. Donations accepted during shop hours.

Electronic Donations: Visit our website and look for PayPal Donate link, or visit:
<https://paypal.me/GraceUMCMiddletownva>

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES*

| September | Date | October |
|--|------|---|
| Sterling Zimmerman | 1 | |
| Ashley & Chris Margiotti* | 2 | Sandy Holt |
| | 3 | |
| Lois Clarke | 4 | Hollie Strosnider, Vickie & Gary Strosnider* |
| | 5 | Kelly Loomis |
| Sherry Jenkins | 6 | Barbara Steele |
| Gene Jenkins Jr | 7 | Emmalynn Quimby |
| | 8 | |
| Thom Bailey, Matt Fauver | 9 | Kevin LeVan, Randy Jenkins, Janet & Tom Cirrani |
| Anna Smelser | 10 | |
| Kayleigh & Brian Boone* | 11 | Melinda & Kevin LeVan*, |
| | 12 | |
| Barbara Baan | 13 | |
| Daniel Beatty, Jacob Pempelton | 14 | Stephen Beall |
| | 15 | Joan Pempelton |
| | 16 | Abby Bowers, Lisa Copeland |
| Ava Belle Furman | 17 | |
| | 18 | Christopher Hawkins |
| | 19 | |
| Courtney Hawkins | 20 | Joanne Thompson |
| Terri Lock | 21 | |
| Stacy Helsley | 22 | |
| | 23 | Ann & Jason Wisecarver* |
| Emily Cissel | 24 | |
| Tyler Strosnider | 25 | |
| Elizabeth Richardson, Bill Tucker | 26 | Jody Osborne, Joyce Tucker |
| Samara & Thomas Quimby* | 27 | Susan Thornton |
| Heather Campbell, Katie & Matt Fauver* | 28 | Cooper Beall, Mary Lou Stallings |
| Brian Cooley | 29 | Dave Scheetz |
| Betsy Jenkins | 30 | |
| | 31 | Cora Quinn Hahn |

Please let us know if your special dates are missing or incorrect! 540-869-1008