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## Message from the Blue Couch

Dear SOV Friends and Family,

I am sad to say this is my last “Message from the Blue Couch.” Some of you may remember that “The Blue Couch” was a sermon I preached when I first came to SOV. I told the story about my seminary classmate, Kathy from Tennessee. Within the first couple weeks of class Kathy came flying up to me and informed me that God told her I should be sleeping on her blue couch instead of commuting from Newport RI to Boston every day. Quite frankly when she first approached me, I thought she was kinda crazy. She kept approaching me for weeks telling me I was supposed to be sleeping on her couch and I kept politely saying thank you but, no thank you. But one day a blizzard came up while I was in Boston and it wasn’t safe for me to drive home. Kathy approached me and triumphantly proclaimed that I had no choice but to sleep on her couch. She was pretty much right. I spent the night with her and we sat up watching the storm and sharing our stories. By the time the night was over we had become fast friends and roommates for the next two years. No matter how hard I tried Kathy never let me pay her a cent.

In our second year she got a bigger apartment with a roommate. When they were making their housing agreement Kathy told her new roommate, Susan, that I came with the blue couch and she wouldn’t room with her if that wasn’t ok because that’s what God told her. For the next two years Kathy, Susan and I laughed, cried, studied and prayed together. We got each other through one of the most challenging times of our lives. Though we communicate through Facebook, I haven’t seen either Susan or Kathy in over ten years. They are both serving churches in the South. But it doesn’t

### Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church Vision Statement

We are Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church, a multi-generational Christ community seeking to sing God’s spirit into the world by inviting all, serving all, loving all.

*Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church, 604 Seven Mile Road, Hope, RI 02831*

*Worship via Zoom (see inside for details), Sunday, 10:00 a.m.*

*Office currently closed—use information below to get in touch with us*

*Phone: 821-8217 • Fax: 826-7787 • E-mail: office@sovumc.org • Web site: sovumc.org*

*Rev. Katherine Mitchell*

matter, because we will always be deeply connected to each other. The Holy Spirit brought us together and they will always be my sisters in Christ.

In the past seven years I have had the very great privilege of being your pastor. I have sat on the blue couch in my office and we have laugh, cried and prayed together. I have baptized your babies, taught your children, buried your loved ones, confirmed your teenagers and helped you grow your families through marriage. We have shared our stories and created new stories together. We have done our best to live into God's vision for Shepherd of the Valley. And yes, sometimes in the midst of it all, we have disagreed with one another. But throughout these past years the Holy Spirit has bound us together in Christ and just as the Spirit has bound Susan, Kathy and I together all these years, I have no doubt that our connection will remain long after I leave Shepherd of the Valley. I love you all so much and I have felt your love for me. I absolutely believe that love is eternal and those we love will be with us throughout eternity.

My prayer for you is that you take all that we have done together and continue to grow in relationship with God and each other. Don't let the fear of the change get in your way. Please keep studying the scripture and God's nature. Keep up your spiritual practices. Keep walking the Labyrinth. Keep being the generous people who, even in the midst of a national health crisis, never stopped providing for your church family. Keep focusing on justice and finding ways to serve the cause of justice whenever and where ever you can. Keep being a church in which everyone who enters knows they are welcome no matter who they are or who they love. I pray that you will continue to be the church that sings God's spirit into the world, inviting all, serving all, loving all, because God know this world needs you.

Thank you for allowing me to be your pastor.  
Thank you for the love you have shown my

family.

Be blessed. Be a blessing. Live fully and love wastefully.

Love,

PK

## From Pastor Effie

Greetings Friends!

In a few short weeks Tara, Xander, and I will make the trek to Rhode Island. When Tara and I shared with our three year old that we were being transferred to Rhode Island his response was excitement. "Yeah! Rhode Island! I love Rhode Island".

Y'all, he has never been to Rhode Island. Still, the joy of his response reminded me of the hymn, *I Come with Joy. I come with joy to meet my Lord, forgiven, loved, and free; in awe and wonder to recall his life laid down for me.* As servants of God, our coming and our going ought to be with joy. Scripture reminds us that having joy in God gives us strength.

During this time when my family will not be able to meet you face to face upon entering the parsonage, we still must find grace and joy in the newness of ministry opportunities. There is another Gospel song from days past that begins *I don't know what the future holds but I know who holds the future.* We are called to TRUST in the care that God has for all of us in these times of uncertainty. As we begin a new journey together remember that God loves us with an everlasting love. God has a plan for the mission and ministry of SOV and we all must be willing agents to live in that plan so that the work of the One Who Loves Us Best may continue to be brought to life in us and through us.

In His Service,

Pastor Effie

*The Circuit Rider will continue as an online publication for now.  
Please submit anything for the September edition by August 23<sup>rd</sup>*

## Being Together

In this time of social distancing, all upcoming church meetings and gatherings will be held via Zoom at least for the near future. The meeting link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88008562849?pwd=Z2hkUnQ3RjVOQWdGZWd0T0tOaVJmdz09>. The meeting ID: 880 0856 2849 and the password: 228288 h. Please note that this Zoom “room” is also available to church members who do not have a Zoom account and want to connect with other members, family, or friends. Please check with the pastor or the church office to be sure nothing else is scheduled.

- **Sunday Worship**—Sunday worship will continue to be held via Zoom. Pre-worship gathering starts at 9:30, worship starts at 10:00 a.m. The order of service will be emailed in advance.
- **Communion Sunday – June 7<sup>th</sup>**—Pastor Katherine will be offering communion during worship via Zoom on June 7<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to participate, you can pick up some grape juice and some kind of break which she will bless. If you have questions, please feel free to contact PK.
- **Women in Spiritual Harmony**—Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.
- **Wisdom Wednesdays**—The last meeting for the Wisdom Wednesdays group will be June 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m., topic to be determined.
- **Kids’ Connection**—Kids can connect with PK and each other via Zoom on Thursdays at 6:30. Last day will be June 11<sup>th</sup>.
- **Men’s Breakfast**—This group will continue to meet via Zoom at 6:00 a.m. every two weeks. Summer meetings will be on June 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, July 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, and August 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.
- **Parents’ Night**—Attention all parents who would like to meet via Zoom! We don’t have a set meeting date yet, but I will be reaching out to those who have come to see what works. If you are interested, please email me and I’ll include you in the group. My email is: [lhargrove@yahoo.com](mailto:lhargrove@yahoo.com). –Lisa Marciniak

## Stewardship

*Your gifts to the church are more important than ever in this time of uncertainty and quarantine—our work and missions go on even though our building is closed. Below, you will find information on a special giving Sunday, on electronic funds transfer (an easy way to give when you cannot be physically present), and online giving (again, an easy option).*

### Peace and Justice Sunday

Peace with Justice Sunday is one of the special Sundays in the United Methodist Church, giving us the opportunity to make a through our offering. Your gift, for example, helps a peace ministry at the Arizona border, address social justice in Liberia, and educate Pennsylvania students about sex trafficking in the U.S. and abroad. These initiatives, and hundreds of others, are possible through your giving. You can easily give through online through SOV’s website: <https://www.sovumc.org/give-now/> and follow the prompts.

### Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

EFT provides a safe and secure way to have your giving deducted from your checking account on a regular basis. If you would like to use EFT, please contact the church office. Also contact the office if you would like to increase your regular gift during this time, or need to decrease it.

### On-Line and Mobile Giving

If you would like to make a one-time gift electronically, please consider using our on-line giving option. Go to <https://www.sovumc.org/give-now/>. You can also do this on your smartphone. Download the free “GivePlus Church” app from the Apple Store or Google Play, find SOV, and make your donation using your credit/debit card or checking/savings account. You can also create an account and set up recurring donations.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

## Surviving a Pastoral Transition

A change in pastor is both an ending and beginning. We are grieving the loss of Pastor Katherine, made more difficult by the fact that we can't physically say good-bye in this time of quarantine. We need to acknowledge this loss on top of all the stress that COVID-19 has brought to our lives. We need to let ourselves feel sad and anxious and experience all the other emotions that come with this change, while also understanding that itinerancy, the movement of pastors from one church to another, are part of what it means to be a United Methodist. We also should know that we are blessed with a new pastor who knows we need to say goodbye more formally and will help us do so when the time is right.

But we should also see a new pastor as an exciting time, a new beginning for both Shepherd of the Valley and Pastor Effie. To maximize this new beginning and build a strong relationship with Effie, there are some things we can do to prepare personally and congregationally. First, pray for Effie and her family as they make this life change, moving to a new community and taking on the responsibility of a new church. Second, remember that Effie is not Katherine, and that she brings her own strengths, spiritual gifts, and experiences; comparisons are unhealthy for all of us. Open your heart and mind to who she is and think about how you can build a unique relationship with her. Third, support Effie in whatever way you can, from helping her learn our names to finding her way around the community to understanding our congregation to supporting SOV's mission and ministries. Understand that these tasks are made all the more difficult for her in this time of isolation, and that the COVID situation has made this transition more difficult for both Effie and the congregation. Let us receive Effie as a spiritual leader who will challenge us, receive us, lift us up, and do whatever she can to bring out the best in us personally and in Shepherd of the Valley as a church.

### Prayer for Congregations in Pastoral Transition

*Almighty God, You who called the universe into being, You who formed our inmost being and called us to be your people:*

*We give you thanks for your constant presence. Through seasons of constancy and even change, you are with us – calling us into deeper waters, calling us together in your spirit of unity, calling us out of ourselves into the world to serve others.*

*Grant that those pastors being called into new waters might hold fast to unending love and mercy as a buoy – a love that promised to hold onto us even as we go where your Spirit leads us. May the churches that receive them be communities of mercy and grace.*

*May the churches experiencing loss and change hold fast to the promise that your mission is bigger than any single pastor, local church, or annual conference. Grant that such a promise would bring both comfort and discomfort – comfort in a season of change and discomfort as it drives us all to love you and each other more.*

*Strengthen us to be your Church in all times and seasons of life – a place where all are truly welcomed and embraced in your love (even new pastors and church members); a place where we find ways you are active among us and calling us to join in your saving work (even in communities that weren't our top choice to move to); a place where the story of your love and grace and mercy are embodied (even if it comes in shapes and sizes and languages that are new to us). We offer our prayers in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*-Ben Gudson*

## Caring and Sharing

### United Methodist Women

Our United Methodist Women's group has been unable to hold any fundraisers during the COVID19 crisis. Unfortunately, we will not be scheduling anything for the remainder of this year. You have been very generous with your time and talents in the past to help with all of our activities. If you are able and willing to help us try to attain our pledge to the New England Conference please send a donation to Shepherd of the Valley UMW (SOVUMW) to Marti Bower, 21 Set'n Sun, Hope, RI 02831. Your donations will be greatly appreciated.

### Sunday School Thanks

Thank you to our amazing Sunday School teachers who worked so hard this year teaching our kids and putting together our Christmas pageant. I wish we could have said thank you in person but know we are so thankful to Doreen Fish and Beth Travers for teaching the younger elementary school aged kids and for Jerry Crosby for teaching the junior high aged kids. Also thank you to Alix and Sophia for taking care of our youngest members and for their help with our Family Fun Nights. We look forward to another year starting and I want to wish all the kids and parents a happy and healthy summer! Hope to be all together again soon!

Lisa Marciniak

### Shepherd's Pantry

Demand on our food pantry is even greater. We need all the basics—macaroni & cheese, rice or instant potatoes, vegetables, and snacks. Healthier food options, including lower sodium, low sugar and fat free items, are always needed along with computer paper and similar sized boxes—they are perfect for our food pickups. You can drop your donations off under the overhang at the entrance to the Hope Room. Someone is at the church regularly to collect and distribute your offerings. Cash or grocery gift cards are also welcome.



### Marge Hiles's Birthday

Marge Hiles is a former United Methodist pastor and long-time church member. Her 94<sup>th</sup> birthday is on Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, and we will be having a Zoom birthday celebration for her. Join us at 1:15 using the church Zoom link



If you would like to send Marge a card or note, her address is Overlook Rehabilitation and Nursing, 14 Rock Ave., Pascoag, RI 02859.

### Magazines Needed

Please save your old magazines. AJ, one of our church children, relieves stress by tearing magazines and needs more given the increased tension of these times. Please drop your magazines off outside the Hope Room door (where the food pantry bins are located). We will be sure to get them to AJ.

### Shut-Ins

We have a number of shut-ins who could use a phone call, card, note, or delivery. Contact Pastor Katherine or the church office if you can help.

### Social Media

Social media sites, such as Facebook, are becoming an invaluable way to connect with others during this time of self-isolation and social distancing. To join (even if only during the current situation), go to [www.facebook.com/r.php](http://www.facebook.com/r.php), input the appropriate information, and click "Sign Up." Use the search function to find the Shepherd of the Valley page and follow what we're posting.

### Save Your Pop-Tabs!

All those beverages you're consuming while you're at home?? Save those pop-tabs. Bring them to church once we're back together and put them in the box in the kitchen. These tabs go toward helping with food, supplies, and utilities for the Ronald McDonald House in Providence.

## Are You Secure?

One of the great things about church is that it is a safe environment and we trust each other. But whether we connect by phone or by computer, there are threats we should be aware of to ensure that we operate in a safe cyber environment. Bryan Stewart, our technical support contact for the church, shared the following information in a recent cyber security webinar.

In general, PC's and Android devices are more susceptible to threats because apps from the Google Play store are not monitored and vetted like many of the apps that are available from the Apple iTunes and app store. PC's definitely need to be protected with virus protection programs, but you don't have to spend a lot for adequate protection. Free virus protection programs can be sufficient if you choose with care.

### Email

By now most of us have been emailing for a long time and are aware of the potential for spam and malware. Be suspicious of any solicitation messages with poor grammar or misspellings—delete them. Never open attachments unless you know they come from a trustworthy source. They can carry what are called “malicious macros” that allow the bad guys to run programs in the background for malicious purposes such as copying passwords and other personal information. A good virus protection program will warn you when one of these macros is about to run. Once your email is compromised, the bad guys can send out messages under your name. So be aware of promotional messages especially when they come from someone you know. Ask your friend about it before opening a file. And notice how links in the message or the source of the message are worded. Often at first glance they will look like a reputable company, but a word or name will be slightly changed. They are “phishing” for easy catches.

### Social Media

Beware of “Friending” someone you don't know. And watch for “Friend” requests from someone you are already a “Friend” of. They could have

“unfriended” you and want to come back, but this can be a trick for a bad guy to gather information from your Facebook page that they can use in nefarious ways. Best to double check with your friend. Be careful of what you post—a picture of your pet and pet's name, for example, especially if you use your pet's name in a password or similar info. The bad guys can figure it out!

### Phone Calls

Particularly if you still have a “land” line, know that you have to defend against scammers. The most common one is a supposed tech representative who has noticed your computer has problems (don't they all?). They are very clever in their approach and may even have the name of a reputable company or your own bank on the phone readout. Those reputable companies will never call you. Hang up right away, and if you sense the call was somehow legitimate, call or contact the company another way. The rule of thumb is never to take the call unless you are confident of the source or originally initiated the communication. Another tip is to ask for a call back number, but that could be fake, too, so best to get the number from a public directory. These scammers often prey on older people. They are very persuasive. In these challenging financial times, and especially during this pandemic, you or your loved ones could suffer more than just loss of pride.

## Joint Finance Committee and Church Council: May 11, 2020

Present: Donna Faria, Sandy Knapp, Martha Ahern, Mark Stambauch, Barbara Walz, John Lombardo, Jay O'Connor, Lisa Marciniak, Howard Gay, Jerry Crosby, Meaghan Davis, and Tom Senerchia. Also present were Pastor Katherine Miller, church secretary Pam Etheridge, and congregational members Rob and Marti Bower.

Katherine opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. with a prayer.

John reviewed our finances. For the first four months of the year we are better than budget by \$11,000, about half from increased revenue (though both plate and Easter giving were negatively affected by the shutdown) and half from lower expenses (primarily utilities, due to both the mild winter and the shutdown). He noted that this \$11,000 is as if we had paid the non-pastoral portion of our mission shares (pastoral portion has been paid). We have not paid anything toward the non-pastoral portion, having held off as a conservative measure not knowing the impact of the shutdown. Katherine asked that we reconsider this decision. People are stepping up to financially support the church, and we need to honor our commitment to pay mission shares to maintain a full-time pastor. Based on our cash position, we could make two months of mission shares payments (a little more than \$5,000) without jeopardizing our financial position, especially since we don't know if current levels of strong financial support will continue. The motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to pay two month the non-pastoral support portion of our mission shares.

John also noted that the \$11,000 amount does not include the \$24,000 Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan we received. Martha noted that this money can be used to cover payroll and utilities for the eight weeks from receipt, but must include documentation that 75% goes toward payroll. The loan is converted to a grant if we retain our employees. Katherine noted that we need to hold a church conference to officially accept the money. We agreed to hold this meeting on 5/24 via Zoom after worship.

On behalf of the Trustees, Mark noted that on-going parsonage expenses are being paid, plus extermination for mice. Jerry noted that the first phase of the parsonage renovations will cost about \$25,000 including flooring, painting, kitchen and vanity cabinet replacement, and other repairs. Window replacement (about \$54,000) is being deferred.

In Stewardship, Howard noted that Native American Sunday is coming up. Pam will be sure donations can be made through the website. With a week's notice, she will add any other special Sundays. Howard also mentioned #IgiveUMC as a way to make small memorial gifts, and hopes to have it available by Father's Day.

Martha reported that the church financial audit is on hold. Pastor's Discretionary Fund is done; Medical Assistance Fund is still to be done. She asked for an estimate of Effie's moving expenses. Sandy noted that they're just under \$4,000. They're not in the budget and will be paid out of the general fund.

In other church business, Katherine's last day is 6/14. Tom, Sandy, and Effie will be providing pastoral coverage until Effie's official start on 7/5.

Volunteers are needed to pick up the Stop and Shop donations each Sunday. Jerry and Nina will coordinate. This is a good chance to get people who aren't normally involved to participate.

We reviewed the current CDC/Conference guidelines on reopening. Katherine shared a video demonstrating what social distancing would look like in a church slightly smaller than ours—we would not be able to fit our normal attendance in our sanctuary under these guidelines. Drive-in church is still an option, and might be something we do occasionally once Phase II opening guidelines are released. We discussed the long-term implications of the lack of physical presence/connection. Rob mentioned making the Zoom connection part of our regular worship once we can gather physically. The worship committee will address this, though we will not do anything new until Effie arrives.

Katherine will offer communion via Zoom on the first Sunday in June. Meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Bell-Lombard0