

July 2020



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF MOUNT KISCO

Beneath the Spires

A Farewell from Pastor Joanne

*If you open your heart
to the hungry,
and provide abundantly
for those who are afflicted,
your light will shine in
the darkness, and your
gloom will be like the
noon.*

*The LORD will guide you
continually and provide
for you, even in parched
places.*

*He will rescue your
bones.
You will be like a watered
garden,
like a spring of water
that won't run dry.*

- Isaiah 58:10-12

We've had an abnormally dry spring and early summer this year leaving the area short of the average rainfall level by several inches. The recent rainstorms have indeed been a welcome relief for our parched gardens and yards alike, but we'll need lots more to make up the difference.

One day recently when the clouds rolled in and the skies began to drench the ground, I was reminded of what it's like to take that first drink of cool water after spending time in the hot sun. When we're dehydrated our bodies and minds don't function well. We can feel confused, sluggish and tired. Our muscles and joints don't work at their peak. But the smallest amounts of water can begin to reverse that deficit.



When we're parched physically, we turn to water to rehydrate, but what if we are parched spiritually, in a dry spell in our faith journey? Those times happen, too. When we find ourselves in the desert, the wilderness, and God seems so far off.

The remedy is similar to taking that first gulp of cool water. Begin to take in the word of God - one scripture at a time, one prayer at a time, one meditation at a time. As you begin to hear and study the word and be in conversation with God and your Christian siblings, your faith will begin to be renewed and replenished. We discover that time spent with

God and in the word refreshes our souls and feeds our deep dryness with gulps of Living Water. Lingering in the presence of Christ and allowing his words of love and compassion to sink deep into our hearts will quench our thirsts.

The dictionary definition of "parched" is extremely thirsty. But as the safety protocols for Covid-19 continue, we may also be suffering from other thirsts; we are extremely thirsty to be able to go wherever we please unencumbered by masks and social distancing.

We are extremely thirsty for a sense of safety and wellbeing.

We are extremely thirsty to be able to gather physically with family and friends, to visit parents and grandparents in nursing homes and assisted living.

We are extremely thirsty to be able to shake hands, offer a hug and a kiss.

But as the psalmist writes, we can depend on God in these most difficult of times.

A Farewell from Pastor Joanne (continued)

God will provide for us, even in parched places. It's in those places that I believe God is calling us to see others who may be feeling parched, too

These months of shutdown during the pandemic have certainly highlighted just how interdependent we are. We need to continue to make the sacrifices – wearing masks and social distancing – necessary for the greater good.

Think also about who's missing on the Zoom screen on Sunday mornings? Who may have felt isolated before this social distancing began and now feels totally alone? Who needs to feel a greater sense of belonging, appreciation and usefulness in this community? Who's spiritual gifts need to be celebrated and employed?

God is putting before you the opportunity to find new ways to be in community, new ways to continue to connect to the members of the congregation and to your neighbors. In what new ways might you lift one another up or carry one another's burden? It is not an easy task, and it's going to challenge how you have always done church. Successful ministry post-Covid-19 will look very different than what you have known. May your hearts and minds be open to those changes knowing that God is there to lead and guide you into the new thing that God is doing.

In just a few days, I will be departing as your pastor to lead the Hamptons UMC in Southampton, N.Y., on Long Island.

Pastoral transitions can be bittersweet times for both the congregation and the clergy person as we say goodbye to those we have come to know and love. And there remain the parts of God's ministry and mission that we had hoped to achieve in our time together. For instance, we have just barely begun to scratch the surface of our work to dismantle racism and white privilege in our lives and community. My move has been precipitated by the New York Conference's decision to end my 1/2 work as communications coordinator. So in order to have a fulltime appointment, I must leave Mount Kisco.

But this appointment will be a bit of a homecoming for me. I was serving in my first appointment at the Bridgehampton UMC when it merged with the Southampton church in 2013 to create the Hamptons UMC. And this will also mean a return to Bella's "hometown." The proximity to the beach and ocean will be a balm for both of us.

As I go, I will be observing some new boundaries. As is United Methodist protocol, I will be breaking off contact with the congregation for a year, which will allow Pastor Elaine Pope-Joffrion to settle in and begin to create relationships with you. I will only return to worship or social events at the church on her invitation. I am confident that you will grow and be nourished to do the Lord's work with humility and intentionality under Pastor Pope's leadership. I hope that you will continue to pray for both pastors during this time of transition, as you

rest of my days.

I want to especially thank Paul Martinez for his collaboration and intuitive nature, Marianne Baldwin for her willingness to take on new challenges, and Art Covey for his dedication and on-point church signs.

I will always carry with me the many special moments in serving as your pastor. A few are forever embedded as snapshots in my mind:

- The glee of the Sunday School kids running up the center aisle because they are so excited to be in church.
- Families searching for the perfect pumpkins amidst all shapes, sizes, and colors on the lawn.
- Little Elisa adding her voice to the hymns.
- The tears of a longtime member of the congregation after being asked for the very first time to help serve communion.
- The inclusion of the pastor, band and children of Iglesia Cristiana Fe y Esperanza in the Living Nativity.
- Three life-size plastic Wise Men on the altar for Epiphany Sunday.
- The food pantry serving hundreds of families in drive-thru lines and then walk-up windows during the Covid-19 shutdown.

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Introducing Pastor Pope

On August 1, the United Methodist Church of Mount Kisco will welcome Elaine Pope-Joffrion as its new pastor.

Pastor Pope is a member of the First UMC of Stamford where she has served as worship planning team leader, a lay preacher, Sunday School co-facilitator, and a healing ministry minister, as well as building props for Vacation Bible School.

"I've even been known to vacuum, wash dishes, and sing - a little," she said.

She was baptized at age eight by her maternal grandfather, an ordained pastor in Pennsylvania. So, she is a "PGK" - a pastor's grandkid. Pope said she was "raised in vibrant, vital Christian churches, with families, homes, and communities with a deep emphasis on loving."

Her faith has held a consistent place throughout her life - from co-directing the Swarthmore College Gospel Choir as a student, serving as a deacon in another denomination to being trained as a chaplain at Greenwich Hospital. Pastor Pope has also worked alongside pastors as they developed and planted new churches.

As second-career clergy person, Pastor Pope also has extensive business experience in operations, marketing, brand management, sales, strategic planning and strategic



management through her own consulting company, various positions at IBM, and non-profit ventures.

She has also served as business and marketing educator for the Stamford Public Schools and Stamford Innovation/Entrepreneur Network.

Pastor Pope's favorite scripture passage is Philippians 3:13-15, especially verse 14: "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

"My call has been 42 years in the making and shaping, pressing, leading, and urging of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," she said. "I say, and will be known to say, "To God be the Glory!"

Pastor Pope is divorced, a mother of two adult sons, Colin Jon-David Joffrion and Taylor Donovan-Gale Joffrion, and the proud grandmother of Savannah.

We look forward to all that God has in store with Pastor Pope as our guide. Let us continue to pray for her and our congregation in this time of transition

A Farewell from Pastor Joanne (continued)

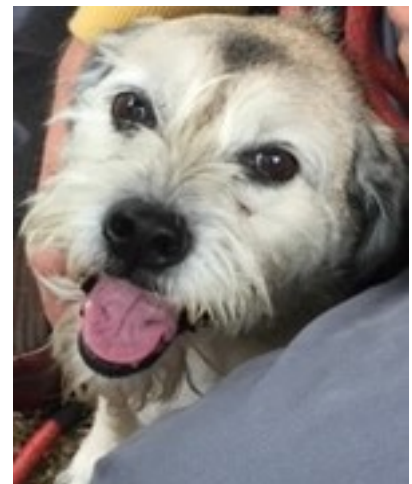
- Joining other Mount Kisco clergy in standing against systemic racism at the "Peace with Justice Prayer Vigil."

My friends, may your days of feeling parched be few and far between. May your lights continue to shine in the darkness and may you be awash in the Living Water that only Christ can provide. I pray that you will be safe and well as you continue serving God from the corner of Smith and Main. God bless you all.

As always, in God's care and service,

Pastor Joanne

Bella we will miss you!



UM Bishops: Act now to end racism, white supremacy

In the aftermath of police killings of unarmed Black people, the bishops of The United Methodist Church have called on all United Methodists to act now by using their voices, pens, feet and hearts to end racism.

In a statement released by Council of Bishops President Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, the bishops are urging every United Methodist to reclaim their baptismal vows to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

More information and resources can be found online at UMC.org/EndRacism.

Books for adults

As we are being urged to take action against the sin of racism, one place to begin is to educate ourselves by reading books or viewing movies from a variety of perspectives.

Black & White: Disrupting Racism One Friendship at a Time: The main message by John Hambrick and Teesha Hadra is that racism can be disrupted by relationships. Forging friendships with those who do not look like you, will change the way you see the world and could change the world.

Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America: Jennifer Harvey's book is for families, educators, and communities who want to equip their children to be active and able participants in a society that is becoming one of the most racially diverse in the world while remaining full of racial tensions.

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism: Antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo defines "white fragility," examines how it happens and offers guidance for how to engage more constructively in cross-racial dialogue.

Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love: Will Willimon, a retired United Methodist bishop, invites readers to consider the gospel command to love (and not merely tolerate) those considered to be "other," while strongly criticizing those who often rush to speak of reconciliation but evade the injustices and inequalities in our culture.

How to Be an Antiracist: In his book, Ibram X. Kendi argues there is no such thing as being "not racist." The author discusses the language we use and don't use in our society to talk about race, advocating for anti-racist ac-

tions to make real progress.

Between the World and Me: Presented as a letter from a father to his adolescent son, Ta-Nehisi Coates reveals his own experience learning about race and power in the United States, while offering thoughts on how we might move forward to make the world better for future generations.

Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela: This book, published in 1994, the same year that Nelson Mandela was elected president of South Africa, recounts the leader's incredible story and his hard-won struggle for freedom. The book focuses on the human rights icon's early life, education and 27-year imprisonment.

Citizen: An American Lyric: Claudia Rankine weaves together essays, images and drawings to document racial aggressions in society, while challenging her readers to understand that being a true citizen requires a broader sense of responsibility to others.

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UM Bishops: Act now to end racism, white supremacy

So You Want To Talk About Race: Talking about race is hard. Ijeoma Oluo examines race in America and offers tips on how to have honest conversations about race and racism and how they infect almost every aspect of American life.

Books for kids

Conversations about race should not be limited to adults. Bringing children into calm, educated discussions can help a younger generation confront the reality of racism and be part of the solution in ending racial injustice.

The Snowy Day: One of a series, this book by Ezra Jack Keats, features a black boy who experiences the joy of a snowy day in his city. First published in 1962, the book is lauded for breaking the color barrier for mainstream children's literature. (For ages birth to 3 years old.)

Hair Love: The book that inspired an Oscar-winning short film, "Hair Love" tells the sweet story of author Matthew A. Cherry, a black father, learning to do his daughter's hair for the first time. (For ages 3 to 5.)

The Youngest Marcher: Cynthia Levinson tells the true and shocking story of 9-year-old Audrey Faye Hendricks, who, in 1963, was jailed for a week along with hundreds of other children following a Birmingham civil rights march. (For ages 5-8.)

Resist: 35 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up Against Tyranny and Injustice: Veronica Chambers, a senior editor at The New York Times, gathered inspiring stories from the past 500 years, each with a lesson for our kids about how to fight injustice in their own lives. (For ages 9-12.)

All American Boys: The book looks at the effects of police brutality from the perspective of two teenage boys, one white, the other black. (For ages 12 and older.)

Movie suggestions

Movies can also illuminate the lived experiences of people of color. Many films are available through on-demand services like Netflix and Amazon Prime.

When They See Us: This Netflix miniseries tells the story of the wrongful conviction of five Black and Latino teenagers (dubbed the Central Park Five) for the 1989 assault on a female jogger in Central Park. (2019)

The Hate U Give is based on a young-adult novel and takes on themes of Black Lives Matter, police brutality and black identity. (2018)

13th: This documentary explains the prison industrial complex spanning from the 1800s through to Donald Trump's presidential campaign. (2016)

Just Mercy is about the renowned civil rights defense attorney Bryan Stevenson, who works to free a wrongly condemned death row prisoner.

Loving is about the real-life couple Richard and Mildred Loving, who were at the center of the Supreme Court case that took down the ban on interracial marriage.

If Beale Street Could Talk centers on a young couple, Tish and Fonny. When Fonny is falsely accused of rape, Tish and her family work together to try to get Fonny freed.

Dear White People: For anyone who still struggles to understand how racism pervades everyday life, this satire can help. It follows four black students at an Ivy League university, as controversy breaks out over a party that features blackface.

Do the Right Thing: What starts as an argument escalates into violence in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bed-Stuy in this Spike Lee movie that looks directly at racial tension. (1989)

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I Am Not Your Negro, by the Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck, is a propulsive documentary about James Baldwin, his writings and his times. (2017)

Moonlight tells the story of a gay Black man growing up in Miami struggling with self-acceptance. The film won best picture at the Academy Awards in 2017.

Mount Kisco Prayer Vigil Against Racism



Clergy from the Mount Kisco area gather following the “Peace With Justice Prayer Vigil” on June 29 on the steps of the Village hall. The vigil, five weeks after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, began with a prayer of lament and ended with a call to action. The gathering, which was instigated by Pastor Joanne, highlighted the need for all people of Faith to stand up and speak out against the racism that pervades every facet of our lives in community.

July Birthdays

- 13th Nancy Beck
- 14th Patty Morabito

- 24th Kaitlin Summers
- 25th Timothy Laux
- 31st Alexa Grace Hall



August

- 2nd Art Covey
- 9th Jennifer Ruff
- 19th President Bill Clinton
Scott Davidson
- 27th Dave Visaggio
Susan Logan
Yvone Orr
- 28th Joshua Morales
- 30th Joe Baldwin



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Find us on Facebook, too!

Re-Opening Update

We have submitted our plan for re-opening the church building to District Superintendent Tim Riss and are awaiting his response. Once the plan has been approved, we will begin to open spaces to the groups using the building and determine when in-person worship might resume. An online worship component will continue for those unable or not yet willing to come to the sanctuary.

There will be a mandatory facemask and social distancing protocol in place for all users of the building. We have also established a plan to clean the rooms after each use.

We are following the guidelines set down by the bishop and taking things very slowly to insure the healthy and safety of everyone in the building. As you get closer to in-person worship, Pastor Pope and the re-opening team will provide additional details.

**[We pray. We love.
We serve.]**

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