



The Oasis

News from First Community United Methodist Church
Medford Massachusetts

November 2020

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Dear Friends,

** This message is an excerpt from the sermon I preached on October 4, " A Love Song for the Vineyard."*

Once upon a time, there was a farmer. She was a well-trained farmer with all the necessary knowledge and experience in farming. One day, she bought a vineyard. As she knew good soil and abundant sunlight are essential for grapes, she purchased the land on a fertile hillside, which would provide the best soil and light to her grapes. After buying the land, the farmer started prepping the vineyard for farming. She dug the earth. She cleared away some stones in the ground, which would hinder the development of grape-vines. She took out everything that would be harmful to grapes and placed all the right equipment for better growth for them. She thought it was all set. The only thing left for the farmer was to wait until the vineyard produces good grapes. However, that didn't happen. Instead of juicy and tasty grapes, what the farmer got was terrible, rotten grapes. Even though the farmer put all her effort, the vineyard didn't meet her expectation. Of course, the farmer was disappointed.

After telling this story through Isaiah, God then explains what the farmer would do for the vineyard: she would "remove its hedge so [the vineyard] will be destroyed." She would "break down its walls so that it will be trampled." In sum, the farmer would demolish the vineyard. Indeed, this story was God's message for the Israelites several thousand years ago. Through this story, God was assuring that

(Pastor's Letter continued next page)

Church Contacts & Media Information

Address: 55 Otis Street, Medford, MA 02155

Church Office: 781-396-5436

Church Office Email: fcumc02155@yahoo.com

Website: www.FirstCommunityMedford.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstcommunityumc

Pastor Suji's Email: pastorsuji@gmail.com



all needed resources for the Israelites were provided and they were expected to produce good fruit. Then, God continues by warning the Israelites what God would do if they don't bear good grapes. If they do not meet God's expectation, God would destroy the vineyard.

And as we do not consider the Bible is only for the Israelites or the first Christians, this message also applies to us. Here, we know God is telling us that we are called to bear good grapes to meet God's expectations. And if we don't, there will be some destruction. It is scary. It is scary to imagine God would destroy our vineyard. If there is one thing that we don't want to see from God is the destroying God. Of course, nobody here wants to be destroyed. Nevertheless, this scary message is for us. It is true that God would "remove our hedge so it will be destroyed" and "break down its walls so that it will be trampled" if we do not bear good fruit. When our personal life goes in the wrong direction, God becomes the vineyard farmer and destroys the vineyard. When the church does not follow God's justice, God comes and breaks down the walls. When this society does not bear the fruit for the kin-dom of God, God removes the hedge so it will be destroyed. When we don't produce good grapes, God destroys the vineyard.

This sounds too much. And this is so different from what we have heard in so many Bible passages. The image of God we are used to is the God of love who forgives us. Isn't the Bible say God always and always forgive our wrongdoings and sins? Isn't it the essence of the Gospel that Jesus came to forgive our sins and rescue us from death? But here, God is saying God would destroy the vineyard when it doesn't bear good grapes. Why does the Bible have this contradicting message?

There could be several ways to read this passage, but one of the keys to this story can be found in the first verse. It reads, "Let me sing for my loved one a love song for his vineyard." Apparently, this story was a love song for the vineyard! Even if it warns what would happen if there are no good grapes, even if it talks about to destroy and breaking down the walls, it still is a love song—a song for God's vineyard with love.

How can this be possible? This is still a love song because the destruction is not a punishment. Even when God breaks down our walls, that is not a punishment. Even when God destroys our vineyard, it is not a punishment for our wrongdoing. Rather, it is an act of hope and an act of love because God destroys our vineyard to provide a second chance for us to bear good grapes. Because what we have done is not satisfying, God takes away what we have done falsely and offers a new setting to try for another round of bearing good grapes. Because what we have now, i.e. the inappropriate systems and old habits, are not sufficient and unethical to bear good fruits, God is breaking them down, so we can start again. Because we do not have hope for a new start in our current situation, God is taking away the barriers so that we can dream of new, fresh season of farming.

(Pastor's Letter continued next page)



(Photo credit: T.Mossholder on Unsplash.com)

Again, our Creator is not a God who punishes us for not meeting God's expectation. Our Creator is the God who gives us a second chance. Our God is the God who provides the best way for us to bear good grapes by taking away the obstacles from the past. Therefore, let us not stay in despair when we feel our walls are broken down. Our walls are broken down to make space to build new walls. Let us see hope for new walls, new vineyard, and new grapes. When we feel God is taking away everything from us, or destroying what we have constructed, let us not be grumpy. Let us not think God is being jealous or punishing us. When God destroys what we have done, that is because it is time for a new start. When what we have done seems falling apart, that is a wake-up call from God for us to start again.

Like we need to die to live again, we need to let go of what we have done wrong. To fix our situation and set up a new norm, we need to let go of the sick parts in our habits, polluted with our ego and pride.

If our bad habits have become our culture or tradition, we ask for God's help to take them down and destroy them, so we have space for new healthy habits, culture, and tradition that is clear, transparent, and fair. Let us say bye to the bad grape-vines that don't allow us to bear good grapes. Let us let them go. Let us invite God to destroy them. Let us plant new grapes, so we have new vines and good fruits. Let us turn to the new hope. Let us see hope in our lives, in our family, in this church, in this society, and this world. Let us remember we share the vineyard, where we are called to rebuild the kin-dom of God.



(Photo Credit: A.Me on Unsplash)

Peace,
Pastor Suji

WISHING YOU A “HAPPY THANKSGIVING!”



(Photo Credit: A.Tukhfatullina on Pexels.com)

**From the Church
Staff-**

Pastor Suji,

Luci &

Kathy

MUSIC FROM THE CHURCH

By Luci Rexroad, Music Director

“Come, Ye Thankful People, Come”

This popular harvest hymn appears in the “Special Days” section of *The United Methodist Hymnal*. *The Christian Science Monitor* Newspaper has on its editorial pages the following quote from scripture: “First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.” (Mark 4:28, American Standard Version) My parents subscribed to this newspaper. I looked at it occasionally when I was a kid, and noticed the Bible verse. But it took a while to connect it to a hymn – probably because the quote appears in the second stanza. Also, the hymn writer altered the ending a bit. A reader once wrote a letter to the editor of *The Monitor*, asking for an explanation about the motto. This was their answer:

Archibald McLellan, the Monitor's first editor, once said of the motto, “It expresses the high ideal set before the staff of the Monitor by its Founder¹, - a lofty purpose, for whose accomplishment they are to strive; patiently and persistently tilling the soil of human thought day by day, until by and by the field shall be crowned with ripened grain, and they shall hear the ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ ”²

That could be the start of a sermon!

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

TEXT: Henry Alford, 1844, alt.

TUNE: George Elvey, 1858 ST. GEORGE’S WINDSOR

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Come, ye thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home;
all is safely gathered in,
ere the winter storms begin.
God our Maker doth provide
for our wants to be supplied;
come to God's own temple, come,
raise the song of harvest home. | 2. All the world is God's own field,
fruit as praise to God we yield;
wheat and tares together sown
are to joy or sorrow grown;
first the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear;
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be. |
|--|---|

Henry Alford wrote this text in 1844. He was born in London in 1810 and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, England, graduating with honors in 1832. In 1833, he was ordained an Anglican priest. He served several parishes and also as Dean of Canterbury. He spent 20 years writing a commentary on the Greek New Testament. “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” is his most popular hymn. He died in Canterbury in 1871.

George J. Elvey wrote the tune ST. GEORGE’S WINDSOR in 1858. He was born in Canterbury, England, in 1816. As a young boy, he was a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral. He was educated at Oxford University and the Royal Academy of Music. When he was nineteen years old, he became organist and master of the boys’ choir at St. George’s Chapel Royal at Windsor Castle, where he remained until his retirement in 1882. He died in Windlesham, England, in 1893.

¹ Mary Baker Eddy founded the Church of Christ, Scientist, and later established *The Christian Science Monitor* in 1908.

² *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 28, 1994

Biographical information from www.hymnary.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- We are sad to share news of Pastor Suji's departure from FCUMC. October 25 was her last Sunday. Please join us in keeping Pastor Suji and her family in your prayers.
- **Staff/Parish Relations Committee** will meet *Thursday, November 5 at 7:30pm*.
- The **District Superintendent** will be available to speak with anyone at FCUMC who has questions about the pastoral transition or life of the church. He will have an open meeting on *Saturday Nov 7th at 7pm*. Information on how to attend these conversations will be sent out no later than a day before. For questions, please contact Jessi (SPRC chair) at jvallee77@gmail.com or 781-526-5656.
- **Daylight Savings** is *Sunday, November 1*. Remember to turn your clocks back an hour before Sunday's service.
- **All Saints Day (Sunday, November 1)**: Stephanie Finley, our Lay Leader, will lead a special service to honor those who walk among us, during this pandemic and our loved ones who have passed.
- **Thanksgiving Sunday** and **1st Sunday of Advent** will be celebrated *Sunday, November 29*.
- **Sunday Bulletin Announcements**: To submit a church-related announcement for our Sunday Worship Service bulletin, please email details to the church office at fcumc02155@yahoo.com by 5pm Wednesday.



November is UMC's Stewardship Month

*Help us tend the vineyard and care
for our church, neighbors and planet*



(Photo Credit M. Petric on Unsplash.com)

1st Sunday of Advent – November 29



(Photo Credit: J.Snider @United Methodist Com)



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November 2020

First Community United Methodist Church, Medford MA

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Bianca & Erik Hegre <i>Daylight Savings</i> <i>All Saints Day</i> 10:30 AM Worship via Google Meet	2 Oriana Hegre & Serena Hegre	3 Ben & Jessie Killilea	4 Finn Killilea & Rowan Killilea	5 Tom & Peggy Kirkpatrick	6 Eleanor & Paul Kulakowski	7 Terran & Susan Rati Lane
8 Autumn Lane & Daniel Laskey 10:30 AM Worship via Google Meet	9 Donna & Fred Laskey	10 Matthew Laskey & Geoffrey Laskey	11 Lauren Laskey & Richard Laskey <i>Veterans Day</i>	12 Charlotte Luscombe & Frank Casseterri	13 Donna & Joe Maguire	14 Bill Mason & Billy Mason
15 George & Sheila McCleery 10:30 AM Worship via Google Meet	16 Emily & Matthew McDonald	17 Samuel McDonald & Neville Pottinger	18 Meaghan Morris & Connor Wilson	19 Chloey Wilson & Cayden Maleszyk	20 Cheryl & Keeley Murphy	21 Nathaniel Murphy & Alexander Murphy
22 Aarion & Katelyn Perez 10:30 AM Worship via Google Meet	23 Jim & Kim Ryan	24 Joan Saniuk & Sharilyn Steketee	25 Dorothy & Frank Seamster	26 Kevin Seamster & Owen Seamster <i>Thanksgiving Day</i>	27 Jennifer & Sean Tappendorf	28 Dylan Tappendorf & Genevieve Tappendorf
29 David Twiddy & Rebecca Stevenson <i>Thanksgiving Sunday</i> <i>United Methodist Student Day</i> 10:30 AM Worship via Google Meet <i>1st Sunday of Advent</i>	30 Lydia Twiddy & J.J. Twiddy	<p>November is Stewardship Month</p> <p><i>Please pray for our friends daily on the designated day.</i></p> <p>Address: 55 Otis Street, Medford, MA 02155 Email: fcumc02155@yahoo.com Office Phone/Voicemail: 781-396-5436</p> <p>Website: www.FirstCommunityMedford.org Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstcommunity/umc</p>				