

Pegram UMC



Newsletter

Rev. Tory Shane Dillard

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Weekly Calendar

Sunday: 10:30 a.m. – Live Stream & In Person Worship (Facebook and Sanctuary Camera)

Monday: 5:30 p.m. -- AA meeting

Wednesday: 11:00 am Facebook Live Scripture Reading w/ Rev. Tory

Thursday: 7:30 a.m. Men's Coffee at Iron Skillet

Special Note

UMW meet every second Wednesday at 6pm in the fellowship hall. Please wear masks and for those that feel uncomfortable attending there is also a zoom option. Please contact Donna Tidwell for more information.

Advent season is just a few weeks away:
Hanging of the Greens/ First Sunday of Advent Service is Nov. 29th at 10:30-11:30am
Christmas Eve Service is Dec. 24th @ 6:30

Blessings Behind Bars is encouraging each member of PUMC to add the names of each members of BBB to your Christmas Card Campaign. Ask Trisha Biggs for more details.

Prayer from Howard Thurman:

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,

December 2020



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Christmas Memories

Some of my favorite memories are about the Christmas season. I remember as a child the excitement and nervousness of waiting for Santa to bring my siblings and I our gifts. Not being able to fall asleep due to excessive counting of all the good things I've done this year and hoping that those outweigh all the, well, let's just say, less than nice things.

Waking up on a Christmas morning as a child was like waking up to a new world with magic, wonder, and of course gifts. As we walked into the living room, we saw that Santa had left his mark. He ate his cookie and drank his milk. He took the reindeer treats we made for his valiant steeds. The tree lights were glowing extra hard and the gifts lined up on a row for my brother, sister, and me.

After the gifts were open and being played with mom would make her famous breakfast with little steaks and hash browns and the special sausages that I thought looked like fingers. The fragrances of the breakfast filled the air while the sounds of "You'll shoot your eye out kid!" played in the background. Then after a well-earned nap from a morning of playing we got ready to have Christmas dinner at my

When the shepherds are back with their
flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.



grandmother's house and if you thought breakfast sounded good then you were in for a treat at Nannie's. Fried Chicken and cooked ham, mashed potatoes and white beans, cornbread and rolls, chocolate pies and freshly baked cookies; All filled the air of the small stationary double wide trailer.

Then night fall came, I never wanted to go back to sleep because if I slept then Christmas was over and then that meant the tree would be taken down and the lights, and the stockings. That meant that we were putting away the magic until next year.

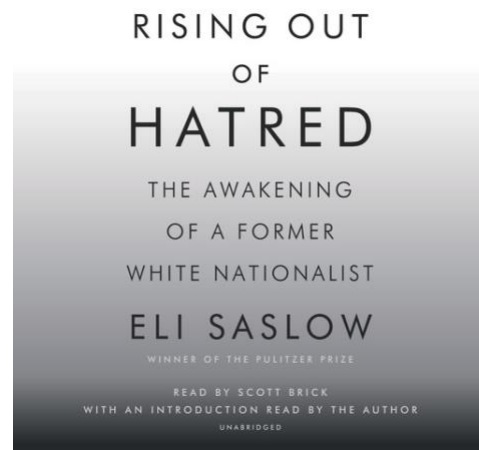
I would always say to myself I will never fall asleep. I will make Christmas stay forever. But then I would shut my eyes and the memories of the day would dance in my dreams and the magic would rock me to a gentle sleep.

To this day I wait in anticipation and excitement for Christmas day. But this time it is not for gifts and jolly ole Saint Nick but for the arrival of the Christ Child. The one who brings us the most precious gifts. The ones filled with hope, love, peace, and joy. May your Christmas be filled with these gifts. Merry Christmas!

Rev. Tory's Book of the Month:



Eli Saslow





This month's top pick is Eli Saslow's *Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist*. Eli Saslow, a staff writer of The Washington Post dives into an unlikely friendship between two college students, one an Orthodox Jew and the other, a former white nationalist.

Rising out of Hatred is an exploration into the life of former white nationalist Derek Black, who was the air to some of the largest racist communities on the internet. Whose godfather was David Duke, a well known KKK Grand Wizard. Derek found himself working towards being the next great "White Hope" for his family. Soon to pave the way supremacy to thrive for future generations.

As a cover Derek went to a school called New College (one of the most liberal schools in the country). During his second year, Derek studied in Germany to study with white supremacist organizations there. While Derek was away, a student at New College who was doing research on hate groups stumbled upon a familiar face. Derek was discovered and the word eventually got out about Derek's escapades. He became a Paraiyer in the school community. Once people heard who he was they instantly shunned him and rightfully so.

However, a fellow student, an Orthodox Jew named Matthew Stevenson thought of a different punishment for Derek. Rather than turn him into a social outcast, Matthew thought that it would be a better idea to invite Derek over for his weekly Shabbat meals. Throughout all Jewish history, the idea of observing *Shabbat* (the Sabbath) has been a key part of Jewish identity. *Shabbat*, also known as *Shabbos*, is a day of rest on the seventh day of the week.

At first Derek was not particularly interested in going, but after several invitations by Matthew, Derek reluctantly went. As Derek sat at Shabbat, he noticed that Mathew invited a lot of people. Derek found himself in an environment of which he had never experienced before, one of diversity and equality. Derek sat in the same room with people of different races, genders, sexes, and religions. Derek found himself in spaces of different voices that showed him grace of which he never experienced before.

Over the course of three years Derek and Matthew grew in their friendship and with that friendship Derek found himself to question everything he had been taught. Derek eventually would leave white nationalism behind him. He currently works with multiple social justice organizations to help stop the spread of white nationalism and supremacy in North America and around the world. This is definitely a must read for your spiritual journey.

Derek Black



Matthew Stevenson



Derek at Matthew's Shabbat meal



Theologian of the Month

Julian of Norwich



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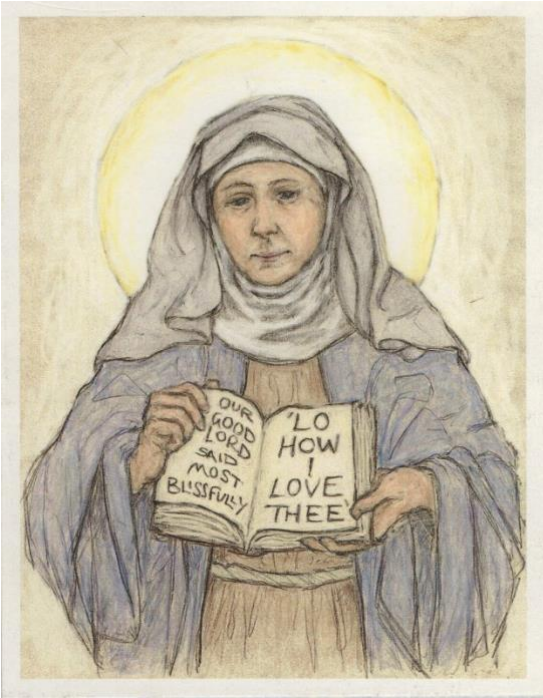
Julian is often depicted of being in a state of prayer while embracing her cat.

Julian of Norwich (c.1342 – c.1416) was an early English Christian mystic and theologian best known for her *Revelations of Divine Love*. During Julian's lifetime, she experienced the first (1348-50) and second (1361-62) waves of the Black Death in England, which is believed to have killed and estimated 10-60% of the population. Julian also experienced the political divisiveness of her time as well. Due to the spread of the Black Death and a lack of resources the Peasants' revolt in 1381, which ended with suppression of the rebels by King Richard II.

When Julian turned thirty, she contracted a severe illness that was characterized by a high fever, difficulty breathing and the sense of being paralyzed. While fighting this disease Julian began to experience the first of her many divine visions.

It is said that as she lay paralyzed by the horrible illness a priest came to visit her. The priest brings a cross to her and the cross begins to glow. She sees Christ standing right in front of her. She is quite startled at this point when a voice says to her, "Look up to heaven. Don't look at the cross but look up to heaven."

Julian interpreted this voice as a temptation and not the voice of Christ: "She was looking directly at the suffering Christ but was being tempted to look away from his suffering." Instead, Julian looked down to the crucifix as the priest told her to.



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Where her eyes had been fixed upward “towards heaven” prior to her visions, now she held her gaze on the cross each time she experienced one. By fixing her eyes on the cross, Julian perceived that “glory comes through suffering, in particular the suffering of Christ, and not in spite of it.”

Julian would continue to experience religious visions or “shewings” throughout her life, writing detailed accounts of each. These descriptions were eventually compiled into *Revelations of Divine Love*, the earliest surviving English-language book written by a woman.

According to Fr. Brendan Pelphrey, a retired Greek Orthodox priest and scholar who has devoted much of his career to studying Julian’s life and theology, tell us that Julian’s view of God as “present in everything that exists: all that was made is good, and therefore nothing God made is evil.” For Julian, God is not remote from humanity, but experiences all the suffering of [their] creation. “God suffers in your suffering.... God suffers with and in us.... God did it quintessentially on the cross itself, where all the pain [of humanity was] taken on.”

Julian believed that dealing with suffering came from focusing on the suffering of Christ and through which Christ will take on the suffering with you. Julian tell us to, “Turn your suffering into his [Christ]. Let yourself experience a bit of the cross [suffering]. Let your suffering become redemptive suffering.”

There is so much to be said about Julian of Norwich and I invite you to go to your local library to look up book about her. She is truly a spiritual leader for our time. Her teaching and experience can truly help modern day Christians come closer to God.

Julian of Norwich Quotes:

“All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” — Julian of Norwich

“If there is anywhere on earth a lover of God who is always kept safe, I know nothing of it, for it was not shown to me. But this was shown: that in falling and rising again we are always kept in that same precious love.” — Julian of Norwich

“God loved us before he made us; and his love has never diminished and never shall.” — Julian of Norwich

A Letter from your Pastor

Dear beloved community,

It is now time for one of the most magical and spiritual times of the Christian calendar. This month we celebrate Advent. Advent is without a doubt my favorite season of the Christian calendar. It marks the beginning of the church liturgical year and is part of the cycle of seasons that include advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, which are all related to the coming of Jesus or the Christ Child. Advent comes from the Latin word, *adventus*, meaning "coming." It is a season to prepare for the coming of Christ in various meanings, such as, the promised coming of the Messiah to the Jews, the coming of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, the promised return of the risen Christ in final victory, and the continual coming of Christ into the lives and hearts of believers.

Advent is a spiritual practice of anticipation. We as believers find ourselves waiting for something even though we don't quite know what that is. We find ourselves waiting for the human embodiment of divinity to be birthed into the world. We wait for something to bring us hope.

During this season we will hanging the greens that symbolize Christ's faithfulness and unending love towards us. We light the Advent candles of hope, love, joy, peace, and finally the Christ candle. These candles symbolize the way in which we prepare for the arrival of the Lord here on earth.

Advent is a time of searching. We as Christians use this time to begin our search for the Christ child. We long to seek out his presence and we yearn for his goodness. We take this time to contemplate on the compassionate nature of the Holy Lord.

It is during the celebration and contemplation of advent, we as believers in Christ are asked to be ready for his arrival. However, even as we celebrate advent, we are unsure when Christ will return. As Christians we are constantly living in a mindset of advent of anticipation and of waiting. We do not know the date or time in which the Lord will reveal himself to us. Jesus doesn't give us a clear answer; he just simply tells us to "stay alert."

We are called to live in the knowledge that God could reveal Himself at any moment and we are to be ready. We see this readiness by the example Christ gives us through the works of his ministry. Jesus prays and Jesus worships but that's not all he does. He also celebrates with his friends at weddings, He laughs and cries and he heals suffering.



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You see Jesus too lived in a constant state of readiness for the will of God. But that wasn't just at his crucifixion but in the interactions, he had throughout his ministry. Jesus cures the blind, he feeds the hungry, He heals the sick of not only his people but those that are socially considered his enemy. He uplifts the weak and questions the strong, he befriends tax collectors and prostitutes. He sees women and children as his equal. He even challenges the law when it dehumanizes and oppresses those that need help. Jesus is living into that constant readiness. Jesus was never afraid to stand up for the weakest in the room. Jesus was unapologetically living into love.

If Jesus' ministry teaches us anything it is that we are called to live a contemplative life. We are called to live in love. But we must remember that we are also called to be messengers of justice and alleviators of suffering. We are not called to ignore the suffering of the world.



As Thomas Merton, the famous trappist monk once said, " The contemplative life is not, and cannot be, a mere withdrawal, a pure negation, a turning of one's back on the world with its sufferings, its crises, its confusions and its errors."

I often wonder how many times God has manifested Godself in the form of the homeless, the sick, the immigrant, the prisoner, the prostitute, the hungry, the naked. How many times has God shown Godself in these forms and I wasn't ready? How often have I ignored them or have spoken unkindly towards them? To be honest there are many moments when I wasn't ready when God showed Godself to me.



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Maybe it is because I was scared? Maybe it is because I thought to myself that I would help that person some other time? Maybe it is because I didn't feel that person deserved my help. Maybe I thought that person wasn't worth my time? Or maybe I spent so much time searching up in the clouds for God that I walked past God at my feet.

This month we start the journey of looking for God in the most unlikely of places. This month we stop looking for God in a palace with money and prestige, laying on a bed made of the finest silks but instead as a poor, refugee, finding shelter in a barn, laying in an animal trough with just a blanket and hay to keep him warm.

During this advent season I invite us to be ready for the coming of the Lord. But don't just look up in the clouds, look down on the ground, look inside the prisons and detention centers, look inside the food banks and on the side of the road. Look inside yourself.

We are following in the path of the great healer and provider. We are making a way for the prince of peace to return. I pray that this advent season will be one of enlightenment for you and your family. I pray



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for your safety and for the safety of your families. I look forward to spending this time with you as we actively and contemplatively prepare for the coming of our Lord.

May you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Peace and Love,
Rev. Tory Shane Dillard





MERRY CHRISTMAS CHILDREN



THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

The candy cane is a long-time Christmas tradition. Everywhere we look we see them. They are used as decorations on Christmas trees and, of course, they are one of the most popular of all Christmas treats. I have heard several stories about the history and meaning of the candy cane. I don't know if they are true, but I do think that the candy cane can teach us a few things about the true meaning of Christmas.

First of all, if you look at the candy cane like this  it looks like the letter J. Jesus starts with the letter J, so that should remind us of Jesus and help us to remember that Christmas is Jesus' birthday.

If you look at the candy cane like this  it looks like a shepherd's crook. The shepherd used his crook to keep the sheep from wandering away from the flock and getting lost or eaten by a wild animal. The Bible says, "The Lord is my shepherd." The candy cane should remind us that Jesus is our shepherd and he will keep us from wandering away and getting lost or hurt.

The candy cane is mostly white. White is a symbol of purity. That should remind us that Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God and that because he came to be the sacrifice for our sin, we can become as white as snow

As you know, the candy cane has three red stripes. The Bible tells us that before he was crucified, Jesus was beaten with a whip which made blood-red stripes across his back. The Bible says that we are healed by those stripes. The stripes on the candy cane should remind us that Jesus suffered and died, so that we can have everlasting life.

Too many people, the candy cane is a meaningless decoration seen at Christmas time or just a piece of candy to be eaten and enjoyed. I hope that this year, every time you see a candy cane, you will be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas

Lord, we thank you that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who keeps us from harm. We thank you that because of his suffering and death on the cross, we have life everlasting

Help us to remember that we find the true meaning of Christmas in him.

THE CANDEL OF HOPE



PEGRAM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
DECEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
Regular Sunday Schedule Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am	(A) Anniversary (B) Birthday *Senior 60+ Lunch *Choir Practice		Dianne True (B)	Jordan Hedgepath (B) Men's Coffee 7:30 a.m. Iron Skillet		April Merritts (B) Donna Tidwell (B)
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Lisa Taylor (B)	AA 5:30pm		UMW 6 PM	Maurice Tidwell (B) Men's Coffee 7:30 a.m. Iron Skillet		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Jo Ann Haley (B) Church Council 11:30 am	Zoom Prayer Meeting 6:30pm AA 5:30pm			Men's Coffee 7:30 a.m. Iron Skillet		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	Zoom Prayer Meeting 6:30pm AA 5:30pm			Christmas Eve Service 6:30 pm	Merry Christmas 	Wayne & Pat McDonald (A)
27	28	29	30	31		
Paul Kaufman (B)	Zoom Prayer Meeting 6:30pm AA 5:30pm					

SENIOR 60+ LUNCH & BINGO & CHIOR PRACTICE HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED UNTIL FARTHER NOTICE

PEGRAM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
JANUARY 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
Regular Sunday Schedule Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am	(A) Anniversary (B) Birthday	*Senior 60+ Lunch *Choir Practice		Men's Coffee 7:30 a.m. Iron Skillet		
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Zoom Prayer Meeting 6:30pm AA 5:30pm		UMW 6 PM	Men's Coffee 7:30 a.m. Iron Skillet		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Wayne McDonald (B) Church Council 11:30 am	Zoom Prayer Meeting 6:30pm Jason Lane. (B) AA 5:30pm			Men's Coffee 7:30 a.m. Iron Skillet	Karla Moffatt (B)	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Zoom Prayer Meeting 6:30pm AA 5:30pm		Audra Hockenberger (B)			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Zoom Prayer Meeting 6:30pm AA 5:30pm					Jane Harris/Donald Brown (A)
31						
Alex Moffatt (B) Jeremy Bell (B)	AA 5:30pm					

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