

Volume 10 Issue 5

May 2020



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.THE MESSENGER

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK ... "SURVIVING!"

*"For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God." (Psalm 62:5-7 NIV)*

Do you have a favorite tree? I do!

My tree lives on what is left of the old Howard farm in rural Sherrill's Ford, North Carolina. It is a massive oak tree. It has seen my family through trials, sufferings, deaths, joys, victories and praises.

I visit this tree from time to time. As I walk around it, marveling at its majesty, I hear voices.

These voices belong to my loved ones. They belong to my great-great grandparents, my great-grandparents, my grandparents, my parents, my brothers, my cousins, my immediate family and me.

These voices are frozen in time as I recall the countless hours that we gathered under this tree for picnics, homemade ice cream churning, for shucking corn, frying fish, eating watermelon, grilling; and, the list goes on.

It was a haven for the foxhounds back in the day, to gather up and sleep off a long night of hunting. As children, we played under this tree's watchful eye. We climbed it.

We tied a swing to it; and, this swing, swung so high it would make our stomachs quiver. It was better than the Ferris Wheel at a county fair. The ghosts of my childhood will forever run and play under this tree.

I do not know how old the tree is. It has been on this farm for over 150 years. Its circumference is over 30 feet.

The tree saw my great-great grandfather, Franklin Q. Howard and his cousin A.A.

Gabriel march off to fight the "War of the Northern Aggression," in 1861. A.A. would not return. He is buried at Spotsylvania Courthouse in Maryland where he was killed.

Many of their buddies remain to this day in other faraway places such as Gettysburg, Chancellorsville, Manassas, Bull Run and Mechanicsville. My family history, which is recorded in an old Bible belonging to my grandmother, tells of the anguish that my family went through. They thought it was the end of the world; and, in a sense, it was the end of their world.

The tree was there in 1889 when my grandfather was born in the old house which still stands there today. It watched my grandfather march off to fight the *War Which Would End All Wars* in 1917; and, it saw him come home bent, battered and broken from mustard gas; and, too much sorrow from seeing too much death.

The tree watched my father leave for the South Pacific during World War II. It saw him come home very different, very 'grown-up' from when he left.

Sometimes I sit under this tree; and, I wonder what sorts of other things it has seen. It survived Hurricane Hazel, Hurricane Hugo, Hurricane Fran; and, the list goes on!

It also survived a direct strike from lightning in 1950. Its trunk still bears the scar. Furthermore, the tree has survived more ice storms that can be counted, Japanese beetle attacks and droughts.

This tree is also generous.

.....continued on the inside

**Even though it is badly bent and battered from the storms of life, it tends to willingly share its limbs for firewood to keep us warm in the winter. During the last ice storm that we had a decade or so ago, several large limbs broke off this tree. The tree donated them to my fire-**

### For Church information visit:

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## PASTORS DESK continued ....

Even though it is badly bent and battered from the storms of life, it tends to willingly share its limbs for firewood to keep us warm in the winter. During the last ice storm that we had a decade or so ago, several large limbs broke off this tree. The tree donated them to my fireplace. They kept us toasty that winter. Oak burns quite well.

Today the tree waits. The winter made it barren and gnarly looking, but *this* new spring is now encouraging life out of it, once again...for one more season at least. Once more, the tree stands sentinel over the Howard farm.

It is always very patient. Time means nothing to the tree; and, it simply waits!

God made this tree. God sent this tree to teach.

The tree has taught me patience and wisdom. I now understand that life moves in cycles.

I know that all of us go through personal winters of the soul. I know that all of us lose limbs at times; and, we even feel as if lightening has stricken us. I know that all of us go through some very dark times which can give us the tendency to lose all hope.

By the time you will be reading this, winter will have lost its grip completely. Although it has a surprise or two left to throw at us before it's done! The forecast for this evening (April 15, 2020) is for a low of thirty-nine degrees.

But the term *winter* can mean many things to many people. It can mean barrenness of the soul. It can mean darkness and struggle. It can simply mean times which could have gone more smoothly.

I suspect all of us experience winters of life in one form or another, off and on, regardless of what the calendar says. Life is filled with joy and sadness, elation and frustration, accomplishment and failure, peace and strife.

At times, many good intentions seem to never become a reality. Even so, God sends bits of agape along the way; and, in the end, much more gets accomplished than can be readily perceived.

Over the years it has become very apparent to me that God rarely allows us the privilege of seeing the end results of our work. It seems to be the natural order of things.

Where am I going with all of this? We continue to work. Our mission is always the same. We serve Christ and his Kingdom.

work. Our mission is always the same. We serve Christ and his Kingdom.

And yes indeed, it is quite clear that we are in a war with an invisible enemy, a virus; and, our weapons of choice are ventilators! I say all the time that who'd have ever thought that World War III would have been fought with ventilators?

Even so, my tree has seen much worse than this! Through it all, there is much more happening than meets the eye.

We are all on a journey. God is in charge.

During this time of unease, I think of my tree. During times of doubt in my life, I think of my tree.

During times of struggle in my life, I think of my tree. God sent my tree to tell me that winters always end, springs always come; and, God is still God. *In His Love, Jimmy Howard*

### **"May is for Mothers!"**

*"Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care"- 1 Timothy 6:20*

The month of May is a full one; and, it's already upon us. When we normally think of May, we think of college graduations, flowers in full bloom, the advent of heat in the South and Memorial Day weekend.

But this spring feels to have been hijacked by a virus. Even so, May kind of reminds me of mothers, because at the end of the day, Mother's Day is the centerpiece.

I have noticed over the years that Mother's Day can be one of the most emotional holidays of the year. Where there is grief and loss, hearts feel a wee bit rawer during May.

Sometimes, we parents may lament a few things that we could have done a little neater and cleaner with regard to raising our own children. I say all the time that God should give us starter kids to practice on before giving us the real deal. So, Mother's Day can open the door to some regrets for me, even though I am not a mother.

Some mothers have had a hard time being a mom; and, this can cause some extremely emotional issues. So, what I am saying is that during May, with all its many events and bookended with Mother's Day on one end and Memorial Day on the other, things can get quite sentimental.

This Mother's Day I am very fortunate that I still have my mother. But sadly, she is into her ninth year now of being a widow. My father's passing left a gaping hole in our family; and, somehow, we've had to learn to find a new normal. Nobody is prepared for this.

On the one hand I am delighted to still have my mother in this world; and, in my life as well. But on the other hand, it pains me deeply to watch her still grieve.

Recently, I ran across some notes that I put together while preparing to speak at my Dad's funeral back in 2011. I remember thinking then, that for three years the spotlight had been on my dad and his battle with cancer.

But in the shadows lurked my mother, always vigilant, always faithful, always serving and she never once backed away from any challenge that she considered would have given my father both quality and longevity of life. Personally, I do not know anyone on this earth who could have kept Dad alive any longer than my mother, the love of his life.

So, I wrote a tribute to my mother to be read at Dad's funeral by the presiding pastor. I didn't think I could get through it, actually.

It was this tribute that I stumbled across today.

**To Mother:**

*On behalf of my brothers and I, our wives, our families and especially the grandchildren please understand that no words could ever express how deeply thankful we are to you for the ceaseless love and care that you provided to Dad, not only during 59 years of marriage, but especially these last three years when the going got really tough.*

*It was you who motivated Dad to go on, to fight the cancer, to remain strong, to keep his faith and to persevere. It was you who lost countless nights of sleep with him, carried him to endless chemo and radiation treatments, empowered him with positive words of reinforcement and remained the love of his life until he left this physical world.*

*At this time, I borrow a term from Sheldon Vanauken, author and collaborator with C. S. Lewis. You offered Dad a "severe mercy." You kept the commitment that you made to him on September 1, 1951 to love and to cherish.*

***You modeled for us the very epitome of selfless giving and faithfulness. You are an example of what is best in life.***

*You modeled for us the very epitome of selfless giving and faithfulness. You are an example of what is best in life.*

*Furthermore, today is not the end of the story. Dad is more alive now than ever before and strangely, so are we. Because of your example, all of us here are profoundly changed. The spotlight has been on Dad for a very long time. Even so, all of us know you were the wind beneath his wings.*

**With Love,**

***The Older Son, my brothers and all of our family!***

So, it's May of 2020, the month of mothers! And, lately I have been thinking about caregivers and the *mothering* role they play in our world. They are the true unsung heroes who give us life. They labor tirelessly behind the scenes; and, they gave us quality and joy.

All of us owe a debt of gratitude to some caregiver who enriched us and most likely enabled us to survive. So, during this month of memories, maybe it would be a good idea to pause and give thanks.

The Apostle Paul mentioned two caregivers in particular, calling them by name. "I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also (2 Timothy 1:3-5 NIV)."

Paul was giving Timothy's mother and grandmother all the credit for the core of Timothy's faith and his missional spirit.

May is for memories. Family extends beyond blood ties. And, some days, angels can look just like ordinary people.

Finally, I will paraphrase Fred Rogers. He said, "When I was a boy and felt sad and discouraged, my mother used to always say, 'Look for the helpers. God always sends helpers.'"

*Jimmy Howard*

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK..** "I have washed my hands so much that my freckles are running together."

*Kat McClure*

# THE MESSENGER

## Trinity United Methodist Church

6230 Beatties Ford Road  
Charlotte, NC 28216



Church—704-399-1684

9am—Rise-Up Worship Service

10am—Small Groups

11am—Traditions Worship Service

answering Jesus' call to:

**“FEED MY SHEEP”**

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

Non-profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Charlotte, NC  
Permit No. 770

## Worship Helpers and Prayer Request

### STREAMING

David Stroupe

### MEDIA SHOUT

Malcolm Miller

### TITHES and OFFERINGS

Needed Weekly—\$5,145.05

Received- \$3,627.50 (4/19)

### PRAYER LIST

Kenneth Alexander, Curtis Buchanan, Deborah Evans, Chet Kidd, Perry McConnell, Mary Moore, Sheila Oates, David Stewart, Bennie Todd, Marcelina Velazquez.

\*\*\*In case of an emergency you can reach Rev. Howard by calling 704-458-8187, Ronna Privette @ 704-619-4647 or call the church office @ 704-399-1684.

### RETIREMENT RESIDENTS

The Laurels-David Todd  
North lake House— Mary Moore  
Ranson Ridge— Perry McConnell

*Simmer on That* is a live broadcast that I run periodically through the Trinity Facebook page. I feature conversations with community leaders, first responders, church folks and many others to find out how they are coping with Covid; and, also what advice they may have for us.

Also, from time to time I feature Bible studies and general information through these broadcasts. To join us in a broadcast, watch for the invitations that I will send out ahead of time on the Trinity Facebook page and through our phone tree.

To access the Trinity Facebook page, simply go on your Facebook home page and type *Trinity United Methodist Church* in the search window. A picture of our sanctuary will pop up and all you have to do is click on the link and then follow. You should be all set.

*Jimmy Howard*

**FISH FRY** has been canceled due to the continued COVID-19 restrictions. The UMM hope to have it in June so watch the upcoming newsletters for a date.

### GRADUATION SUNDAY

On Sunday June 7th Trinity will recognize its 2020 High School and College Graduates. Please send your graduates names to Jennifer McLemore or call the church office 704-399-1684 and leave a message. This is a very unique year for our graduates and we want to honor them for all of their accomplishments.

### **Trinity's VBS**

**June 21-25th**

Would you like to volunteer? Go to



[www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0448ABAB22AB9-vbs2020](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0448ABAB22AB9-vbs2020)

**“Simmer on That”**

