In My Head: thoughts from Pastor Jason

When we closed to in-person activities on March 12, we assumed it would be a short-term closure, that we would buckle under for a few weeks and that all would be well. We are approaching a milestone we never even imagined. August 10, 2020 will mark 150 days since our church suspended face-to-face gatherings. In reflecting on these 150 days, I am reminded that we have 150 Psalms in our Bibles. And the Psalms encapsulate much of human emotion: joy and anger, excitement and grief, anticipation and worry, praise and resentment. I know I have felt all these emotions in abundance over the last months and I am willing to bet that you have too.

Our world and our church will never return to what it was before. How could we when over 150,000 US citizens have died? How could we when we see the reach of our emerging digital ministries? How could we when we have all experienced the deep and lasting trauma of physical isolation from each other? This is the hard reality we are slowly beginning to face. And like everything we do, we will face it together.

This sounds all dark and gloomy, but I tend to be a glass half-full kinda guy. I have faith that Jesus Christ will show us the way, that God will strengthen us, that the Holy Spirit is creating something new. Over the centuries, the Church has waxed and waned, but our Triune God is ever-present. The Church is dying to its old ways. And that is good news, really good news. Dare I use the word gospel? Because through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are promised new life. We are promised to be reborn into something new and wonderful, something we can’t even imagine.

Solomon’s temple was destroyed (2 Kings 25) but it was rebuilt (Ezra 5). The church saw turmoil during the reformations of the 16th and 17th centuries but we came out stronger on the other side. God is always creating and re-creating. Paul reminds us in Romans 8 of this truth: “I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Let us add global pandemics to this list!

Birth is painful and so is saying goodbye to what we have always known. But in death there is a promise. Join me in celebrating the work of our God through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit that we might all be born anew!
NEW TENANT:
FUTURE CHURCH

We are pleased to welcome FutureChurch to our education building. FutureChurch is a non-profit organization working for reform within the Roman Catholic Church. Please join in offering an extravagant welcome to Co-Executive Directors Deborah Rose-Milavec and Russ Petrus!

FATHER TAYLOR:
BOSTON’S SAILOR
PREACHER

Rev. Bill Armstrong, retired pastor and West Park UCC member has published his latest book about one of America’s most celebrated preachers. Edward T. Taylor, known as Father Taylor, an uneducated former sailor became a Methodist minister and served a church for sailors in Boston for forty years. His eloquence was admired by people such as Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Mann, and the Peabody sisters. Their descriptions of him and his preaching and those of many others are the center of the book. You can find the book on Amazon or call the church office and we can order one for you.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT BOOK STUDY:
SO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT RACE

Widespread reporting on aspects of white supremacy has put a media spotlight on racism in our society. Still, it is a difficult subject to talk about. How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law take umbrage when you asked to touch her hair -- and how do you make it right? How do you explain white privilege to your white, privileged friend?

In So You Want to Talk About Race, Ijeoma Oluo guides readers of all races through subjects ranging from intersectionality and affirmative action to “model minorities” in an attempt to make the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race and racism, and how they infect almost every aspect of American life.

On Wednesday, September 2, we begin a five week book study, meeting each Wednesday evening at 6pm for 75 minutes throughout the month. The book can be purchased on Amazon or your favorite book seller. If you would like us to order the book for you, please contact the church office.

TO ACCESS THE WEEKLY 6PM MEETING:

Join Zoom Book Study Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87037224655?pwd=UVZWZE5MUWILnzVRc0Z1MTEzQTZxUT09
Meeting ID: 870 3722 4655
Passcode: 478657

Or you can call in without video by dialing 929.205.6099
Meeting ID: 870 3722 4655
Passcode: 478657

Weekly Schedule:

- September 2
  - Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2
- September 9
  - Chapters 3, 4, 5
- September 16
  - Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9
- September 23
  - Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13
- September 30
  - Chapters 14, 15, 16, 17

You may sign up for the book study under the CHRISTIAN EDUCATION tab on our website @ WestParkUCC.org.
BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST
1 Tim Thomas
2 Emily McKee
3 Zachary Milstead
  Sarah Griffin
6 Ann Rennette
9 Don Noreenberg
10 Wanda Paulin
  Diane Kragt
  Timothy Nelson
15 Callie Thayer
20 Beverly Busch
22 Jonathan Miller
24 Carolyn Cates
26 Sandee Vastag
  Edna Schleich
30 Terry Hogan
  Hallie Moreland
  Kathy Rennette
  Richard Rice

SEPTEMBER
5 Midge Karnatz
  Stacey Thayer
9 Rachel Hrehocik
11 Dede Todd
12 Dale Horn
14 Darlene Zaharewicz
  Julie Turnley
17 Rev. Jason Thompson
  Dennis Jones
18 Catherine Chavers
22 Dave Finley
23 Mike Zmina
25 Daniel Vivacqua
27 Olivia Armstrong
  Jean Clark
30 Gail Kenney
  Joanne Roff

ANNIVERSARIES

AUGUST
Eric & Robin Jessen
08-06-1983
Barry & Barbara Barthelman
08-10-1963
Steve & Renee Thayer
08-13-1994

SEPTEMBER
Darlene & Stan Zaharewicz
09-06-1986

WHILE YOU WERE AWAY

The Board of Trustees is keeping the buildings and grounds in good repair: Mark and Pat Rust repaired and repainted the wall in the Truax stairway; after the heavy rains in late July they cleaned the clogged south parking lot drain by hand; we also addressed some minor flooding in Bartter Hall. Thanks to Jeff Dobransky and Bob Arcuri for moving the refrigerator and freezer into the Food Pantry office. Trustees are also seeking quotes for a new sanctuary roof and parking lot resurfacing. Also thanks to the Trustees, the old Sr. High room is ready for Future Church, our new tenant.

SUNDAY WORSHIP: Our weekly Sunday morning at 10am can be found on YouTube @ YouTube.com/WestParkUCC.

NO INTERNET ACCESS?
You may use the following phone numbers to listen in to worship:

SUNDAY 10am Worship
1 929 205 6099
Meeting ID: 503 841 134

COFFEE HOUR after Worship
1 929 205 6099
Meeting ID: 198 946 112
Passcode: 493586

WEST PARK UCC FUNDRAISING DINNER GOES VIRTUAL!
COVID-19 has impacted so many aspects of our daily lives but we’ve adapted as a church family to find new meaning in our faith as we worship virtually and continue the important outreach ministries of our church. In that “can-do” tradition, the Board of Growth & Outreach voted to hold this year’s fundraising dinner virtually on Saturday, September 19, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. via Zoom. As with our previous fundraisers, participants will enjoy a sing-along, country-western trivia, and a gift basket drawing, but this time from the comfort of your own home!

A finger-lickin’ dinner of fried chicken, pulled pork sliders, macaroni & cheese, baked beans, cornbread and apple pie will be available for pick-up in the church parking lot between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m., providing participants with ample time to return home and enjoy dinner before the festivities begin.

We’re offering three options for those who have already purchased tickets for our annual fundraising event:

Option #1: If you are available to pick up your dinner and would like to attend West Park UCC’s Hoedown virtually, there’s nothing more to do. We’ll reserve you a spot and provide you with the Zoom passcode.

Option #2: I am no longer interested or unable to attend the event, please provide me with a full refund on my ticket purchase.

Option #3: I am no longer interested or unable to attend the event, I would like to donate the cost of my ticket(s) to West Park UCC’s operating budget.

To order tickets, call the church office at 216-671-7228 or email dmoreland@gie.net. It’s guaranteed to be a rootin’-tootin’ good time!
West Park
United Church of Christ
3909 Rocky River Drive
Cleveland, OH 44111-4153
www.westparkucc.org
216.671.7228

August/September 2020

The Good News
News & Happenings @ West Park UCC

Following Christ, Caring for All, Growing Together

CHURCH STAFF
Rev. Jason Thompson
Senior Pastor
WestParkUCCPastor@gmail.com

Jim Furry
Associate Pastor
WestParkUCCLicensedMinister@gmail.com

Christopher Venesile, PhD
Music Director
WestParkUCCMusic@gmail.com

Linda Ferro
Church Administrator
WestParkUCCOffice@gmail.com

Sara Jovanovic
Food Pantry Coordinator
WestParkUCCPantry@gmail.com

Rachel Miller
Social Media Administrator

Bob Arcuri
Director of Maintenance

Darrell Hurns
Custodian

West Park United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation