

Mid-Month Messenger

August 15, 2019

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Friday, August 23rd

9:00-1:00 & 4:00-7:00



From the Pastor's Desk...

“Eyes Wide Shut”

“Eyes Wide Shut” is the title of a 1999 film by the prolific director Stanley Kubrick. It is the story of a mythical New York City doctor, who becomes involved in a ‘secret association’ made up of the wealthy and elite of society. The ‘secret association’s’ goal is to engage in as many corrupt, immoral and decadent acts as possible. Sound familiar? As they would say on the TV show Law & Order – the story is ripped from today’s headlines!

By now we are all aware of the death of Jeffrey Epstein, the billionaire accused of operating a sex trafficking ring. While his passing will hinder the prosecutors involved, it will not end the investigation into what is becoming eerily similar to the above mentioned movie. Is this art imitating life? Or the other way around? Either way, it is endemic of how our society has become immune to such behavior. But is that what Jesus expects from us?

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John chronicle the life and teachings of Jesus. The Son of God, sent here to save the world rather than condemn it, Jesus defied convention and stood up against the high and mighty, the rich and powerful, and started a revolution that continues today. Or, has it run out of steam?

The history of the Christian Church reveals and ‘on again – off again’ relationship with the morals of society. Over the centuries, the Church has been intertwined with various governments, which meant they stifled the message of Jesus to better fit their relationship and, often times their funding. At other times, such as during the period of the Social Gospel from the late 19th century well into the 20th, Churches stood for decency, morality, fair economic policies and justice for all. Some of the major accomplishments of the churches during this period were:

Public Schooling for the poor

Abolition of Child Labor

Settlement Houses for Immigrants

Working with unions such as the AFL to end violence against workers

The theology of the movement was eloquently stated by the Presbyterian Church in 1910:

“The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.”

So where is the Social Gospel today?

It would appear that the social gospel is hiding somewhere in the background, waiting for the opportunity to once again be brought to the forefront – but by whom? If you haven't guessed by now, that would be us! Yes, all who proclaim faith in Jesus Christ, all who come to church seeking eternal life, all who understand Jesus as their Savior need to rise up for what is right, without fear or hesitation. It does not mean anything if we merely go through the motions on Sunday morning; if we do not put into practice what we preach, then we are just as culpable as those acting to disrupt the Kingdom that Jesus is trying to build.

The choice is ours – do we hide our heads in the sand, or do we follow Jesus? If being an Ostrich is what you desire, so be it. But, if you wish to follow Jesus, then you must follow Him to wherever He goes. No turning back. It is all the way, or no way! Stand up. Speak out. Fear no one. Be a Christian Soldier, marching forward for our God!

*“He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.”*

((Battle Hymn of the Republic))

Don't be left behind!

God Bless you all,

Pastor Tony



**Please continue praying for Brittney Ruskie, Brett Chauncey,
Mae Rudnick, Taylor Block, Scott Bartow and Elizabeth Hurst.**

Summer Worship 9:30 AM

The Church Council will meet Tuesday, August 20 at 7:00 PM



It's in the Bag!

The Saugerties United Methodist Church is ready for the new, green way of shopping! We have high quality reusable bags for sale for \$5 each. These are heavy duty tear resistant and water repellent polypropylene bags with dual reinforced handles and a plastic bottom insert.

You can purchase these bags at Church or by contacting Diane McDowell at 246-4888. All money collected from the sale of these bags goes directly to the Church.



Our summer rummage sale will be held on August 23 from 9 – 1 and 4 - 7. We will be setting up after church this Sunday the 18th. We will have a pot-luck lunch following the service and then make fellowship hall look like Macy's! Please come out for fun and fellowship. Anyone wanting to donate clothing, toys, or school supplies can bring them to fellowship hall until Sunday

NO BOOKS PLEASE!

Sunday School News

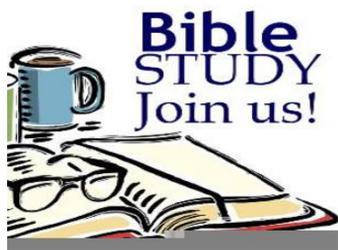
There will be a Sunday School Teachers Meeting this Thursday the 22nd at 7:00 PM. We will meet in the Sunday School Classroom.

Save the dates:

Sunday School for children age 3 through grade 12 will resume on September 8 at 9:15.

Youth Group for those in grades 7-12 will also resume on September 8 from 6-8 PM.

BFF Kids, for those in grades 4-6 will have its first meeting of the school year on Friday, September 13.

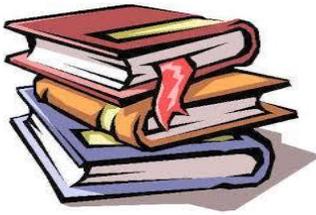


Thursday Morning Bible Study

Starts September 12, 10:30 – 12, in the lounge

The fall study is called “Fierce, Women of the Bible Who Changed the World” by Jennifer Cowart. It is trendy to use the word “fierce” when describing women at the top of their game, but women have been fiercely changing the world for thousands of years.

In fact, the Bible tells of many fierce female characters that made hard decisions, offered hope, boldly repented, shared their faith and blessed those around them. Although some are less well known than others, these women can teach us how we, too, can live into our callings, honor the Lord, and even change the world through our courage, faithfulness, and obedience. This is a six-week study, and each participant will receive a workbook with devotional lessons.



The next Book Club meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 9 at 10:00 a.m. in the Church lounge. We will be discussing the book “The Bean Trees” by Barbara Kingsolver.

\$Money Can Be Confusing – Here is a lesson from a friend and church member.

Get it back....and more!

While I'm not an accountant, clients often ask me if they made out better under the tax law change of 2018. Every taxpayer has a unique situation, but there is a good chance that many folks, especially retirees, lost their ability to deduct charitable contributions on their **Federal Income Tax** return. Without going too deep in the weeds (like I do when I play golf), I'll try to explain why. In order to be able to **deduct charitable contributions**, your total “itemized deductions” must be over a certain amount called the “Standard Deduction”, otherwise you just take the Standard Deduction. In 2018 the Standard effectively doubled while other popular itemized deductions for New Yorkers were capped meaning many taxpayers just take the Standard. It also means that contributions to the **Saugerties United Methodist Church** may not be providing a tax break come April. That is not the reason why you give to the church, but wouldn't it be nice to get some back, if you can? If I haven't lost you yet with all this boring financial stuff, I've got a great idea how **taxpayers over 70 ½** can get it back....and more! If you are taking **Required Minimum Distributions (RMD)** from your IRA, you can tell your custodian to make out and **mail a check directly to the Church** for any amount up to Your RMD. This strategy is known as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). Since it reduces the amount of taxable Income being sent to you from your IRA, it reduces

your total Adjusted Gross Income which is calculated before the Standard Deduction. Another tax benefit is that by not having as much income coming in from your IRA you may also be able to lower other taxable income sources such as the portion of Social Security that is included in your Adjusted Gross Income!

Here is an example of how it can work. Let's say that your IRA custodian says that you must take out \$12,000 from your IRA this year to meet the RMD and you normally give \$4,000 annually to the church. Chances are you are not able to deduct the \$4,000 on your income tax anymore. If you tell your custodian to do a **QCD to the Church for \$4,000** and send you the remainder of \$8,000, your taxable income will only go up by \$8,000. If you are in the 12% Federal Tax bracket **you save \$480 in tax and \$880 if you are in the 22% bracket.** If you have been finding it difficult to increase your contribution to the church, use the money that you save in taxes to give a little extra! There could be an added bonus for some. If your Social Security is being taxed, you may see that by **reducing your taxable IRA contribution by \$4,000 you may also be lowering your taxable Social Security by up to \$3,400 which could reduce your taxable income by up to \$7,400!**

If you haven't already taken your full RMD for 2019 it is not too late. Figure out how much you will be giving to the Church for remainder of 2019 and withdraw as much from your remaining RMD to cover it through a QCD. On Sunday you can mention in your envelope that you gave in a lump sum through a QCD. If you have already taken your RMD, keep it on the radar screen for January 1 of 2020.

What if your retirement funds are in a 401K plan, 403B or other qualified retirement plan. **Unfortunately, the QCD must come from an IRA, but you can rollover the retirement plan to an IRA and draw from there if it makes sense.** If you have any questions on the QDC I'll be happy to answer them as best I can.

Howard "Fritz" Haller, CFP