

“THE MEADOWS MESSENGER”
A Communication of Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church
July 2020



May and June 2020 Financial Reports

We hope that you find this information helpful as you pray for this congregation and evaluate your giving and participation in the worship, work and mission of this part of the Body of Christ. Sincerely, the Session and Pastor.

Tithes and Offerings needed for each week of 2020 = \$1,485.13. This figure is based on a total 2020 spending plan of \$77,227.00 which was approved by the Session.

MAY

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (5 weeks)	\$7,425.67
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (5 weeks)	\$8,586.00
This results in a budget overage for this month	\$1,160.33
Total Expenses (5 weeks) resulting in an overage for the month	\$5,470.93
	\$3,115.07

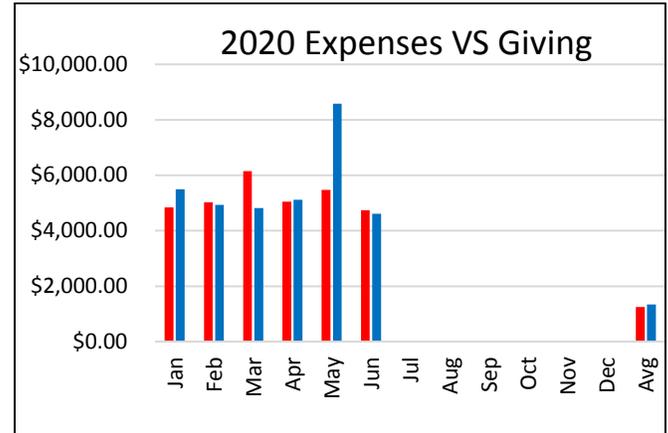
JUNE

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (3 of 4 weeks)	\$4,455.40
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (3 of 4 weeks)	\$4,614.00
This results in a budget overage for this month	\$158.60
Total Expenses (3 of 4 weeks) resulting in a shortage for the month	\$4,735.80
	(\$121.80)

YEAR-TO-DATE

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (25 weeks)	\$37,128.37
Actual Tithes and Offerings (25 weeks) received	\$33,562.00
This results in a budget shortage to this point	(\$3,566.37)
Total Expenses (25 weeks)	\$31,272.93
This results in an overage to expenses for the year	\$2,289.07

For those of you who understand a chart better than a bunch of numbers, below is the 'picture' of our finances for 2020 (25 weeks):



Expenses VS Income

Session Highlights

The Session:

- Approved a request from the Mong family to rent the fellowship hall for a family gathering after Linda's funeral on Wednesday, June 10th.
- Approved a request from Linda Mong's daughter, Robin, to use of our parking lot for a single family yard sale on Saturday, June 27th.
- Approved a request from the Preston/Pershing family to rent the fellowship hall after the burial of Ruthie on Sunday, June 28th so that they can spend some time with the folks who come to honor Ruthie.

Some Bible Trivia

The theme for this month is: the company of the apostles

1. What hard-working companion of Paul was called an apostle?
2. What was Peter's original name?
3. Who preached at Pentecost?
4. Who was banished to the island of Patmos?
5. By what other name was Matthew known?
6. Who doubted the resurrected Jesus?
7. Who were the sons of Zebedee?

The Pastor's Ponderings

In a conversation on Sunday afternoon, I said: I am ready to skip the rest of this year and go to 2021. I have had enough of this one. Then on Monday, I telephoned my mother to wish her a happy birthday and during our conversation she said to me that she feels a little like Job. When I said to her that she has not lost everything but still has her home and her children, she said: “for now.”

Many of us are feeling the stress that has come to us in 2020. We have been enduring the COVID-19 crisis for three months now, with all the uncertainty and separation that has caused. We have witnessed a new surge of protesting due to racial injustice and inequity. And death has taken people we love – some unexpectedly. Like my mother, some of us might be wondering what other losses and difficulties we will experience before this year is over. It might seem like darkness is increasing in our world and in our lives.



As I thought about all of this I remembered a book I read by Barbara Brown Taylor: [Learning to Walk in the Dark](#). I highly recommend this book, but until you have the chance to read it, I

¹ <https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/2017/04/learning-to-walk-in-the-dark.html>

offer you this reflection on that book by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, who blogs under the name of Velveteen Rabbi.¹ I have done some editing and added some words and phrases in [] for readability and to make connections to our present experiences. (Quotes from Barbara Brown Taylor's book are in italics.)

If you are in the middle of your life [or are experiencing some difficult times], maybe some of your dreams of God have died hard under the weight of your experience. You have knocked on doors that have not opened. You have asked for bread and been given a stone. The job that once defined you has lost its meaning; the relationships that once sustained you have changed or come to their natural ends. It is time to reinvent everything from your work life to your love life to your life with God – only how are you supposed to do that exactly, and where will the wisdom come from? Not from a weekend workshop. It may be time for a walk in the dark.

Even when you cannot see where you are going and no one answers when you call, this is not sufficient proof that you are alone. There is a divine presence that transcends all your ideas about it, along with your language for calling it to your aid ... [nevertheless,] darkness is not dark to God; the night is as bright as the day.

Sometimes we feel that God is agonizingly absent from our lives, but this is ... a matter of how we experience the world around us, not a genuine indicator of how that world actually is. This is a core tenet of my theology.

Barbara Brown Taylor is clear that in our [dislike of] darkness, we also manifest a discomfort with everything that isn't simple and solar and bright... but a full human life contains both light and darkness, both literally and metaphorically, and that's as it should be. She writes: *The way most people talk about darkness, you would think that it came from a whole different deity, but no. To*

be human is to live by sunlight and moonlight, with anxiety and delight, admitting limits and transcending them, falling down and rising up. To want a life with only half of these things ... is to want half a life, shutting the other half away where it will not interfere with one's bright fantasies of the way things ought to be.

[W]hen we run from darkness, how much do we really know about what we are running from? If we turn away from darkness on principle, doing everything we can to avoid it because there is simply no telling what it contains, isn't there a chance that what we are running from is God?

What if I could learn to trust my feelings instead of asking to be delivered from them? What if I could follow one of my great fears all the way to the edge of the abyss, take a breath, and keep going? Isn't there a chance of being surprised by what happens next? Better than that, what if I could learn how to stay in the present instead of letting my anxieties run on fast-forward?

[Barbara Brown Taylor explores] the idea that emotions such as grief, fear, and despair have gained a reputation as “the dark emotions” not because they are [harmful] or abnormal but because Western culture keeps them shuttered in the dark.

It is easy to imagine (or to hope) that grief has a schedule and will go away on a set timetable. It does not, and it will not. But that doesn't make grief or sadness a bad thing: sometimes they are the only reasonable reaction to the realities in front of us. And I believe wholly that the only way through them is *through* them – not pretending them away.

This puts me (Rabbi Barenblat) in mind of Jay Michaelson's writings about sadness.² We get ourselves into trouble when we resist our sadness and our grief, or when we imagine that we are supposed to be able to sidestep them, or when we imagine that they will go away on schedule. [At

² The Gate of Tears The Gate of Tears: Sadness and the Spiritual Path by Jay Michaelson

this point,] Barbara Brown Taylor cites Greenspan³ ... on spiritual bypassing – “It is the *inability to bear* dark emotions that causes many of our most significant problems ... and not the emotions themselves.” Yes, yes, and yes.

For those of us who cherish religious practice, there is real risk of spiritual bypassing – using our religious rituals or practices to distract us from what we're feeling, or to paper over what we're feeling. But authentic spiritual life calls us to do something different: to bring what we're feeling into our religious practice, even when what we're feeling hurts.

Your pastor, Yvonne, talking now ... Remember my Lenten sermon series on the Spiritual Practice of Lament? That is a religious practice that can help us in difficult times. Praying the Psalms and engaging in our own prayers of lament can help us be real with ourselves about what we are going through and how we feel about the stuff we are dealing with in our lives. The practice of lament is not a way to avoid our grief and struggles but a way to face them head-on in the presence of God, who is with us in the darkness and who will help us just as much in the darkness as in the light – maybe even more. Back to Rabbi Barenblat ...

There's so much else in this book that speaks to me. Like this brief passage on Jacob's night-time wrestle with the angel that earned him the new name Yisrael, God-wrestler: *Who would stick around to wrestle a dark angel all night long if there were any chance of escape? The only answer I can think of is this: someone in deep need of blessing; someone willing to limp forever for the blessing that follows the wound.* [Someone who is willing to learn from God the lessons he has to teach us in the dark and difficult times.]

[T]he reality that troubles the soul most is the apparent absence of God. If God is light, then God is gone [in the darkness]. There is no soft

³ Healing Through the Dark Emotions by Miriam Greenspan

glowing space of safety in [the] dark night. There is no comforting sound coming out of it, reassuring the soul that all will be well. Even if comforting friends come around to see how you are doing, they are about as much help as the friends who visited Job on his ash heap. There is an impenetrability to the darkness that isolates the soul inside it. For good or ill, no one can do your work for you while you are in this dark place. It has your name all over it, and the only way out is through.

In the end, what the darkness asks of us [Barbara Brown Taylor says,] is simple presence: *When we can no longer see the path we are on, when we can no longer read the maps we have brought with us or sense anything in the dark that might tell us where we are, then and only then are we vulnerable to God's protection. This remains true even when we cannot discern God's presence. The only thing the dark night requires of us is to remain conscious. If we can stay with the moment in which God seems most absent, the night will do the rest.*

I would argue ... that's what life asks of us in general: our "dark" times, and our "light" ones alike.

Toward the end of the book, [Barbara Brown Taylor] writes about the moon: *Sometimes the light is coming, and sometimes it is going. Sometimes the moon is full, and sometimes it is nowhere to be found. There is nothing [fickle] about this variety since it happens on a regular basis. Is it dark out tonight? Fear not; it will not be dark forever. Is it bright out tonight? Enjoy it; it will not be bright forever.*

Is it dark out tonight? [Does the world around us seem to be getting darker?] Fear not: it will not be dark forever. And even though darkness will inevitably return, so will its end. For me, right now, that is a profound theological statement about the return of hope and the hope for a future that is better than what we have known in the past. May it be so.

Your pastor again ... As we do the best we can in the darkness of the grief of our losses, the struggles of the corona pandemic, the challenges of making and maintaining good relationships with each other, and whatever else this year will bring us, let us all remember that darkness and light are the same to God (Psalm 139:12). When we are in God's presence, we can trust that God will bring us blessings and carry us through, no matter what we are experiencing. Thanks be to God.

Pastor Yvonne

Some Bible Trivia Answers

1. Barnabas – Acts 13:1-3
2. Simon – Matthew 4:18
3. Peter – Acts 2
4. John – Revelation 1:9
5. Levi – Mark 2:14
6. Thomas – John 21:25
7. James and John – Matthew 4:21



Back in April some of you made goodies to show appreciation to the healthcare workers of Broughton Hospital. The goodies were delivered to the hospital and distributed to the various departments. On June 11th and June 22nd I received packages in the mail which contained 23 thank you notes, each signed by members of the different departments. Above is the front of the card signed by Robbin Buchanan. She wrote:

To the Ladies at Quaker Meadows,
Thank you so much for the delicious pound cake that the Administration Office received. Your thoughtfulness was very much appreciated. You ladies have done a remarkable job making the staff at Broughton feel like “heros.” Wish you could have seen the “smiles” and heard the comments of “appreciation” as we delivered the cookies, cakes, Rice Krispy treats, breads, etc. to the various areas.

Again, thank you. Blessing to each and every one at Quaker Meadows.

The Pastor’s Ponderings – Part 2

Earlier in the Pastors Ponderings I reminded you of our Lenten sermon series on the Practice of Lament. We have a lot to lament about these days, but I wonder how many of you are lamenting (complaining) to God? Are you lamenting in prayer to God or are you lamenting only to other human beings? It is sometimes hard to pray in times like these, I know, because I have found it difficult to pray in the last few months myself. I am not saying, however, that I have not prayed recently, but it has been more difficult than usual. The losses and pain and constant COVID-19 vigilance have disquieted me. But if my study of lament has taught me anything, it has taught me that prayer is often not an easy or peaceful or polite conversation with God. Prayers of lament are raw, messy, and often impolite expressions of what we are experiencing in our lives.

So, I share with you now a prayer of lament which I found as I explored the blogs of the Velveteen Rabbi, Rachel Barenblat. She wrote this poem on May 28, 2020.⁴ Perhaps it will inspire you to write a prayer of lament (or two) yourself as you tell God honestly what you are experiencing in your life.

If you write such a prayer and would like to share it with me, please let me know.

⁴ <https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/>

“Pandemic Psalm 3”

The enemy
could be anywhere.
The tiny spiky mace
that liquefies the lungs
and clots the vessels
in the brain –

could be
on a door handle
or a package
or a light switch
or lingering in the air.

Going to the grocery store
or the mechanic
is a walk
through the valley
of the shadow.

This flimsy scrap of fabric
over my nose and mouth
is my shield.
Hand sanitizer my chain mail.
Will soap and water protect me?

I want to feel your presence
your cool embrace
on my hot skin
your glorious light
like early dawn breaking.

I don't want
to walk through the world
afraid.

Birthdays

Heather Kramer – July 15th
Randy Caudill – July 19th
Geri Lowdermilk – July 28th

Cover image: ABEUTY DIY Paint by Numbers for Adults
Beginner – Red Sunflower

Darkness Image: 8tracks.com/explore/walking_in_the_dark