

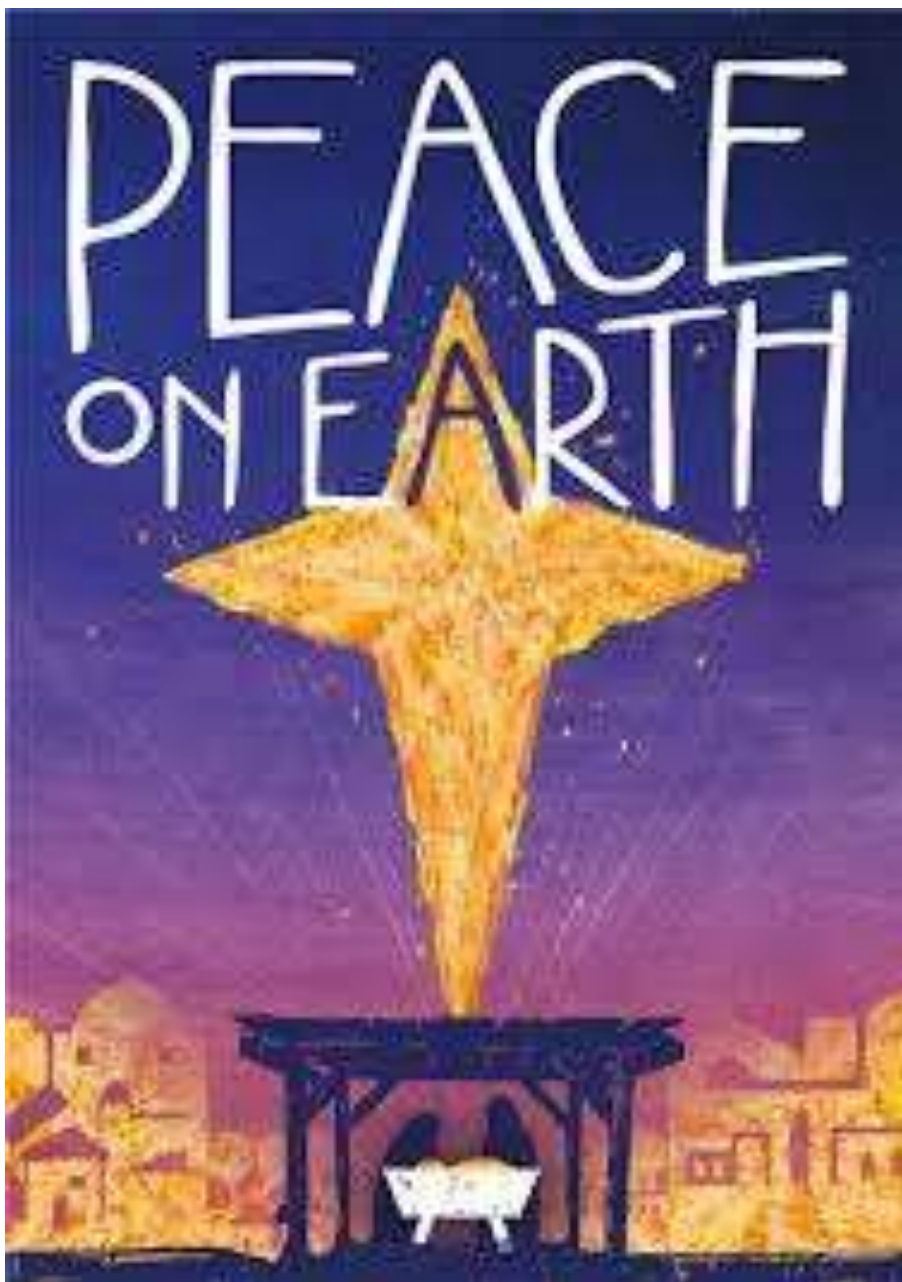


Dove of the Desert

# *Dove Tales*

Vol. XXXII Issue 2  
December 2020

“Increasing Love for God and Neighbor by Going Deeper, Reaching Farther, Transforming Lives”



*Merry Christmas*



# Pastor Dave

I once read a book called, “Take this Bread: A Radical Conversion”. It is written by Sara Miles, a journalist who was born and raised as an atheist, but found faith when she walked into a church and received communion for the first time.

Here is what she has to say about the Christian faith:

*But this is my belief: that at the heart of Christianity is a power that continues to speak to and transform us. ... It proclaims against reason that the hungry will be fed, that those cast down will be raised up, and that all things, including my own failures, are being made new. It offers food without exceptions to the worthy and unworthy, the screwed-up and pious, and then commands everyone to do the same. It doesn't promise to solve or erase suffering but to transform it, pledging that by loving one another, even through pain, we will find more life. And it insists that by opening ourselves to strangers, the despises or frightening or unintelligible other, we will see more and more of the holy, since, without exception, all people are one body: God's.*

Miles reminds us that the Christian faith is not something that has happened; it is something that is still happening. And even more than that, it is something that is happening to all of us. All people are worthy of God's grace and presence; and even more than that, all people are able to experience it on an individual and personal level as well.

One of the great enjoyments of being in ministry is having the opportunity to hear people's stories. People welcome me into their lives and invite me to be part of their journeys of faith. I walk with them through the good and the bad; I see God's grace and presence burst into their lives in the most unexpected ways and places.

Ministry has taught me that there is no one universal or single way that God enters into our lives. God speaks to us through moments of chaos and confusion as well as moments of stillness and silence. God comes to us when we are experiencing both tragedy and joy. God's presence knows no barriers. There is no formula that grants us access to God's grace; it is just available to us always.

We remember moments in our religious tradition where God entered the lives of ordinary individuals. God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and Moses entered the cloud and went up the mountain for 40 days. And then God appeared to some of the disciples – Peter, James and John – on a high mountain when Jesus was transformed in front of them, appearing with and speaking to Moses and Elijah. These moments not only defined who these individuals were, but also who God was and who God was calling them to be.

I guess we could call it their “mountain top” experience.

If there is one thing that these stories teach us, it is that Christianity is not about believing alone; it concerns experiencing it as well. It is about experiencing God in our midst, on a personal and transforming level.

We may never literally experience something like the mountain tops of Moses and the three disciples, but I can say with certainty that at some point in our lives we will all find ourselves on a metaphorical mountaintop. We will all experience a moment when God comes into our midst and boldly proclaims the Good News to us. This moment may happen in the distress of a hospital room, in the quiet of the desert during a morning hike or in room full of laughs and friends. It may happen in the liturgy of a worship service or it may happen around a dinner table. It could happen as we put our children to bed and sing to them, as we care for an elderly family member or as we gather around a table and share a meal with others. It may happen in the noisy commotion of a crowded place or it may happen in the peaceful silence of an empty space.

But it will be **your** mountaintop.

So this – the lives that we lead, the people that we touch, the ministry that we take part in – this is our mountaintop. And it is on this mountaintop God comes into our lives and shines his light upon us. It is on this mountaintop that God reveals himself to us, boldly declaring his love for us and calling us into his ministry.

May this season of Advent lead you to experience God in new ways.

He is coming,  
Pastor Dave



## Pastor Louie

As this issue of the Dove Tales arrives, we have entered into the Season of Advent. It is a time of preparation for Christmas, but this year, Christmas will be different from any other we have ever had because of Covid-19. The words, "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" from Godspell always come to my mind at this time of the year. But how do I prepare this year is the question I want to tackle today.

"I say to you, he who believes in Me...greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." (John 14:12) Dear Ones, prayer does not equip us for greater works - prayer is the Greater Work. Yes, we are all in need of prayer, especially if this Christmas Season might lead to a let down because of not following our regular routine. Christmas Eve, a time when the church is full at each of the different services offered, families gathered together looking forward to what follows after Christmas Eve worship. I already know that Joyce and I will NOT be at our daughter's home on Christmas morning to watch the grandkids open their presents because we are trying to follow the recommendations of the medical and scientific experts. Oh, we can see the results of the kids opening their presents through pictures, showing what the kids received, along with "phony smiles," they are teenagers after all. I wonder, will that be good enough for me?

What all this leads up to is, "What am I or you remembering and celebrating as we prepare during the time of Advent and then on Christmas Eve, when the words are stated, "Christ the Lord has been Born in the City of David?" Is not Christmas the time when God showed us how much he cared for us by sending Jesus upon this earth? Is not Christmas a time when we all usually feel a Spirit that we do not always feel during the rest of the year? Is it not also a time where there is great sadness felt by many who might have lost some one dear to them? Christmas is many things but let us never forget that there could not have been an Easter if God had not sent his son upon this earth in human form.

Whether you are focusing on what Covid-19 has taken from you this year or your sight is on the True reason for the season will determine how you will feel come December 24th or 25th. However God may engineer your circumstances this year, your duty is to pray. Never allow yourself this thought, "I am of no use where I am and how I am feeling about things," because you certainly cannot be used where you have not yet been placed. Wherever God has placed you and whatever your circumstances this year, you should pray, continually offering up prayers to Him. And He promises, "Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do..." (John 14:13).

Dear Ones, my prayer is that YOU will be a Blessing to others and to yourself as you share the True and Real Reason for this Season. Remember, Attitude is what is important. Do I have to be in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve? Do I have to be at a family member or a friend's home to really celebrate Christmas? Or is the fact that because I can celebrate Jesus and what Jesus' birth means in my life, no matter where I am, that makes this Christmas Season so special. Don't forget, if you aren't there yet, Prayer Changes Things. Have that conversation with our Heavenly Father right now.

May You and Your Loved Ones Know that no matter where you are, you are loved by God. May the words, "Christ the Lord has been born this day in the City of David" make this Season for you, no matter what.

Shalom,  
Louie







## Finance

**Stewardship Update** - A huge thank you to everyone who has been able to turn in their pledge cards during this year's *Together For Joy* stewardship drive. If you were unable to turn in a pledge card and would like to, please don't hesitate to return it to the church office via mail or call the church office if you still need a pledge form in case you did not receive or need a new one. We know that this has been a difficult year for many and we are extremely blessed by your faithfulness throughout 2020 and your commitment into 2021. For those who may have been unable to make a commitment at this time, we are thankful for your continued support of Dove in so many other ways and pray that you will be able to make a commitment when the time is right.



**Finance Update** - Our year-to-date (YTD) financial picture through October is much improved from September thanks to the continued faithful giving of our congregation. Income through the month of October is just slightly ahead of expenses by \$1,363.42. This is a much better than expected position than our original budget for the year. Thank you to everyone for your sustained faithful giving as well as to those within our staff and church leadership responsible for prayerfully managing our expenses as this has continued to enable Dove to navigate a very challenging year thus far. You are all a blessing that has enabled your church to continue to thrive during this time. Although we are not physically together, the great work of Dove is able to continue thanks to your support!!



## Youth Ministry

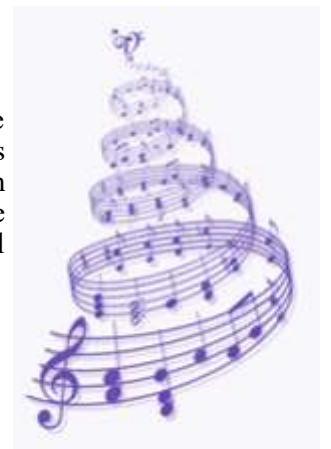
### DOVE YOUTH PROJECT

VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS CAROLING IS COMING THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON!

The Dove youth will be recording Christmas Carols and sending them to our Dove homebound members and friends who may need a little extra cheer this Christmas season! Our homebound members are cherished members of our congregation. The youth want the homebound members to know that each of you is loved and supported. May the Peace of Jesus fill each of you, and may you know that our Jesus, our Savior, is as real today as when born in the manger over 2000 years ago!

Bless you, always! Merry Christmas!

Greg Ramsey  
Dove of the Desert Youth Leader





# Fellowship Opportunities

We will let you know when Fellowship Opportunities Resume



The **LUNCH BUNCH** meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month for good food and fellowship. Please call: 623.931.4283 for reservations or information. Newcomers are always welcome! *(Currently not meeting.)*



**DOVE MEN'S BREAKFAST** meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month for a time of devotion, prayer, and fellowship. Please join them at **8:00 am** on Saturday, December 12 via Zoom!

Please R.S.V.P. to Louie Lyon, 623.238.8455 or e-mail [CarePastor@doveofthedesert.com](mailto:CarePastor@doveofthedesert.com) and he will send you the Zoom information you will need to join the event. Don't forget to have your coffee and breakfast ready along with your Bible!!



### PRIME TIME LIVE!

is the Dove of the Desert adult fellowship group and includes all Dove adults: married, single, young and young at heart. We meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month at a member's home and enjoy the evening together with food, fun and Christian fellowship. The host supplies a main course, attendees bring sides and dessert. *(Currently not meeting.)*



### PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of each month from 9:00 - 10:00 am in Room 7. The group knits or crochets shawls, baby blankets,

lap blankets, prayer squares, and other items to be given to Dove members and others in need of comfort.

For information, please call *Mimi Griffiths* at 602.762.6709 or at [mimig7852@gmail.com](mailto:mimig7852@gmail.com).

*(Currently working on projects from home.)*

### OTHER FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Many other opportunities exist for fellowship at Dove, including Adult Sunday School classes, Tuesday Talks, Women's Bible Studies, and Dove's musical groups including Celebration Singers, Dove Notes, Folk Group, and the Bell Choirs, Prime Time Live! plus many more. Please check the calendar found on the Dove website.



## Thank You

We want to thank our Dove family for all the cards, words of encouragement and calls. Bill and I love our Dove family and it has been a great comfort to know we have such great friends. Also, a heart full of love to Rev. Louie as he was with us in the ER till the end; what a blessing he was and still is. Pam and I thank you all for the compassion you gave us. Blessings to you all. *Jean McEachern*



## Special Prayers

### Condolences to:

Jean McEachern and the Dunphy family on the death of husband, father and grandfather, Bill McEachern

Mike & Debbie Przybylka on the death of Debbie's mother Gloria Miller

Anita Burnett on the death of her nephew, John.

Don & Lil Behrens on the death of cousin, Cliff Doty

Louie and Joyce Lyon on the death of her brother, Marv Pippert

### For these churches:

Sunrise UMC, Phoenix

Willowbrook UMC, Sun City





## Prayer Line

For a daily prayer and devotion with Rev. Louie please dial **602-375-PRAY**  
**(602-375-7729)**

Please send all prayer requests to Rev. Louie at [carePastor@doveofthedesert.com](mailto:carePastor@doveofthedesert.com)



## Missions

**Please deliver directly to the Mission**  
**Donations for St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance**  
**Pet Food & Supplies to Animal Shelters**  
**Justa Center Donations**  
**UMOM Donations**



## Board of Church & Society

### What Is the Measure of a Good Economy?

We keep hearing about how well the United States economy is doing, as evidenced by the recovery in the Stock Market. Why is the Stock Market the measure of the strength of the American economy? Maybe we should be looking at the lives of our fellow Americans: the many families in America who cannot find affordable housing, the many children in America who go to bed hungry every night, the many people in America who cannot afford medical or dental care.

A strong stock market makes rich people richer. The Stock Market is a place where shares of public listed companies are traded. We know that the wealthiest 1% of Americans (about 33,000 people) own 29% of the wealth in the country - over \$25 trillion. The rest of the population (over 330 million people), own only \$18 trillion, and we know that only the top 20% have effectively recovered from the Great Recession.

Maybe when we hear our political leaders talk about our growing economy, we could look beyond the stock market. We could consider the number of families that face food insecurity, that can't pay for health care, that are homeless or struggle to pay rent or a mortgage. If their situations are not improving, our country has a problem. We can do better. Our leaders need to do better.

As Paul said to the people of Corinth, "I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, 'the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.'" (2 Corinthians 8:13-15) NRSV



### Racism and Economic Inequality

The UMC Desert Southwest Conference Task Force on Economic Inequality will present a fish bowl event regarding racism and its effect on economic inequality. It will be on Tuesday, December 1 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm in a zoom meeting.

The format will be a panel from the racism task force established at the request of Bishop Bob. Questions will be predetermined to present to the open chair.

This will be the first of a series of presentations that address the impact of injustice categories; immigration, education, criminal justice, etc., on economic inequality.

If you would like to join in viewing, the event link will be provided upon your request to Bud Clark at [budandmary2002@gmail.com](mailto:budandmary2002@gmail.com).



# Care Ministry



**The Casserole Brigade** is a group of ladies and gentlemen who prepare a meal and/or purchase prepared food occasionally. There are no meetings to attend, no set schedule for involvement, and your effort is always appreciated. Casseroles are just one of the options!



Our Dove Pastors contact Care Ministry and share if there is a temporary meal need for:

- ◆ person home from hospital who may live alone
  - ◆ out of town family here for a funeral
- ◆ Child suddenly very ill, siblings at home and parents work, etc

Involvement in this outreach is a great opportunity to perhaps include your family's youth and it has an added benefit of helping someone you may not know. Please contact Sharon who will be happy to answer any questions and sign you up!

Sharon Eshelman, Coordinator – sharon.eshelman@hotmail.com – 623.566.2798

## Zoom Groups

**Come to the "M.O.R.E."** (message, online, reflect and engage) discussion group, as we go deeper into the message. We gather Sundays from 11 am to 12 pm on Zoom. Email [mkburt2@att.net](mailto:mkburt2@att.net) (Peggy Burt) for the Zoom link. **Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study** ~ meets weekly on Zoom. We have a time of fellowship from 9:30 to 10 am, study begins at 10 to 11 am. Join us as we dive into timely, relevant, scripture, based book studies. Contact Peggy Burt [mkburt2@att.net](mailto:mkburt2@att.net), 847-727-4763 for zoom link.

## Rose Garden

### News from the Rose Garden

The extreme heat this past summer killed many of the rose bushes in the garden. Over the next several months there will be work going on to refurbish the garden. We will be planting 43 new rose bushes. So do not be dismayed if you see the garden in a mess. The church was given a gift to cover the cost. If you are interested in helping dig holes, plant and/or water plants on planting day, call Mary Patterson at 623 219 9679. The roses should be here in early February and blooming for Easter.



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# *Dove of the Desert*

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**Return Service Requested**

**Sending December Blessings to:**



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