



Under the Dome

**Dunbar United Church of Christ
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An Open & Affirming Congregation

Weekly Services

Sunday Mornings @ 10:00 A.M.

Saturday Evenings @ 5:00 P.M.

February 2024

Pastor's Report, February 2024

A theme that is repeated at least three times in the church year, during lent, advent, and now, epiphany, is “repent.” Repent means to change or return to the right path, which is the path of becoming the image of God, which is already in us, but not yet realized. Jesus is what that image looks like, we could say, in full bloom. So when John the Baptist, and then Jesus following him, say “repent,” that’s what they mean. They are telling us to become the image of God that God intended us to be. Become Jesus, in other words.

In my annual report last month (edited parts of which are in this February report) I talked about a movie about repentance that Phyllis Gibbs told me I must see, made in 2019, called: The Best of Enemies. I recommend that everyone see this movie. It was based on a book: The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South. It’s the true story is of the civil rights activist Ann Atwater and the Ku Klux Klan leader C.P. Ellis, and takes place in Durham, North Carolina, 1971. An early scene is a Ku Klux Klan meeting in a room like our Fellowship Hall, packed with White supremacist men, where the meeting ends with Ellis saying a prayer — because all these men who hate people of color and Jews and Catholics —also consider themselves good, God-fearing Christians. This is how these black-Jew-catholic-all people of color-immigrant-hating “Christians” prayed at the close of their meeting:

“Heavenly Father, give us strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands. Keep us unfettered from the world that we might fight the good fight, be worthy to claim the prize. May we as brethren and clansmen be steadfast and unremovable as we go hence from this klavern and to the struggle of the alien world. Let us not forget the crowning glory of a clansman is to serve. Not for self but for others.”

It's interesting, there was no mention of Jesus. Is that because he was a Jew and they hate Jews — even Jesus? I found an interview from 2014 of the Imperial Wizard of a Virginia klavern, Frank Ancona. He said the Klan is Christian and not violent and they don't hate people. They just believe that God made the white race superior to others, and that Jesus was white. He said "Jesus was not a Jew — he was only called Jew because people mocked him." And yet, the KKK have a history of committing acts of violence against African Americans, including lighting their homes on fire, lynchings, and leaving burning crosses in the front yards of homes and churches. The KKK was associated with Protestants in its heyday in the 1920's — many of its four million members then were also anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic. But Imperial Wizard Ancona said they are not a hate or a terrorist group. Ancona described himself as a practicing Christian and a leader in his church. He said membership in the Klan has surged since Barak Obama was elected president in November 2008.

If we study the history of the United States, and in particular, the Ku Klux Klan, we see that Imperial Wizard Frank Ancona is not telling the truth. But millions of people believe his version of history. Even recently the candidate for president Nikki Haley (born Nimarata Nikki Randhawa to immigrant Sikh parents from Amritsar, Punjab, India) said the cause of the Civil War “was basically how government was going to run, the freedoms, and what people could and couldn't do.” Later, when her answer caused a backlash on social media because she didn't mention slavery, she said, “I mean, of course, the Civil War was about slavery. We know that — that's the easy part of it.”

Many people don't know the history of the United States, or if they do, they're ashamed of parts of it and so they revise it. What if Haley had given a more honest answer to the question of why the Civil War was fought? What if she had quoted a speech — called the Cornerstone speech — made by Alexander

Hamilton Stephens, the vice president of the Confederate States of America at the beginning of the Civil War? Stephens said: “Our new (Confederate) government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea (as the one presented in our Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal). Our new government’s foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.” Stevens — vice president of the Confederate States of America — went on to use scripture passages in the Bible to justify the torture, rape and enslavement of other human beings.

As of 2017, the Southern Poverty Law Center listed 917 hate groups in the United States, and of these, 450 — about 50 percent — were white supremacist organizations. That number includes 100 white nationalist groups, 78 racist skinhead, 99 neo-Nazi, 43 neo-confederate and 130 Ku Klux Klan chapters.

Many of the members of these hate groups call themselves Christian. We might ask: “How can this be?” Can violent Jew-hating, Catholic-hating, immigrant-hating, Black-hating, bigoted, White terrorists follow a man of peace and love and forgiveness while at the same time hanging, shooting, torturing, terrorizing people who are not like them? In other words, can we pray to Jesus AND follow the devil at the same time?

As painful and discouraging as parts of “Bests of Enemies” were to watch — because it exposes how ugly we can be to one another — it was also inspiring and encouraging because C.P. Ellis had a conversion in the course of the story, something like Paul on the road to Damascus. Ellis, the president of his local KKK had a turn-around experience — he repented — and

became an advocate for integration and a civil-rights activist dedicated to helping the different races of people in the United States live in harmony with each other. He continued, until his death at 78, to work for civil rights and remained close friends to the end with Ann Atwater. At his funeral, she gave the eulogy.

The movie is important because it is a mirror of who we are right now at this moment of our history. As church attendance across the nation declines, White supremacy is on the rise and is no longer a fringe, American terrorist phenomenon but has become mainstream and normal and even respectable as more and more affluent and popular Americans, even an ex and maybe future president, and millions of Christian Nationalists shout “retribution, revenge, no poisoned immigrant blood, America first!”

Many in America — and as we can see in our history, this isn’t new — want to worship Jesus AND the devil together, at the same time. Jesus said we can’t serve two masters, but we try.

Our ship has lost its rudder. God tells me: “America is lost — people want Jesus AND Satan — at the same time! They want Jesus, and retribution. They pray to me, but call my children ‘poison.’ They say ‘pro-life,’ but have no love. Who will go for me and reveal the real Jesus of love, compassion, forgiveness — who loves all races and genders and orientations and colors? Who will go for me????” And I believe the reason why we are here, why our church is here, is so we can say to God: “Here we are, send us!”

Grateful to be here — in this ministry and calling — with you, with love,

George

***Contact Pastor George @
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Trustees

The Trustees' activity for the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024 centered on securing cost estimates for possible capital projects in 2024 and working with Steve Hurd on developing a draft budget for review during the 2024 annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
John Donohue

Deacons

I personally want to thank all the Deacons for their time and commitment to our wonderful church community.

The Deacons continue to work to support members of the congregation in need. Please don't hesitate to reach out, we are here to help.

Respectfully yours,
Kitty Donohue

H.O.P.E.

H.O.P.E. would like to thank those that have donated this past month and helped us keep feeding others:

George and Janet Braen

John and Charlotte Sroka

John and Lois Kasarauskas

Rev. George and Janet Manukas

Heather Sibley

This month we are donating to Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen where they serve dinner Sunday through Thursday and distribute whole foods grocery style every Wednesday. They also operate a low barrier downtown day program for people who are on the street 1:30-5:30p.m. Sunday through Friday.

If you would like to make a donation, you can do so by visiting our Dunbar website or send a check to Dunbar with HOPE in the memo.

Please help us keep up Helping Other People Eat.

Thank you again,
Debbie Laffin

Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship will be holding their "famous" Souperbowl Luncheon on February 11! Church service will be in our sanctuary with the luncheon to immediately follow in Fellowship Hall. Salads and breads will be out by 10:45 with soups served starting at 11 a.m. A donation of \$5 is suggested for all the soup, salad and bread you can eat! We will be supplying beverages and desert as well.

Proceeds to go to the Hamden Food Bank.

If anyone would like to make a soup, bread or dessert, please let me know so we can coordinate all.

We will be voting on proceeds from our 2023 successful Apple Festival at this time. If you have a specific charity you would like us to consider, please let me know.

The Souperbowl luncheon is open to everyone, please invite you family and friends to join us!

Much appreciated ,
Debbie Laffin, (203) 281-3241

Board of Missions and Concerns

Hi Everyone,

The Missions Committee is looking forward to another year of contributing where needed. We will continue to give to individuals and local, national and international organizations.

As always, please let us know if there is anything that we can be of help with. Our Missions Committee will continue to show love, kindness and caring.

Take care and thank you for all your support.

Donna and the Missions Committee:

Janet Braen, Olga Dryfoos, Phyllis Gibbs, Jennifer Johnson ,
Lois Kasarauskas, Debbie Laffin, and Jodi O'Sullivan

Sunday Service 10am every Sunday is also available online via Zoom

Meeting ID 658 791 9474

Password 503008

To join by telephone, dial 929-205-6099 and enter the meeting ID. If prompted for a password, enter 503008.

Saturday Service every Saturday at 5pm

In person only

Bible Study every Wednesday via Zoom

Meeting ID 658 791 9474

Password 503008

To join by telephone, dial 929-205-6099 and enter the meeting ID. If prompted for a password, enter 503008.

Women's Fellowship is holding its annual Tag Sale on Saturday, April 20, from 9-12. If you are doing some spring cleaning, please think of us and save those items. We can store them in the Parish House. Please let me know if you need help dropping off/pick up. Please let me know if you are dropping off independently so I know what is for the tag sale.

Thank you,
Debbie Laffin

Dunbar UCC Open & Affirming Statement

We, the members of Dunbar United Church of Christ, want Jesus to be the center of our lives. Our mission is to practice the New Commandment that Jesus gave us: to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34). We seek to follow God's will by loving our neighbors, friends and enemies alike. We seek justice for all.

We celebrate the image of God in every person. As an Open and Affirming Church, we welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of our church, and affirm that the grace of God, known especially through Jesus, is a gift meant for people of every race, color, age, ability, gender and sexual orientation. Worship, leadership, ministry, and employment are open to all.

We are on a journey of faith and invite all people to join us. No matter the church or community where your journey began, you are welcome here.

Mission Statement

“We believe that Jesus calls us to love each other, serve our neighbor, and nurture God's spirit within us.”