

November 22, 2020

Perrysville UMC, 139 East First Street, Perrysville, OH 44864

Pastor Janet, 740-504-2238

Dear Friends & Family of Perrysville UMC,

Here we go again!. . .seems to be the likely phrase needed to manage the recent outbreaks of COVID-19. Thanksgiving is just days away. And, again, it seems to be the one holiday we could have really used to focus our thoughts toward the blessings; personal and church-wide we receive from the Great God we worship.

At this time, key leaders of our church, and I have discussed all the coronavirus setbacks, recommendations, etc to decide upon our current quarantine of in-person worship. An initial decision has been made to continue the quarantine throughout the remainder of the calendar year. However, we will continue to monitor the events and the public health advisory system found online at coronavirus.ohio.gov. ***IF the circumstances change to an orange or yellow status, we definitely want to strongly consider resuming in-person worship!!***

We will be keeping a close watch of current events! Please keep us in prayer!

Blessings!

Pastor Janet

Announcements –

Our online presence is growing!!! We have an updated website found at this address: <https://www.perrysvilleumc.com/> Sermons will be posted online. Check it out!!

PLEASE email prayer requests to me at janeteboyd98@gmail.com and I will track them and continue to publish them in this quarantine newsletter.

In addition, please continue to ***give*** to the Perrysville Association of Churches December event. More details will be provided in next week's newsletter.

I am aware of a PO Box for the Church. Will someone provide that information to me?! Thank you!!

Prayer Requests –

Continue to keep Carol's grandson, Riley, in your prayers!

Continue to keep the nation in our prayers.

Scripture reading –

Hebrews 11:1-3 NRSV

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

Devotional Thoughts –

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving – in whatever way we choose to celebrate this holiday – I want to encourage and remind each of you to persevere in your faith.

Recently, the question has been asked of me – Will this ever end? The “this”, of course, is COVID-19. While I do not own a crystal ball nor do I engage in predicting future events, I admit I have thought deeply about that question.

When the coronavirus outbreak began in March of this year, my emotions took a nose dive. The work steadily invested in beginning the childcare seemed to have slipped right through my fingers. Daily, I began gaining a more steady degree of thought and insight. I realized each and every person – on a global level – was indeed dealing with the same types of emotions, thoughts and, for some, panic, as I, and many other people, had initially experienced.

We, as a nation and part of the international experience of COVID-19, are now into our ninth month of this roller coaster ride we call daily life. Each day we learn of more deaths related to the sickness or more joblessness related to the sickness or economic imbalances related to the sickness and so on and so on. But, what I haven’t heard a lot of or even the mention of – faith.

Faith through an extended period of darkness. Or faith that God has not abandoned His people. Or faith that God does continue to heal and provide. Faith, a simple word packed with an abundance of meaning. For example, I often reminisce about what the Pilgrims went through to sail to and begin to live in an entirely new geographic area. What I realize now, as an adult, is the Pilgrims relied upon their Faith to see them through this overwhelming experience.

Their voyage consisted of 65 days at sea enduring horrific storms and terrible sickness aboard the ship. Many died. By the way, after they landed they immediately had to build shelter and food. (Not like carrying in bags of groceries to a warm house and electric lights.) Their first winter in 1621 was incredibly cruel. In fact, half of the remaining pilgrims died in the first three months.

After a successful harvest in late summer of 1621, Gov. William Bradford declared a thanksgiving celebration to be held in the fall. The harvest was abundant and plentiful. The three-day feast included games, archery, hunting and guests. The Native Americans were an integral piece in the Pilgrims survival those first years.

Just as I went away thinking that all was a happy ending during those early years in the new land—I now know better. The Plymouth settlement had lost 50% of the original pilgrims to sickness. During the second winter of 1621-22 an unexpected shipload of new people had arrived at the Plymouth settlement. Suddenly the abundance of the previous harvest had to be rationed in order to accommodate the new arrivals. Half-rations were ordered by the Governor. Sickness did continue to ravage the community taking many folks to their deaths. No thanksgiving celebration was recorded the second year. A 12-week drought threatened the

pilgrims in the Spring of 1623. Gov Bradford organized a day of fasting and prayer which miraculously brought rain for the next 14 days. And the story continues . . .

I am not quite sure what intrigues me most about the story of the Pilgrims. But each year, I reminisce about the story of approximately 100 people who decided to trust God; to take Him at His Word and to set sail on an adventure of a lifetime. I believe their story can provide us with insights into *a life of faith* that many may think impossible. They did not give up when nature, unfriendly people and illness all took turns giving them adversity. Adversity in extreme doses. There was absolutely NOTHING easy about what they did. The Pilgrims possessed faith, but even more importantly, they LIVED BY their FAITH.

How does the example of their faith in action motivate you? Is God urging you to a higher level of faith? Is your faith growing? In spite of extreme adverse circumstances they believed God had guided them to the new land to worship freely. The pilgrims did not give up and sail back to Europe. When their faith was tested, they stood in unity of faith and forged ahead. They persevered.

Fast forward 400 years. We are approaching a very unique Thanksgiving Holiday. A holiday atmosphere shrouded in sickness, doubt and fear. Is discouragement and fear nipping at your heels? Is the darkness ready to overtake you? Are you ready to simply give up?

STOP! Take in a deep breath and activate your faith. Ask God to guide you to where He is working. Yes! He is working in the midst of the coronavirus and all the additional mayhem that is accompanying the virus. Then stand firm in persevering faith! Trust God with the results. The outcome will be a 'bigger' adventure than you might possibly have imagined but it will be worth it all.