

...from the Heart

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Going Forward

By the time you receive this, Thanksgiving will have passed, and Christmas will be coming at us fast and furiously. Life moves on. Whether we want it to or not, whether we're ready for it or not. It must.

As we come to the close of 2020, I have no doubt the far majority of the world's inhabitants, if not all, cannot wait to put the start of *this* decade behind them. It can't happen soon enough. But in doing so, how will we go forward?

My thoughts run to another group of people who couldn't break away fast enough from a situation in their lives: the Jews and their enslavement in Egypt. They were able to *move on* with their lives and beyond their conditions, which lasted more than a "year." They were free to go, free to carry on with their lives. However, their existence was far from carefree! There were other problems, different issues, but issues nonetheless. They had their ups and downs. They hit their fair share of "holes" in the road, which in one case, turned out to be a sink-hole – literally! One could say they were attending the school of hard knocks. It didn't have to be so bad if they could have learned from their experiences. Instead, a great many failed out, a whole generation to be exact. There were many disappointing test results. One in particular that I can't get out of my mind. We can find it in the Old Testament book of Numbers, chapter twenty-one.

A King, by the name of Arad, attacked Israel on their way to a better life. He took some captives, and what did the people do? They turned to the Lord. Stop! What a novel idea! (Sarcasm intended) You see, they weren't in the habit of doing that. And guess what? The Lord listened to them and defeated their enemies; He gave them a big victory! The Lord had *earned* a certain notoriety for doing such things!

They looked to the Lord! However, in a short amount of time, well, they reverted to their old ways; they took their eyes off of Him. It was not enough that the Lord freed them from the Egyptians' death grip, with one plague after another, parted the Red Sea, gave them water from a stone, bread from heaven, and defeated yet another cruel dictator.

After all that, *the people became **impatient** on the way*. Why? Because the Lord didn't have them take the most "direct route." Why? Because His way was the safest! Now, to add to that, not only did they speak out against Moses, which they were in the habit of doing, they also spoke out against the Lord with a recycled complaint: *You brought us out of Egypt to die! **Not true!** There is no food or water!* Again, false! The Lord supplied them with both. But here's the truth of the matter: *we loathe this worthless food!* (Numbers 21:4-5) In other words, they were **ungrateful**! Also, they developed a **distrust** for the Lord and lost faith - **unbelief**. Both are game-changers. A deadly combination, if you will, which will prove fatal. It will serve to keep them from stepping onto the property God had declared was theirs.

Therefore, God sent/allowed *fiery* snakes to visit them, and people began to die. Why?! Getting His people to the *other side* was His top priority! He had to gain the attention of the generation that would eventually cross over the Jordan River. And He did! The snakes served as an alarm! So the people came back around and confessed to Moses: we blew it again. And Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord directed him to form a bronze snake to set on a pole. He then walked through the camp, and when they **looked** upon the snake, they were healed.

Years later, Jesus would teach using this same story: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* John 3:14-15 ESV

The apostle John would record it, and to this day, Jesus' words echo throughout time and space to reach *our ears*! Therefore, no matter what may land in our laps in 2021, what direction our country heads in, or what tests we will have to go through, it is right and just for us to continue to trust the Lord Our God! To remain grateful and faithful to Him for all He continues to accomplish on our behalf, especially when tempted to think He is taking us the "long" or *wrong* way.

Whether He has spoken to us from a pillar of cloud by day, or a pillar of fire by night, or when He sported a pair of worn-out sandals, or when He hung from the cross while bleeding out, or now, while seated at the right hand of the Father; His loving guidance remains the same: Lift your eyes and look to me. I am where your help has and will always come from; I am the Lord your God. I am the Keeper of your soul, and I will keep you! Now, and in 2021, and forever and ever more! Let us get in the habit of calling on the Lord if we aren't already. He waits, and He is listening, and He is on His way!

Pastor Vin

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Sunday Service at 10am

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Check out our website at www.patchnaz.net
for Sermons, church activities and other events

Do You Know What *You* Want?

Two and a half-year-old Grace went to my refrigerator, opened the door, and stared. I stood behind her and asked her what she wanted, and her response was a shrug of her shoulders. "Do you want an apple?" She shook her head. "Milk or bread?" Another shake of her head. The condenser in my old refrigerator began to beg for mercy. "*Grace*," I said, "what are you doing?" "Shopping," she replied. I hadn't appreciated the fact that she didn't know what she wanted but she was determined to figure it out. I stifled a laugh and suggested some water. That was it! Grace took a small bottle of water and went to the dining room.



Five and a half-year-old Jake knew exactly what he wanted. He selected strawberry-flavored water. Reading the side panel of the box, he commented, "Water is very healthy and this has zero calories. That's very healthy!" He then explained that water gave him the energy he needed to get through the portal and fight the aliens. Honestly, how does one keep a straight face? Smiling (or more like biting the inside of my cheeks), I told him he'd made a very good choice. He drank his water and went outside to plan his attack. The aliens didn't stand a chance.

What are we expecting to find when we open the door of our church on Sunday mornings?

Like Grace, are we shopping?

We want something, but we're not sure what. If asked, we would honestly say "I don't know". Maybe we're secretly hoping we'll figure it out if we wait long enough or if someone helps us decide.

Like Jake, are we on a mission?

We've had something specific in mind, long before we ever stepped into the building. We know what we need, why it's necessary, and where we'll find it.

Jesus has living water for *every* thirsty heart. It flows into us as we worship Him in song, by our fellowship with one another, as we receive teaching, and as we wait expectantly for Him to speak to us.

Isaiah 55:1, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." NKJV

John 4:14, "...but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." NIV

-Sue Cerruto, Hospitality.

Get Crafty this Christmas!



Bake, sew, decorate; make a card, a wreath, knit a sweater, color a picture, wrap a package, write a letter, sing a song! Get crafty this year in your own unique way. Christmas is a time of giving and sharing your talents with others, making it both a blessing for the giver and receiver. We will not be having our annual ladies craft this year, but there are millions of ideas out there on sites like **Pinterest**. One thing that I thought might be fun is stringing buttons to make a Christmas tree garland. This could be something fun to do with your kids or grandkids.

It seems much neater than popcorn, and for those of you like me, you can use some of the hundreds of buttons from your button jar, or you can buy buttons in bulk at the craft store. Cut a 6 foot piece of string and make a slip knot on one end and feed it through two button holes of each button (you can tie a knot in the back to keep it from sliding) until you get to the end of the string and make a slip knot to finish it off. You can make as many garlands as you need or have buttons for. Try making all white or alternate white and red buttons. Corinne ♥



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### Pray for our families who have lost loved ones

Alan Mueller - loss of brother Roy.

Matt Boutsikos - loss of Dad, Panos.

Bier family - loss of Uncle Mike.

Kreamer families - loss of Aunt Kathy.

Gugliuzzo sister's family - loss of Joseph Kelly.

Donna Kreamer's Brother-in-law, Bill.

Elaine Kreamer's Dad, George.



God makes us rich in every way so we can be generous on every occasion, which will result in thanksgiving to God. ... God doesn't bless us to provide for our own needs; he blesses us so we can be generous. —Rick Warren (based on 2 Corinthians 9:11)

First and foremost I would like to thank all who have been faithful with their giving through this most difficult and different time. Even when we were not meeting in person you have been faithful and generous, mailing in, or using PayPal to send in your tithes and donations. I am happy to say that this year's giving is in line with the giving amounts in 2019. This has made it possible for us to keep paying our obligations without interruption. We were also able to upgrade some equipment enabling us to keep the message

going over YouTube and Facebook. We put some safety precautions such as sanitizing stations and special air filters and cleaning supplies in place to enable us to be open in person. God is still working among us, and we are working towards getting the message of the Good News out to our community. The kids, teens, ladies and men are meeting; the worship team is praising, and the people are praying. Even though the holidays will be somewhat different this year, one thing never changes – God's love for each and every one of us. Celebrate the Good News of God with Us. As we enter the New Year I hope we will be able to spend more time in fellowship with Him and each other. We thank you for sharing the blessings God has given you with us.

Corinne Franco, Church Treasurer



As of this writing, we have been blessed to provide turkeys and all the trimmings for 21 families to celebrate Thanksgiving this year.

Thank you for your food and monetary donations.

## FOOD PANTRY

OPEN: MON, WED, FRI  
10AM - 2PM  
65 Franklin St. (HPYC Building)  
Rear Entrance

*"...for I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,  
I was a Stranger and you welcomed me..."*  
Matthew 25:35 (ESV)



# A Christmas Reflection

We just returned from Florida this week and went from the 80s to the 30s without warning. We are cold, and we are not enjoying the dark, cloudy days of rain and now the time change. It stays light a little longer in Central Florida by about 40 minutes ☺ On the bright side, I got to play golf twice a week while away in the warm sun. Corinne was able to hang out with her childhood friend and go shopping, etc. We enjoyed meals and fellowship together during our stay.

This got me thinking about our fellowship together as the family of God. We enjoy each other's company, and that's a good thing, since we will be spending eternity together – LOL.

Why is this possible and why is this a reality we can rely on? Well, it all started before God formed the world. He had a plan that included all of us. This concept may be too much for us to consider in one article, but God had a plan from the beginning, and He carried out His plan flawlessly, though it took many years to come to fruition.

Then, when the time was right, God sent His Son, born of a woman, on that first Christmas Night. This event has been celebrated for over 2000 years, and it never gets stale. The Messiah came to us in a way we were not expecting, and He continues to bring peace and love to all who acknowledge Him. It boggles my mind when I think of how long we have been celebrating this greatest event in history.

Sometimes people celebrate Christmas for the gifts, sometimes for the love of family, and sometimes genuinely out of reverence for God. However, do we think of the 2000+ years of history behind this celebration? Maybe it's time to stop for a bit and remember what this celebration is all about. Jesus came for you and me. He gave His life and shed His blood for His promised salvation. The best part is that all He asks of us is to believe in Him. "If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we shall be saved." "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom. 10:9, 13) What an amazing promise to us all.

So, when we fellowship together, realize that you are a part of a bigger picture. You are part of the family of God, established long ago and put in place by our Lord Jesus Christ – the Messiah – Savior.

Merry Christmas and never lose the reason behind it all.

Much Love and Grace to you,  
Pastor Nick and Corinne ☺





## HORIZONTAL FOCUS

Two Thousand Twenty has been a year that none of us will easily forget. I can say with relative ease, that I'll have no regrets waving good bye to 2020 on New Year's Eve. I'm guessing you feel the same way. You probably can't wait to put the: hurricanes, forest fires, Covid scares, riots, economic insecurity, educational isolation, mandatory face masks and the rough shod trampling of basic freedoms, behind us.

Could it be we're living in what Jesus referred to as the, *last days*? That's a question I'll save for another essay but all of us have stories from 2020 we can share. In the days leading up to the American Revolution, Thomas Paine, author of *Common sense*, penned the words, "These are the times that try men's souls..." Can you identify with those sentiments? Many who have suffered hardship; illness and depression are tempted to wonder where God has been during all of this. Why he hasn't stepped in to help. My response - he has. Multifaceted problems that drag on over extended periods of time can cause us to lose our perspective, make us feel helpless, maybe even hopeless. But what if we look at things from a different vantage point? For a moment shift your focus upward, away from personal problems, to the vast horizon. Your perspective can't help but change when you concentrate on something or someone other than yourself.

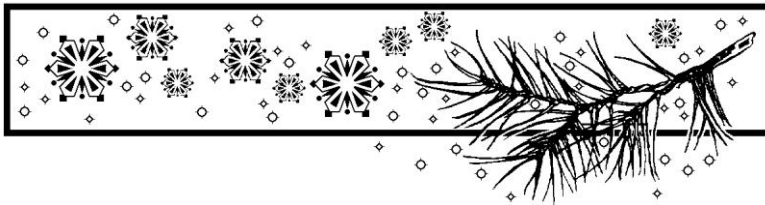
Let's start with the Turkish city of Izmir that was recently rocked by a 7.0 earthquake. I want you to meet a local firefighter there named Muammer Celik. After three days of digging through the rubble, caused by that deadly quake, Muammer reached a 3-year-old girl who had been buried for 91 hours. Finding her motionless and covered in dust, his heart sank as he asked a colleague for a body bag. But when Celik extended his arm to wipe her face, the child opened her eyes and grabbed hold of his thumb. "That's where we saw a miracle," he said. Wrapped in a thermal blanket, little Ayda Gezgin was whisked into an ambulance to the applause and chants of, "God is great," from rescue workers and onlookers. The hospitalized child was reported to be in good condition. How is it possible for a helpless three year old to survive a killer quake after being buried alive for 91 hours? God showed up.

That account, just lifted your spirits didn't it? Why, because you looked away from personal problems, and focused on the well being of a child. If you're still with me, go one step further; take a mental review of all the times God has showed up for you in the past. It won't be difficult, because his Spirit will bring those occasions to mind. Have you got it? You just shifted your gaze above your problems, and on to God's greater preserving power.

Let's try it again. Prior to the pandemic, a homeless man named Jay found a wallet that was intentionally dropped by a man walking past him. Jay retrieved the wallet which contained two thousand dollars, and returned it to the man, who in turn gave him a financial reward. Jay didn't know the entire episode was being filmed. But this story gets even better. Jay went directly to a city food stand and used the reward money to purchase sandwich bags of food which he distributed to other homeless people on the street. Jay is a veteran, with a pregnant wife, both are homeless. The man, who filmed all of this, sought out Jay thanking him for being such an amazing person, giving him additional money for his family. Maybe this episode has caused you to hear Jesus' words from the parable of the Good Samaritan, *Go and do the same.* Luke 10:37 (NIV)

The future, as always, is uncertain; the year 2021 may or may not bring the changes we are hoping for. But one thing is certain; our lives will change for the better when we get involved in the lives of people who need us. It's what God has called us to do and it's guaranteed to bring the greatest returns in life. *Give and it will be given to you: Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will men give unto you. For with the measure you use, it will be measured unto you.* Luke 6:38 (ESV)

Serving Him Together,  
Pastor John





## WOMEN'S MINISTRY

I think many of us feel the same way about 2020 – we can't wait to see it go! In spite of the many changes we have had to deal with since our world got hit with the pandemic, God has never left our side. In the midst of the fear of the unknown, the loss of lives, the inability to find what we need on store shelves, God has been faithful to meet us, challenge us and comfort us during this storm. We have learned to adapt to how we spend time with our families, attend church and other functions. But, through it all we have seen the sacrifices made by so many health and essential workers to care for us tirelessly day after day. We have also learned of the strength we didn't know we had and the ability to reach out to the homebound and lonely to let them know they are missed and cared about. We have used the gifts and talents God has blessed us with to serve others however we can. How blessed we are to have our faith and faith family to see us through this time. Thank you to all who have made a difference, some without realizing just how much a little touch meant to someone.

Our Thursday lady's group has continued to meet each week. What a wonderful time of prayer, praise, study and fellowship we have enjoyed these last several months. It has been much needed by all of us and has been a source of encouragement as we realize just how important we are to each other.

Another blessing has been singing the old hymns as Janet accompanies us on the piano and we feel the presence of the Holy Spirit fill our souls! All ladies are welcome to join us in the sanctuary at 10A.M.

on Thursday mornings. Masks are required as you enter but may be removed once you are seated. Even though the church building was closed for several months, we have been able to collect items for Operation Christmas Child and will be packing/collecting shoeboxes to be delivered to needy children around the world. This year more than ever, life has been difficult for those who live in poverty. What a joy to know that our simple gifts will bring some happiness to boys and girls who need to know they are loved in the name of Jesus. Thank you for all who have donated items or filled boxes.

Our holiday festivities might look different this year but let's be thankful for the birth of our Savior and our families and friends. Know that you are never alone but that God watches over us always. He is Sovereign and will see us through whatever is ahead.

As the new year approaches, it might not be as different as we would like. Instead of bemoaning more of the same restrictions we have faced this year, let's focus on all that the Lord has brought us through and continue to pray for restoration in our land and the world.

Have a blessed holiday!

Serving together,

*Mary Ann*



# WINTER

## Weekly Schedule

### Subject to Change

Masks and social distancing required

### Sunday

10am - Service - Nursery closed

10:45am - Children's Sunday School - HPYC Building

10:45am - Teen Bible Study - HPYC Downstairs

First Sunday of Month - Holy Communion

### Monday

7pm - 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month - **September through May** –  
M.E.N. (Men's Encouragement Network) - Fellowship Hall

### Wednesday

7pm - Bible Study - On Zoom - Watch for Announcements

### Thursday

10am - Every Thursday - Ladies Prayer & Bible Study Group –  
Sanctuary.

### Friday

7pm - First Friday of the month. Pen It Forward - Fellowship Hall and Zoom.

For other Winter meetings, events, & activities, consult your Sunday Bulletin.



## Coming Up...

### December 2020    **MERRY CHRISTMAS**

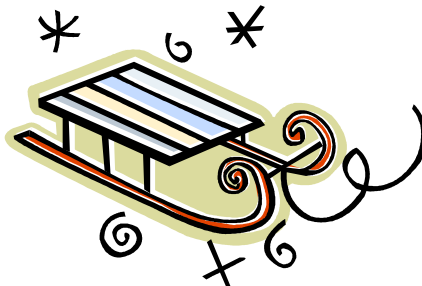
December 6 - Second Sunday of Advent  
December 13 - Third Sunday of Advent  
December 20 - Fourth Sunday of Advent  
December 21 - First Day of Winter  
December 24 - Christmas Eve Service 2pm  
December 25 - Christmas Day  
December 31 - New Year's Eve

### January 2021    **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

January 1 - New Year's Day  
January 18 - Martin Luther King Junior Day

### February 2021    **HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!**

February 14 - Valentine's Day  
February 15 - President's Day  
February 17 - Ash Wednesday



## A Few Words About Grace

A few months ago I heard a story on The Moth Radio Hour that caught my attention. A woman, Auburn, was going through drug withdrawals and was struggling with work and raising her son. She got a phone number for a Christian counseling hotline from her mother, so late one night, during a particularly bad withdrawal, she dialed the number. A man picked up the phone and Auburn explained that she received the number from her mom and was going through a rough patch and asked if he had time to talk. The man said, “Of course, what do you need to talk about?”

Auburn went on to unload her issues on this person, and from 2am on, she walked through her problems, being encouraged by the gentleness and empathy of the man on the other end of the phone. When morning rolled around, Auburn felt so much better and was impressed by the man’s experience with counseling. She asked him how long he had worked for this particular organization. He responded cautiously: “Auburn, I don’t want to upset you, and I don’t want you to hang up, but that number you got from your mom – it was the wrong number.” Auburn was astonished that a complete stranger in the middle of the night would not only listen to her, but show real compassion toward her.

Her experience made me think instantly of God’s grace and how it can break through to us when we least expect it – and when we are in the most need. Pastor Vinny spoke about God’s mercy recently, and how it comes to us even when we are most undeserving. I think God’s grace works the same way. Paul writes, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). What a radical idea! What radical grace! I’ve tried to wrap my mind around it, but I don’t think God intends for us to fully understand His ways.



Many theologians have thought upon and written (voluminously) on the topic of grace. One in particular who has helped me not just think about, but in a certain way actually experience grace, is Paul Tillich. He wrote in one of his sermons: “Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of an empty and meaningless life . . . It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear, when despair destroys all joy and courage.” It is during those moments, Tillich says, that grace breaks into our lives like a beam of light, and we are brought to the knowledge that we are accepted by God in spite of our sins.

Like many of you, I have found this year particularly hard. Between the threat of the virus and the vitriol of American politics, I found myself retreating. Joy was nowhere in sight. Social distancing turned into social isolationism, and as St. Augustine aptly put it, “I became unto myself a wasteland.” But then one day a few weeks ago I received a call from an old friend I hadn’t spoken to in a long, long while. He was just calling to check in and see how I was doing with the virus, but his simple call became that beam of light where grace breaks in. Like Auburn, that one call, I feel, was God’s grace reaching out to me in my moment of weakness. I was able to experience the grace of God, and I pray that in this continuing pandemic and polarized world, that you may be able to experience it, too.

Χάρις,  
Jon Ollett



## SHARE THE WARMTH

We were one week out from our holiday missions outreach, “Share the Warmth,” and it was the final collection date for donations. As a team, our aim was to collect an abundance of warm weather apparel and toiletry items to distribute to the homeless in NYC, but only a handful of coats had been donated. Admittedly, I was concerned and did not believe we would collect much more to help those living on the streets endure the harsh winter months. However, God had his hand on this mission, and He provided above and beyond our expectations. By the end of service, the donations poured in - a mountain of coats, piles of winter apparel, hygiene kits, blankets, and more filled the Fellowship Hall! Additionally, a collection was taken in support of this effort and our generous church family raised over \$400 toward this cause!

In total, we received enough contributions to distribute:

- 60-70 “outfits” (coat, shirt, hat, gloves, scarf, socks)
- 40 Crisis Care Hygiene Kits
- 103 care envelopes (enclosed in each a New Testament Bible, Our Daily Bread devotional, prayer card/encouraging note, Cliff bar, and McDonald’s gift card)

With a van borrowed from Lighthouse Mission, we were able to transport these goods and our volunteers into the city. We parked at 8<sup>th</sup> & 33<sup>rd</sup> outside of Penn Station. It was a beautiful day, and everyone was outside, so we were too! We circled the area by foot, handing out hygiene kits and care envelopes; whenever people expressed a need for apparel, we directed them to our van. Next thing we knew, word spread, and people were flocking to us for supplies. In a matter of two hours, we distributed all the men’s apparel, all of the toiletries, and most of the care envelopes (the rest we will save for future outreach events). The women’s apparel that we did not have the opportunity to distribute we have donated to Lighthouse Mission. The homeless were all so thankful, humble, and kind. Many spoke of falling on hard times due to the coronavirus, and some shared their stories of faith. Others spoke of their personal struggles, health issues, and emotional needs. In fact, we had one special volunteer who researched and supplied resources to those who expressed interest in receiving help from homeless shelters and addiction support meetings in the area. God moved in the hearts and minds of many.

Thank you to our amazing church family - your prayers, support, donations, monetary contributions, and time are all so appreciated! It is clear God put it on each of your hearts to support us in some way and this effort would not have been possible without you!

Thank you to our amazing volunteer team who shined the light and hope of Jesus on the lives of those who need it most!

A special shoutout to: Justin Kressel Taub (a.k.a “Share the Warmth” Founder and Spokesman) – God placed this whole operation on your heart, and you carried out His will; this entire vision was an amazing Spirit-led prompting that He began in you! John Harper (a.k.a Navigator Extraordinaire!) – Thank you for transporting us all safely and successfully into the Big Apple.

With God’s provision and alongside an incredible team of people, I envision us doing this for many years to come! Thank you again and God Bless! Alissa Donato