

# The Praise Report

The Newsletter of Ujima Village Christian Church

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1001 Pennington Road \* Ewing, New Jersey



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**SPECIAL "LOCK-IN" EDITION**

[UjimaChurch.org](http://UjimaChurch.org)



## **Living in the "Upside Down"** by Pastor Norwood

It is been a challenging season. Nothing has been left unaffected by the Coronavirus Pandemic. We have had to "social-distance," "lock-down," rely on the Internet and telephone for our communications. We have watched the numbers of those infected continue to increase, along with the number of those who have died. Neither the Korean War nor the Vietnam War claimed as many American lives as COVID-19, and it has only been a little more than three months after the first cases on our shores. Little conveniences suddenly have become a challenge to negotiate. Getting a haircut, or your "hair did," grocery shopping, pharmacy pickups, going to the movies, or going out to eat, are all but a memory - at least for now. Borrowing from television series "Stranger Things," my daughter said that it was like living in "The Upside Down," which is a fanciful place that looked like the normal world but where reality was completely altered and scary. This is the way many people feel today. Our first responders and essential workers have been on the front lines in hospitals and law enforcement and food marketers and shipping and delivery and sanitation workers have continued to keep things going even while we have all been living in what seems to be the "Upside Down." We have kept these brave individuals in our prayers as they continued to struggle, placing themselves at a higher risk than most of us may be able to completely understand.

This pandemic has been called a war. And in many ways it is. We have casualties. Hundreds of thousands injured and tens of thousands dead. The sick cannot be comforted by the touch of their loved ones and those in mourning bury their dead with few embraces as the restrictions and limits to gather - even for funerals - have impacted our way of grieving. This is one way that the upside down is not like war, because we cannot gather to even comfort one another in the manner that we would do if it were not for the danger of simply coming together. Nerves are on edge. And, sadly, even while many people are demonstrating a higher level of civility through acts of self-sacrificing charity, we are also seeing far too many instances of shortsighted immaturity and irrational outrage over reasonable precautions recommended and implemented in an effort to stop the spread of this deadly disease.

But of this we can be certain... OUR GOD IS STILL GOD, EVEN IN THE "UPSIDE DOWN"... JESUS CHRIST IS LORD EVEN OVER THE "UPSIDE DOWN." Even though we may not understand his ways, for they are much higher than ours, we can trust in the fact that there is purpose even in the most painful of situations and, because he holds all things under his control, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ or the destiny that he promised to all of those who are truly his disciples.

We have been forced to minister in new ways. Because we have continued to worship online and over conference calls and video calls, we are reaching people that had not attended our worships or Bible studies before. People have testified about growing in grace. Our homes have been turned into houses of worship. We are continuing to give God the glory in spite of the circumstances, as we should! This pandemic is dividing the mature from the immature and the faithful from the foolish. It is causing those who truly trust in the Lord to rely on him more than ever before. Perhaps the "upside down" is a proving ground for many of us where we are learning powerful lessons about the grace of God and trusting in him and his promises with an eternal outlook. Let us not lose the lessons we are learning while living through the "upside down."

Romans 8:18 (ESV); 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

## COVID-19 REFLECTIONS

### Discerning Truth from Fiction By Sis. Sandy Baez

During this pandemic, it is difficult to discern truth from fiction. At times, I become agitated because of the behaviors of our government and our society. While I am not a doctor, scientist, nurse, or epidemiologist, I am an educated and knowledgeable concerned citizen. I also hold the roles of mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and daughter. However, the most important title that I hold is Woman (Child) of God. I am one of God's saints; beautifully made; called to bear witness; called to live a Christ-like life; called to spread the Gospel. As such, clarity on defining the term, coronavirus, and the current COVID-19 strain is essential to relieve others and myself of the agitation, anxiety, and hopelessness.



Although born again in Christ over 20 years ago, it wasn't until about five years ago that I really took a deep dive into my faith. I was urged to do more, to think outside of the box and work harder for the Kingdom of God. I was compelled to study and learn more. I wanted to really evaluate myself and discern how I could better serve Christ and walk closer with Him. With those things in mind, almost a year ago, the Spirit of the Lord guided me to begin a private, intimate Bible study group with two of my childhood friends.

During our study, we not only study the Word, we reflect on the Word by relating it to past and current real-life experiences. As we concluded our study of 1 Timothy, we focused on Paul's mentorship to Timothy warning him about false teachers and the call to "fight the good fight" (1 Timothy 6:12). 1 Timothy 6:11-12 serve as words of encouragement to Timothy: **"<sup>11</sup> But you, man of God, turn away from all these sinful things. Work at being right with God. Live a God-like life. Have faith and love. Be willing to wait. Have a kind heart. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the life that lasts forever. You were chosen to receive it. You have spoken well about this life in front of many people"** (NLT). These verses also helped me and my study group to discern the fallacies posed by some within our government, our society, and pastors (leadership) of the Christian church as they relate to COVID-19.

Currently, we reflect on all aspects of this horrific pandemic which is the coronavirus/COVID-19. The parallel of today's false assumptions and teachings is similar to what the Apostle Paul had to confront in his words to Timothy. My study group and I agree, wholeheartedly, that we must fight - especially in times of distress. We must not only be grounded in the Word of God, but we must continue to bear our crosses in the midst of distress.

According to "Bible Study Tools" (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/7-ways-to-fight-the-good-fight-for-joy.html>) There are seven ways to put on the armor of God and fight the fight. With joy, we must:

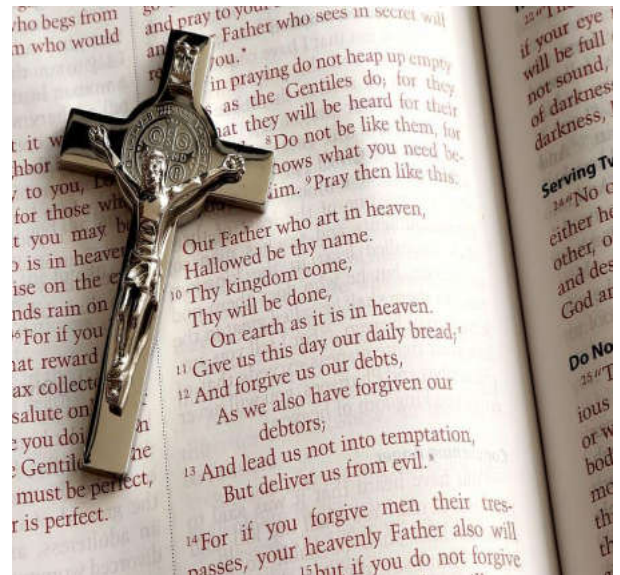
1. **Pray** - "<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess. 5:16-18, ESV)
2. **Abide in Christ** – trust Him "<sup>5</sup> ... with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6, ESV). We must abide in Jesus' love for us.
3. **Take in God's Word** – Studying scripture and truly meditate on the truth allows us to live Christ-like lives.
4. **Praise and Thanksgiving** – we must praise God without ceasing for our spiritual blessings with a joyful heart.
5. **God's Restoration** - that comes from the joy of salvation
6. **Salvation** - Contemplate your salvation and heaven to come
7. **Focus** - Keep focused on God and know that He is good

## **Discerning Truth from Fiction** *(Continued)*

By Sis. Sandy Baez

Some have suggested that this pandemic is God's pouring out His "end times" judgement and wrath upon the world, referring to COVID-19 as a sign of Revelation 16. Those who hold to this have stirred anxiety, confusion, and fear among many Christians. Sadly, it has caused some to become indifferent, callous, or irrational in their response to the suffering the pandemic has caused. Some have become cavalier about the recommendations of health agencies, rejecting the call for social distancing and the use of masks... all in a misguided show of what they believe to be "faith." We are warned to beware of false teachings and false prophets... and we must also be cautious about erroneous interpretations or falling into the trap of false teachings and error.

There have been plagues and pandemics throughout history, and some were far worse than what we have experienced with COVID-19. With each of these, there were those who presumed they were the sign of Revelations 16. We must be faithful and careful in interpreting scripture and cautious about misapplying passages and prophecies, which can do more harm than good.



Any interpretation of scripture that leads Christians to being callous or indifferent to suffering or to disregard sound medical guidance or justified precautions is not of God. Our God is a God of order, a God of mercy, a God who sacrificed his Son for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. Jesus paid the price for our sins. He was born to a virgin, persecuted by Pontius Pilate, crucified on the cross, he died and was buried, and on the third day was resurrected. We have been pardoned. We have a Savior. God's Word is unchanging – the same yesterday, today and eternally. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is about redeeming, perfecting, divine love.

Let us all fight the good fight! Stay in the WORD! Stay in communion with Jesus through prayer! Fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus and look to the Word for confirmation of all things. Today and every day, I give praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for my Pastor, John Norwood. He not only preaches the word, but encourages us to study, research, and seek true understanding. We are not to totally rely on our Pastor, but rather pray and study the Word so that the Holy Spirit can help us discern truth from fallacies. COVID-19 is not of Christ. It is a coronavirus that has attacked our world. It's an upper respiratory infection spread through coughing, sneezing, and close personal contact. This pandemic has taken the lives of over 3,000,000 people worldwide- thus far.

Aside from following CDC medical guidelines, believers must focus on Jesus! Focus on what He has done for us. Focus on what He continues to do for us. Focus on His promises. Know that He will not leave nor forsake us, for we are called to be witnesses of His Gospel! Focus on continuing our discipleship for we must continue to be diligent in our quest to glorify and worship Him. Pray for those who have suffered and continue to suffer through this pandemic. These sufferings are through loss of loved ones, depletion of finances, mental insecurities, feelings of helplessness and lack of health care. Pray - without ceasing- for our first responders and their families! Lead them to Christ – it is our great commission. Pray - without ceasing - for an end to this pandemic. However, more importantly, pray that the unsaved will be saved and transformed.

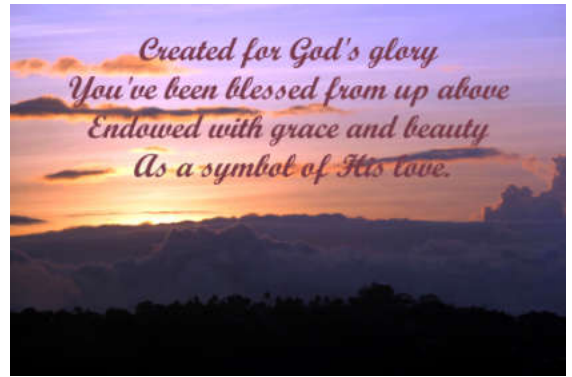
Beware of fallacies, false teachers and ill-advised government officials. Honor the Lord, our God! He was in control yesterday, is in control today, and will be in control tomorrow! He is our sole and soul provider! He is the ultimate physician, nurse, and provider! PRAISE HIM ALWAYS!

## **COVID-19 Reflections**

**Introduction:** by Sis. Sandy Baez

It's been a year since the Lord summoned me to create an intimate Bible study group with my childhood friends (and sister and brother in Christ), Lee Ann Shepherd and Orlando Nieves. We have studied Romans and 1 Timothy, and we are now studying 2 Timothy. We begin our study in prayer for God's guidance and understanding. We read the Word and use a study guide filled with questions on the text.

One of the questions we were asked was to define, in our own words, the meaning of God's grace. Lee's response was so powerful that I felt compelled to publish it in our newsletter. Her answer seemed to me like a testimony. This testimony stems from her physical struggles, which thankfully is not COVID-19 related, but rather a current condition that has yet to be diagnosed. I pray-without ceasing for my Sister, for she is a true woman of God! Please continue to pray with me that the doctors determine a diagnosis and that the Lord heals her body from this unwanted intrusion!



**Reflection: My Definition of God's Grace!** by Sis. Lee Ann Shepherd -

I feel weak and helpless and struggle through life. I find grace in the space where I need strength just to breathe... and I realize it has already been supplied to me by God. Nothing in my being could purchase or in any way-earn grace. Yet, it is given to me by the grace of God. It is He who has equipped me to live another day in anticipation of fulfilling the life to which I have been called. I have freedom and a release from illegitimate bondage. Also, I am not a slave to any curse.

If I am to "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," (*Ephesians 6:10*) I do not have the power to overcome demonic forces. God, Himself, is the only One capable of putting them in their place. If I am to find any victory, He is the One who empowers my victory in Him. My humanity, my willpower, my intellect, and my physicality are all useless. I am useless, but for grace. I need to live this and "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1).



**Hardwick Boys...Something Different** By Sis. Tameekia Hardwick

Hello, Church Family! Thanking God for His continued grace, mercy, protection over me and my children. It has been a journey... "but God!" I would especially like to thank Him for blessing me and my family with a home. On February 4, 2020, we moved to Maple Shade. God has been faithful and we are truly grateful!

During this pandemic, I have been using my time wisely. I, along with my children, have been getting to know God even more, by diligently reading the Word. Previously, I had prayed that the Lord would show me a way to continue

to teach His Word to my children. It was during this time that He revealed to me a couple of ways. While working with them, they had been cooperative. Since that was my prayer, I was (and am) very grateful for that opportunity. Even I had been growing from the Sunday school lessons as I taught the boys each week.

I continue to pray that God will increase my understanding, teach me His ways and give me His wisdom through this time. I appreciate this time that I get to spend with God. He has definitely been with me and my family. He has allowed another opportunity for me to be a witness to others around me. I pray that He keeps me on the straight and narrow path, allowing my light to shine- even when days are difficult.

Every day is not perfect, but each one has purpose. When this outbreak first began, I had said that it was happening for a reason... and I still believe that. I cannot speak for anyone else, but I could use this time with God. Since my children and I had been on a long journey, I needed this time to praise Him for the blessings we had received. It was my desire to worship Him without distractions. I still have to express gratitude for every day that He gives me life.

Although it is unfortunate that we have to maintain distance from people we love- for now- I am blessed to have this opportunity to talk and listen to the Lord. Praise God! I pray that all will take advantage of this time and worship Him in spirit and truth. We are going to come out of this- stronger than ever before!

I also pray that God continues to keep and bless you, in Jesus' Name. Amen.



## **COVID-19 Reflections (Continued)**

### **Parkside Manor COVID-19 Isolation by Sandy Baez**

As Jordan and I reflect on this time of isolation because of the COVID-19 pandemic we give thanks to God first and foremost for our four-legged support friend and family member Buddy. Since early March Jordan and I were forced to isolate and begin a new life of virtual learning and working from home. Buddy has been a true blessing for us because he allows us to take time out of our busy learning and work schedules to regroup. We relax on the couch, take long walks periodically, or in Jordan's case take afternoon/evening naps during what seems like very long, sometimes endless days. Buddy comforts us and likewise we comfort him and give more love

than he is used to. There are times that he actually hides from me because of my frequent need to get exercise and fresh air by taking long walks around the neighborhood (smiles).

As reflected in Jordan's 4.3 GPA, virtual learning is not a difficult process. However he does miss his friends terribly. As a sophomore student athlete, the closing of Ewing High School and the cancellation of their baseball season has had an effective on him. Yet he continues his daily workouts and hopefully soon he will resume his outdoor baseball workouts in preparation for his upcoming junior year. Jordan also remains positive and hopeful for the opportunity to play Ewing Recreation Fall Ball. Aside from his academic life, Jordan is thankful for Ujima's Thursday evening Zoom class and the Time for Truth studies on Sunday afternoons. Staying connected to our First Lady, Trinity and his Church brothers and sisters are essential to his life.

As for me, I praise Jesus for allowing me to work for a company that has mandated their work from home policy even for contingent (contract) workers. I rejoice because I continue to work diligently supporting my manager virtually albeit an increased daily work schedule. I am blessed to be able to earn a bi-monthly paycheck. Working from home has also allowed me to bond with Jordan, yet like Buddy, Jordan tries to escape me because of my mandated three meals a day, exercise and fresh air schedules (smiles). All in all I rejoice in the Lord because we are in need of nothing and are thankful for all things!

In retrospective the most difficult part of this isolation is not being with my Pastor, First Lady and my Church family. Praise be to the Lord for Pastor's diligence in leading his flock virtually. The blessings of being able to worship and have Bible Study weekly are essential for me to stay connected with my Church and keep me grounded in Christ Jesus. This situation has allowed me to get closer to God. My studying of the Word and my prayer time have increased significantly. I continue to meet with my childhood friends and facilitate our private Bible study sessions three times a week. The Lord has brought me so much peace and joy and I am convinced that while this pandemic is not of God, His plan is most certainly flawless. He is my rock, my savior, and my redeemer. My thirst and hunger for the Word has increased exponentially and my desire to serve His Kingdom is my main focus. The Lord has allowed me to minister to others specifically my oldest son and daughter. I have been allowed to really 'connect the dots' of scripture and my need for sharing it is overwhelming.

We miss our friends, family, and Church family. Praise God that we are all healthy and safe. Praise God for this opportunity to devote our lives to Him. Praise God for all things seen and unseen. Praise God for His Magnificence, His Love, His Grace, and His Mercy. I LOVE THE LORD, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my being for HE is with me and my family ALWAYS! Hallelujah! Amen!!

## **Pandemic Endurance (My Experience)**

By Sis. Naomi Cullum

### **General Thoughts**

When the coronavirus suddenly hit the U.S (and especially the NY/NJ area), the initial impact was quite incredulous to me. I tried to make some sense of this catastrophe that was infecting and killing so many, so quickly...this “stranger” that had prompted extensive closures and state shutdowns. However, soon enough, I concluded that none of this could even take place unless the Lord *allowed* it for some purpose or reason. After all, believers know that our God is *still* in control of *all* things.

It was at this point that my perspective on this had shifted. While I began to gain a degree of peace about it, I understood that so many others were experiencing a sense of confusion, despair and hopelessness relative to this outbreak. It also became obvious that this was yet another opportunity for Christians to help make a difference in this world.



### **Actions for Others**

With the above realization (although bound by lockdown restrictions), I found myself utilizing some safe ways to reach out or be a blessing to others. So, I tended to make use of phone calls, postal mail and texts on a weekly basis to stay in touch with the following: friends, family (both natural and church), Christians (and non-Christians). Additionally, it was my pleasure to offer “over-the- phone” prayer for the sick and newly-saved. I also exercised patience in working with and encouraging (at least) four people who are new or “borderline” on their faith journey.

My own family has experienced four deaths during this time frame- with two lost to Covid-19 between March and May. An acquaintance of mine was also lost to Covid-19 during the first week in April. With no gatherings allowed for funerals, surely, this was upsetting-yet understandable. I felt compelled to just comfort where I could.

### **Actions That Helped/Help Me**

On a personal level, this pandemic has reinforced my daily regimen and need to have prayer/intercession/devotions- as well as weekly fasting. Although we know that the Lord is ever-present with us, there are times when He actually allows us to *personally sense* His mighty power/presence. In those times, I feel especially comforted, blessed and encouraged in the faith. I’m grateful for that wonderful experience during this particular time- as well.

On a lighter note, with this additional time on my hands, I have a chance to be more creative with my culinary skills-preparing meals that I had little time for before. There is also room/balance for me to catch up on my more casual reading and watch some great suspense movies on TV.

Overall, it is my sincere hope that my prayers (along with those of others) will touch God during this crisis. However, I must remember, “Not my will, but Thy will be done.”

Blessings, Grace and Peace to all...

## **Practicing Social Distancing & Spiritual Disciplines**

Interviews by Sis. Tina Roach

### **Interview: Steward Clifford Rawls**

Being apart from my church family has been the most challenging experience. One Saturday I went into the sanctuary for Pastor and it hurt me so much realizing we would not be fellowshiping together the next day which was Sunday.

It's amazing how God has turned things around because there was a time when I didn't go to church for many years and didn't want to. Billy Graham shared about a time when a father and his little boy went outside after a snowstorm. First, the father stepped out onto the fresh snow, turned around and asked his son "what are you doing?" and he answered, "I'm walking in my Daddy's footsteps!" God has shown me that's a picture of me now. I'm following my earthly father and my heavenly father. I remember seeing my father go up to the altar and pray for his family and how hard he worked in order to help the Pastor and the church. Now, I see myself following in his footsteps.

I feel like God wants me to follow in His footsteps and that's what being in Ujima's Men's Ministry helps me to do. We love each other deeply and we are trying to make a path for the younger men to know what they should do and the young ladies to know what they need to look for in a husband.

Thankfully, we are still able to worship together on Sundays and Wednesdays through online services and Bible studies on the conference call line. On Sundays, my family and I get dressed as if we were going to church and meet in our living room for the online worship service at the same time we would've been at church. That's our way of coming to God with our best.

Thank God for Pastor Norwood and Sister Norwood. They show what obedience to God looks like in a family and then they preach it. Some people say "showing me is better than telling me", but they do both! We want them to know the Word is taking root in our hearts and just like one of Pastor's recent messages..."As for me and my house we will serve the Lord!"

### **Interview: Missionary Linda Rogers John 3:30 "He must increase but I must decrease."**

During the pandemic, I've had opportunities to get closer to God. On April 30, I experienced a blackout on all of my TV/Internet/Phone services. I have to admit I was initially very distressed and I cried a little. When I called the company they explained they couldn't send a technician out until May 7. Somehow they came on May 1st. In the meantime, I read my devotional from April 30 which suggested fasting from TV, newsprint and electronics and spending that time with the Lord. I decided to do this for a while and God has given me such a special time with Him.

Also, I've made adjustments and changes but God has been working so many things out. I've been blessed to join another Bible group. Despite the pandemic, the seniors (residents of Ujima Village) are going to be continuing the year long Bible study of the beatitudes "Blessed to Be". I've been so encouraged and inspired. The seniors are still hungry and thirsty for more of God so we are starting a conference call ministry. I've been stretched to find new ways to make an impact. I've been calling and reaching out periodically for prayer on the phone. Normally I go to the gym for exercise but I've been walking for exercise and now I'm up to two miles per day.

One of my neighbors is a dear friend and she has been looking for employment. I've included her in Ujima's prayer box and we've been praying for her situation. God answered and she got a new job that relocated her to California last week!! I will miss her so much but already I see God opening the door and giving me favor with another neighbor.

I receive national geographics because I enjoy nature. The scriptures tell us these things will happen, but I am seeing how it's affecting wildlife and nature in places I may never go to. It's affecting societies and cultures and all kinds of changes and adjustments it's causing here and across the globe, in places like the Netherlands. It is really something to witness.

The greatest challenge has been not being around people; especially the people I love. I really like seeing people smile and I'm definitely looking forward to getting out and about in God's time. I get lonely but I say "God, I know I'm not alone."



**The Blessing of Ujima From Almost 3,000 Miles Away!** By Sis. Treca Adams (Pastor Norwood's Niece)

When my uncle, Pastor Norwood, sent out an invitation to the family to join Ujima's "Time for Truth" Adult Bible Study, I calculated the time it would start in California, where I reside. I was excited about the opportunity to study the Word with him and Ujima's church members, since I had always lived so far away, and was not able to visit. The time of Bible Study was optimal for me to participate-allowing me to still be part of my local church's online services. From the first time I joined, it has truly been a blessing for



me, especially during the time of COVID-19. The breaking down of the Word, verse by verse by Pastor Norwood, and the wonderful questions posed by the congregation, has made the scriptures come alive for me. Scriptures that I have read and reread for years have been illuminated like never before! Praise God!!

I hadn't shared with my uncle, but prior to COVID-19, my family and I were making plans to move to another nearby city. When the restrictions were imposed on Los Angeles County, I wasn't sure how I would meet the deadline to find another property, get us moved out of our current home, and keep everyone safe. The burden was weighing on me as the days passed- without a clear answer or plan in sight. I felt the anxiety and stress of so many unknowns surrounding my family.



One Sunday, after the Ujima Adult Bible Study, I asked my uncle if he was free to talk, and he called me. During Bible study that day, as we read the scriptures, I was touched by the goodness of God... how His very nature is good, and the fact that He is the author of goodness. I thought about how this unprecedented time had led me to join my uncle and Ujima church members for this Bible study, how the Lord was using the pandemic to reach people in new ways, and how He was using it for good. As I shared this with Pastor Norwood, he cited, Romans 8:28, "ALL THINGS work together for good....." Now, I have read and known that scripture for a very long time, but it was in that moment that it became more real to me than ever before!

I thought about my current predicament with moving, and the fact that the Lord is able to turn even this stressful situation, into something good. That very day, on April 5th, I sat down with my two daughters and an index card. I told them that we were going to give our new house to the Lord. I asked them to tell me the things they thought we needed in our new home; they even added a couple of desires that went beyond our immediate needs. We prayed over our new house, and aligned three scriptures (that I wrote on the back of the card) with our prayer: Psalm 20:5, Psalm 37:3-4, and II Samuel 7:11.



That same day, we noticed a bird that kept flying right to our front door. It kept resting directly on a wreath that was hung there. A day later, we saw that it was a dove, and it was bringing twigs and building a nest in the wreath. Several days later, we saw that the dove had laid two little eggs, and was nesting right on our front door. As I continued to search online for suitable homes, I pondered the meaning of the dove and the eggs. Doves seemed to be a symbol of peace and the eggs, a new beginning. I prayed for the Lord to reveal to me what it all meant. I felt the Lord tell me that He wanted me to know He had heard our prayers, that He would meet us right where we were and bring a promise of peace. The two little eggs meant that, not only would He answer prayers, but we would also have choices.

I want to share with you that on May 1st, we solidified our new home- in the midst of a pandemic! By the end, we had several choices, but the one with which we were finally blessed, answered every need and desire that was written on that card! "ALL things DO work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose."

Thank you, Uncle, and Ujima for reminding me of that!!!

## An Inspiring Word from Our Church Clerk

April 4, 2020

Our Church Clerk, Sister Sandy Baez, wrote an inspirational letter that I was moved to post. I am sure that it will bless you as it did me. -Pastor Norwood



### Thoughts on Holy Week by Sis. Sandy Baez

To my Church family I write this letter to you with love! My desire to worship with you compelled me to write this simply to wish you peace and thanksgiving and to let you know that I miss you all sincerely.

As you know, due to the Coronavirus, our Pastor and First Lady have worked diligently to continue to minister the Word and keep our congregation together. Our Worship and Study services are temporarily being held online and by teleconference. The sermons and Bible study recordings are posted on the Ujima website. Additionally, a secure donation application with instructions on how the congregation can continue to worship through giving of tithes and offerings has been posted on the Ujima website. Praise be to God for the Blessing that is Our Pastor John Norwood and First Lady Deacon Tanya Norwood. During our prayer services, we continue to uplift the first responders, doctors, nurses, city, state, and federal leaders, our children and families, and all of those infected or affected by this horrific pandemic. We give praise and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ for keeping us safe; for enabling the doctors, nurses, and scientists to not only provide immediate medical assistance, but for working together to develop therapies and medications to combat and maintain this virus known as COVID-19.

We thank God for uniting our world and praise Him for allowing nations to come together and share supplies, best practices, and data analysis so that leaders worldwide can strategically manage and combat this invisible enemy. At Ujima we mourn our separation and our inability to gather together in person as one body in Christ to worship and glorify our Lord and Savior. We pray that the Lord bring an end to this pandemic so that we can be reunited!

Not being able to gather together for communion is heartfelt by our congregation. And now, as we prepare for Holy Week our hearts are heavy and saddened because we will not be able to gather as one. Despite these challenging times, as Christians and true believers, I'd like to remind the congregation of the significance of our commitment to remain focused on the Lord and our obligations to reading His Word, staying in communion and prayer, and worshipping our Lord through giving.

With that said, I'd like to remind you that Holy Week is the most sacred time of the year for us and fellow Christians worldwide. As a saint of Christ I felt obligated to provide our congregation, and all believers who read this, points of meditation that we can focus on during our physical separation and our inability to commune and break bread. During Holy Week, Christians must recall the events leading up to Jesus' death by crucifixion, and his resurrection.

Holy Week reminds Christians of God's sacrifice of his son, and also God's love for his people. Christians learn much about Jesus through the last week of his life. For example, you may have noticed that during Lent until Good Friday, Ujima's color is purple which is symbolic of penance prior to Christ's crucifixion. Jesus was forced to wear a crown of thorns and a purple cloak as the people mocked Him. Purple is the color of royalty to welcome the coming of a King and yet it also symbolizes Christ's pain and suffering. Although we are prohibited from receiving palms and communion on Palm Sunday remember the significance of this day commemorating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to observe Passover.

Scripture reminds us that Holy Monday is the day on which Jesus cleansed the temple. Matthew tells us, "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' He said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'" ([Matthew 21:12-13](#)).

### Thoughts on Holy Week (Continued)

Holy Tuesday is when Jesus underwent various challenges by the Pharisees and Sadducees over subjects such as paying taxes to Caesar and questioning Jesus on the source of His authority. This day Jesus spoke against the Pharisees - 13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in." ([Matthew 23:13](#)).

Holy Wednesday was the day on which Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin. Luke wrote "3 Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. 4 He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. 5 And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. 6 So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd." ([Luke 22:3-6](#)).

Maundy Thursday is a big celebration at our Church as Pastor commemorates the first Eucharist, the Washing of the Feet and the Last

Supper of Jesus Christ with the Apostles. During the Last Supper, Jesus identified that Judas would betray him, and that Peter would deny him.

Good Friday may seem an ironic title for the day of Christ's death for it is a sorrowful, awful day for the followers of Jesus. But it is also a day of celebration for the Lord completed his work as the living son of God on Earth, atoning for our sins so that we might be forgiven and receive salvation. We must not only remember his agony and torture, we must glorify Him for his sacrifice and salvation.

Brothers and Sisters we may not be able to be together physically during Holy Week, but in prayer, meditation, and study we must honor and remember the last week of Jesus' life on this earth. The most important day of all is Resurrection Sunday. The greatest focus of the week is the suffering, death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the events that led up to it. During these days, we suffer with Christ out of gratitude for our salvation so that we might identify with him, and serve and honor him.

Under normal circumstances Holy Week is a time that we clear our schedules of unnecessary activities. Yet because of our world's current war against COVID-19 we are given an opportunity to truly clear our minds and hearts and be fixed on Jesus. Focus on what He has done for us.

As the Bible and our Pastor have taught us, remember that the most important event in history is Jesus' resurrection. It is the central principle of Christian theology. Not only does the resurrection witness to the power of Jesus Christ, the resurrection also proves to us that Jesus is the Son of God and Messiah. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" ([John 11:25](#)). Without Christ there would be no resurrection unto eternal life with God in heaven. The astounding thing about the power of Jesus is that He does more than give life, He is life, and that's why death has no dominion over Him. In resurrecting from the grave, God reminds us of His absolute sovereignty over life and death.

Our God is a God of order, intention, and purpose. The world is going through a horrible pandemic but God is in control! We are not to be fearful or anxious. We are to stay grounded and focused on Him. Many are on the front lines of this war, many are working from home, many have reduced work schedules, and many may have lost their employment. But not one of us has lost Christ Jesus who "will never leave you nor forsake you." ([Deuteronomy 31:6](#); [Hebrews 13:5](#)).

Join me in staying focused, diligent in worship through prayer, worship, and thanksgiving! Remember and Celebrate Holy Week! Commune with Christ Jesus! Witness to others! Love each other!

Until we meet again!

Yours in Christ!

Sister Sandy Baez



## Ujima Celebrates Black History Month by Sis. Sandy Baez

### Sojourner Truth - 1797-1883 Jordan Everett Presentation 2/9/20

Brother Jordan Everett (15), one of Ujima's teens, and part of the Audio and Drama Ministries' provided a summary of a cherished and beloved Christian Saint, Sojourner Truth. Despite the slight presentation mix up, Jordan took the lead by taking charge of "Wisdom Keeping" and providing our young children with a close and personal summary of Sojourner Truth.

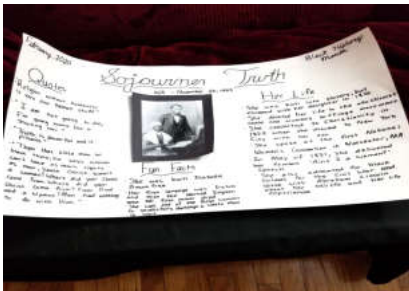
Born into slavery in New York in 1797, Sojourner's birth name was Isabella (Belle) Baumfree. A fun fact about Sojourner was that her first language was Dutch and when her first owner died she learned English. She converted to Christianity in

1820 and felt commissioned by Christ to escape with her daughter to freedom in 1826. In 1828 she was one of the first women to successfully challenge and win a case against a white man in court when she fought to recover her son. Sojourner devoted her life to the abolitionist cause and women's suffrage movement. She spoke at the first national Women's Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts.

In May of 1851, she delivered her famous "Aint I a Woman?" speech. She also advocated for black soldiers in the Civil War and spoke with Abraham Lincoln about her beliefs and her life experience.

Sojourner's Famous Quotes: "Religion without humanity is very poor human stuff;" "I am not going to die, I am going home like a shooting star;" "Truth is powerful and it prevails;" "Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman!' Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a Woman! Man had nothing to do with Him."

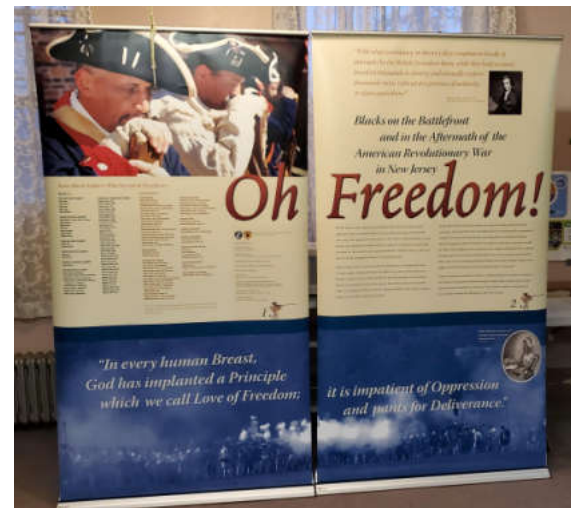
Giving God all the Praise and Glory we Salute the Saints who have passed on to Glory and paved the way for us today. We praise God for Brother Jordan and his presentation and for leading "Wisdom Keeping" allowing our young children to praise and pray for our Lord Jesus Christ.



### Oh Freedom.... Blacks in the Revolution

About thirty people gathered in our fellowship hall on February 6th for a "listening session," sponsored by the New Jersey Historical Commission's Semiquincentennial Initiative in preparation for the 250th birthday of the United States. A long set of display panels were set up, with little known facts about the New Jersey's African American contribution to the Revolutionary War. The session was to get public feedback on ways to ensure that the whole story of NJ's part in the revolution is told.

The little known facts, much of which has not been included in the school curricula of our state, is that about 20% of those who fought were black. Even though legal slavery ended in New Jersey in 1804, forced apprenticeship of African Americans continued for many years under law.



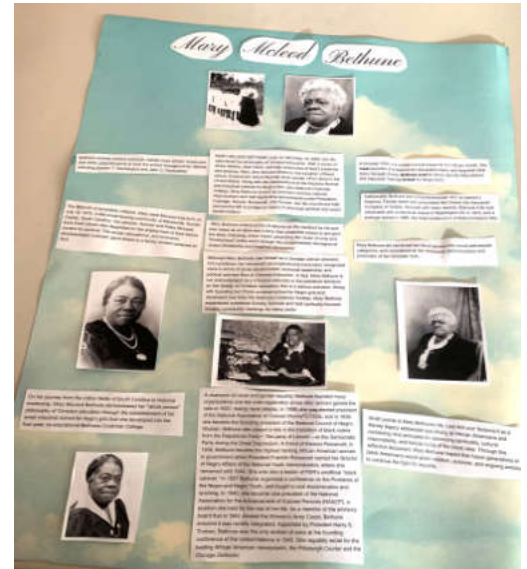
**Mary McLeod Bethune** Acolyte Johnny Weeks Presentation 2/16/20

One of Ujima's Acolyte's, and part of the Audio and Drama Ministries', Acolyte Johnny Weeks (16), provided a summary of a cherished and beloved Christian Saint, Mary McLeod Bethune. Johnny shared his presentation during "Wisdom Keeping" and provided our young children and congregation with a summary of ms. Bethune.

One of the last of 17 children born to Samuel and Patsy McLeod, Mary was born on July 10, 1885, in South Carolina. She was most recognized for being a black educator, civil and women's rights activist, and a government advisor to Franklin D. Roosevelt, allowing African Americans an advocate in government. In the early 1900s, she founded a college that set the standards for today's black colleges. One of her biggest accomplishments was first opening up an all girl's boarding school in Daytona Beach and later the school became a college that merged with the all-male Cookman Institute to form the Bethune-Cookman College.

Mary McLeod Bethune was truly an inspiration and icon to the community! She was a mother, educator, activist, advocate, and a successful businesswoman who co-owned a resort in Daytona, Florida and a co-founder of a life insurance company in Tampa, Florida. Mary lived a full life and passed on to glory on May 18, 1955, in Daytona, FL. 19 years after she passed, her life was celebrated with a memorial statue in Washington, DC. in 1974, and 11 years a postage stamp was created in 1985.

Giving God all the Praise and Glory we Salute the Saints who have passed on to Glory and paved the way for us today. We praise God for Brother Johnny and his presentation.



**Cultural Dress on Display**

Throughout the month of February, the choir changed from their new choir robes in order to celebrate African American History Month by wearing cultural attire and singing traditional African American hymns and spirituals. It was a blessing both the ear, eye, and heart.



## **"Dinner and a Movie"- A Review** By Sis. Naomi Cullum

At the end of January 2020, the *"Mighty Men of Ujima"* sponsored yet another outstanding event at the church. In attendance was a highly-engaged, sizable audience for the poignant film presented that evening. Available during the movie was an appetizing meal consisting of delicious pizza, salad, hot wings and beverages. Following the end of the film- as with all previous ones- was a brief discussion and allowance of comments.

The movie, entitled *"Overcomer,"* follows the journey of a teenager who is the product of a highly-dysfunctional family. The teen was raised by a bitter aunt who blames the girl's father (and his substance abuse) for contributing to the death of her sister/the girl's mother. This aunt has allowed her resentment to spill over to the teen- causing poor communication between them. An element of mendacity also prevails...the teen was told (by the aunt) that her father was also dead.

As a high school student now, she has her share of trouble and challenges. However, her life soon takes a turn when she becomes interested in participating in the sport of track and field/running. As time goes by, at school, the teen also becomes actively involved in a Bible study (her journey in becoming a Christian) with the help of a school counselor. Additionally, she is unaware of the fact that her father is actually alive, locally hospitalized and dying. Coincidentally, this man/her father also had a talent/history of being a great runner during his younger years.

Meanwhile, while on a hospital visit, the track/field coach of the young lady accidentally encounters her sick father. As an unlikely friendship ensues between the coach and the girl's father, the coach soon discovers this father-daughter relationship between his runner and the hospitalized man. He then proceeds to arrange for the two to meet. Presuming that her father had died some time ago, the teen (and her dad) both experience an awkward and emotional moment- when the two finally meet each other. Subsequent visits with her dad help to establish more of a comfort level *and* a recognition of their common interest in the sport of running.

From that connection, the father was eventually able to proudly serve as the "bedside coach/cheerleader" for his daughter in her upcoming running competition. Needless to say, with her dad's help, the young lady did win the championship for her high school. In addition to winning that competition, came the restoration of family relationships that were lost in the past. The movie concluded with a look at how this young lady continued to be a source of encouragement/inspiration to others. She was seen ministering through providing Bible study for others-as well as becoming a motivational speaker

What a blessing to be in attendance at such a fine and inspirational dinner/movie event!



## **Saturday Ministry: The Nineth Anniversary Celebration**

By Sis. Naomi Cullum

During the month of February, the *Saturday Ministry* (at the Ujima Village Plaza led by Sis. Linda Rogers), celebrated its ninth anniversary! It was a joyous time for all who were able to participate. In attendance were the Plaza residents, Sis. Daisy and Sis. Millie (and others who stopped by). There was also the surprise visit of Ujima Village Church sisters Sis. Shirley Hillary and Sis. Gail Snead, Sis. Diane Watkins, and yours truly. While everyone brought an assortment of delicious dishes, Sis. Linda also provided a beautiful decorative sheet cake for the occasion.

Time was spent praying, reading the Word, sharing the goodness of God in our lives, and listening to soul-soothing gospel music. Indeed, we had a relaxing and marvelous time - no one was in a rush to go anywhere. [Now, it doesn't get any better than that!] What a blessing it was to be a part of this wonderful gathering!



## **The Lighthouse Ministry: To Ujima Village Plaza** By Sis. Naomi Cullum

Currently in the works are additional plans that serve the residents of Ujima Village Plaza. For nine years, Sis. Linda Rogers has faithfully been leading the Saturday Ministry at this residential center. Now, there is an effort underway to further increase this outreach. To serve this population in greater ways, a committee has been formed that includes Sis. Linda, residents of Ujima Plaza, Deacon Tanya Norwood (First Lady at Ujima Village Christian Church) and other members of Ujima Village Christian Church.

Ideas are still being tossed around, but one specific move is to continue to familiarize the residents with not only the Saturday Ministry, but also the services available at the nearby Ujima Church. To promote this the committee has decided to explore the creation and circulation of door knob hangers for each apartment in the Plaza.

With such great potential and so much that can be done, the Lighthouse Ministry invites the Ujima family to join/participate in this wonderful endeavor for the Lord.



## **Spotlight on: Sis. Patricia Panniell – “Deacon-in-Training”**

By Sis. Naomi Cullum



At Ujima Village Christian Church, it's great to know that one can find a host of diligent and vigilant saints of God. Many work so faithfully and graciously-serving the Lord with their varied talents/skills. One such person who particularly comes to mind- at this writing- is Sis. Patricia Panniell. The wife of Ujima's Associate Pastor, Rev. Henry Panniell, she is also a mother who clearly loves both her natural family and church family.

At Ujima, she wears many hats: choir member, usher, Sunday School Teacher, Wisdom Keeping Teacher...and currently, “Deacon-in-Training.” If she serves in even more roles than listed, that would be no surprise. In observing her, one can see that she does each job so well- lending an element of creativity to all that she touches.

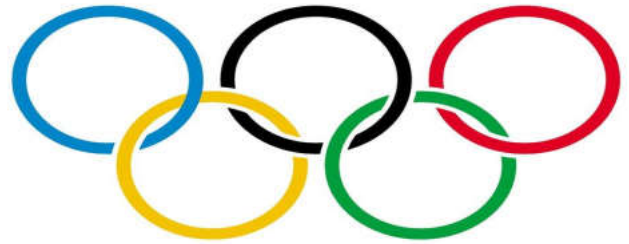
Possessed with such a vibrant spirit, kind heart, great personality, lovely sense of humor and a beauty inside and out, this dear sister is also blessed with a wonderful gift/spirit of wisdom. With an evident humility, she is such a joy to listen to and learn from as well. Certainly, all of her fine qualities can only be attributed to the Lord!

May the Lord continue to bless and use her at Ujima...and *anywhere* He sees fit!

## **The Busy Bees are Buzzing!**

From removing the hedges to stripping and polishing the floors, the Busy Bees Ministry has indeed been busy... all while staying safe with PPE and distancing. Buzz on brothers!





### **“Biblelympics 2020”** By Sis. Naomi Cullum

Our annual “*Biblelympics*” event (held in February) at Ujima was certainly full of fun, excitement and extended learning! As in previous years, the Ujima family came together to engage in a healthy competition that tested their knowledge of the chronological books of the Bible, as well as scriptural/Biblical facts. Rounding out the session for that night was the chance to recognize and sing lyrics of Christian music.

#### **Part 1 - Knowledge of The Books of the Bible:**

For the first portion of the evening, each person was challenged to list (chronologically) the books of the Old Testament on one side of a paper, and the books of the New Testament on the other side. Approximately ten minutes were allotted for this particular activity. When the time expired, papers were exchanged among the group for assessment. In this particular evaluation system, once a book was listed out of order, that would make all the rest of the list in error. Still, this provided the opportunity to be a little more conscientious of these books in the future.

#### **Part 2 - Knowledge of Bible Trivia:**

For this section, the idea was to have two teams compete to correctly respond to Biblical trivia questions. Many of the thought-provoking questions would involve various names, places, circumstances, occupations/titles, and a host of other concepts relative to scriptural content. Of course, there were ranges of difficulty and, therefore, the assignment of higher points associated with them. The Pastor, Rev. John Norwood, served as the host/keeper of questions while First Lady, Deacon Tanya Norwood, took on the role of scorekeeper.

This year’s teams were the “*Righteous Riders*” and the “*Warriors of the Word*.” As it was in the past, the scores were consistently close as team members fiercely collaborated to deliver timely and accurate responses to the questions. However, in the end, it was the “*Warriors*” who managed to outpace the other team.

#### **Part 3 - Knowledge of Christian Songs/Lyrics:**

Concluding the activities for the evening, all were given a small card in the shape of a sheep. On the back of the card was a word or term that was found in a Christian song. As each person’s turn came, they were to sing a portion of a song that contained their particular word. Responding to this actually requires paying attention to/remembering an assortment of lyrics of Christian songs. Indeed, this was an activity that brought out many smiles and laughter as we listened to eager voices respond with a note of confidence.

In the end, everyone was still a winner. An array of wonderful and functional prizes awaited all who had participated courtesy of Deacon Tanya Norwood.

Overall, it was easy to see that the evening was not only an enjoyable one, but a rewarding one as well!

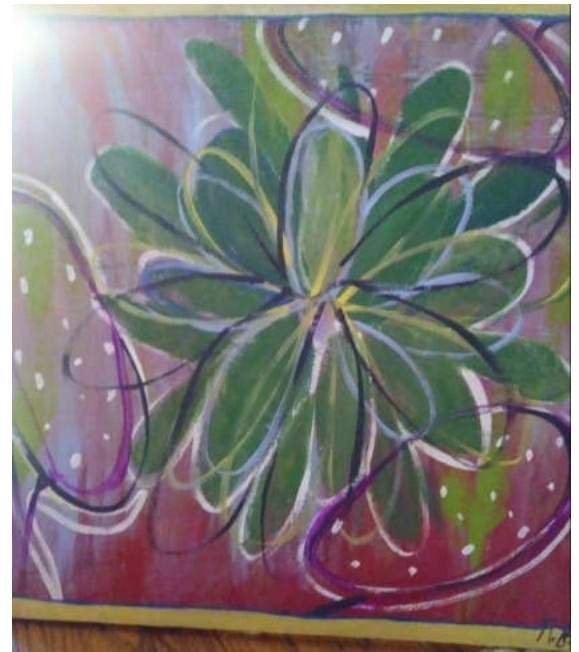


### **If Jesus Came to Your House**

Humbly submitted By Deacon Tanya Norwood  
on behalf of Grandma Manning who gave this  
poem/recitation to me about 15 years ago.

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two,  
If He came unexpectedly I wonder what you'd do.  
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored guest,  
And all the food you'd serve Him would be the very best.  
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there,  
That serving Him in your home is joy beyond compare.  
But when you saw Him coming would you meet Him at the door  
with arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly visitor?  
Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in,  
Or hide some magazines and put The Bible where they had been?  
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard,  
And wish you hadn't uttered that last loud, hasty word?  
Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?  
Would you let Jesus walk right in or would you rush about?  
Yes, I wonder, if this Savior spent a day or two with you,  
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?  
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?  
Would life for you continue as it does from day-to-day?  
Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?  
And would you find it hard, each meal, to remember to say grace?  
Would you sing the songs you always sing and read the books you read,  
And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?  
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you plan to go,  
Or maybe would you change your plans for just a day or so?  
Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends,  
Or hope that they would stay away until His visit ends?  
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever, on and on,  
Or would you sigh with great relief when He, at last, had gone?  
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do,  
If Jesus came in person to spend some time with you.

### **The Artwork of Nashea Flowers**





### **A Call to Action from the Council of Trustees** by Sis. Sandy Baez

During the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic the Trustees of Ujima Village Christian Church ask that you put your faith and trust in the Lord into action. The Trustees are asking all members to fulfill all of the acts of worship. Take the opportunity to respond in gratitude to the grace, love, and mercy of God.

As part of our online worship service that our Pastor has worked diligently to provide for our congregation, we remind our members to respond in gratitude and give your tithes and offering to God each Sunday. This act of worship through tithing is just like the confessing of the Apostles Creed, singing of hymns, hearing the sermon, and engaging in prayer.

Below is a list of a few Bible verses that will help you fully understand biblical stewardship. Just like in our physical Sunday worship services at Ujima we remind you of what the Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (ESV); 6 ...whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Psalms 56:12 "I must perform my vows to You, O God; I will render thank offerings to You."

Proverbs 11:24 "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want."

Malachi 3:10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Luke 16:11 "If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth (money), who will entrust to you the true riches?"

Luke 21:1-4 "Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'"

## Ujima Village Christian Church on Facebook

by Sis. Sandy Baez



Who says social media is bad? Not I, for it is a wonderful venue for spreading The Word of God. Ujima Village Christian Church is now on Facebook!! This page was created by yours truly at Pastor's request. This page provides all those currently using this social venue to access links to the official Ujima website ([www.ujimachurch.org](http://www.ujimachurch.org)). All sermons, music, the tithes and offerings URL, and our Time for Truth/Bible Study recordings are posted. Please share with your family and friends and help spread the Good News of Christ Jesus. Invite your friends and family to worship with us now and hopefully when this pandemic is over they can worship with us in person, in spirit and in truth!

Our Facebook account is <https://www.facebook.com/ujima.church.1>. Let's all stay connected!

**Note that all friend requests are subject to approval and all personal postings, solicitations and/or fundraisers not directly related to our official Ujima website are strictly prohibited.**

## Interceding, Calming, Helping... by Pastor Norwood

There are many people who are in need of special prayer. Remember those who are sick, those who are mourning the dead, those who are on the "front line" fighting the virus and trying to keep people safe, informed, and supplied with the necessities. Remember those who are still working under stressful conditions and those who are afraid and confused.

***"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" [Philippians 4:6](#)***

***"...pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous person can accomplish much" [James 5:16](#)***

The grace of Christ causes Christians to be compassionate and to live out the love of our Lord and Savior. You can help by supporting the efforts of worthy charities that are helping in the battle against this pandemic and its effects. We encourage your support of: [The Salvation Army](#); [Samaritan's Purse](#); [World Vision](#); [Church World Service](#); [The Trenton Area Soup Kitchen](#); [No Kid Hungry](#)

Also, we can provide support to one another. Contact neighbors, especially those who may be alone or elderly or handicapped. Encourage them and pray with them. See if there is anything they need that you may help provide (without putting yourself at risk). Spend time online with students and children who may be confused or afraid and in need of reassurance and guidance. Slide a written word of blessing and encouragement under a neighbor's door. Sister Norwood and I just put together small care packages with candy, treats, a devotional booklet ("Our Daily Bread"), a palm cross, and a roll of toilet paper with a simple note of care for each of our neighbors. We left it at their doors and stepped back after knocking so that we obeyed the "social distancing" rule. It was an encouraging witness that brought smiles to their faces. I am sure that if you prayerfully consider what you can do, the Lord will put something on your heart.

Share the link to the church website ([UjimaChurch.org](http://UjimaChurch.org)) and encourage people to participate in our on-line worship and conference call studies. There may be those who would not come to church before that may get saved because they will take advantage of what is provided virtually.

***[2 Corinthians 1:3-5 \(ESV\)](#); <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.***

## **Health Focus: Fighting Fear with Facts** by Sis. Tina Roach

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear but of love, power and a sound mind.” 2Tim 1:7

“We will not fear, though the earth gives way & the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar & foam & the mountains quake with their surging. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”  
Psalm 46:2-7

**Reflections from the frontline:** While I don’t mind saying I don’t know repeatedly, and have no insights on what the pandemic “really” means or how it “really” started or whether it fulfills prophecy, I must admit, as a nurse it was especially difficult seeing so many people suffering and dying alone. Hospital visit restrictions prevented family members from being at their bedside. As I prayed about the situation, I was comforted by the realization that everyone goes into eternity alone. What benefit is a hundred individuals at your bedside, if you haven’t made peace with God. While even if there is nobody at your side and Jesus greets you with open arms, surely you won’t be lamenting those last moments alone! The things we do during mourning and periods of bereavement are primarily to provide comfort and promote healthy coping of the survivors. Let us be prayerful as the impact of these circumstances have altered the grieving process for so many. May we be encouraged and creative to find new healthy means to cope and mourn. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.” Matt 5:4

We have been bombarded with evolving information about the Pandemic almost on a daily basis. However, this presents an opportunity to raise awareness on a few issues that are relevant now and when the Pandemic is a part of our distant history.

**Asymptomatic Carriers:** After a person becomes infected with any disease, at some point they will usually develop signs and symptoms as the body’s immune system kicks in to fight the agent. However, in some cases, an infected individual never develops any symptoms at all, yet they are actively continuing thru the lifecycle of the disease and possibly unknowingly transmitting the infectious agent to other people and surfaces. Research varies regarding the percentage of asymptomatic covid carriers, but please be aware this is a factor. This is another reason to be wise and follow the precautions to further protect ourselves and most importantly others. As Christians we should always consider the interests of others above yourself. (Phillipians 2:4)

I’ve always thought of courageous heroes in regards to situations like our First Lady’s mother shared how she became a widow when her husband rushed into a burning building and gave his life trying to save a stranger’s children. During the pandemic, society thinks of hospitals and considers healthcare workers as heroes but essential workers are making sure our needs are met in many different industries: grocery/food, gas, sanitation, prisons and more! While they are not rushing, these dedicated workers daily walk into workplace environments that often have increased exposure to undiagnosed (early covid cases), noncompliant covid positive cases and asymptomatic carriers. We acknowledge and appreciate their courage and we pray to God to protect and preserve essential workers. Let us lead the way and demonstrate our faith with actions: Let’s be compliant with orders from authorities and cooperative with recommendations from experts. Christians should be wise and harmless examples at this time (Matt 10:6).

### **Handwashing & Masks:**

**Myth:** Frequent handwashing, disinfection and masks are recent innovations introduced by the CDC and medical experts to avoid catching Coronavirus.

**Facts:** In the 1800’s Florence Nightingale and her team of nurses revolutionized healthcare by introducing frequent handwashing and disinfecting surfaces/medical instruments after discovering soldiers were dying from catching diseases/infections in medical facilities ten times more than from combat injuries. The CDC and medical experts have been advocating for frequent hand washing every flu season but the pandemic has raised awareness to unprecedented levels. Handwashing is the gold standard intervention, the most effective and least expensive approach for preventing spread of all types of infectious diseases including: MRSA, VRE, diarrheal illnesses, open wounds, infections known to be especially resistant to strong antibiotics (VRE, CDI/F), Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and others.

**Myth:** Wearing masks/face coverings protects the wearer from catching covid.

**Facts:** Yes and No. There are many different types of masks but primarily two types being discussed in regards to the Pandemic. Basic medical masks/face coverings, and N95 respirator masks.

No, medical masks and face coverings do not protect the wearer from contamination from others; instead they primarily protect other people from potential germs from the wearer's nose/mouth. However, an additional benefit for the wearer is the mask helps prevent the wearer from contaminating themselves by preventing them from touching their own face/nose with their hands after touching surfaces that may be contaminated.

Yes, N95 respirator masks do protect the wearer from catching covid; however supplies are much more limited. Even healthcare professionals preserve these masks for providing direct care to acute covid patients. Unless you are caring for someone confirmed covid positive, please abstain from wasting these valuable supplies so healthcare providers have access when needed.

**Health Disparity:** Disparity means an unfair difference or the condition of being unequal. Research shows a longstanding history of health disparities across the globe. In the United States it is most evident when poor and minority populations experience worse health outcomes and higher death rates than the general population with the same conditions such as: Heart Disease, Cancer, Diabetes, Hypertension, COPD, Stroke, and Kidney Disease. The Pandemic further highlights this troubling trend.

**Myth:** Asians and Chinese people caused Covid, seniors are more likely to be infected and blacks are less likely to be infected.

**Facts:** Such ignorance fuels fear, stereotypes, racism, discrimination and promotes unfair health disparities. Stigma and stereotypes are ungodly works of the flesh that promote hate, wrath and strife. Individuals ages 13 and older are most likely to be infected, those with compromised immune systems and/or poorly managed serious pre existing conditions are more likely to become seriously ill if infected. Blacks are actually being infected, becoming seriously ill and dying at higher rates than the general public due to health disparities. "Collectively, Black Americans represent 13% of the population in all areas of America releasing such data, but have suffered 27% of deaths." (The Color of Coronavirus, APN Research Lab)

Disparity is another catastrophic result of pervasive discrimination that means people will suffer and die after having less access to care, less information for sound decision making, less quality of care, for no other reason than their epidermal melanin levels (determines skin color). Descendants of Africans and Native Americans have the highest melanin levels. Will Christians shrink back from opportunities to reduce stigma and fight fear with facts? God forbid! We are called to be ambassadors of Christ and ministers of reconciliation. As peacemakers, Christians have a responsibility to promote love and equity amongst all of God's creation, for all souls belong to Him and we are healed by His wounds!

**Health Resilience:** Science Confirms the Bible Again!!! Unfortunately, Spiritual and Mental health are often overlooked in the context of health and wellness, but not in the Bible! Many spiritual disciplines have a beneficial side effect: they also promote a healthy lifestyle. The Bible says avoid excesses, waste & gluttony; today Health Sciences calls this "portion control". God calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our "minds", and some say, "do not fear" is the most repeated command in the Bible.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled; do not be afraid." John 14:27

"You will keep whoever's mind is steadfast in perfect peace, because he trusts in you." Isaiah 26:3

Science shows sustained stress & anxiety (fear) hormones are devastating to homeostasis and depletes the immune system and wreaks havoc on your mind. Stress hormones (cortisol, epinephrine) trigger increased heart rate and breathing, opens vessels feeding the lungs and muscles, suppresses the digestive and reproductive systems and alters growth processes. These effects are beneficial and protective during a brief encounter with a perceived threat or danger. Like pulling an alarm, these hormones help ensure immediate access to increased blood and oxygen in anticipation and preparation to respond to an imminent threat with valiant efforts. However, God did not intend for us to live in a chronic state of anxiety, apprehension or fear; extending alteration of the body's natural cycles and states leads to dysfunction and sense of dys ease including increased prevalence of: depression, digestive problems, depression, headaches, memory/concentration problems, heart diseases, sleep problems, and weight gain.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (NOR COVID)\* .....shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37-39 (\*added for emphasis)

The Pandemic brings unprecedented levels of worldwide toxic stressors which means an extended period of societal trauma. We all experience and express stress in various ways. Even now, His grace is sufficient and his strength is perfected in our weakness. Health experts use the term Health Resilience to describe the ability to cope with significant stressors in a positive way. Research shows proven health benefits for those with higher health resilience including: longevity, lower rates of depression, and greater satisfaction with life. Resilience can be protective in helping prevent the development of emotional, mental and physical complications and also supports the ability to maintain, adapt and even thrive despite adversity and hardships.

Faith Based Communities Help Build Resilience: Since resilience is a skill, it can be strengthened and developed through principles and methods such as connectedness and fellowship, rest and renewal, laughter and joy, reflective journaling, goal setting and planning, faith and prayer. Positive indicators of resilience are more prevalent in faith based communities including hope, forgiveness and a sense of wellbeing. These practical approaches are referenced in the Bible and remind us that our heavenly father instructs us for His glory and for our good.

“...let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.....but exhorting one another...” Hebrews 10:24-25

Laughter Boosts Immune System: Laughter decreases cortisol, DHEA, and stress hormone levels and increases immune cells, and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease. Laughter triggers the release of natural chemicals (endorphins) that give us a sense of positive feelings and an overall sense of well being and even temporary pain relief. Low DHEA levels increase fatigue, depression, dry skin ,dry eyes and decreases exercise tolerance. [Humanity] has unquestionably one really effective weapon—laughter. ....Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. — Mark Twain

JOKE: A married couple died in a car accident and went to heaven. Jesus opened the pearly gates and welcomed them, Michael & Gabriel gave them a tour and they were awed at the beauty and magnificent splendor. The husband turned to his wife and said, “If it hadn’t been for all your healthy cooking, I would’ve been here years ago!”

“A merry heart is a good medicine: but a broken spirit drieth up the bones.” Proverbs 17:22

The Color of Coronavirus: <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>

Why some racial groups are more vulnerable

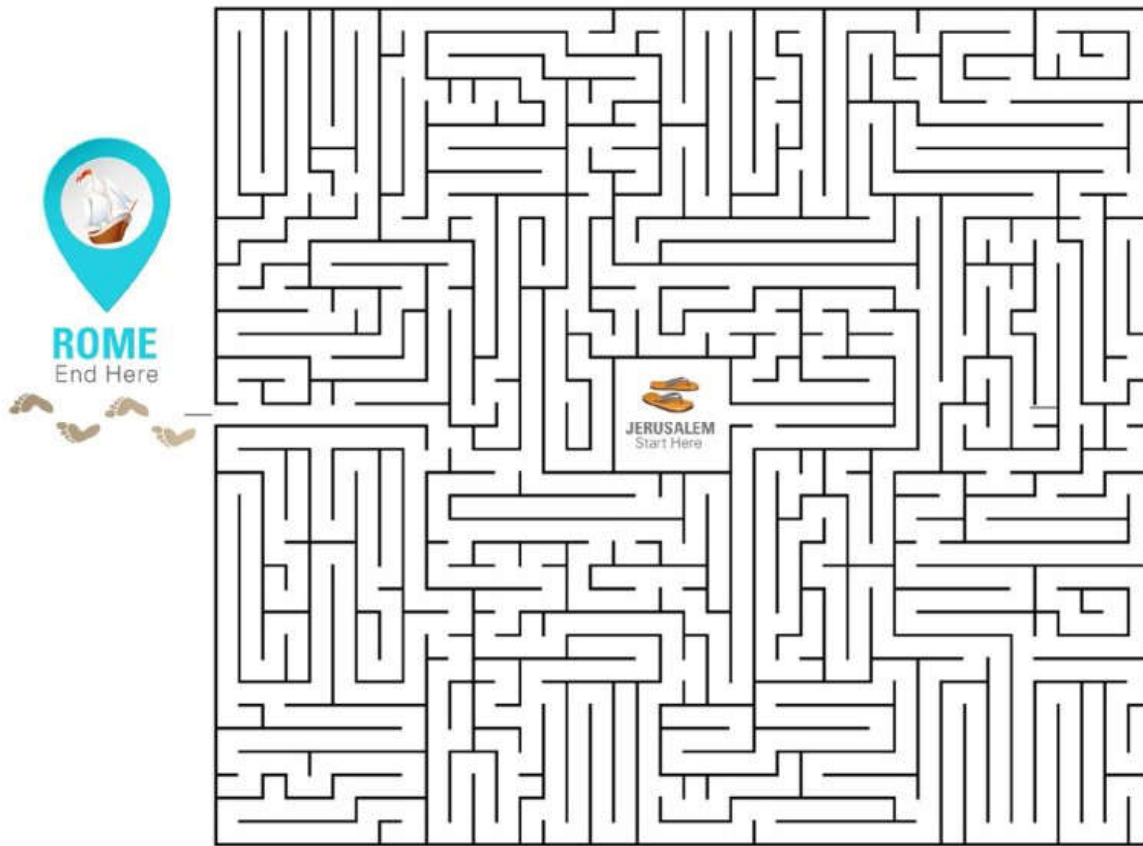
<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200420-coronavirus-why-some-racial-groups-are-more-vulnerable>



## A-maze-ing Bible Journeys

### #5 PAUL OF TARSUS

The Apostle Paul traveled through half the known world, carrying the gospel to tens of thousands of gentiles. The farthest he was from Jerusalem is probably Sparta, which today is a 900-mile drive. He traveled several thousand miles in all three of his missionary voyages, and made more than 50 stops between Jerusalem and Rome. Go with Paul as he faces shipwrecks, imprisonment, heresies, and all sorts of challenges...

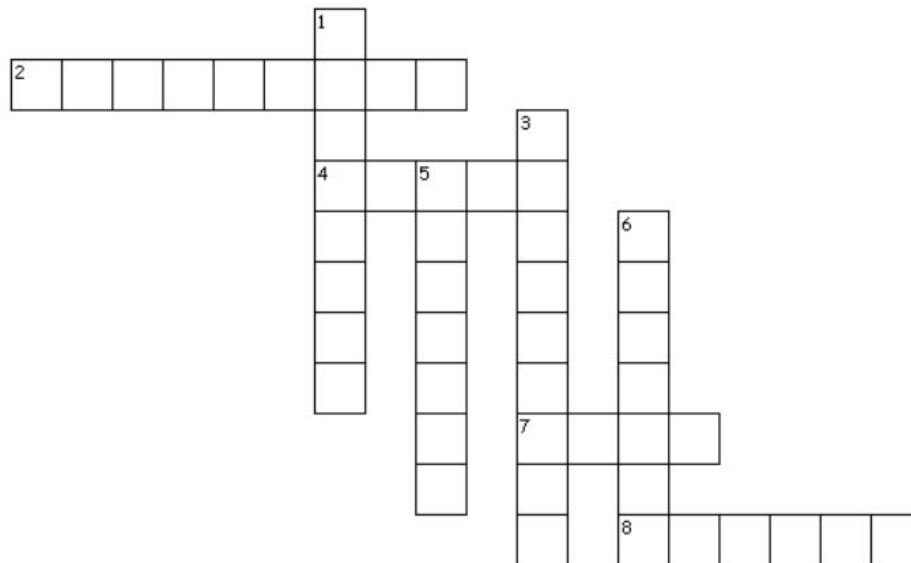


**Philippians 3:8** What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.

# CROSSWORD #4 PSALM 22

Learn one of the best-loved Psalms by answering questions about it in the crossword puzzle below.  
Read the Psalm first!

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?<br/>Why are you so far from saving me, so far<br/>from my cries of anguish?</p> <p>2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not<br/>answer, by night, but I find no rest.</p> | <p>3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you<br/>are the one Israel praises.</p> <p>4 In you our ancestors put their trust; they<br/>trusted and you delivered them.</p> <p>5 To you they cried out and were saved; in you<br/>they trusted and were not put to shame.</p> |
|--|---|



## Across:

2. These relatives put their trust in you.
4. Those who trust you were not put to...
7. By night, I don't find this.
8. God, you seem far from doing this.

## Down:

1. Why have you done this particular thing to me?
3. People trusted you, and you did this.
5. My cries are made of this.
6. Israel does this to you.



## **Thank You to Our First Family**

**From the Congregation**

Thank you to Pastor Norwood,  
First Lady Norwood, and  
Treasurer Trinity Norwood

From Our Hearts - To Your  
Hearts



The Covid-19 pandemic has produced societal changes globally, giving us all an opportunity to reflect and make responsible decisions. Certainly, we all are in need of sound biblical advice, and examples. We are honored and blessed to have the Norwood family as our Church leaders and family. They have made this time of great pain and distress more endurable and bearable.

The online church services, sermons, audio conference and zoom meetings, music selections, and all of the other work that goes along with the care and upkeep of the Church does not happen magically. It has taken a lot of work, work, and more work. The extra effort required to minister in a remote fashion on a consistent basis is technical, time consuming, requires attention to detail, and is compassionate in nature. And the quality has been superb. This is a reflection of who they are.

Our First Family, we are grateful, blessed, comforted, and encouraged. We love and thank you with all of our hearts!

May God Keep and Bless You Always!

Ujima Village Christian Church

***God Bless Our First Responders and  
Essential Workers!***

***Thank You For Your Service!!!***

