



***** FEBRUARY 2024 *****

A VIEW FROM THE PULPIT

*“Why are thou cast down, O My Soul? And Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God!”
Psalm 42:11*

GROUNDHOG DAY

Groundhog Day is a silly, fun, superstitious day for many of us. Admit it, many, if not most of us, are curious to know if the little critter will see his shadow and retreat back into his hole to wait out six more weeks of winter, or if he didn't see his shadow, it means that spring is just around the corner.

If you look up Groundhog Day on-line you can discover, it really should be called “Badger Day” because German farmers started the custom centuries ago by watching the activities of badgers. It looks like these old farmers were trying to predict the seasons change the actions of these animals, But over time a lot of superstition crept in. Don't you wonder what really lies behind it all?

Behind all the myth and legend is a very human emotion: HOPE. The start of winter was probably a dreadful ordeal for primitive people. As the cold hard days dragged on and on, they must have feared that spring might never come---- so they hung on to any hope that winter would pass.

Hope, don't you think is the real lesson of Groundhog Day. It is a celebration by the human spirit to find a reason to hope. Maybe we could join in giving thanks that we can rest our hope not in an animal like the groundhog, but in GOD, who is the anchor holding our souls not just through the winter storms of life, but also through sunny, joyful, blessed times too!

Rev. George Walton, Stated Supply Pastor



A STONE OR BREAD?

**“What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?”
Matthew 7:9**

No loving father would give a stone or a snake to his hungry son if he asked for a piece of bread or a fish. Jesus used the absurdity of that analogy in Matthew 7 to underscore the heavenly Father's readiness to give good things to His children when they ask Him. He wanted them to have complete confidence in the Father's provision for their spiritual needs. Sometimes, however, it may seem as if the Lord has given us “stones” instead of “bread” But in His wisdom, He actually is working through our circumstances to give us something far better than what we requested. An unknown author expressed it this way. I asked for health that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things.

I asked God for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak that I might learn to obey. I asked for power and the praise of men; I was given weakness to sense my very need of God. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing I asked for but everything I hoped for In spite of myself, my prayers were answered-I am among all men most richly blessed.

Yes, God always gives us what's best for us. Abundant Blessing

**Jan Renwick
Buffalo PW Secretary**

**Thank you to Pat Johnson for
your gift
In memory of JW Bailes.**



Remember with love and prayer:



Manuel Bailey, Dr. David Ciliberto, Joe Daniel, Jason Dunigan, Barbara Jo Glass, Miriam Gunter, Geri Hales, Jimmy Holt, George & Brenda Honeycutt, Danny James, Evelyn Johnson, Tammy Johnson, Tim Johnson, Ingrid Luton, Brandon Maness, Rev. Gilbert McDowell, Jeff Renwick, Jeanette Siess, Julie Siess, Peggy & Cecil Sineath and Karen Smith

COMMUNION

We will be celebrating the Lord's Supper on Sunday, February 11th at our 11 am service.



WEEKLY OFFERINGS

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|--------------|-----------|
| Jan 7, 2024 | \$1055.50 |
| Jan 14, 2024 | \$472 |
| Jan 21, 2024 | \$562 |
| Jan 28, 2024 | \$1587 |

FLOWERS WILL BE PLACED IN THE SANCTUARY THIS MONTH BY THE FOLLOWING:



- Feb. 4th OPEN
- Feb 11th OPEN
- Feb 18th OPEN
- Feb 25th By Marie Macko in loving memory of her husband, Colonel Charles Macko.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- Feb. 05th - Allison Goodwin
- Feb. 10th - Linda Cummings
- Feb. 11th - Kristian Johns
- Feb. 13th - Jeff Cashion

- Feb. 16th - Charlotte Johns
- Feb. 17th - Andy Holder
- Feb. 21st - Marie Macko
- Feb. 22nd - Geri Hales
- Feb. 22nd - Pat Kelly
- Feb. 23rd - Debbie Thomas
- Feb. 26th - Jason Kelly



Susan Daniel will be leading Bible Study for Buffalo PW on Tuesday, February 27th. All women are invited to attend.

BEING A MUSTARD-SEED CHURCH

By Whitney Wikinson Arreche

In Matthew 17:19-20, when Jesus calls out his disciples for thinking too little of the power of God within them, he talks about tiny mustard seeds. He tells them that if they had the faith even of a mustard seed, they would be able to tell massive things like mountains to move, and those massive things would move.

The mustard seed becomes an object lesson in faith. We usually hear it used to illustrate that if such a small amount of faith can do such great things, we can only imagine what big faith can do! Perhaps like those disciples, who have just witnessed the transfiguration, we think bigger is better. And perhaps like them, we miss the entire point of Jesus' lesson.

Nothing is wrong with smallness if that smallness is chock-full of faithfulness. I say this as the new pastor of a small but mighty church of 50 or so active disciples. Ours is a mustard-seed-sized church. We just cannot do some things because of our size; and if we were like those disciples in Matthew 17, we might get hung up on that. For example, we cannot host the fancy, huge events that churches in our area with several hundred members can put on. But we have so much we can do, precisely because of our size.

A choir member, who is also a deacon, can knit a prayer blanket during worship that will later bear sticky notes full of prayers from people who personally know the ill person receiving the blanket. In a tiny church like ours, prayer is radically tangible and personal.

Our youth activities are intergenerational by necessity, but also by design. Teenagers lead people who are their grandparents' age in studying books on whatever is close to their heart — from gender identities to hobbits. Nothing is off-limits. These young people find a space tailored just for them by caring and present adults. They go on to serve as liturgists, cheered on by adults who know them as well as anybody.

One church member who is passionate about social justice can ignite that energy in the entire church through her witness and presence. Someone dedicated to

supporting scouts in our community becomes an ambassador for those young people — who might not worship with us each Sunday but who remain a vital part of who we are.

We cannot hire someone to address every facilities need that arises in our church. However, an all-member work crew descends upon the church every Wednesday (yes, with matching T-shirts). People of all abilities help maintain our building in whatever way they can, and they share life organically over coffee and pastries in the kitchen. This same group shows up to help church members needing wheelchair ramps, to help isolated neighborhoods needing care and to offer frequent service at the local food pantry.

When we in Christianity believe that bigger always means better, we are following the spirit of capitalism rather than the Spirit of Christ. That will never save us or our churches, our neighbors or this planet. If we are very honest with ourselves, life can feel overwhelming with all the bigness around us: the major events, the terrifying diagnoses, the enormity of violence and hatred and bigotry.

We crave smallness in those times, the smallness of a still moment when we remember we are more than calendars and obligations. We crave the smallness of human connections that are utterly ordinary. We crave the smallness of God, who surprises us with a little bit of kindness when we most need it. Those small kernels of faith keep us going no matter what bigness we face.

Maybe this craving is why I love pastoring small churches so much: these imperfect and yet deeply incarnational communities where God is as close as the person who remembers your name and wraps you in a blanket of love.

In these mustard-seed places, the mountains of our social and spiritual isolation from each other move, little by little.

Buffalo might be a little smaller than a mustard seed-size church, but we can reach out and still do wonderful things in God's name.