

# hands & feet

A monthly newsletter of the Southbridge Methodist Church

## Mark Your Calendar

Sunday, July 10 to  
Sunday, August 28:  
"Summer Baggage"  
Sermon Series

Starting on  
Monday, July 11  
6:30pm  
Bible Study on the  
Book of Genesis

Wednesday, July 21  
6:30pm:  
Movie Night: The Way

Sunday, July 31  
Praise Band Sunday

Wednesday, August 17  
6:30pm:  
Movie Night: An Interview with  
God

## EDITORIAL

My dear friends,

It has been a while since we issued our last newsletter and much has happened.

314 mass shootings in the United States since January 1, 2022... It would be easy to speak of vengeance after gunmen opened fire on innocent people, killing many and injuring many more. But it is much more difficult to speak of love and the healing power of God. This country has become a killing field, that really makes me cry. Of course, I have been angry, advocating for the banishment of all weapons, emphasizing that weapons are made to maim and kill. However, instead of expressing bitterness, I have decided I should champion more love. Only love can conquer evil. Our hearts break not only for the victims and their families, but for the impacted communities who must now work to heal the wounds and find words that can comfort and reassure. Not to forget the families and friends of the perpetrators and the perpetrators themselves, these damaged and lost lives. How many more lives must be lost? How much more blood must be shed before we throw down our guns and silence the voices of hate? We should preach more love, not revenge or anything that comes from the evil and would make us become part of the evil. We should never forget that we are a Christian church.

Which leads me into another serious happening recently: Roe vs. Wade has been overturned.

(continued on page 2)

## SUMMER 2022 EDITION

*"Summer afternoon, summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language."*

Henry James



## EDITORIAL (continued)

several pastors around the country challenged their conservative counterparts with this question: Are you pro-life if you are pro-gun?

I've heard people tell each other you're not Christian because you're pro-choice. And I heard responses like how can you be pro-life and not support getting rid of assault rifles? We have heard many emotional statements on both sides and they are a vignette in the larger narrative of a nation divided on how – or if – guns should be regulated. The faith community is not of one mind on this issue.

People of faith who are tired of years of failed gun control efforts and grieving the latest mass shooting victims are pointing out what they say is hypocrisy – conservative Christians pushing to abolish abortion and grant unfettered access to guns. Those who disagree contend the real problem is sin and soft targets. It's not guns, but the "evil" in people and abortions that kill, they say.

These entrenched, partisan divisions in the U.S. on abortion and gun rights are stark after high-profile massacres and the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that overturned the constitutional right to abortion.

According to 2017 Pew Research Center data analyzed for Christianity Today, 41% of white evangelicals own a gun compared to 30% of Americans overall – the highest share of any religious group. The survey also shows 74% of all gun owners in the U.S. agree that their right to gun ownership is essential to their sense of freedom. Most states also allow firearms in places of worship.

Christian author and activist Shane Claiborne disputes the notion that the U.S. has a sin problem, but not a gun problem; he says it has both. Claiborne recently went to Uvalde, Texas, to support victims, and to Houston to pray and protest at the National Rifle Association's convention held days after the massacre. He passed out tracts asserting "We can't be pro-life and ignore gun violence" and asking "Will we choose the gun or the cross?"

Claiborne was among those asked to leave the NRA's prayer breakfast after disrupting the program to call for prayer for the Uvalde victims. He wants to see laws change, including policies that would raise the age of gun ownership, limit magazine capacity,

ban assault-style weapons, and mandate training. He said laws can't make people love each other, but they can make it more difficult to take a life.

Claiborne said: "We want to make it harder for folks to kill other people, and we're making it really easy right now."

Conservative pastors have said mass shootings and other social harms are the result of an overall degradation in moral values and disregard for human life. Some say the cause is mental illness.

But, at the end of the day, how can you teach in schools when people are traumatized by gun violence? When a church is no longer a safe space, how do I help grow people's faith? The impact is like an epidemic that touches every fiber of our being. I guess I was a fool to think Sandy Hook was going to change the world...

Yes, I refuse the bitterness and the need for revenge and choose the way of love, reminding us of a God who the Psalms tell us "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." However, I also remember the words from Jeremiah. Rachel weeps for her children, because they are no more, and there is no bringing them back. So Rachel has no proper response, but to weep. Rachel weeps for her children, and she refuses to be comforted, for they are no more. I think that we have to refuse to be comforted after these events. If we can be comforted, then that's how these things keep going on and on and on. We get outraged, and we pray, and we move on.

We have to refuse to be to be comforted when guns, and individuals with guns and a system that perpetuates guns all over the country are causing our children, elderly, grocery shoppers, churches, people, death, injuries, and trauma. We have to move past the weeping and keep a bit of anger that this is going on.

We can choose the way of love and still say, enough is enough. We need to stop using Christianity as a veneer to deny reality. We love, we forgive, we pray, but we stand with our arms raised high, asking for Justice, for the right to live safely.

May it be so.

Pastor Sabina



# My Summer Prayer

by Enid Blyton

**G**IVE me, O God,

The sunshine glinting between the trees,  
The soft little kisses of every breeze,  
The busyful hum of the happy bees,  
Lost in the laughing clover ;

The cornfields bathed in the golden sun,  
The poppies nodding to me in fun,  
The daisies closing up one by one  
Sighing that day is over ;

The wonder of dawn in the eastern sky,  
The scent of the hedge-rose, wind-blown by,  
The whispering trees, and the bubbling cry  
Of the brook fast-flowing under ;

The love of the mystic distance blue,  
The love of all things pure and true,  
And when I yield my life to You,  
The worship of Your Wonder.

## NEW SUMMER SERMON SERIES!!

This eight-week series uncovers some of the heaviest baggage we carry and invites us to exchange it for the peace Jesus offers. We learn that our luggage is often filled with emotions we might be unaware we feel, but God invites us to release the burdens and trust him to restore our brokenness and help us experience the freedom he offers.



**SUMMER BAGGAGE**  
WEIGHED DOWN BY THE BAGGAGE WE CARRY

WEEK 1—JULY 10: ANGER	WEEK 5—AUGUST 7: JEALOUSY
WEEK 2—JULY 17: BITTERNESS	WEEK 6—AUGUST 14: FEAR
WEEK 3—JULY 24: RESENTMENT	WEEK 7—AUGUST 21: PAST
WEEK 4—JULY 31: PRIDE	WEEK 8—AUGUST 28: SELFISHNESS

## Trey's Life Garden Is blooming!!



*In my deepest, darkest moments, what really got me through was a prayer. Sometimes my prayer was 'Help me.' Sometimes a prayer was 'Thank you.' What I've discovered is that intimate connection and communication with my creator will always get me through because I know my support, my help, is just a prayer away.*

***Iyanla Vanzant***



## Happy Birthday, Patti!

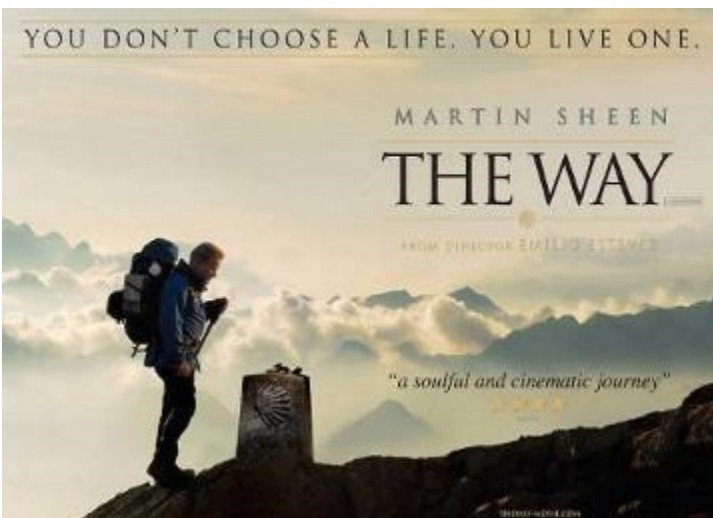
Thank you for your many years of service  
as our Treasurer!





**July 21, 2022 - 6:30pm**

**August 17, 2022 - 6:30pm**



Dr. Tom Avery (Charlie Sheen), an uptight ophthalmologist is summoned to St. Pied de Port, France, to collect the remains of his grown son Daniel (Emilio Estevez). When he arrives in France, kindly police Capt. Henri (Tcheky Karyo) informs the stunned father that Daniel was killed in a sudden storm on his first day attempting the Camino de Santiago, an ancient pilgrimage also known as the Way of St. James. Still struggling to understand why Daniel wanted to travel the Way of St. James, the grief-stricken father impulsively decides to make the arduous 500-mile pilgrimage in his son's stead. Donning Daniel's gear, Tom resolutely sets off on the journey, often stopping along the way to spread his son's ashes.

An Interview with God stars Brenton Thwaites as Paul Asher, a journalist whose time covering the war in Afghanistan and crumbling marriage forces him to question his place in the world, and the faith that affirms it. A work assignment with an interviewee who claims to be none other than God (David Strathairn) further challenges Paul and the faith he is clinging on to. Well performed and revealing in the power of its mystery, An Interview with God may not deliver answers but will instigate thought and conversation about its eternal themes.

**Note on "The Camino de Santiago":** the centuries old pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela where the remains of the Apostle Saint James is entombed in a crypt beneath the main altar. An 800 kilometer trek, Camino de Santiago, or "The Camino" as it is commonly called, is the ultimate metaphor for life itself. It begins in the Pyrenees in southern France and ends in Santiago, Galicia, Spain. The reasons for the pilgrimage are personal to each individual and are as varied as the pilgrims themselves. Some walk for personal reflection or enlightenment, others for adventure. Typically, pilgrims carry a scallop shell to honor St. James. They also carry a Compostela, a passport which is stamped at each important stop along the journey before reaching Santiago at which point the pilgrim received a special certificate honoring their achievement.

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022

## Theme: “Envisioning the Beloved Community”

### Pastor Sabina’s Highlights:



**Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling** delivered the memorial sermon titled, “May The Life That I’ve Lived Speak For Me”, and Friday morning worship sermon. She quoted Proverbs 29:18, which says, “Where there is no vi-

sion, the people perish.” But vision is not enough, Bishop Easterling said. “For visions to have import, they must become our reality. It is good to envision the beloved community, it will be even more blessed when we become ... when we are ... the beloved community.” (please see Sabina for link to video)

### Rev. Effie McAvoy is the 2022 Zeigler Preacher.

Rev. McAvoy serves Shepherd of the Valley UMC in Hope, RI. In her sermon, on Psalm 130 and 2 Corinthians 6:1-



10 on Friday afternoon, Rev. McAvoy said:

“There is a balm in Gilead ... and I wonder, Where is that healing ointment for us right now?” But she said, “even in my lack of faith, I still have faith that God is going to ... and God is doing ... a new thing in New England. There’s hope. There’s always hope. You must lead the people with hope.” Great sermon!

On Thursday morning, **Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar** opened the Annual Conference session with what is expected to be his final annual Episcopal Address before retiring at the end of this year.

Bishop Devadhar focused on the 2022 Annual Conference theme: “Envisioning the Beloved Community” and the guiding scripture, Philippians 3:14, providing his vision for such a community and some action items for living into that vision. “The upward call in Christ Jesus always inspires, challenges, and stimulates us to constantly examine ourselves as baptized Christians regarding what is happening outside our church buildings,” he said. “The Beloved Community

starts and ends with love.

It is ‘agape love’ – a love that is unconditional,” he said. “What I have said, before, to all of you bears repeating: what if each of our congregations in the New England Annual Conference were to say, ‘Send us the people no one else wants?’” Speaking of the Methodist tradition of an open table communion that extends grace to all, the bishop said: “As so many of our churches have affirmed, all means all. And we are invited to walk humbly with our God, our constant companion in life, our Guide, our Redeemer. In our humility, we say to our siblings who disagree with us theologically, ‘We may be wrong about this, but if we are to err, we will err on the side of expansive grace. We live out of this conviction as we seek to walk with God in every aspect of our life’s journey.’”



And finally, he spoke about hope. We provide hope, the bishop said, “by offering Jesus in new and compelling ways.”

“Friends, I offer my deepest thanks for the hope you are offering through the many new ministries you have begun in the midst of COVID,” he said.

Bishop Devadhar also offered these “action items:”

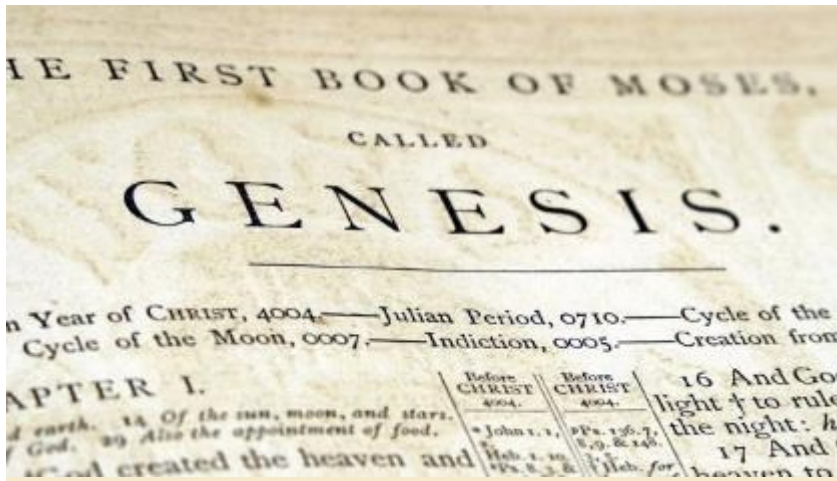
**Accessibility**  
“When we speak about the persons who may not feel welcome at our churches, we often neglect to remember those persons living with disabilities.”

**Mental health**

“We also need to have conversations about mental health. When there is a mass shooting, it is highly offensive for politicians to blame these shootings on people who are mentally ill to take our attention off the gun issue.”

The bishop encouraged our camps and Sunday schools to offer specialized programs to meet the needs of youth with autism.

*(see conclusion on next page)*



Starting on July 11 at 6:30pm,  
 a study of the Book of Genesis!  
 Every Monday at 6:30pm



All Friday Meals in the Summer are BBQs!! Join us, volunteer!  
 It's free, it's good, it's fellowship, community with a side of  
 God!



## ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022 CONCLUSION

### Pastors Respite Fund

“Encouraging our clergy to take the time and steps necessary to care for themselves and their health will reduce their stress and benefit everyone.”

The bishop challenged the conference to set \$1 million as a goal for the fund, “to ensure no clergy ever needs to put an appointment before his/her own well-being.”

See Pastor Sabina for the full text and/or video of the speech.

### Pastor Sabina’s Sad Moments:

- 4 churches closed
- 4 churches disaffiliated
- 56% of churches reported no children
- New licensed local pastors received their licenses from and were anointed by the Bishop, which reminded me I never got this honor... Covid...
- Not being in New Hampshire to enjoy fellowship and see some friends





*"Come as you are, we mean it!"*

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**OFFICE HOURS: By appointment**  
**WORSHIP: Sundays at 10, in person and live on Facebook**  
**BIBLE STUDY: Mondays at 6:30pm**  
**ESPRESSOUL (coffee with the Pastor): Wednesdays at 3:30**  
**CAROL'S CLOSET (free clothing, hygiene products,...): Fridays 1-6**  
**BREAD OF LIFE Food Pantry: Fridays 1-6**  
**ROLSIDA'S KITCHEN (free meal): Fridays at 5**  
**INTERNET CAFÉ (free computer, wifi and coffee) TBA**  
**LAUNDRY LOVE (free laundry and detergent) TBA**