

THE PEW & PULPIT

Newsletter



Happy New Year!

As we usher in the New Year, we will begin a meaningful journey with our upcoming sermon series at Travelers Rest United Methodist Church, titled "Time to Say Goodbye to...". I encourage you to reflect on a classic yet powerful concept: instead of adding more to our lives, let's focus on subtraction. Why not use this season to eliminate rather than accumulate?

In this series, we will turn to scripture to discern areas in which God might be calling us to let go. As followers of Christ, let us gather to explore the timeless wisdom of our faith and discover how saying goodbye to certain habits and distractions can bring us closer to God's purpose for our lives. Join us in this traditional yet timely exploration, as we seek to align our hearts with God's will for a blessed and purposeful year ahead.

--Pastor Brian

January 7

Remember your Name: _____
and Your Baptism

Mark 1:4-11

January 14

Time to Say Goodbye to...
Complaining

Exodus 15:27 - 16:3, 16:11-15

January 21

Time to Say Goodbye to...
Comparing

Matthew 20:1-16

January 27

Time to Say Goodbye to...
Making Excuses

Luke 14:15-24



Each Fall, every United Methodist Church has its annual Charge Conference meeting. This is the time to celebrate the ministries of the church, conduct the business of the church, and prepare the leadership and committees for the New Year. An important task for the pastor for Charge Conference is to give a State of the Church report. As we end 2023 and enter into 2024, I would like to share my State of the Church Report from our Charge Conference on November 6, 2023, so that we can review our progress from the past year and focus on the best course to accomplish our goals and adapt to challenges and changes in the coming year.

Webster's Dictionary defines a transition as "a process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another." Transitions are sometimes easy, but more often somewhat challenging. Transitions force us away from the familiar and direct our steps toward the unknown. And often we go kicking and screaming...but in the end, we must follow the path life gives us. As tough as transitions can be, they are a vital and inevitable part of our lives. Everything is in a constant state of transition.

Over the last 4 years, The Gilmer family experienced many transitions. In 2020 we transitioned from serving at Lyman United Methodist Church in Lyman, South Carolina, a place that we called home for ten years, to a new home when I was appointed to serve as the Senior Pastor of Buncombe Street UMC in Greenville. The atmosphere at this large church was completely different from the smaller setting at Lyman UMC. During our three years at Buncombe Street, transition and change were constant themes in our lives. The biggest transition happened in the spring and summer of 2023. I found myself the Senior Pastor of a church that made the decision to separate from The United Methodist Church. It was a time of great pain as I watched many of the faithful church members I served find themselves without a church home and others questioning what the future of their church would be, and still others questioning if they would ever step foot back into a church.

For me, separating from the United Methodist Church was out of the question. My service, beliefs, and loyalty ensure that I am UNITED METHODIST to the core. I needed to transition to a church that was planning to remain part of the United Methodist Church.

The transition of moving to Travelers Rest UMC has been exciting and exactly what my family and I needed. We needed a place to find healing, comfort, and peace.

Much of my time thus far at Travelers Rest has been spent listening and learning as much as I can about my new church family and their ministries. One of the specific ways that I did this was by having four cottage meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to give the TRUMC Clergy (Christine and me) the opportunity to:

- Get to know the congregation in a more laid back, intimate setting.
- Be able to listen to the congregation tell their story and the story of our church.
- Learn about the congregation's hopes and dreams moving forward.

We accomplished these goals by answering four questions:

1. Of all the churches or faith communities in the area, why are you at TRUMC? How did you get here?
2. Two or three words that describe the essence (heart, lifeblood, spirit, core of who we are) of TRUMC for you.
3. What do you want to hear the community saying about TRUMC? Or what do you hear the community saying about TRUMC now?
4. What is God calling us to do or become in this new chapter of life? (Up to three answers.) What are three wishes you would make for the future of TRUMC?

Below is a summary of what I learned from those questions and what I want us as a congregation to think about and remember as we enter the New Year together.

Over and over again, our members and guests describe Travelers Rest United Methodist Church as real, genuine, authentic, open, caring, loving, approachable, welcoming, accepting, inclusive, relevant, friendly, musical, inviting, hospitable, community minded, and mission and service minded. An approachable church.

People went on to say that Travelers Rest UMC is a “safe place.” Its members are loving to all people. They have created a place where everyone is welcome, a place where you can be who you are, no questions asked, no rejection, a diverse community of faith, a generous church that sees a need and fills it, a church that sees the importance of involving children and youth in all aspects of the church. TRUMC is a church that practices what they preach.

To sum it all up...TRUMC is the definition of the spirit and ideals of the United Methodist Church! Let's head into 2024 determined to spread that message to everyone we see!

As we begin a new year, I am excited to be the pastor of such a great church. I am excited to see all the ways that God is using this church in the community and world. I am excited to be able to serve beside such a great staff, lay leadership team and Rev. Christine Matthews. But, I am also excited to know that there is still plenty of work to be done. There are plenty of people who need to experience God's grace and love, and who better to share that with them than Travelers Rest UMC. God is truly working in and through the lives of TRUMC and its members and I am convinced that with continued hard work, dedication, and God's grace that Travelers Rest will continue to thrive and grow in the coming years.

Looking forward to what's to come,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Gilmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rev. Brian Gilmer

