

# COLLOQUIES with Pastor Brian

Dear Family of Northwood UMC,

This has been a hard year for Minnesota Methodists. We anticipated a historic meeting of our global denomination this spring in Minneapolis poised to make big changes. This was, in turn, swallowed up by a pandemic affecting almost every aspect of our daily lives. And finally, even our pandemic behavior was affected by the killing of George Floyd and the resulting marches for change as well as the riots following. All of this was experienced in different ways throughout our nation and our community. But all of us felt some part of these earth-shattering events.

In the midst of this, life has gone on. Some of us have experienced losses in our families and close friends. Others have given birth to new life, having to learn what raising a baby in the midst of a pandemic looks like for them. The majority of us have dealt with children and grandchildren suddenly at home all the time, changes in our work schedule and expression of our jobs. Many of us experienced new challenges in how we see or communicate with co-workers, businesses, family, and friends. No matter how the world changed or worked differently, our daily lives changed often regardless of the larger situations surrounding us.

It is okay to say these have been hard times. As Christians, we are not robots asked to say everything is joyful and great. God didn't give us feelings only to then ask we deny them or pretend they aren't there.

## “Yet...!”

'Yet' is such a funny word. It admits something is true in a statement, but then with three little letters, it says something else is true too, almost unexpectedly. 'Yet' is used in the New Testament over 128 times (NIV version), and yet we as Christians are not surprised because our God is one who takes situations of sadness and reverses them. Instead of an outcome of brokenness, God helps us find joy. And if not joy, there is usually more than a glimmer of hope.

This Friday, I will be doing a funeral for Bonnie Propp's mother and father. The circumstances aren't ideal. We are not inviting the whole church. We can't meet as a large group. We will only be graveside. These are the circumstances we are given. “YET...!”

We will also be announcing here were lives well-lived. We will proclaim the eternal in Bonnie's mother and father did not die, YET it still abides with the Eternal we worship and proclaim. And Bonnie's sister taught me something I hope to learn more about. She offered that she grieved her father (who died 20 years ago) in 'the wrong way' for too long. Losing her mother has offered her another way to grieve that is healthy and provides wholeness. Do you hear the 'yet' in there?

I have found myself hungering to talk to Bonnie's about what she learned so I can learn it too. Because I am mourning all we lost this last year and trying to make the leap into God's YET and I think she knows some of the answers. I heard the 'yet' she offered and I'm clinging to it.

As children of God and the family of Christ, I want to offer the same invitation to each of us. May we all listen and look hard for God's “YET”. We don't serve a God of brokenness and despair. While God gave us emotions to help us come to grips with our circumstances, we are not left to be tortured by our feelings or controlled by emotion. We are not slaves to how we feel but instead masters of these gifts. And to this end, we have the reminders of the scriptures. Can I share with you one of the 'yets' providing comfort for me during these challenging times?

*Romans 8:24-26 - “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”*

Tough times have come through. I am certain, just in the living of life, other tough times will come. YET! I also know God provides the tools for us to survive these hard times AND to still find ways to see hope, express Faith and seek Love. I hope that this might be of comfort to you and me in the days ahead.

Peace to you,

Pastor Brian