

## Newspaper Reflections for November

This year many have been looking forward to the time when 2020 will come to an end. There have been many events which have occurred within this calendar year which will always have negative associations for us. It will certainly be a year whose date will resonate whenever it comes up in future conversations. It certainly will be a year that people will remember. There have been many people who have expressed the desire for it to end quickly; as if that would solve the many problems which have surfaced within our country and culture this year. I sincerely wish that the fact that there is a definite time limit assigned to any particular year would mean that limit would apply also to the many negative events which have seemed to come in waves since 2020 began. It would indeed be wonderful if all these things came to an end at the end of next month. Unfortunately, many of these problems did not just arrive with January, or even March of 2020. But many of them just began to intrude into the awareness of more and more of us. Many of them have been latent within our society, present but underneath the surface where most of us could remain happily unaware of them until the effects of the corona virus exposed them. In fact, the corona virus is just the latest in a series of new viral diseases which have threatened large populations, but those viruses and their threats were controlled before they reached our shores. Corona-19 however, was the first which reached into populations outside those widely affected by Ebola or the others; it truly became the pandemic long predicted by scientists. Other things long predicted by the scientific community which have also been ignored (climate change, for example) are also beginning to have effects which are creating noticeable havoc this year...those increased numbers of tropical storms due to warmer ocean waters which also changes the storm's patterns of speed, wind, and rain...the increased numbers of wild fires due to longer seasons of reduced snow and increased heat...None of these things are going to end at midnight, December 31, 2020. Other things that have been exposed by the events of 2020 are that our society has some viruses of another type which have been infecting us in what in the study of virology is called a "latent" manner. There are viruses which can "hide" within the host until there is a triggering or stress factor present; then the virus emerges and begins replicating, causing the host to exhibit the signs of its presence. A herpes viruses most are familiar with like this is: it causes fever blisters. The "latent" viruses which are emerging in our society in 2020 are those of racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice which target groups which are "different"; are "other in some way". The basis of the difference may vary depending upon the group; it may be against someone of a different religious background, a different ethnic background, an immigrant background or any characteristic which leads to a physical or behavior difference. These differences have caused the marginalization of many in these groups. Just how marginalized they have been has been exposed by the staggering differences in how they were affected by the covid-19 virus...many were the suddenly "essential workers" who were working more than one job to make barely life sustaining wages. Yet because of their marginalization their health status is lower, their access to health care is less, their hospitalization and death rates as well as infection rates are higher. As we come to the closing months of this year, as we sincerely wish, hope and pray for an end to the many disasters which 2020 has brought to so many; perhaps we should add to those prayers the sincere prayer that the exposure of this rampant latent disease within our society has been exposed; that we can now seek to find a remedy for it...not one that hides it or allows it to become "latent" again, but will truly rid us of it so that we can come together around the celebrations of the future as one

body, united together in a vision which we have long proclaimed but failed to live. Because as we near the end of every year we prepare to welcome the One who calls us to be and do much better.

November is a month that we do traditionally have special occasions of remembrances. In this year when many things have happened that we would like to forget or ignore, we need to find time and space to recognize that around those occasions there were elements that were painful as well. The first occasion of remembrance in November is actually a day set aside to honor those who have served our country...the **Veterans** of our military. Many of them, especially those who have returned from the almost continual wars of recent years, have deep and painful scars, not only physical but mental and emotional. While we honor their service and take occasion to offer our thanks to them, we need to consider the cost to them and their families and seek ways that the future need not ask so much of others. Near the end of this month is a day traditionally set aside for the giving of thanks for our blessings...although many have turned it into a day of frenzied shopping or media consumption of football programming. Although this year, large gatherings and mass shopping expeditions are not encouraged, the more traditional occupation of that day, actually giving thanks is still available to us all. **Thanksgiving Day** is a great opportunity to truly appreciate the blessings we have. It is a day to consider how vastly blessed each of us is especially in the midst of all that is happening around us. This year, as we leave November we begin to anticipate the arrival of our Lord, who came and dwelled among us to show us the true depth of the love God has for us and the call the man he grew to be gave to us to love one another as he loved us. That is another blessing for which we give thanks.

Shalom,

Pastor Libby