



## *People's to People*

The Newsletter of the People's Church of Dover  
United Church of Christ  
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Pastor: Rev. Dr. G. Derrick Hodge

**February 2021**

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# Should the church be “political”?

1.

Before the election, I was careful to avoid saying anything that might be interpreted as “political.” Of course I would never tell you for whom to vote, and so far, I have been fairly successful at keeping my messages focused on spiritual principles. (That is hard to do these days, because just about *anything* anyone says is interpreted as “political”!)

But let's think about the word “political.” It is the English adjectival form of the Greek noun *polis*, which simply means ‘the society’ or ‘the people’. When we debate public policy, think about our laws or our policing system, plan for the future of our country, interact with other countries, try to improve our economy, or make sure that justice is applied fairly and evenly – when we do any of these things, then we are debating the nature of the *polis*. In other words, being “political” simply means that we are interested in the wellbeing of the whole people, of the community, of our country. The moment we stretch our minds beyond the confines of our individual skulls and think about each other, then we are engaging in “politics.” Therefore, being a faithful Christian means that we must be political. We *must* talk about and debate anything that has an impact on the wellbeing of all God's peoples.

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Being “political” means that we care about the wellbeing of the *polis*, of the whole people of God. Thus, to be a faithful Christian we *must* be “political.” Church is exactly the place where we *should* talk about how to work toward life abundant for *everyone*, how to live out our Christian values in the public sphere, and how to design a *polis* that comes as close as possible to the Kingdom which we *claim* to want on earth as it is in heaven.

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2.

But a very different kind of “politics,” has been outspokenly dominant in our country since the early 1980s. That is a “politics” that isn't really interested in the *polis* at all. It is an ideology whose goal is the wellbeing *only* of each *individual* self, to the exclusion of concern for the whole. This way of thinking begins with the individual liberty that our country promises; the problem is that it also *ends* there, with the individual, without ever expanding outward to think our interdependence on each other. The individualist ideology assumes that there is an

unresolvable conflict between our collective wellbeing as a nation, and the wellbeing of each individual. Any law or policy that interferes with any individual's ability to get whatever he wants and to do whatever she wants, without regard for the consequences of other human beings or of the future, is suspect. At its extreme, this way of thinking believes that "looking out for number one" is, and should forever be, the only goal of public policy.

The old idea that we cannot thrive as individuals unless our whole society is thriving, is nonsense to people who think this way. For this reason, we might call this perspective *anti-politics*, because it minimizes the importance of the wellbeing of the whole community, peoples, nation, or globe.

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### 3.

Now, I will lay it all out on the line! I will confess my personal political and religious commitments, so that you can better evaluate anything I say in a sermon.

First, I believe in *democracy*. Strongly. Democracy was not known in the ancient near east, so there is no mention of it in the Bible. But I see the values of democracy there. I believe that democracy is the form of social organization that is most likely to allow us to live out the values that Jesus taught us. (Sometimes, democracy is in conflict with liberty, and that is where we have to make a faith decision.)

Second, I believe in *truth*. Strongly. In fact, democracy *depends* upon truth. People cannot make rational decisions about what is best for the polis, if they have fallen for the big lie, or been duped by the false prophets of the day. The Truth will indeed set us free, but both the truth and the truth have been denied to large portions of our population. People cannot make responsible decisions if they have no idea what is going on. Finally, in order to rationally debate public policy, everyone needs a set of *facts* to base their arguments upon. Without basic, agreed-upon facts, we get nowhere in our efforts to build a society based on the righteousness that God demands.

Third, I believe in the *Gospel*. Strongly. I believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to deeply, completely, and unequivocally dedicate our entire lives to the building up of the Kingdom (and the polis) so that everyone can have life, and have it more abundantly – even unto death (John 15:13). I believe that Christ calls us to put self-interest aside long enough to consider how our actions and inactions affect other people and the natural world, including future generations. Although I am a sinful person and fail frequently, my faith rails against every form of self-obsession, selfishness, greed, self-interest, and cowardly apathy. I believe that the Gospel calls us to act on behalf of the *polis*, the Kingdom. *My personal salvation cannot happen if my primary goal is merely my personal salvation.*

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### 4.

Conclusion: I will preach my faith, and my faith is "political" to its core, because I believe that God *cares* about the wellbeing of the whole *polis*, and that we Christians are called to turn away from short-sightedness and self-obsession, and outward to God, to God's people made in God's own image, and to the amazing earth that sustains us.

Rev. Dr. G. D. Hodge

## Membership



### Prayer List

We rely on you to let the office know when members or friends have a special pastoral need. Reverend Hodge will be glad to call, write, or visit anyone with a particular concern. Call the office to let Sheila know about prayer list changes. Names will be on the prayer list for three weeks, unless someone requests that they remain.

- Carol and Tony Bucco – Parents of Jennifer Childears
- Judy Smith and family – Friend Robin Hinderer
- Louise Warfield – Member
- Pat Hufnal – Member
- Bill Hufnal – Member
- Carly Fedena – Friend of John Downs
- Claire Zaragoza – Friend of Bill and Joyce Darling
- Denise Hoffert – Sister of Cleah Muntz
- Patricia M. Bartley – Friend of Paul Hanebutt
- Brian - Friend of Kathy Hanebutt; she is asking for prayers for his recovery

### February Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 02/03 – Glenn Boehmer
- 02/03 – Louise Warfield
- 02/07 – Theresa Lloyd
- 02/14 – Cheryl Goldsmith
- 02/19 – Cynthia Hotchkiss
- 02/20 – Lester Gallihue
- 02/21 – Kathy Hanebutt
- 01/22 – Delia Middleton-Hall
- 02/25 – Shannon Biddle

## Worship



After worshipping via zoom two Sundays in January, we will once again enjoy worshipping in person in February as we practice social distancing and other safety measures. We will also celebrate Holy Communion for the first time since Christmas. Great care continues to be taken to ensure that this experience is as safe as it is spiritually uplifting. Worship continues to provide opportunities to enjoy uplifting music, inspiring and challenging sermons, and the joy of seeing our church family face to face in the midst of these challenging times. As changes continue to happen in our church we look to the future of People's Church with renewed hope and energy. We hope to continue to see new and returning faces in the future. If you are not able to safely join us in worship, the service is still available on YouTube.

Rev. Judy Zingaro

### Altar Flowers and Liturgist Schedule

	Flowers	Liturgist
02/07	Mary Beth Andrews	Jean Hitchens
02/14	Paul & Kathy Hanebutt	John Downs
02/21	Joe & Judy Zingaro	Warren Bouton
02/28	Vicky Healey	Vicky Healey

## Finance



No news at this time; except send back your pledge cards via email to [office@peopleschurchofover.org](mailto:office@peopleschurchofover.org) or mail back in the enclosed stamp envelope that was provided via mail.

Lyn Arnold

## Meditation

The meditation group will not be meeting in February and will advise you via email if we will. If you have access to the internet and would like to do some meditation at home, I recommend the following guided meditations which are on YouTube.com. There are many other guided meditations on YouTube.



[Daily Morning Meditation for Positive Energy, Clarity, and Achievement After Sleep](#)

[50 Healing Verses - soothing music - YouTube](#)

Serena Leiser

## Trustees



The Board of Trustees continues to promote mask-wearing whenever you are outside your home. We encourage researching the vaccines available for the coronavirus and when able, to make a prayerful decision as to whether or not to get vaccinated.

Jennifer Childears

## Administration

- Anyone interested in donating flowers for March and April please let Cheryl Goldsmith know at [cheryl.goldsmith@cr.k12.de.us](mailto:cheryl.goldsmith@cr.k12.de.us) or 698-1074.
- Those who can't give anything are just as much a part of our community – we need *you* even more than we need your money!
- "Kathy and Paul Hanebutt would like to thank the People's Church family for the outpouring of love, cards, etc. following the passing of Kathy's mother, Roberta. Your support and understanding was greatly appreciated."
- ***The deadline for the March newsletter is February 22.***

## Who We Are

The Purpose / Mission Statement of the  
People's Church of Dover  
United Church of Christ

The purpose of this church shall be to worship God who embraces all people; to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ as our Revealer, Lord and Savior; to celebrate the sacraments; to facilitate spiritual growth; to practice Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal; to proclaim the Bible as the story of our faith and to educate and nourish that faith among all ages; to render loving service towards humankind; to be faithful in our stewardship responsibilities with our time, talent and treasures; and to strive for righteousness, justice, and ace.

Church Office – 302-674-4177

Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00

Email address: [office@peopleschurchofver.org](mailto:office@peopleschurchofver.org)

## Staff

Rev. Dr. G. Derrick Hodge, Pastor

Kathy Hanebutt, Organist

Dr. Paul Hanebutt, Choir Director

Dr. Randal Revay, Sexton

Sheila Kay-Lawrence, Administrator

## Board of Trustees

Jennifer Childears - Moderator

Sue Harris - Mission and Outreach

Vicky Healey - Clerk (Interim)

Serena Leiser – Pastoral Relations

Judy Zingaro - Diaconate

Mary Beth Andrews - Christian Education

Robin Hinderer - Treasurer

Lyn Arnold - Finance

Paul Hanebutt - Facilities Management

Richard Johnson - Management



# Our Covenantal Relationship

## A Message from Reverend Nelson Murphy, Associate Conference Minister for the Chesapeake Association

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In the UCC, we are proud of the fact that we are bound to each other, not by assent to doctrinal standards or conformity of beliefs, but by covenants, the sacred commitments we have made to be in relationship with each other regardless of whatever we may disagree about. Our covenantal polity is at the heart of what unites us together.

But from where does our notion of “covenant” derive? Is it not deeply rooted in the covenant that God made and continually re-makes with us?

Covenant is the very centerpiece of God's self-revelation. The Bible is the story of God's remarkable love affair with human beings, and it centers on the concept of God's enduring love in spite of humankind's repeated failure to reciprocate faithfully in kind.

As Dr. James Cook has written,

When the sin of Adam and Eve replaced mutual affection between God and God's creation with alienation, the first couple and their descendants learned that God loved them with a love that would not let them go. Then God came walking in the fields of Haran, making covenant with Abram and Sarai that began with the promise to be God to them and to their children, and ended with the assurance that in them all the families of the earth would be blessed!

From there, the long story of God's people that culminates in the renewal of the covenant through the coming of Jesus is the story of how God's enduring love makes us one with God and with each other. God's loving, persistent concern to be in relationship with us is always expressed in a covenant of grace that not only binds the Old and New Testaments into one, but also makes those testaments God's gracious invitation to covenant life. This covenant life is from first to last a gift of God's unmerited love.

The UCC Manual on Ministry describes our covenantal polity like this:

Throughout Biblical stories and across generations, God calls us to belong to God and to respond to God's grace by belonging to one another. Such belonging together (being in covenant with one another) relies on the initiative and grace of God, the One who gives and renews life. In Jesus Christ, the covenant is made new. By the Holy Spirit, the covenant is widened and strengthened. .... As God gives God's self to humanity for the sake of all, so Christians are called into covenant for the sake of one another rather than for one's self.

“Covenant – the commitment of God to God's people, of the people to God, of the people to one another as the Body of Christ – is foundational to UCC identity.... The covenantal relationships between parts of the Body of Christ are characterized by mutuality, transparency, accountability, and a desire to represent Christ for the glory of God.”

To survive these difficult times as those called to faithfully bear witness to the glory of God's unconditional love for a broken and self-centered world, let's reaffirm our covenantal relationships. Nurturing, encouraging, and supporting those bonds helps us all hang in there.

Together, we have each other's back. But more importantly, God has our back.

*Nelson R. Murphy*



# Christian Nationalism and the Looming Death of Religious Liberty

by Jonathon Davis of the Baptist News Service

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Every week the headlines get more troubling. In the quest to make America great again, many seem to have forgotten what made America great to begin with (if we were ever great at all). Long before the United States was conceived as a nation, a movement was afoot across Europe challenging the notion that governments can speak for God and embracing the belief that matters related to human conscience and religion are between the Creator and the created.

Presently, there is another movement afoot that could conceivably set us back centuries in terms of human flourishing and religious liberty. I am not an alarmist by nature; at the same time, I believe serious trends call for serious thinking and serious warnings.

“Christian nationalism – including the tendency of many evangelicals to seek power for themselves (and their version of Christianity) – is a threat to the true liberty of all.”

Christian nationalism – including the tendency of many evangelicals to seek power for themselves (and their version of Christianity) – is a threat to the true liberty of all. According to the Christian Nationalist Alliance, Christian nationalism “upholds the belief that politics is just as capable of saving souls as other forms of evangelical outreach.” Let that soteriological statement sink in – the saving of souls through politics. At least the CNA says plainly what many evangelicals are still reluctant to admit.

Although Christian nationalists claim support for the reign of God throughout the land, it seems they are happy to use ungodly methods to achieve it. Many evangelical churches and pastors persistently face manipulation and even legal bribery by Christian nationalists. Here are several ways Christian nationalists try to increase their influence and dominion.

1. **Influence peddling.** Through using free gifts to butter up clergy and peddle influence, many pastors (and therefore many churches) are bought and paid for each election year.
2. **Race as a weapon.** Christian nationalism is decidedly white. Christian nationalists often use racist scare tactics and warped theology to drum up support. Race is still weaponized in a number of ways, from border policy to mass incarceration.
3. **Theocratic violence.** Christian nationalists often use militaristic and violent language, or even actions. Some even call for physical violence against those who differ from them politically, blessing theocratic violence with ominous warnings of divine judgement.
4. **Revisionist history.** For decades Christian nationalists have been hawking the idea that America is founded as a Christian nation and that we should get back to our theological roots: “Christians have an obligation, a mandate, a commission, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ – to have dominion in the civil structures, just as in every other aspect of life and godliness. But it is *dominion* that we are after. Not just a voice. It is *dominion* we are after. Not just influence. It is *dominion* we are after. Not just equal time. It is *dominion* we are after.”

How any of this squares with the person and teachings of Christ is beyond me. White-nationalism and Christian-nationalism are bedfellows of the lowest order. We must resist the ungodly and un-Christlike movement of Christian nationalism with all our might. We must decry it in our pulpits. We must soundly reject it. The future of religious liberty for all depends on it, as does the future of our nation.

# Valentine's Day

## Word Search

Find each word in the word search and circle it.  
Then, color the picture.



Heart



Candy



Love



Friends



Cupid

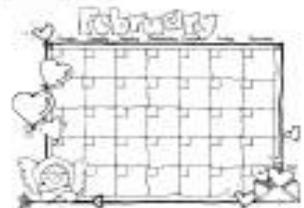


Flowers



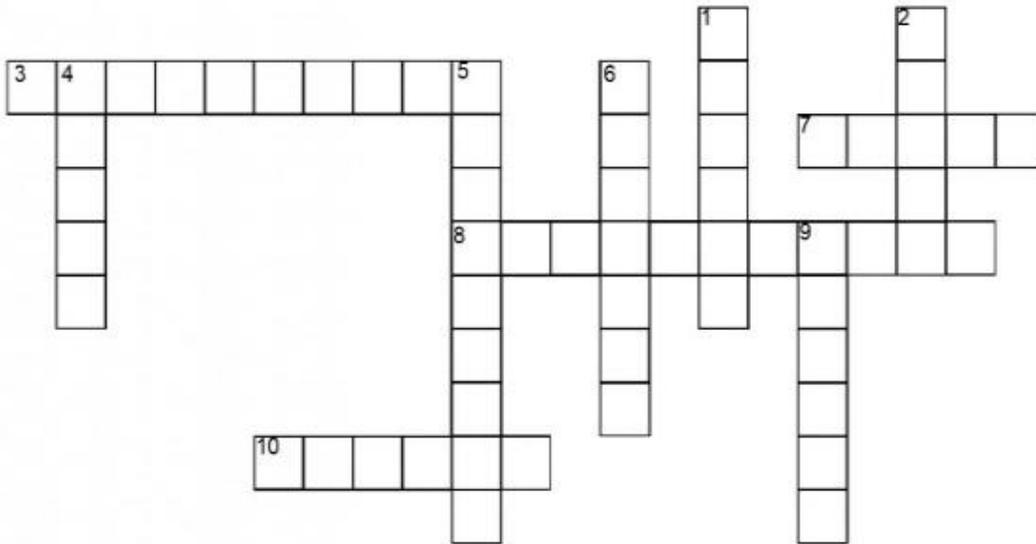
Letter

f	u	t	f	w	f	e	w	x	y
b	i	n	l	p	e	c	b	d	f
e	o	n	o	o	b	v	i	r	r
t	p	h	w	u	r	p	r	e	i
y	w	y	e	y	u	f	h	t	e
h	e	t	r	c	a	z	e	t	n
e	r	e	s	r	r	d	u	e	d
a	j	y	o	e	y	q	y	l	s
r	d	b	q	w	k	m	x	s	i
t	c	a	n	d	y	l	o	v	e



February

# Healthy Heart Puzzle



Directions: solve this crossword puzzle and learn to keep your heart healthy for life!

## Across

3. Eat lots of fruits and \_\_\_\_\_ to get many of the nutrients you need for good health.
7. Staying at a healthy weight, avoiding excess sodium, and getting enough regular exercise can help keep your \_\_\_\_\_ pressure right where it needs to be.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ fat is good for your heart, as long as you don't eat too much of it. It's in things like olive oil and fish.
10. Blood carries \_\_\_\_\_ to the heart.

## Down

1. When fat, cholesterol, and other things build up in your bloodstream, they can form \_\_\_\_\_, which sticks to your artery walls and makes it harder for blood to move around.
2. When in doubt, choose \_\_\_\_\_ grains, which are great sources of heart-healthy fiber.
4. When you eat, choose foods that are full of nutrients, not \_\_\_\_\_ calories.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ fat is not good for your heart. You can find this kind of fat in full-fat dairy and fatty meats.
6. According to the American Heart Association, "Using ANY \_\_\_\_\_ product damages nearly EVERY organ in your body and can cause heart disease and cancer." Even "smokeless" versions cause damage.
9. Staying \_\_\_\_\_ every day with fun exercises will help keep your heart in tip-top shape.

Solutions: 1. plaque, 2. whole, 3. vegetables, 4. empty, 5. saturated, 6. tobacco, 7. blood, 8. unsaturated, 9. active, 10. oxygen