

community will be openly welcomed into the church. 2021 is the year in which the United Methodist denomination will make a decision on this issue and probably split over that decision. Pastor Jack has already said he'll be on the side of full inclusion. What are your thoughts and beliefs on this issue? This is an issue which demands a certain response from United Methodists around the world. What is your response? Write your thoughts here.

Thursday, March 4

The Black Lives Matters movement has touched the hearts of many people as we seek justice, equality and peace for our Black neighbors and friends. This is another issue that has been debated for a very long time in the church. Perhaps the issue isn't so much our belief that Black people should have the same opportunities as others but how do we ensure those opportunities. Racism and prejudice has left a terrible legacy in our nation and the divisiveness surrounding this issue has been remained despite the efforts of many generations. The fact is that we can't just say that we aren't racist, but that we have to be anti-racist. What your thoughts? Write them here.

Friday, March 5

In an interview with Pastor Jack this past summer, Bishop David Bard mentioned that he is a little bewildered by the debate on wearing mask and making every effort to protect others from the Coronavirus. Even as we see the light at the end of the tunnel that is the Covid-19 Pandemic, that tunnel is long. We must remain diligent in protecting ourselves and others as we consider coming back to in-person worship. It is a decision that is not being taken lightly by Pastor Jack and the leadership of Central Church. What are your thoughts? Have you shared them with the leadership of our church? Please do as our leadership wants to be effective in making that decision. Pray for our church leadership.

Message Notes – February 28, 2021

Words to the Cross – A Late Word of Valor*

- I. “What I have written, I have written.” spoken by Pilate to the cross are not particularly _____ or mean; rather they are words that demonstrate _____, even nobility.
 - A. However courageous and _____, Pontius Pilate’s words were late.
 - B. Pontius Pilate is more widely _____ than any other first century leader.
 - C. There is so much _____ posturing, power and threats in our scripture passage for today.
- II. Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea – the modern term would probably _____.
 - A. This encounter with Jesus and ensuing conflict with the Jewish leaders may have been Pilate’s most notable _____ with those over whom he ruled.
 - B. Pilate told the religious leaders to take Jesus and _____ him themselves.
 - C. The religious leaders fully disclosed their motive: “We’re not permitted to put anyone to _____.”
 - D. Pilate might have had Jesus flogged in an attempt to save his _____.
- III. It is likely that you may have heard the end of the story; Pilate washes his hands of the whole thing setting the wheels in motion for Jesus to be _____.
 - A. But Pilate wrote on the sign that would be placed on Jesus’ cross, “Jesus of Nazareth, the _____ of the Jews.”
 - B. The Priests objected and said, “Don’t write that but

*John 19:1-22

- rather ‘This man _____ I am the King of the Jews.’”
- C. Pilate _____ saying, “What I have written, I have written.”
 - D. These words come from the man who a few hours earlier, when courage would have _____, backed down before those same leaders.
 - E. We understand Pontius Pilate, right? We have to admit that we all have good twenty-twenty vision in _____.

- IV. We need to speak with courage and _____ about the issues of our day.
- A. I have once again stated my position of being on the side of _____ of LGBT+ people when our denomination divides over this issue.
 - B. We have to talk about _____ reconciliation.
 - C. Opening up our church involves more than swinging wide our _____ and letting people in.
 - D. We have to bear witness to our faith with courage and the best intentions for _____ of God’s creation, especially _____ humankind
 - E. The timing of that courage is _____.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, March 1

Pastor Jack began the message with a story of a man diagnosed with Schizophrenia, who also suffered from bouts of depression. Pastor Jack felt a nudging – the movement of God’s Spirit – upon him as he greeted the man one Sunday morning. Within a week and a half, the man had committed suicide. To this day, Pastor Jack wonders if things might have been different if he had followed God’s nudging and reached out to the man.

Have you experienced a “nudging from God?” Have you had a strong sense of God leading you in one direction or another? How have you responded in the past? Have you ever just acted, quickly and decisively, on what you sensed God was leading you to do? Have you completely ignored this nudging? Contemplate these questions and write your response here praying for clarity in understanding God’s call upon your life.

Tuesday, March 2

Read John 19:1-22. If you have time read John 18:28-40. In this reading you get a sense of the conflict between the Jewish Leaders and Pontius Pilate. At a certain point in the back and forth between Pilate and the Leaders, Pilate became focused on releasing Jesus (John 19:12). It seems that Pilate was quite sympathetic to Jesus and wanted to release him; perhaps Pilate was wondering about the possibility that he was in the presence of a God himself.

At any point, Pontius Pilate could have demanded that Jesus be released; it may have cost him in some way, but he could have weathered the reactions of both the Jewish Leaders and Rome. He was not a person without power. His obstinate rejection of what the Jewish Leaders wanted written on the sign that hung above Jesus’ head as he die on the cross was a courageous word but it was too late. The timing of our courage is as important, perhaps even more important that the courage itself. Think about a time in which you analyzed a conflict or opportunity to demonstrate courage, the insights you gained were most like right on point – but perhaps too late. Write your ideas here.

Wednesday, March 3

Timing is everything according to some and dependent on the topic at hand. For decades the church has fought over the issue of LGBT+ inclusion; whether or not people of the LGBT+