



September 29, 2019  
FUMC Portsmouth, NH

YOU

*Belong*

WELCOME

**FUMC PORTSMOUTH  
A RECONCILING CONGREGATION**

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



**New England Annual Conference Tri-State District**  
The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop  
The Rev. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801  
Office Phone 603-436-6038 [office@fumcportsmouth.net](mailto:office@fumcportsmouth.net)  
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm  
[call to ensure availability]  
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at [www.fumcportsmouth.com](http://www.fumcportsmouth.com)

Like and Follow Us On:   



We Gather for Worship

**Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light**

**Gratitude Moments**

**\*Call to Worship**

L: Look around here in this sanctuary. Who is here and who is missing?

**P: We see many familiar faces: people who are part of our church family. There are some newer faces and some who have been here a long time.**

L: God calls us to notice those around us, those who are present and those who are missing. How do we do that?

**P: We can be a friend, check on those who are usually here, invite friends, family, acquaintances, and even strangers to be part of our church as we worship God together.**

L: Yes! Let us continue to open the doors of our minds and hearts to others!

**P: God has blessed us to be a blessing! Hallelujah!**

**\*Hymn:** "Jesus, We Are Here" TFWS #2273

**A Time for the Child in all of Us**

Prayer (unison)

**Loving God, there are times when we catch ourselves passing judgment on someone who looks different from us or who is in a different economic status, or who might have a different approach to life than we do. Help us to move past the differences and embrace the oneness we have in you through Jesus, our Savior – the Savior of all. Thank you for your acceptance of even us, and help us to do the same with others. May we continue to live in Jesus' example of welcoming everyone. Amen.**

**Sung Response:** "Fill My Cup, Lord" UMH #641

We Proclaim the Word

**Reading the Word:** Luke 16:19-31

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

**Message:** "Pay Attention" Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

**\*Hymn:** "When the Church of Jesus" UMH #592

**Prayers of the People**

**Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer**

**The Lord's Prayer** (unison)

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**Ministry of Music**

**Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings**

**\*Doxology:** *(Please join in singing the following)* UMH #94

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

**\*Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

**Thank you, God for all you have given us. We know that there are many who need to find hope and encouragement in our world. May our offerings be a part of ministering to them. Amen.**

We Go Forth to Serve

**\*Hymn:**

"God Be with You till We Meet Again," v. 1,2,4 UMH #672

**\*Choral Benediction** *(Congregation encircles the Sanctuary)*

**May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.**

**\*Pastor's Charge**

**Postlude**

*\*Please stand as you are comfortable*

*TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal  
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters*



## Welcome!

Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshiping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!



Rev. Deb Hanson

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards

Liturgist - Yvonne Griffin

Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Acolyte - Sue Richards

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Greeters - Linda Reiber

Ushers - John VanReenen & Ken Westbrook

Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek

Worship Service Tech - Nancy Chesser

Photographer - Dave Atkinson

Sunday School - Dave Atkinson



Come join us for coffee hour after church service in Sanborn Hall. We'd love to catch up with you and see how your week has gone.



## WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...

Anne & Mike Coffey

Ken Young

Rev. Bill & Gayle Gardei

Marion Collinshaw

Sylvia Bartlett

Gil Stebbins

Woodie Lange

Jim New

Bobbie Noble

Barbara Glidden

Judy Doyon

Charles Gilman

Ruth Griffin

Jim Slater & Family

Barbara Sylvester

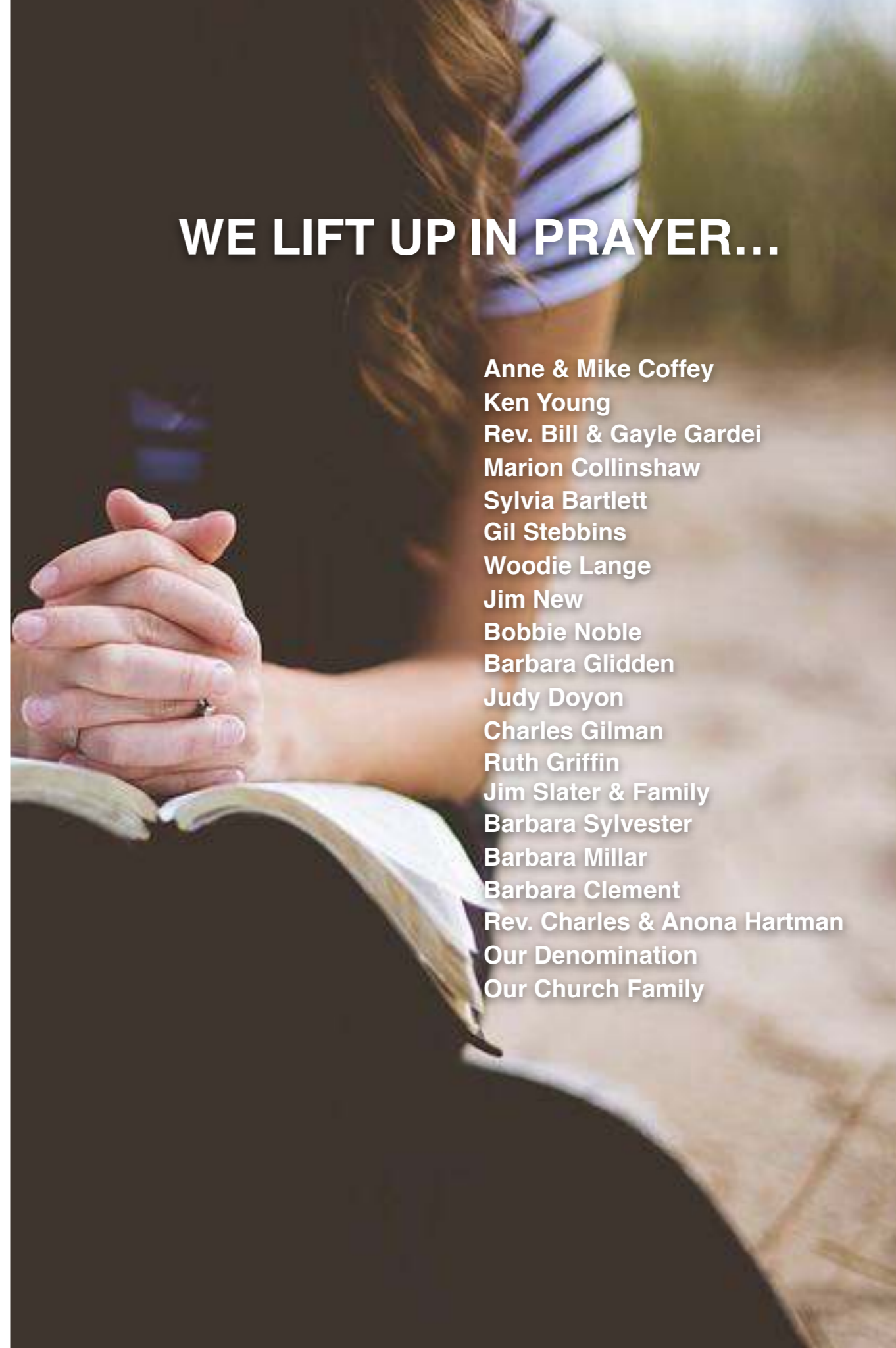
Barbara Millar

Barbara Clement

Rev. Charles & Anona Hartman

Our Denomination

Our Church Family





# UPCOMING EVENTS

**Donations** are being accepted for a new hand held microphone. The old one is no longer working. The cost is \$1,000. Thank you!

**10/5**, 9 am-4 pm, District Resource Day at Eliot UMC. All are Welcome, subject is "How to attract people to your church".

**10/8**, At 6 pm we will have Finance Trustee meeting at FUMC.

**10/19**, at 2 pm is our second Pumpkin Delivery.

**9/1 - 10/31**, FUMC is collecting your "stuff" for our Savers FUNdraiser. It's a great time to clean out and have the church get paid. Bag or box up your good, clean, working, sellable condition items and put them on Sanborn Hall stage. We need to deliver everything all together to Savers on 11/6, for weighing. Here's an example: 14 lbs. of "Soft Goods" = about a 13 gal. trash bag and a black garden leaf bag from 30 to 40 lbs. Our goal is 10,000 pounds which equals approximately \$2000.00.

**11/16**, Our annual turkey supper date has changed, please note this on your calendars and we look forward to having you there.

# FRIENDLY REMINDERS

Thanks to everyone who helped out with the Pumpkin set up last Saturday.

FUMC thanks everyone for all the school donations. We had a very successful campaign. The October Beacon will have more information.

Just a friendly reminder, please try to keep your pledge up to date so we can meet our financial obligations as a church. Thank you for your faithful giving!

We continue to celebrate those in Senior Living. Please send a card from the table in Sanborn Hall to brighten their day. Stamps are available in the office or leave on counter for mailing. Thanks!

**Altar flowers are dedicated  
to all the Wentworth Senior  
Living caretakers by  
Woodie & Sue Lange.**





SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY  
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Pay Attention” – 9/29/19  
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: Luke 16:19-31

THEME: Who are the Lazarus’s around us?

Today’s parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man always reminds me of one of my favorite Christmas stories, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. The main character, Ebenezer Scrooge, is a greedy, wealthy curmudgeon, who is so stingy that he won’t spend one penny more than absolutely necessary. According to Wikipedia, “Scrooge is a cold-hearted miser who despises Christmas. Dickens describes him this way: ‘The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.’” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebenezer\\_Scrooge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebenezer_Scrooge))

His partner, Jacob Marley had died seven years earlier, according to the story, and Scrooge had him buried in a pauper’s grave because he didn’t want to spend the money to give him a proper burial. The story is about Scrooge’s gradual awakening to the needs of others. His wealth and stinginess had kept him from a relationship with his nephew as well as seeing the plight of his very poorly paid clerk Bob Cratchit. In short, he hoards his money, lives more than frugally, and is a miserable miser.

The Rich Man in our story doesn’t appear to have the same penny-pinching way of living; in fact, he lives sumptuously, in luxury and with far more food than he would ever need. However, this man does share something in common with Scrooge. He cares nothing for the plight of the poor, even though Lazarus is destitute and has been dumped at the rich man’s very gate. He continually ignores Lazarus and is probably repulsed by him since, according to the parable, Lazarus is covered in sores and obviously homeless, hungry and sick.

This made me wonder. Who are the Lazarus’s around us? Who are the ones whom society might ignore, or at least, try to ignore. Who is right under our noses, and we don’t see them or we look past them? (I am using “we” to define our society, individuals or our church.)

Years ago, I went on a mission trip as a chaperone with a youth group from another church in Rhode Island. We went to South Carolina and stayed at an inner city church where our task was to help work on a new food pantry, as well as start renovating tiny sheds across the street from the church for the homeless. Most of the youth worked on the sheds, while several of us adults helped with the food pantry construction. We ate our noon meals at the food pantry with those who were being served, and interestingly, we were kept at a distance from the regular clients. I’m not sure why, but we ended up not having much contact with them.

After a day’s work, we would meet as a group to have evening devotions and check in with each other. The youth, who were from the Rhode Island church, reported quite excitedly that they had found needles and human feces in the sheds. This was all new to them, and I’m quite sure they returned home with a whole different understanding and appreciation of what they had in their lives. This church was in a very unsafe area, so it was always locked, and we were instructed not to go anywhere without permission and in groups. Most of us just did our work and stayed put at the church until we took a break and did some sight-seeing as an entire

group. When I think of it now, I realize that, in spite of how worthwhile the trip was, we didn't even have to travel to South Carolina to find these conditions.

The homeless and struggling folks are all around us. When I was working with the Hampden Neighborhood Food Cupboard while I was serving the Hampden, ME church, we used to give out Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, like so many places do, even right here in our area. What I remember the most was a young, well-dressed woman who came to pick up her Thanksgiving basket. She told me that she never thought she would have to get food from the food cupboard, but her salary was barely enough to pay rent, utilities, keep her car going, and feed her children on a daily basis. There was nothing left for special meals or even gifts at Christmas. It was embarrassing for her, but she was very thankful for the gift of a food basket as well as being able to put a roof over their heads and make ends meet.

We probably all have heard these kinds of stories. The homeless and hungry aren't necessarily people who don't have jobs. Some live in their cars, some have tents during the summer and live in the homeless shelter during the winter. Others move from house to house of family and friends. Some hold down two jobs, and some have given up trying. Some are trying to find a better life by moving somewhere else; others are fleeing their countries to find somewhere they can be safe or find a better life for themselves and their families. Some are considered "throw-aways" – like Lazarus was.

And, as all of Jesus' parables do, our parable takes a twist. Both Lazarus and the Rich Man die, and while the Rich Man finds himself in Hades, which during Jesus' day was considered a place for the dead, where supposedly all who died ended up and few left. In Christian teaching, some have called it purgatory. So the Rich Man was obviously in a place of torment while Lazarus was in a place of comfort – the bosom of Abraham. Maybe it was the comfort he did not receive on earth.

Regardless, the Rich Man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to bring water to him, something a servant would do. When Abraham said that the chasm was not crossable, the Rich Man asked him to send Lazarus to warn his brothers so they wouldn't end up in that same place – something like having Jacob Marley appear to Ebenezer Scrooge to warn him to change his ways. Again, Abraham said it wasn't possible. The Rich Man insisted that his brothers would listen if someone from the dead came back, but Abraham told him that if they didn't listen to Moses and the prophets, they wouldn't pay attention to a man returned from the dead, especially a man who had been ignored and outcast during his earthly life.

If the Rich Man ignored Lazarus in life, most assuredly, his brothers did, too. The chasm that Abraham spoke of wasn't one that suddenly appeared after their death, but one that was created while they were on earth. Our world has dug many chasms that divide us from one another. It's so easy to put people in categories and pass judgment: worthy or unworthy, rich or poor, lazy or productive, too old, not "like us," or whatever perception is out there. Who decides who is worthy, but God alone? Our job is not to judge, but to pay attention to human need.

The Rich Man was not condemned because he had money, but what he chose to DO with his money. He used it selfishly, wasting it and flaunting it. It had a hold on him, just like the

character Ebenezer Scrooge who, in contrast, saved his money to the extreme of almost living in poverty himself because he didn't want to spend it. It is how we share the money we have that reflects our relationship with God.

I had a parishioner once who came to see me. This man was upset that I continued to talk about the rich as though it was bad to have a lot of money. He started quoting me from notes he had taken, and I realized that he was quoting from scriptures that had been the focus of my sermons, such as from Luke 2 where Mary, the mother of Jesus said, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (vv. 52-53). This bothered him because he was a very wealthy man.

However, as I came to know this man, I also learned that he was VERY generous with his money. He had started his business as a young man, living with his wife in a motel room, on \$50 a week. Gradually, he built his business until now he owns many motels and has a multi-million-dollar corporation. What he taught me is what I recognize in this parable. The rich man wasn't a bad person or wrong to have money, but what he did to make a difference in the world with his money – what he did to help others – what he did to pay attention and care for those who were in need – made a difference for God. He could have helped to give care to those in need and hope to those who had no hope. He could have fed the hungry and clothed the naked. He could have provided medical care for a sick man who lay at the gate to his house right under his nose.

Jesus reached out to the poor, the outcasts, the rejected, and the marginalized, and as the Church of Jesus Christ, that is our calling as followers of Jesus. The good works are not our means of salvation – only grace gives us that – but our works are a product of our faith and our connection with Jesus. We also need to nurture each other, so there is that balance of what John Wesley called personal and social holiness. Personal holiness is our own growth in our relationship with God and each other, and social holiness is giving of our time, talent, and treasure to help others.

Professor Karoline Lewis says that so many people try to censor the gospel by keeping the message of Jesus from being heard. Sometimes a prophetic word is hard to hear and hard to speak, but in spite of the efforts to silence that word, we must speak the truth. She writes:

*We are reminded once again that seeing the un-seeable, caring for the disenfranchised, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, setting the oppressed free are not only marks of discipleship or acts that contribute to the reality of the Kingdom of God in our midst (Psalm 146). They are moments of resurrection. They bring the dead to life.*

*The world will try to censor the Gospel with its reasoning and rationality. The church will continue to cause the Gospel to be heard in this world, yet it will also continue to tame that Gospel because of societal pressures. Our ministries will make censoring the Gospel sometimes easier than proclaiming its truth. But we . . . know better -- Someone did rise from the dead. (Text This Week under commentaries for today's scripture lesson.)*



Throughout the story of *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge is shown a picture of his life. From the Ghost of Christmas Past he remembered what his life had been and how he had reached the level of miserliness that he was in. With the second ghost, he was made aware of what was happening all around him with beggars on the streets, people living in poor houses, his own clerk's struggles to help his crippled son. And the ghost of Christmas yet to come, he is given a glimpse into what could be with his own death, not having made a difference in the world, and people happy that he had died because their debts to him were then gone. His eyes and cold heart were opened, and he was given another chance to change, not just at Christmas but all year long. And he did change, and he did make a difference.

I know this is fiction, but it is also a parable, a reminder to anyone who does not make humanity their business, as Marley told Scrooge. It is the message from Jesus: put aside the laws that hurt others, pay attention to those who are looking for comfort, care, hope, and help. Let us tear down the barriers that separate us and build a bridge and cross over the chasms of fear, avoidance, and ignoring those who are hurting or needy. That can happen in so many ways, and in case you weren't aware, it can also make us uncomfortable. As someone once wrote, "If you feel fear when facing some task, do it anyway." If we are uncomfortable, do it anyway – we will soon discover that God is with us and already has gone ahead of us to pave the way.

We don't give help to others to build our own egos or take credit for what we are doing, but we do it because we are God's children, brothers and sisters in Christ who ARE the Church in the world. We are the bridge builders, the barrier crossers, and the voice for the voiceless. Let us stop to notice where there is need. Let us pay attention to where we are called to serve. Let us be generous with our time, talent, and treasure.

Let us pray:

SING – Make me a servant, humble and meek,  
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak.  
And may the prayer of my heart always be:  
Make me a servant, make me a servant,  
Make me a servant today. (The Faith We Sing #2176)

Amen.