



What's the News?

November 2021

Finding Meaning

Our minds have spent the past almost two years occupied with a physiological pandemic, and much of our short- and medium-range decision making has centered on protecting health and getting through this challenge. Before COVID-19, however, there was another epidemic sweeping developed nations around the world. In Japan, it's called *hikikomori*, where young people stay at home deep into adulthood. In China, it's *tang ping*, or "lying flat," an empowering choice to resist a culture where the "996" schedule, or 9am-9pm, 6 days a week, has become normalized as the only way to be successful. In America and the West, it manifests as the "great resignation," or a willingness to put attainable elements of life like relationships and experiences ahead of the sort of expected goals of marriage, homeownership, and the rest.



What does this have to do with the church newsletter? It's a fair question. I believe it's worth understanding what is motivating (or de-motivating) our neighbors as we seek to find ways to welcome, equip, and bless the generations to come for mission. I believe this is an exciting time to be in ministry. The old American lowercase-gods of progress and prosperity have been unmasked by economic stagnation, inflation, and other fierce headwinds. What used to make sense no longer does, and the future holds unknowable mysteries of its own.

In worship this month en route to Advent we will be encountering familiar stories of people who also found themselves living a life different than what they may have expected. Ruth found herself widowed in an unfamiliar place. Her prospects were not great. Given the choice of

(Finding Meaning, Cont'd.)

returning home or staying with her mother-in-law, she remained and set about creating a new life. Another widow, this one older, gave two coins, and used her economic power to contribute to the world she hoped could be.

In both these stories, we are reminded of the agency we each hold. God grants us the freedom to choose in this life; these people made meaningful choices. How can we also use the things within our control to make choices that lead us to meaning?

As we begin to think with more intentionality about the things we choose to do or not do, maybe try this exercise. Choose any activity you do, particularly something you do each day. It can be as simple as brewing coffee in the morning to visiting with a difficult friend. As you do this, ask yourself some simple questions, such as:

Why am I doing this?

Do I want to do this?

If not, what would I rather do?

What will happen if I don't do this?

Where is Christ in what I am doing/
offering/sharing?



Bringing in this sort of awareness on the decisions we make each day can help us clear the way for more faithful, meaningful life in the years to come. It's never too early or too late to start thinking through the things we do, especially the things we do on autopilot, and see where there may be opportunities to bless others in that time. A life of out-of-reach materialism and cut-throat career check-boxes is, in the end, meaningless. What a gift it is then to take time and reflect on where the real meaning can be found in everything we do. You woke up today with more power to enact change in your own life and in this world than you may have initially thought – use it for good!

SHIP NEWS

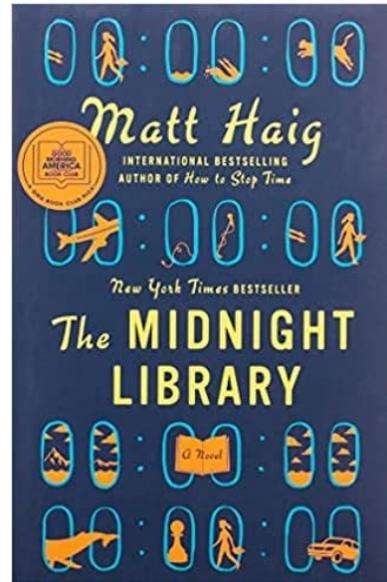


On October 27th, our SHIP team of food providers and lunch assemblers provided 72 bagged lunches plus an additional 22 sandwiches to SHIP.

At the same time the church's ongoing drive for macaroni and cheese as well as other non-perishable food brought in 130 boxes of macaroni and cheese as well as assorted other canned and boxed food. The result was a total of 125 pounds delivered to the Foodbank Network of Somerset County.

Thanks everyone for your support of these valuable missions. - Mike Ultee

BOOK CLUB



The FUMC Book Club's next meeting will be centered on *The Midnight Library*, by Matt Haig. This bestseller was published about a year ago and has already won numerous awards, including a Goodreads Choice Award for Fiction and an Amazon Best Book of the Year. The club is open to any interested member

of our church family and has been meeting via Zoom. They will meet to discuss Haig's book on Monday, Nov 29th. Let Mike Ultee or Pat Dedert know if you'd like to join.



NOVEMBER 21 AFTER WORSHIP

Come one, come all!

Help us get our church ready for Advent!



COAT DRIVE

Winter is coming and with it comes cold weather. Every year, First UMC collects new or gently-used winter coats for those in need.

The drive starts now and will end in January.

You may drop winter coats off at church on Sunday, or during the week leave them in the drop box in the parking lot.

If you cannot make it to the church, please contact Morgan Henry and she will find someone to pick up the coats and deliver them to the church for you. Please call the church office (908-725-1473) for Morgan's phone number if you don't have it.



COMING UP

Nov. 7 Missions Meeting on Zoom, 12:15 pm

Nov. 17 Church Council, 7:30 pm

Nov. 24, 11 a.m. SHIP