

## Puzzles

By Pastor Andy Straubel

I don't like jigsaw puzzles, but my wife Janice does. It started when we became empty nesters. She quickly went from the two hundred fifty, then the seven hundred fifty, and graduated to the thousand-piece puzzles. Some see puzzles as a metaphor for life, and in many respects I do as well. Puzzles have been around since the year 1767 when John Spilsbury, a cartographer, cut up a wooden map and challenged people to put it back together. It quickly became a tool to teach children geography. They became popular in America during the Great Depression to alleviate boredom as people were out of work. Puzzles have become popular during the pandemic as people have had to sequester themselves in their homes with little to do. Amazon was "sold out" for months and months, and they are still hard to find. Some see puzzles as a metaphor for life, and to a large degree I would agree.

Currently we have a thousand-piece puzzle sprawled out on a table in our living room. I have watched the autumn picture emerge piece by piece. Often, I find Janice sitting on the couch staring at the table, ever so patiently taking a piece, turning it around and around. It may take ten minutes to match a piece or not at all. And she is okay with that. I marvel at her patience and perseverance. She thinks I am good luck when I sit in the room as she works; I am not so sure! I can see however that there are a host of benefits to the art of puzzle building.

I am told that every builder has their own process. Without giving away all her secrets, Janice uses both boxes to sort the pieces. Others just dump the pieces out. Edges and corners first! They are the easiest to find with the flat edges. Then common colors and

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## *Christmas Eve Service*



## “Puzzles,” continued...

images are separated. It can get frustrating: pieces all seem to look the same. Luckily the picture on the outside of the box reminds the builder of what the puzzle should look like when it is complete. In time an image begins to emerge that resembles the picture on the box.

As a pastor I see a host of lessons for life. Life is a puzzle, a project, a systematic process of putting pieces of a puzzle together. Life did not come with a detailed list of instructions, just disjointed pieces and a picture to guide the process. Some things we have to figure out as we go. Sometimes pieces don't fit no matter what we do and must get set aside, at least for a while. I have Janice sit on the couch, staring at the puzzle, observing details—edges, corners, patterns. Me? I would be pulling my hair out (what little I have left). She, on the other hand, remains cool, calm, and at peace with the universe. At this point I realize it is no longer about the destination; it is about the journey.

Jigsaw puzzles are a journey in relaxation! They can relieve stress and produces a feeling of peace and joy. Some pieces may not fit, and we might need to walk away for a while. But eventually it leads to a desired end. Like ascending the peak of a mountain and viewing the landscape, one contemplates the journey. And, for a few moments, there is an indescribable joy of accomplishment.

I am told on good authority that there is an element of sadness when the puzzle is finished; time to look for a new puzzle. Now, I like puzzles, mostly for what they do for my wife. Thanks, Janice, for sharing your favorite winter pastime.

## Financial Update

(through November 30, 2020)

*“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...”*

	Actual	Budget
<b>Income</b>	\$189,419	\$265,833
<b>Expense</b>	\$241,798	\$265,774

Windsor Chapel has sent \$36,012 to our missionary partners this year. That's 19% of your giving!

## Worship Team News

By Don Ober



This month we will look at the song “God Is Able” as seen through the eyes of Dave Simicevic, one of our singers. Dave works as an engineer at the State of New Jersey Department of Transportation. He is married and has one daughter and has resided in New Jersey for over thirteen years. He has been attending Windsor Chapel for around eight years and contributing to the music there as both lead and background singing for the team.

### God Is Able

By Dave Simicevic

A Christian song that really speaks to me is “God is Able” by Hillsong. I love the lyrics to the song. The Lord never fails us. We are weak, and He is Almighty. He has and will continue to do great things. He was able to defeat sin and death for us.

God is on our side and makes a way for us. 1 Corinthians 10:13 talks about God not allowing us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that we may be able to bear it.

The bridge of the song talks about God never leaving us which reminds me of Hebrews 13:5 where it says, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* I am also reminded of the end of The Great Commission in Matthew 28:20 where it says, *“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

It is such a comfort to know in life that God is always with us, that He is always able, and He always makes a way for us no matter what the situation is. It is good to cling to those facts/promises especially in times like these. Praise Him for His mercy, grace, and love.



## Elders' Corner

By Ken Bills

The past year has been full of God's blessings, though they have certainly come in the midst of storms and trials. Sometimes the ups and downs have come so fast that I have felt as if I was on a dizzying roller coaster of emotions. Perhaps because of our current circumstances, I couldn't help but take particular notice during Advent of the many highs and lows in the Christmas stories.

To take merely one example, consider the visit of the wise men. They arrived sometime after the initial dramatic events that surrounded the birth of Jesus – Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, the lack of room in the inn, the birth in a cave or stable, the angel chorus, the worship of the shepherds. The shocking and dramatic prophecies of Simeon and Anna at the presentation of Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem were also in the past when the wise men came.

The young, poor family was still living in Bethlehem, no longer staying in a stable, but now in a house. While Mary and Joseph no doubt continued to ponder the supernatural birth of Jesus, the silence of Scripture suggests that their life may have settled down. One could picture them as a normal family, dealing with the routine domestic challenges of earning a living, making a home and raising a (miraculous) child.

Then one day without warning, out of the east, came the "wise men." The wise men no doubt described to Mary and Joseph the miraculous star that had heralded the birth of Jesus and led them to their home. Joseph and Mary must have been astounded by the arrival of these wealthy foreigners who had come so far to honor their son. And the gifts they brought! Gold, frankincense and myrrh... what a blessing to a poor family! Not only did the wisemen honor Jesus as King, but they fell down and worshipped Him.

Yet I could also imagine Joseph and Mary exchanging concerned glances as the wise men excitedly announced that the star proclaimed Jesus to be King of the Jews. To be identified as the King of the Jews was dangerous in a land that already

had a king—Herod, a violent, ruthless ruler, had already claimed the title "King of the Jews." When the wise men related that they had stopped in Jerusalem and been directed to Bethlehem by Herod himself, Mary and Joseph may very well have felt not only astonishment but, perhaps, growing uneasiness as well.

But then God stepped in! He warned the wise men in a dream not to return to Jerusalem and Herod, so they departed for home by another route. God sent an angel in a dream to warn Joseph also. The angel told Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus because Herod would soon be searching for Jesus to kill Him.

So the young family left Bethlehem. Jesus was born to be the Savior of the world, but it fell to Joseph and Mary to protect the life of the Son of God. To escape Herod's grasp, they left their home at night so that their departure would be unseen and their destination unknown. Most likely leaving behind their friends and relatives, they made a long and perilous journey through the wilderness and the Sinai desert. At the end of the journey, they had to make a new home as sojourners in a foreign and distant land. Sometime later they would have learned that Herod had in fact murdered all of the children in Bethlehem under two years of age in an attempt to kill Jesus.

The Bible does not tell us what Mary and Joseph thought of these events. If I had been Joseph, I think I would have had mixed emotions. Certainly, I would have been tremendously grateful for God's warning that had made it possible to escape Herod's wrath and protect my son. Tradition says that the gifts brought by the wise men were used to finance the journey to Egypt and to support Jesus and his parents in their exile, and I would have been thankful for God's provision before the need arose. On the other hand, I would have been appalled and saddened by Herod's cruelty. Perhaps I would have wished that God would have kept the good news about Jesus a bit more of a secret. Was a star proclaiming Jesus to be King of the Jews really necessary? If the wise men needed help finding Jesus, couldn't God have provided

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**“Elders’ Corner,” continued...**

someone beside Herod to point them to Bethlehem? For that matter, couldn't God have found a way to protect Jesus that did not require a long, dangerous journey into exile?

Of course, we cannot know God's reasons, or why His blessings come at the time or in the form they do. His ways are higher than ours. We don't know how the wise men's lives were changed by their encounter with Jesus, or how others they shared with on their return home may have been affected. The visit of the wise men to Herod may have been God's last invitation for him to repent. (Apparently without success, soon afterward Herod ordered the deaths of two of his sons he suspected of plotting against him and then died himself.) And certainly, the Gospel account of the Christmas star and the wise men's visit has spoken to the hearts of many through the years.

The Bible describes Jesus' incarnation as light breaking into the darkness. That darkness was evident at the time of Jesus' birth, and remains so in our time. From Jesus' birth until his death, the Gospels show the dawning of the Kingdom of God and God's on-going work of redemption in a world that does not recognize and refuses to embrace the light. So as we see God's blessings coming to us in the midst of a fallen and hurting world, that is nothing new. The light has dawned, but the full brightness of daytime is still a way off. But God is faithful and active in the midst of the darkness, and, as He did with Joseph and Mary, He invites us to receive His blessings with joy and to share in His redemptive work.



Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

Nathaniel Ventura	January 1
Elena Yamamoto	January 8
Merkle Cherry	January 11
Kristin Westbrook	January 25
Timothy MacQueen	January 26
Tobias Boote	January 27

## *Perisseia*

Our women's growth group will begin its Winter Series on Thursday, January 28, 7:00-8:30, via Zoom. In this eight-week series, we will continue to take a deeper look at prayer and focus particularly on prayer in the New Testament.

All women are welcome. If you participated in our last series, you will receive a Zoom invitation and the day's notes unless you request to be removed from the list. If you did not participate in our last series and would like to be included (or if you did participate and want to be removed), please e-mail Cindy Bills at [cynthialbills@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialbills@gmail.com). For more information, please contact Cindy at the above-mentioned e-mail address or at 609-275-8557.

## **Budget Information Meeting**

Please attend in person, or virtually, the Budget Information Meeting on Sunday, January 17, during the 11th Hour to hear about the Chapel's finances and the proposed budget for 2021. This will be the time to ask questions in preparation for the vote on the budget at the Annual Meeting. There will be a private live stream set up for this meeting with a chat feature that will enable people at home to submit questions to the moderator.

## **Annual Meeting**

Join us on January 31 to hear and celebrate in retrospect the events and activities of 2020, and to vote on the 2021 budget and leaders. Since a quorum of 50% of members is required, please plan to attend. Again, there will be a private live stream set up and the method for virtual voting and links for the live stream will be emailed.

## **Worship Service Emails**

If you are not receiving the Windsor Chapel's emails containing the links for the live streaming of our worship service, we may not have your current email address in our database. To receive these emails and other important chapel announcements, please contact Dorothy in the chapel office at [chapel@windsorchapel.org](mailto:chapel@windsorchapel.org), and let her know that you would like to be added to our Windsor Chapel Email List.

## Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in  
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

### The Journey of 2021

Here we are, looking at another new year. For most of us, 2020 was frustrating at best and excruciatingly painful at worst. And along with the frustration and pain, progress and growth can be difficult to discern. Where do we go from here? How can we move forward?

Just before Thanksgiving, Ken and I took a trip to Adams, Massachusetts, and then up to Burlington, Vermont, to help our son and his family move. It blessed us to bless and encourage them with our help. But when we said our good-byes and left for home, we were confronted with two negatively reinforcing truths: 1) we were exhausted; and 2) we were 6 ½ hours from home, without stops.

I took the first driving shift. Our route required me to spend an extended period of time driving on a series of country roads in Vermont. The view was spectacular, but the speed limits—mostly 30-40 mph—were maddening as I was eager to put miles in the rear view mirror. As I read one depressing speed limit sign after another, it was easy to feel that we would never get home. But one of the very odd aspects of that initial part of our trip was that even though I did not exceed the speed limit (despite my best efforts, I have been unable to find biblical justification for breaking traffic laws), our ETA progressively moved in our favor.

I think this experience has some encouraging relevance to us as we face another new year. We may be exhausted by our Covid-colored lives. Our way forward may seem exceptionally slow if not outright impossible.

But appearances can be misleading. Our perceptions and perspective are limited. But praise God! Our Lord, who indwells us by His Holy Spirit, is not limited by our circumstances, our perceptions, or our perspectives. He asks us only to keep moving in the right direction (and making necessary correction when we get off course), following Him in faith. He will guide and guard us toward our destination. We work out our salvation in fear and trembling, and He is faithful to complete His work in us. (Philippians 2:12-13)

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews encourages his readers to persevere in faith. He uses the story of Abraham and his life as a stranger in the Promised Land, and of Moses, who led God's people out of the land of Egypt, to highlight the importance of living by faith. The faith that Abraham and Moses exemplified underscores for us that even we as New Covenant believers are sojourners on this earth, making our way to God's eternal heavenly kingdom. In the second half of the seventeenth Century, pastor and preacher John Bunyan wrote the Christian classic, *A Pilgrim's Progress*. This allegory describes the often difficult and discouraging life journey that believers take as they make their way to the Celestial City. Bunyan was in a position to know: he suffered persecution for his preaching and spent twelve years in prison.

The biblical truth is this: We need not concern ourselves with our rate of progress if and as we encounter obstacles and hardships, even when and as we struggle, stumble, and fail. January 2021, is a perfect opportunity for us to consider the Lord's faithfulness and to depend on Him as we persevere in faith. The Christian songwriter Michael Card describes this as the "joy of the journey." May we encourage one another as we walk into and through this new year.

*Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or [cynthialbills@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialbills@gmail.com)) to continue the dialogue...*

## Perseverance in the Trial

By Janet Berrill

As those of you on the prayer chain know, on December 10, 2020, I had sinus surgery. Prior to the surgery the doctor said that the recovery is not that bad. Most people don't have pain but rather feel pressure in their sinuses. He even said some people go back to work the day after surgery. I had the surgery because my nasal passages were obstructed, and the doctor said he anticipated that I should be able to breathe better right away.

My post-op experience was not what I expected. My recovery, although still within normal limits, was on the severe end of the spectrum: nausea and vomiting blood after the surgery, extreme swelling, inability to breathe through my nose for over a week, nose bleeding for days after the surgery, difficulty sleeping, difficulty swallowing, difficulty eating, blood in my eye, and these were just the major symptoms.

Here is an excerpt of something I wrote as I was dealing with all of the above:

Through it all, I praise God and give Him thanks. About trials, 1 Peter 1:7 says, *"These (trials) have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* James 1:2-4 says *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

I am going through a trial, and I continue to praise God for who He is. For despite my circumstances, who He is doesn't change, and He is always worthy of praise. In this trial I am facing, God is giving me the grace to get through it. I have prayed, and asked many others to pray, that the swelling will go down sooner rather than later. So far there is no indication of any reduction.\* So I ask God to help me adjust to the situation as it is if it is not going to change, and He is doing that.

God is good and is worthy of praise all the time! My situation is what it is, and God will see me through it; I am confident of that. He will give me what I need to persevere with grace. My hope is in Him alone. And I trust that through this trial I will come to know Him more; that my faith and experiential knowledge of who He is will grow. I know that this trial I am in is nothing compared to what some other people are facing. So many other people deal with situations that are far, far worse and last much, much longer. But the truths of God do not change with the severity of our trials. God will give us the strength to get through whatever He allows us to go through. He is worthy of praise through it all. As our faith is tested, He matures us and He is glorified. All good things!

\*Larry just told me that my nose looks less swollen and red than it has. I said above that there is no indication of any reduction in swelling for I am still completely blocked from breathing. Larry's comment reminded me that God is working, even if I can't see it. He is working to reduce the swelling in my nose even if I am unaware of any change. Thank You, God, that you hear my prayer and that You are always working for my good.

## Communion



On December 6, we resumed receiving communion, both in church and virtually. It was the first time since March, and it is being done safely, using an individually packaged set of elements—both bread and cup. We hope to continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper together the first Sunday of each month, both in person and virtually at home.



If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

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