



Woodside World

CHURCHNEWS of CONGREGATION and COMMUNITY

Rev. Dr. Deborah DeMars Conrad, Pastor

FROM THE PASTOR...

There's a series on Hulu I've fallen for lately, only 8 episodes, so not too much of a distraction. It is called *11.22.63*, which, of course, is the day Kennedy was shot and killed in Dealey Plaza in Dallas.

The short story is that Jake, a high school and adult ed teacher from Maine in 2015, learns through a friend about a time portal, the "rabbit hole," through which he can travel back to October 1960. The friend, dying from cancer as a result of Agent Orange, persuades Jake to go back and prevent the assassination, to prevent the ramp-up in Vietnam, which he blamed on Johnson, and so ultimately to prevent the friend's cancer.

So Jake tries it. And without ruining the whole thing for you, I can tell you this lesson he learned pretty quickly: when you try to change the past, the past pushes back.

I've been thinking about that, not so much because I believe in time travel (although there's a lot of stuff I don't know and am not willing to write off), but because of things we can't see that try to make us conform, that try to keep us from causing "trouble."

In social and political discourse, we refer to the "system," and in some corners, folks still talk about "the man."

In this electoral season, it's "the establishment." As in the parties, PACS and profiteers that control us, that write the social equation to their own benefit, that won't take no for an answer.

At both ends of the political spectrum, there is a disgruntled bunch saying "no" and trying to make it stick. The ones on the far right and the ones on the far left have only this in common: an acute awareness that something isn't working. Of course, we don't agree on what isn't working, much less how to fix it, but each edge has embraced what it considers an off-the-radar candidate to carry its flag.

Now, you know me, and you know I believe the right has it wrong. You probably could guess that I don't think the left is nearly left enough. I get this from scripture. So, let's concede that I'm out of the mainstream, the 80 percent in the middle where candidates

will duke it out in the general election.

But from that vantage point, here's what I see: people challenging the system, and the system fighting back. Against the people. Like this:

- Disenfranchising voters. Voter ID laws that confuse and manipulate; voting machines that don't work, or ballot shortages in critical precincts; voters inclined a particular way finding their party affiliation changed or their names inexplicably dropped from the rolls; people of color, captured their own communities and hauled off to some other, whiter, community where they won't have a right to vote or where their personhood will be counted differently;
- Tilting media coverage. I know. I can't believe I ever doubted this, but it has been so blatant this season as to give me chills. After the debate here, CNN's clips on the post-debate show were manipulated to flip the story about who got the most applause; after one recent primary, the tabulations of the less-desirable, but winning, candidate were on the screen, but it was the face of the one who lost, the establishment's choice, which was shown prominently on the screen, perhaps to boost the public impressions of the strength of the candidate's strength. Writers I trust seem to have given up on their long-held ideals, suddenly jumping on some other bandwagon. Is it because they're syndicated by major corporations? Even facebook seems to be manipulating coverage; watch what "trends," and tell me if you think I'm wrong.

It could be that I'm just a jaded conspiracy theorist. Or it could be that the establishment is in full defense mode. Because the system isn't working and people are catching on.

Establishment. System. The man. Big Pharma. Wall Street. In church, we call them the powers and principalities. And some would add "church" to the list.

No good for you, no good for me.

Paul, the apostle, wrote that our fight is not

against people, but against the forces of self-absorption, against the powers and principalities.

With all due respect to Paul, the powers and principalities are a *system* made of *people*, not just unidentifiable energy or auras or karma. Actual people.

Three folks I trust read advance copies of this newsletter and all three told me it didn't really go anywhere. One said she felt me holding back. I am. Because I'm trying to say something about the system that isn't about a particular candidate.

So here's the truth: I feel manipulated. Bottom line is that the system has an agenda and I'm in the way. So are you, FYI. We are component parts, and we are being sold off for parts.

I'm not against having a system. But I am against one that uses, exploits and manipulates us. The system we have has steered far off course. I resent the system that seems to have decided well in advance who will be our next president and how life will go for the foreseeable future, even before we're done voting.

"Rabbit holes," they say, are metaphors for disorienting, nonsensical realities. And I'm looking at the rabbit hole we're being asked to jump into, and I'm disgusted and angry. More than any other political season.

But if "rabbit hole" is a way of talking about disorienting or nonsensical realities, perhaps "resurrection" is the way of describing the antidote — the only thing that makes any sense at all.

So I guess I would like to say that voting is part of a resurrected life. So are donating, and organizing and protesting and boycotting and choosing animals from a shelter instead of from a breeder and questioning where food comes from and challenging the tax benefits of a Panamanian life.

In a system that likes keeping all the power for itself, maybe resurrection is just life fighting back.

With you on the journey,

— pastor deb

THE "KIDS TO CAMP" GROWING TOGETHER EVENT.

Woodside wants to send our kids to camp! (We do our best to make this possible for all our kids without a financial strain on families.) We need your help.

- * Choose a container. April 23-24, we'll have a "container swap" at church. Bring something festive — or challenging or goofy or unique — and go home with something equally inspiring.
- * Plant something. Before May 1, turn your container into a planter, with a real plant. (You can bring other creations, too, all with a gardening theme.)
- * On Sunday, May 1 bring your creations and your bidding mood. Buy something in a Silent Auction for as much money as you want to spend. (This is the part that helps send our kids to camp.)
- * Deliver your purchase to someone you love, or put it on your coffee table. Either way, a real day brightener.
- * Wave the kids off to camp, and be ready for stories on their return!

If you can bring a creation for auction, fill out the form on the table and help us plan. And if you want to include your kids in a camp experience, pick up a packet or a postcard with ages and dates, and watch for more registration info.

We are informed...Jenny Johnson has expressed her thanks for Woodside's thoughts and the plant we sent (through her daughter, Dee) during her recent hospitalization.

WOODSIDE'S GOT TALENT!

Not done supporting kids, camp, scholarships and music? Then do this, May 12 at 5:30 pm!

It's a talent show.

It's an auction.

It's a dinner.

Plus some other stuff we haven't thought of yet!

What can you sell? What would you like to buy?

Is there a honey-do list you'd pay Woodside to have someone take care of?

What talent could you imagine sharing? Can you bake a cake, sew a quilt, do yard work, make a dinner, knit a sweater, garden?

Do you create art you'd like to share for the auction? Paintings, ceramics, baby bonnets, photography, woodwork, jewelry?

Is there some artistic entertainment you can share? Do you do magic, juggling, stand-up comedy, dramatic reading, dance, play an instrument, sing (or anything else that you can think of)?

See Leslie Cummings or Joe Eufinger, or sign up on the sheets on the table in the lobby. A light supper is \$5/person or \$20/family.

The evening's proceeds will benefit Music, CE Summer Camp, & Woodside Scholarships.

FAITH EXPLORATION FOR ADULTS

This week our Michigan UCC Conference minister, Rev Dr Campbell Lovett will be here for conversation prior to worship bringing us news of the conference and to hear about Woodside's witness in Flint. Plan to attend! He will also be preaching at 11 am on *You Did It!*

THIS WEEK AT WOODSIDE 4/24 - 4/30

SUNDAY:	4/24	9:30 am <i>Adult forum with Campbell Lovett</i> 11 am Worship <i>Coffee (Church & Ministry Committee)</i>
MONDAY:	4/25	Office Closed 7 pm Chime Choir
WEDNESDAY:	4/27	6:30 pm Women's Folk Choir 7:30 pm Chancel Choir
SATURDAY:	4/30	11 am -3 pm Health Fair

WATER IS A HUMAN RIGHT. New yards signs are here. Bring your old wire stands if you have them and put one or two in your yard. Let's declare our solidarity and faith in God's reign of justice.

NEW BOOK GROUP! Fridays in May, 5:01 pm at 501 Restaurant. The book is *Pre Post Racial America*. (available in the office for \$17, if you can). Read the prefix and the first three chapters before May 6. Pastor Jha will be with us May 29 to preach and lead adult forum!

WOODSIDE SCHOLARSHIPS! Applications are now available in the office, for undergrads or high school seniors. Pick it up, fill it out, turn it in; it's that easy. Completed applications are due by Wed, Apr 27.

SPRING CLEANING! Join in as we organize and spruce up inside and out, Sat, May 7, starting at 9:30 am. For outside, bring gloves, rakes, shovels, wheel barrows, shrub trimmers. For inside, rubber gloves and boxes. We will have cleaning supplies and trash bags.

INTERNS COMING SOON. This summer we're welcoming three young adults through the Summer Communities of Service (UCC And Alliance of Baptists). They are Rene Guo from China, via Ohio; Sarai Hayes, from North Carolina; and Max Roepe from Colorado.

They'll work with our community partners, and be with us a few hours a week and in worship.

If you'd like to be part of preparing for, welcoming or nurturing these folks, and ensuring they have a life-changing summer, see Karen Eaton, Jay Cummings, Chris Szumowicz or Deb.

HEALTH FAIR! SATURDAY APRIL 30, 11 AM—3 PM, AT WOODSIDE

Sponsored by Motherly Intercession and Woodside's Outreach and Social Action Committee, this is for Genesee County residents affected by incarceration; caregivers of children with parents who are or have been incarcerated; spouses or partners of incarcerated folks; and men and women who have themselves been incarcerated. Among other things, the event includes lead and blood pressure testing, insurance information and a free lunch. Call 810-630-6276 to pre-register. *One adult from each of the first 30 families to register will receive a free stress-relieving mini-massage.*