

The Vision

Volume 15, Issue 1

“For the VISION is for the days yet to come.” *Daniel 10:14*

January 2022

How Far Does God’s Grace Go?

By Pastor Larry

The story of Jonah is often relegated to the shelves of children’s literature. Yet it is actually far more than a tale about a stubborn prophet and a big fish! Jonah is actually a profound challenge to go into the far country to deepen our understanding of God, salvation, and the meaning of grace.

To really grasp the meaning of Jonah for our day, we need to not read the little book as a historical documentary. The story of Jonah is a moral tale, much like Aesop’s fables, and is designed to teach the audience something about themselves.

It is plausible that the story of Jonah was told around ancient Hebrew campfires. It is a tragic comedy, and its subject matter is serious. The book may have been written as late as the Fourth Century BCE, and it is a satire about the nationalism of Judah gone awry. We must look through the eyes of Jonah to appreciate the message of this story.

If you went to Sunday School you undoubtedly have learned the plot line of Jonah's story. God's instruction in both Jonah 1:1 and Jonah 3:1 is for Jonah “to go to Nineveh, the great city.” The prophet is to tell Nineveh that in forty days the city will cease to exist. The narrative opens with God’s call to Jonah, commanding the prophet to pronounce a word of judgment against Nineveh. To an Israelite like Jonah, this would have been equivalent to announcing, “Go to Osama Bin Laden’s lair and tell them to convert to Christianity!”

Remember who Assyria is in the eyes of Jonah. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the nation that destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and held the southern kingdom of Judah as a vassal for almost one hundred years. It was in 721 BCE that Assyrians invaded Israel and carted off ten of the twelve tribes of Israel and resettled them across the Assyrian Empire.



In that awareness, Jonah is called out by God to go and prophesy a word of both destruction and hope to the enemy. See this through Jonah's eyes! He is in a terrible position. He is to go to the

enemy and speak what God has told him to say, yet the prophet does not want anything to do with God's plan. Jonah's response is emphatic! He boards a ship that heads in the opposite direction!

On the ship bound for Tarshish, Jonah, blamed for a number of misfortunes that occur during the journey, is tossed overboard. He is swallowed by a great fish. He begins to pray to God, and when he starts to sing, is vomited out of the belly of the fish. God calls Jonah a second time in Chapter 3:1, and this time the prophet does go to Nineveh.

Astoundingly, the people of Nineveh get their act together and repent. The king mandates that every person and every animal be donned in sackcloth and ashes as a sign of repentance. Imagine this in your mind and it becomes exaggeration, even a comical way of saying that every "creature," from the highest to the lowest - people, cows, sheep, dogs, chickens, camels (you get the idea) - are all fasting with sackcloth attached to their bodies. (Continued on page 2)

How Far Does God's Grace Go? continued

One would think that Jonah would be filled with joy over the success of the biggest evangelistic crusade in the ancient world. Yet the story does not end on a high note. The point of the story is not that everyone repented and was converted. The real focus is on Jonah's reaction to the conversion. Jonah is angry, and the reason is because God is being consistent to God's own self. The NRSV plays down his anger with the words "this was very displeasing to Jonah and he became angry" (Jonah 4:1). The Hebrew reads roughly, "it was evil to Jonah, a great evil, and his anger burned." Burning anger is just a little more than being "mad."

The "it" of Jonah's burning anger is the crux of the matter. Jonah is angry because God offered his grace to Nineveh in the first place. Jonah explains to God, "for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and ready to relent from punishing" (Jonah 4:2). Think about this: Jonah is angry at God for the very attributes that Israel has always depended on for its own salvation (Exodus 34:6-7)! Then Jonah becomes even more angry when Nineveh actually repents, and that is compounded because God changes His mind and spares the city.

The thought that he might have to worship with the Ninevites is more than he can bear. He is so aggrieved by this possibility that he wishes to die and contemplates suicide. He would rather die than change his attitude and behavior! What a message for us today at many levels of living! At the end of the story Jonah is sitting alone outside the city. He is sulking and feeling sorry for himself.

God speaks to Jonah, and the book ends with these words from God to the prophet: "And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty

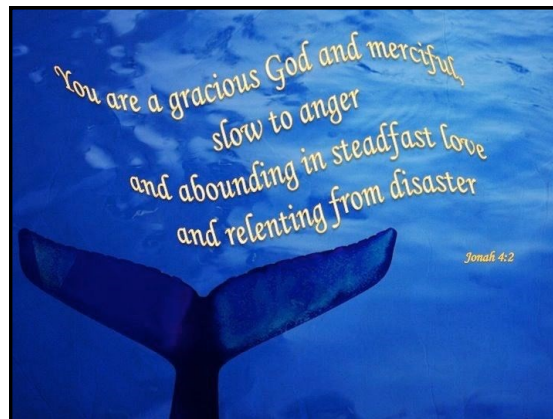
thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?" (Jonah 4: 6-11) We are left with an unforgettable contrast between the prophet's selfish ingratitude and the kind heart of a God that goes to every "end" to save human beings. Jonah was reluctant to carry the grace of God beyond his self-imposed parameters. His nationalism - that of Judah - had run amuck!

How different is Jesus thinking. We need to remember that he broke down barriers. He associated with tax collectors, sinners, and gentiles - the Ninevites! The questions that come to us are: "Who is Nineveh for us? Should we be concerned about Nineveh?" Jesus teaches us that God seeks us time and time and time again. He will leave the ninety-nine who are safe and risk all to find the one who is lost. And it is all to this end: to bring each of us to an awareness of his presence and purpose in our lives.

As others have pointed out, if we can't believe that God can save the most villainous of humanity, then how can we believe God can save our own souls. In his heart, Jonah, full of prejudice and anger, would have said that high and strong fences make tolerable neighbors. I think Jesus would say, "If you must build fences, be sure they contain gates that can be open and wide."

We need to be careful about how we disperse the grace and mercy of God. We live in a time when it has become all too easy to say who is worthy and who is unworthy of God's grace. Here is the question. How willing are we to let God be God? Salvation is pure gift and grace and Jonah's story reminds us that we do not own that grace. God will be forgiving because that is the very nature of God.

See you in Church!



January's Online Messages & Meditations

Sunday Services

January 2: Communion Sunday **Epiphany Sunday**

In-person & Online at 9:30 AM

Let Me Be Full, Let Me Be Empty
Psalm 147:12-20; John 1:1-9
Pastor Daniel

January 9: Baptism of the Lord **In-person & Online at 9:30 AM**

Lord, Are You the Real Deal?
Luke 3:15-17; 21-22
Pastor Larry

January 16: **In-person & Online at 9:30 AM**

What Do These Subtle Signs Mean?
Psalm 36:5-10; John 2:1-11
Pastor Daniel

January 23: **In-person & Online at 9:30 AM**

Have You Checked Your Compass?
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Pastor Larry

January 30: **In-person & Online at 9:30 AM**

Jesus the Antagonist
Psalm 71:1-6; Luke 4:21-30
Pastor Daniel

Access online services & videos
at veldarose.org,
or on our Facebook page at
facebook.com/veldaroseumc

Wednesday Online Meditations

January 5 at 10:00 AM

How Do We Receive the Holy Spirit?
Acts 8:14-18
Pastors Larry and Daniel

January 12 at 10:00 AM

Gifts, Gifts, and More Gifts
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Pastors Daniel and Larry

January 19 at 10:00 AM

Open Your Heart and Listen
Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Luke 4:14-21
Pastors Larry and Daniel

January 26 at 10:00 AM

I Know Who You Are!
Jeremiah 1:4-10
Pastors Daniel and Larry



As we come to a new year, we are filled with hope that things will continue to get better in 2022. Last year was certainly a challenging year for all of us. 2021 ushered in massive efforts for distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, the sensationalism factor in the news has weakened. Perhaps, we are beginning to see social distancing measures being relaxed a bit.

As Christians, we can approach this New Year with a blend of realism and hope – not so much because of what the news says, but because of what Jesus says. On the night before He goes to the cross, Jesus tells His disciples that *they will experience*

trouble in this world – that’s being realistic. In his book “Good to Great”, Jim Collins talks about James Stockdale, a POW during the Vietnam War who experienced great suffering over the course of 8 years, yet he endured and lived to tell his story. In comparison with other fellow POWs who didn’t survive, Collins highlights Stockdale’s combined optimism with a realistic view of the challenges of the present. He knew there was no guarantee they’d be free by Christmas, and he knew there were significant difficulties shaping their present, but he didn’t stop believing that someday, somehow, he would make it. We may be called to struggle longer than we’d like. But in our real difficulty, we have even bigger hope: “*Take heart, for I have overcome the world.*”

As of January 1, 2022, we will implement a new leadership team (Governance Board) that will help lead and guide Velda Rose UMC into the year 2022 and beyond. I ask you to pray for these new leaders, and to pray for our church to fulfill that which we have been called to do. The ministry in this place isn’t accomplished just by the pastors, the Governance Board, or by the staff. It is all of us working together to do God’s work in this place and out into the world. This is a good time to brainstorm new ministry ideas, to get to know your board members and to see how ministry can happen in our community.

So, where do you see new ministry opportunities? Where would you like to serve? What ways can you imagine reaching out to our community and the world? A new year is a good time to think about that...and then to put those thoughts into action! Talk to me, to a staff member, or to a board member if you want to get something started. Ask for support...and then make it happen! Everyone here can share the Gospel. Everyone here can invite someone to church. Everyone can use their hands and feet and hearts and voices to proclaim God’s love and God’s grace to a world that needs to hear it. So join us and pray as we plan our new year of serving God and his people! I pray that He will bless us with His eternal perspective and with the confidence that comes from being joined forever to the ultimate Overcomer, our King Jesus!



MUSIC MINISTRY

We are in the process of moving forward with our Music Ministry. In our Traditional Service, we will continue to feature special musical numbers. We will build on this by adding more musicians. Stay tuned for the exciting changes!

We are pleased that Robert Richter has been our wonderful Organist and look forward to yet another year of his beautiful, heartfelt playing. Some of you may not know that he donates all of his time to us. What a great blessing he has been!

Our "Infinity in Music Concert Series" will begin again. In the months ahead, we will feature outstanding organists, singers, instrumentalists and choirs.

Mark your calendars for our yearly "Legacy Quartet" Concert on Sunday, February 27.

We have greatly appreciated the support for our "Musical Gifts" on-line concerts these many months. Many fine musicians have performed. I am especially grateful for Ron Roberts and the countless hours he has given in putting these together. Beginning this year, we will only have these for special occasions.

My heart is full of gratitude for the great support of our staff and members. There has been a beautiful tradition of service with the Music Ministry for many years and I hope and pray I can continue in that path. We hope and pray to uplift, inspire and heal the hearts of all as we share the musical gifts the Lord has given us.

I humbly thank my Heavenly Father for putting music in my life and for directing me to be at Velda Rose United Methodist Church.

Gratefully,

Mary Ellen Loose
Director of Music Arts

United Methodist Women



United
Methodist
Women

UMW NEW OFFICERS FOR 2022

A vote was taken in December and the following officers were approved to lead the UMW at Velda Rose UMC for 2022.

Co-President: Billie Larime
Vice President: Pat Nixon
Co-President: K Roemmich
Secretary: Mary Killgrove
Treasurer: Arlene Oisten
Nominations: Kathy Kolbo
Social Action: Tish Roberts
Spiritual Growth/Membership: Grace Van Brunt
Mission Education: K Roemmich Sec. Of Program
Resources: Mary Killgrove

Additional Heads of Programs:
Cards & Cutlery: Jill Prather
Prayer Chain: Ruth Mogen
Reservations/Name Tags: Laura Bingham
Rummage Managers: Joan & Tim Most
Church Women United: Billie Larime & Beverly Loftin
Directory: Mary Killgrove

RESPONSE (the magazine of women in mission)
Jan./Feb. 2022 issue

Looking backward: As January begins we look back for a moment to the advent process. We learned through HOPE to prepare with courage. We learned through PEACE to live even in chaotic and unpredictable situations. We learned through JOY that it give permission for darkness, grief and pain to be mixed in to prepare the way for Emmanuel's arrival. We learned through LOVE that it is our greatest commandment! It can be fierce and it can be tender. It prepares the way for all we do.

Looking forward: The term "New Wineskins for New Times" is currently being used in the United Methodist Women's literature and programs. (See Mark 2:21-22) Some of the new plans are:

**** Mission u will be introducing three new curricula each year – one for children, one for youth and one for adults. It can be used in a variety of settings – such as small groups, Vacation Bible School, etc.

**** Soul Care retreats will offer personalized experiences for women around common interests, race, ethnicity, age, etc. They are for UMW members and any friend who is not a member.

**** A national membership is being offered via a new website. Women can participate in on-line programs and events, or in person when they choose.

Here are some opportunities to add to your calendar:

Jan 6 10 a.m. The installation of Officers Celebration and a Social Action (Moore Hall)
(Bring your own beverage in a self-contained cup.)

Jan 15 St. Matthew UMC is hosting a Leadership Training event. All local officers should attend as well as others who are interested. We can carpool and leave VRUMC parking lot at 8:30 a.m. A noon lunch will be provided.

Jan 20 1 p.m. The combined Velda Rose circles will meet in Moore Hall. It is our annual pledge service. (Bring your own beverage in a self-contained cup.)

May 20 – 22 The National Assembly will meet in Orlando, Florida. You may attend in person or view and participate virtually. Scholarships are available to help cover some of the cost.

June 24 – 25 Red Mountain UMC will host an in-person Mission u. (more info to follow)

July 22 – 23 A virtual Mission u (more info to follow)

(Continued on page 7)

Church News

Lessons from the Library



HAPPY NEW YEAR 2022... Let's start the New Year off right:

"Live your Life and forget your age." (On purpose, that is.)

"Go out of your way to talk optimistically about everything."

"It's always too early to quit."

Gentle Chair Yoga Reopens

Pam Bolo instructor for Gentle Chair Yoga announces reopening of classes starting Jan. 10th, 2022 from 9:30-10:30 a.m. New location will be in Moore Hall with Sanitation Procedures in place before and after the 1 hour session. Each session has a charge of \$3.00 and is due on the date attending. Exact change preferred. The Yoga class meets weekly, unless the Church Office is closed.

All adults are welcome to attend. For any questions please contact Pam. Give Pam a call to let her know you are coming for the first time this coming year.

Submitted by Billie Larime, CO/President UMW

Environmental Concerns Committee



Refuse disposable plastics...

Plastic is forever. Almost every bit of plastic that has ever been created still exists, including the small amount that has been incinerated and has become toxic particulate matter. **PLASTIC IS A MATERIAL THAT THE EARTH CANNOT DIGEST!**

Plastic poisons our food chain...

Plastic creates toxic pollution at every stage of its existence: Manufacture, use and disposal. In the environment, plastic breaks down into very small particles that attract toxic chemicals. These particles are consumed by our wildlife. On our land and in the Oceans. In time contaminating our food chain.

Plastic affects human health...

Harmful chemicals leached by plastics are in the bloodstream of every man, woman and child. Including newborns.

Disposable plastics are the main source of plastic pollution...

Our consumption of disposable plastics such as bags, bottles, straws, utensils, Styrofoam cups, film, food packaging and so much more, has gotten out of control. These items are used for only seconds, hours or days, but their remains last forever.

United Methodist Women, continued

FOR PERSONAL THOUGHT: (a poem from "Divinity in Disguise") by Kevin Anderson

I saw a tree bowing down.

I saw a tree bowing down
and asked: "Do you do God's will?"

I saw a tree bowing down
and asked: "Do you do God's will?"
It whispered, "I do."

I saw a tree bowing down
and asked: "Do you do God's will?"
It whispered, "I do God's willow."

This makes me think about how I try to be a willow, and a spruce, and a redwood, and an apple tree, and a dogwood, and who knows what else – instead of just being me – one person here on earth. How do we graft all our roles onto the "child of God" that we are – in a useful and manageable way? Hopefully through prayer, fellowship and times of sharing with each other as United Methodist Women we will more fully become who God created us to be.

K Roemmich, Co-President VRUMW

The ABC Program, City of Mesa



The City of Mesa provides shelter, meals and other essential services to Mesa children, families and seniors facing challenges. For the 2021/2022 fiscal year, the City has allocated ABC grant money to three non-profit agencies:

- Maggie's Place which provides shelter services at Hannah's House.
- Teen Lifeline (Crisis services)
- United Food Bank provides emergency & supplemental food assistance.

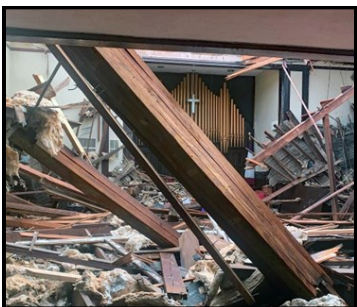
During the past year, ABC donations helped Mesa non-profit organizations provide the following services:

- 5,411 food bags for children during the weekends
- Delivered 48,141 meals to seniors
- Provided crisis services to at-risk teens by answering over 20,000 crisis calls and text messages.
- And, provided over 23 million pounds of food to 24,723 households.



Donating to ABC is easy. City of Mesa utility customers can contribute by automatically donating money with their monthly utility bill payment. If you are not a utility customer, you can still donate by calling City of Mesa Customer service at (480) 644-2221.

United Methodists Respond After Devastating Twisters



United Methodists in Kentucky, Tennessee and neighboring states are coming to terms with the devastation of a string of tornadoes Dec. 10-11, while also mobilizing quickly to provide food, emergency shelter and other relief. The storm system that struck on Friday evening into Saturday morning — including one tornado that caused destruction across some 240 miles — is blamed for nearly 90 deaths. Twisters sheared roofs and shattered windows at some United Methodist churches and parsonages, as well as badly damaging congregation members' homes and local businesses. After getting word of the tornado

threat, the Rev. Joey Reed and his wife, Laurinda, fled from the Mayfield church's parsonage to its historic sanctuary, taking refuge in a basement closet. "My wife and I held hands and we prayed, and after a few seconds there was a huge shattering sound," Reed told UM News. That was glass doors breaking, and soon they heard two thuds — the sound of much of the roof collapsing.

The Rev. Yasmel Reyes sorts through donated goods inside the gymnasium of Madisonville First United Methodist Church in Madisonville, Ky. The church is offering aid to those affected by deadly storms in Hopkins County on Dec. 10.

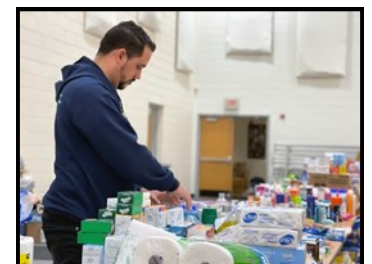


Photo by Brandon Buchanan, courtesy of Madisonville First United Methodist Church

By the United Methodist News staff Dec 13, 2021

United Methodist Men



The UMM met on December 11, 2021. Election of Officers was held. Officers are: President -Bruce D. Williams, Vice President-Lee Nixon, Treasurer-Alan Bergman, Secretary-Jim Price.

At the meeting we decided to change our meeting days and time to see if we can get a better attendance. We will now be meeting once a month on Tuesday at 11:30 AM. Our next meeting will be held in Moore Hall on January 4, 2021 at 11:30 AM.

We will be having a **CHILI COOK OFF** on Saturday, January 15, 2021 at 6:00 PM in Moore Hall. Tickets will be \$8.00 per person or \$15.00 a couple, all you can eat. There will be prizes for the best chili and the best cornbread. Plan on entering your favorite chili and corn bread, you may win.

Along with the Chili and cornbread we will be serving coleslaw and ice cream. The first 100 tickets sold will be eligible for the grand prize drawing of a bottle of Alka-Seltzer.

We will be selling tickets on Sundays, at the front door of the church, before and after the 9:30 AM service. Tickets will also be available at the entrance to the cook off.

Look forward to seeing you there.

Bruce D. Williams

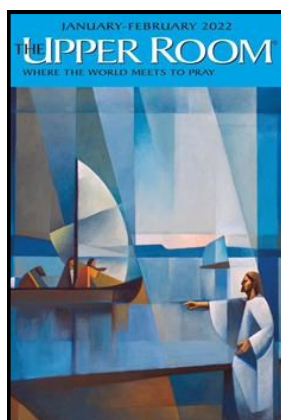
Thank You From the United Methodist Women

The United Methodist Women want to thank all of you who contributed in stuffing products or financially to make it possible to stuff 515 stockings for the 4 elementary schools in our area. Special thanks to Carol Tadden and her painters, who donated their hand painted stockings for us to fill. You helped make 515 little children happier for Christmas.

Blessings and Merry Christmas to all.

VRUMW

Upper Room



The January-February 2022 Upper Rooms are available in the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings, or in the office during office hours.

If you are homebound and would like to receive the Upper Room by mail, please contact the office to be put on the mailing list.

January Pantry Needs

- Cereal
- Canned tuna
- Peanut Butter
- Chef-Boyardee meals
- Spaghetti



You may bring these items on Sundays and place them in the shopping carts outside the Sanctuary, or to the Food Pantry office Mondays & Thursdays, between 9:15 & 11:30 AM.



A new hymn written for Army veterans, "Ever Faithful to the Call," exists because its author survived a close call during the Vietnam War. Hovering in a helicopter so soldiers could rappel onto the battlefield during the Battle of Hamburger Hill, Capt. Tom Lough felt death was near. Seventy-two American soldiers died and 372 were wounded in May of 1969 during the battle on Dong Ap Bia mountain in central Vietnam. Lough was nearly number 73. His helicopter took fire and went into a tailspin.

"The image of a sitting duck definitely comes to mind," said Lough, 79, who had already enjoyed a career as an Olympic athlete at that point and would go on to write a hymn for Army veterans. "I was in the cargo area of the Huey (helicopter)," he remembered. "And I said to myself, 'So this is what it's like to die.'" Lough remained calm during the experience. He credits his United Methodist faith for that.

"I could calmly manage and process what was going on and be aware of the things that were happening because death is a fantastic transition into everlasting life," Lough said. "I wanted to be alert for that transition if it was coming up for me, so I could experience it to the fullest." Because he survived, Lough reevaluated his life and came to the conclusion he needed take *any gifts that I might have been given, to develop those to the fullest potential*. He felt he had a gift for music and potential as a songwriter.

"Ever Faithful to the Call" is Lough's shot at giving the Army its own hymn, like "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" is for the Navy and "Lord, Guard and Guide the Men Who Fly" for the Air Force.

Prayer

In need of prayer? Call head of the UMW Prayer Chain Ruth Mogen, or the Church office at (480) 832-2111.

The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]. James 5:16 AMP

in loving memory

Janice Farnum 11/5/2021

Aud Gundersen 12/17/2021

Jim Hudkins 12/20/21

Helen Pecha 12/20/21





Birthdays

Connie Zimmerman	1/1	Joyce Damron	1/16
Phyllis Dunn	1/3	Suzi Reed	1/16
Melisa Ika	1/3	Diane Fischer	1/17
Fern Killgrove	1/3	MaryAnn Little	1/17
Lee Nixon	1/3	Gayle Ottman	1/17
Marilyn Colby	1/4	Judy Dunn	1/18
Bonnie Misch	1/8	Lois Rowe	1/18
Leona Vander-Vorste		Kristi Anderson	1/21
Schott	1/8	Tom McMahon	1/21
John Burley	1/12	Wes Roose	1/21
Robert Lane	1/12	Hal Hartley	1/22
Cliff Lowum	1/12	Norma Winslow	1/25
Rita McDaniel	1/12	Robert Maumatapule	1/26
Pat Schmitt	1/13	Richard Miller	1/27
Gene Clabaugh	1/14	Madou Traoré	1/28
Paula Latu	1/14	Deidre Poyer	1/30
Carol Ball	1/16		



Anniversaries

50+ Years

Bill & Jean Corkill	1/26
Richard & Virginia Williams	1/29

Also Celebrating

Paula & Sieni Latu	1/21
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VELDA ROSE

United Methodist Church

5540 E. Main Street
Mesa, Arizona 85205-8720
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Or on Facebook: @veldaroseumc

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Staff Leadership

Rev. Grant J. Hagiya, Resident Bishop
Rev. N. Susan Brims, East District Superintendent
Rev. Dr. Larry R. Norris, Senior Pastor
Rev. Daniel Gómez, Associate Pastor
Ministers, Every Member of the Congregation

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Join us online for our midweek devotion
each Wednesday at 10:00 AM,
and 9:30 AM Sunday morning services in-person
and online at
facebook.com/veldaroseumc/
or on the church website:
veldarose.org/connect/watch/

NEXT ISSUE

Items considered for the
February Vision

must be submitted by

Tuesday, January 11, 2022.

Please **e-mail** Jessica at
officeadmin@veldarose.org
with your newsletter articles.