

# “The CHIMES” – January

Volume 55, No. 1

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers. I’m thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it’s always a prayer full of joy. I’m glad because of the way you have been my partners in the ministry of the gospel from the time you first believed it until now. I’m sure about this: the one who started a good work in you will stay with you to complete the job by the day of Christ Jesus.”*

—Philippians 1:3-6

*“This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*—Nehemiah 8:10b



While many people participate in setting “New Year’s” resolutions with a goal of looking forward and changing something in their lives, I have a tradition of looking back and reviewing where I have been in the last year with the purpose in mind of moving forward. I began this tradition after my first year of full-time ministry. The inspiration for this tradition came from an assignment during my last semester of seminary when I was required to write a *Rule for Life*.

At the time it was just another assignment I needed to complete, a hoop to jump through; but I always tried to make my assignments meaningful, even as I was checking them off as another hoop jumped through. The *Rule for Life* was meant to be a foundation I could build on that would define ministry for me and keep me accountable (similar to a Ministry Plan for a church).

I completed my *Rule*, which included a Scripture verse which is influential to me (Nehemiah 8:10b), a short prayer to remind me of God’s faithfulness, and a personal mission statement. That first attempt at a personal mission statement was quite short, just one sentence. But, I was actually quite happy with the results.

As that semester came to a close and life became busier with packing up my house to move north and actually begin full-time ministry my *Rule for Life* was forgotten, until the end of my first year of ministry. As I began reviewing that church’s Ministry Plan, considering how we had measured up according to our plans, and thinking of the new year of ministry ahead, I was reminded of my *Rule for Life* and I began to wonder

how I had measured up. So, I found my *Rule* and did some personal review.

I won’t share my entire *Rule* with you here, but, I was happy to discover that I had been faithful in some areas, even without the *Rule* in front of me. I celebrated that and made a plan to build on the success as I determined to keep the *Rule* where I could review it regularly throughout the year. (This is also a good thing for churches to do together with their Church Ministry Plan.)

Now that I had my *Rule* out of storage, I made plans to work on the areas that I had neglected; as I re-read my *Rule* I realized my goals were still very good aspirations for my life. Having the *Rule* in front of me made remembering all of my good intentions much easier, so follow through was more realistic and fruitful.

As I mentioned earlier my *Rule* is a foundation for ministry; it is meant to be flexible so I can alter my goals when needed or build upon the foundation that is set. It is meant to be a blessing, not a millstone around my neck or a heavy burden on my back. And I have updated and expanded that first *Rule* from one sentence to a three-point mission statement with focuses on 1) my personal/family life, 2) church life, and 3) life in community. I found this necessary because my God-given mission in life does not stop with one area of life, it is who I am. A church’s ministry plan should take that same thing into consideration; every single thing we do as a faith community affects every other ministry and we are all in this together.

I am sharing all of this with you because, as I have mentioned throughout this letter, a church’s Ministry Plan has a very similar purpose to a personal *Rule for Life*. It is intended to be the same sort of foundation for ministry; it should also be a blessing, not a burden put on us by the Conference as a hoop to be jumped through, but the way we see ourselves ministering together by the grace of God.

Our ministry as the Sparta United Methodist Church should not happen by accident or become stale as we continue trying to do things the way we have always done them. We need to be intentional in discerning God’s plan for our life and ministry together; and this plan will change and evolve as we mature and grow as a community of faith.

We have begun this discernment process already when we voted at our November ad council meeting to

move to an accountable leadership model. That is not a change that happens overnight, but will take some preparation and training; it will mean change and even when we support change it can be difficult when it comes down to actually doing it. (See page 4 for more information about accountable leadership.)

While we are going through this process we can't forget that we will need to update our ministry plan to stay current and come to agreement in what God is calling us to do. Some ministries will continue because they are still fruitful, others may be replaced by ministries more meaningful to our current situation. It is all part of the process of being Christ's church doing intentional ministry in a particular place and at the present time.

If that sounds like a lot of work, well, I'm not going to lie, it is. But we are not in this alone, as we faithfully follow God he promises to be with us always and to send his Holy Spirit to guide us. The first and most important thing we all have to do is continue in prayer for our church breakthrough.

In the past I have asked you all to do this on your own using the *608 Breakthrough Prayer*; but in 2020 I would like to see us come together a few times to specifically pray for our faith community and where God is leading us. For us to continue in God's intentional ministry for us, we need to be planning and working together, celebrating our successes together, and building on our ministry plan for the future.

Finally, I don't want you to hear that this is only work, work, work. We have many successes to celebrate and I find myself, like the Apostle Paul, praying for you with thanksgiving and a glad heart, pleased that you have continued in faithful ministry, believing and proclaiming God's message through your lives together. I truly believe God has big plans for us in 2020; if we pay attention with trusting hearts and follow God faithfully and joyfully. My prayer is that you will join me in ministering in the "joy of the Lord," confident that our strength comes from that joy.

God bless you as you seek to know and love God fully!  
Pastor L

"What is God's Mission?" "What is the UM Mission?" "What is Sparta UMC's mission?" We also heard a guest speaker, Ray Leach, Chaplain at Fort McCoy. He encouraged us to think more about ways to include our military in our activities. His talk was a great segue to our next discussion "Who is our Neighbor" and "What is our purpose?" We thank Tom and Laurie Graber who were wonderful and gracious hosts.

In June, the Church Council met to discuss the Ministry Plan which had not been revised since 2009. After much discussion, we narrowed our focus to two main goals:

1. Enhancing our audio/visual equipment in the church by Easter 2020
2. Establishing a Long-range Fund for major maintenance needs

In July, however, our number two goal took precedence when we received a bid of \$32,900 to fix the leaking problem we experienced last winter. Before the council could even vote on the bid, we received an anonymous donation of \$15,000 to be used as a matching fund. Whoever, you are anonymous donor, we thank God for the blessing that you are!

As of this writing, we have raised over two-thirds of our goal to make the repairs, but still have about \$4,072 to raise. If you would like to contribute toward the Special Projects/Roof Fund, any amount is welcome and very much appreciated.

Before the new year began in 2019, the Church Council voted to pay a twelfth of the apportionment bill every month. This was a giant leap of faith as we hadn't been able to pay our apportionment bill in full for the last several years. Paul Foulke, our Finance chair, reported that our apportionments are paid in full for 2019 and our operating budget is doing well! GOD is GOOD!!!

So good, in fact, that another anonymous donor in the church has donated \$10,000 toward our Audio/visual enhancements. I am overwhelmed at how the spirit is moving in our midst. Thank you for your amazing, generous gift anonymous donor!

In October, we had a guest speaker, Rev Dick Jones, come to tell us about a new way of organizing our Ad Council. It is called Accountable Leadership. Thirty-two churches in Wisconsin have adopted this new structure, while eight more are considering it. We discussed it in November and voted to adopt it in 2020. More details to follow.

As I review the past year, I marvel at this wonderful church which I call "family." What a blessing you all are to me.

In Christ,  
Toni Burrows,  
Ad Council Chair



## Administrative Council Year in Review

After our last charge conference in 2018, we saw the Parsonage Kitchen Renovation come to near completion. Pastor Loretta and her husband, Tim, graciously hosted an Open House in December so all could see fruits of the Trustees labor. Thank you, Trustees, for all your hard work on that project.

We started out the new year of 2019 by having a Leadership Retreat at the Sparrow's Nest in January. Our discussion revolved around the questions



## Roof Matching Funds Progress

We are slowly making progress toward meeting the matching gift for the work that needs to be done on the outside of the church to keep us dry and safe. As of Sunday, December 15 we are at **\$14,128.**

With your faithful support we are so close to meeting the financial obligation for this work. **Prayerfully consider how you can support the project while continuing your regular financial support of the ministries of this church.**

We can do this! **If each member gave an extra \$25 this month** we will be successful in raising the remaining funds to start the year off strong for the maintenance of our beautiful, historical church building. That would even give us a small cushion to begin an ongoing maintenance fund for the continued care of our properties. A maintenance fund is very important for the upkeep of any building, but especially when you have an older building that you want to keep around for future generations.

Please designate your extra gift for this project to: **church roof/trustees.**

### **Sparta United Methodist Church Mission Statement:**

*We are called to make maturing disciples of  
Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

### **Giving: God at Work**

*“For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.”*

(Matthew 25:29)

Matthew 25 shares a series of parables describing the Kingdom of God. In the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) the master leaves his immense wealth (the equivalent of 160 annual salaries) in the hands of his servants. Two servants double what they were entrusted with; while one only returns the talent he was given. The master rewards the two successful servants with even more responsibility, but casts out the unsuccessful servant. Clearly, stewardship is central to discipleship in the Kingdom of God.

The punishment of the poor steward seems severe, but the stakes were incredibly high. Thus, it is with our stewardship. Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is our job alone. What will we have to show for it when the Master returns?

Therefore, we must strengthen our stewardship so we can be the best disciples possible, not out of fear of punishment, but out of an abundant desire to do what is right and what pleases the Lord. Like a gymnast or musician, we are always looking for those occasions when it all seems to happen perfectly—in our prayers, presence, service, witness and in our giving. God does not just want our average performance, but our best

prayers, our most engaged presence, our most selfless service to others, our deep and abiding witness, and our sacrificial giving. Of course, we know there will be difficulties along the way, but we have the assurance of God’s abundance.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or Facebook/wumf.org  
Or call 1-888-903-9863



### **Notes of thanks...**

Dear UMC Members:

Thank you so much for your thoughts and prayers after my husband had his heart attack and his two surgeries. All those prayers definitely worked, as he is feeling better now than he has in a long time. Happy New Year to you all.

In addition, thank you to all of my Volunteers who have helped with *The Chimes* this past year – Max Gudbaur, Dorothy Zillmer, Emily Axelsen, Ruthie Jerome, Margaret Jensen, Jane Hobson, Lorna Schamens, Beth Nowak and Paul Foulke. A special thanks to Rich Zidich, who takes over for me when I am unable to run off *The Chimes* or bulletins and Emily Axelsen, who is always there when I need her to help with bulletins or any other odd jobs. A lot of hands make my job much easier.

Peggy Wright

## SUMC Leadership Changes For 2020

The current church leadership is listed on pages 7 and 8. If you pay attention to this sort of thing you will note that it is basically the same list as last year. The reason is, we will be transitioning to the **Accountable Leadership** model in the church over the next few months and it didn't seem like a wise use of human resources to recruit new committee members for such a short time. We have been talking about making this move for a year now and some of you still have questions so I want to give a brief overview of the accountable leadership strategy for the church from the book *"Winning on Purpose"* by John Kaiser.

To get us out of the mode of thinking about how we have always done things Kaiser starts with the metaphor of a soccer field to explain the accountable leadership model. In soccer, the rules are clearly defined. There is a field that constitutes the "in play" area. Outside of that the ball is "out of bounds." On either end of the field there are goal posts as well. You also can only use your feet/legs to kick the ball. You can't use your hands, etc. These rules are agreed upon beforehand by the soccer governing boards.

So what strategy does a coach use in order to help her team win? Any strategy she wants. As long as she is following the rules, she can work with her team to develop the strategy that she deems best. Are you seeing any parallels to church organizational life?

Let me cut to the chase a little more quickly. In *"Winning on Purpose"* Kaiser presents three levels of leadership: 1) a church board, whose role is governance (setting up agreed upon rules, boundaries, etc.; 2) a pastor, whose role is leadership; and 3) a staff, whose role is management and includes paid and volunteer staff. Within this leadership strategy is flexibility for the benefit of local churches within their particular setting.

Kaiser says: *"The position played by the board is governance. Accountable to the board is the pastor, who plays the position of leadership. Accountable to the pastor is the staff, which plays the position of management [of day-to-day tasks]. Staff in this book refers to the managers of ministries in the congregation without regard to employment or compensation status. Accountable to the staff are the various ministry teams, through which the members of the congregation play the position of ministry"* (p. 47).

For the purpose of governance, the role of the church board is to help set up broad agreed-upon policies that help to provide direction and accountability for the pastor.

He continues: *"Tom Bandy calls it proscriptive thinking... 'Proscriptive thinking requires the board to think negatively in order to empower mission*

*positively.' John Carver refers to it as proactive constraint in his book, "Boards that Make a Difference." 'The board has neither the time nor the expertise to state everything that should be done. It does have the sense of values necessary to recognize what should not be done. The principle is simple and, perhaps more than any other principle, enables excellence in governing...A few simple, well-placed boundaries in the congregation can provide the pastor and staff with an abundance of freedom and resources to fulfill Christ's purpose for his people'" (p. 63).*

In essence, this is the system as presented in the book. There is accountability at each level of leadership and there is also ample room for freedom. The board works with the conference to help find the right pastor. The pastor hires and selects her/his staff. And the staff leads the ministry teams. The board can't tell the pastor what to do or how to deal with her/his staff. If the pastor isn't doing a good job, the pastor is accountable to this board.

In the next few months Pastor L, Ad Council Chair Toni Burrows, and the Ad Council will be working out the specifics of accountable leadership for SUMC. Then we will make the final move to that model later in the year. Stay tuned for more details as they become available and if you have questions please ask Pastor L, Toni, or any of the ad council members.



## BASH News...

Can you believe it is that time of year already? As we prepare for Christmas and the New Year, I hope you can find some time to reflect on this past year and thank God for the blessing he has given you.

The kids have been busy since the beginning of November learning about Advent and the meaning behind each candle, Love, Joy, Peace, Hope and Jesus. We have also been working on a Bible Study called *The Wonder of Christmas*. Mrs. Hemstock has been working with the kids on their Christmas Program, *Silent Night: Birth of a Carol*, which was on December 15 during our morning worship service. Following the Service, we had a Birthday Party for Jesus in the Gathering Place. We also have been collecting blankets, pillows, pillowcases, and socks to send to the Harbor House in Superior, Wisconsin. All collected items were put under the tree in front of the church and blessed by Pastor and the kids. There will be NO BASH on January 1; BASH will start up again on January 8.

I would like to say "Thank You" for bringing your kids each week; they truly are a blessing. I would also like to thank the teachers for your dedication, without you we could not have a BASH! Happy New Year!

Lynn Humphrey, BASH Coordinator

## Our “Wonder”ful December Programs

On **December 8** the Chancel Choir performed a beautiful Christmas cantata called “*Do you Hear What I Hear.*” It was a beautiful re-telling of the Christmas story through familiar and contemporary songs. If you were not able to attend worship that Sunday you can see the entire service online. The easiest way to find it is through the church **Facebook** site or go directly to **YouTube** and search for Sparta UMC 12 8 19.



The BASH children performed a very nice Christmas program on Sunday, **December 15** as they told the story of how a favorite Christmas carol, Silent Night, came to be. After the program the children helped bless the Christmas gifts collected for Harbor House, and after worship we all celebrated at a birthday party for Jesus. It was a wonderful morning all around. If you were not able to attend worship to see the program you can also find that service online; just find the link on our **Facebook** site or search Sparta UMC 12 15 19 on **YouTube**.



## SUMC's New LifeTouch Pictorial Directories EXCITING Update...

We know that it seems like forever ago since you had your photo sessions scheduled and had your pictures taken to be included in an updated pictorial directory for Sparta United Methodist Church. Perhaps you have even forgotten about the promised FREE directory you were to receive just for having your photo taken to be included in the directory, but the time is FINALLY drawing near for them to be printed and delivered!

Through the collaboration of Margie Lakowske and Cyndi Wise from the Records and History Committee; and Jan Hanson, your Office Manager; much time and effort over the course of many busy weeks and months has been put in to ensure the final product is as accurate and up to date as possible when it finally reaches your hands. It has taken many hours to work our way through four "proof" copies of the directory. We submitted additional pictures and requested multiple changes or updates be made each time until we finally felt we could approve it going to print. By the way, you ALL took great photos!

Now, the EXCITING news is that they will be printed in early January and should be delivered to us shortly after that. Distribution will begin once we receive them and will likely start with Margie Lakowske handing them out after Sunday worship services and checking you off her list as having received your copy. The majority of them will be distributed that way.

We are just as anxious as you are to see them "for real" and hope you will be as pleased with the final product as we are!

church. Many hands make light work, so please consider helping out.

### January 19, 2020 "All-church Birthday Banquet"

All are welcome to celebrate their birthdays with others from our congregation following the morning worship. Please bring a dish to share for the potluck brunch. Dessert will be provided with decorated birthday cakes for each month of the year. Pennies will be collected for each year of your age, which will go to Volunteers in Mission.

Let's celebrate together as we begin the New Year that God has given us!

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to all!"

Submitted by Cyndi Wise, Nurture Chair

### December Pizza and a Movie

Who: Everyone is invited  
What: Pizza and the movie "I Can Only Imagine"  
Where: Sparta UMC's small kitchen and chapel  
When: **Saturday, December 28 at 6 p.m. for Pizza 6:30 p.m. for movie**

**RSVP:** Please contact Toni Burrows at 608-343-3029 **before noon on 12/28**, if you will be attending, so we know how much pizza to order

### "I Can Only Imagine"

The inspiring true story behind Christian band Mercy Me's beloved, chart topping song that brings ultimate hope to so many with the power of true love and forgiveness. Rated PG

### Nurture News

We joyfully worshiped Jesus, the newborn King, during Advent and Christmas. Thank you to all who shared in:

- Hanging the Greens
- Salvation Army bell-ringing
- Advent devotional readings
- Chancel Choir Christmas Cantata
- BASH children's Christmas program
- Caroling
- SUMMIT Spirits' presentation of "Happy Hollandise"
- "Lighting of the Night" luminaries and Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve

### January 5, 2020 "Epiphany"

Following the morning worship service we will be taking down the Christmas decorations around the

### Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of Betty Simplot (grandmother of Ben Simplot), for the loss of Betty.

### Directory Updates:

Kory Foss, 307 N. Court Street, Apt 204, Sparta, WI 54656

Antonia Gutierrez

**New email:** [elbuenpastorimu@gmail.com](mailto:elbuenpastorimu@gmail.com)

**New phone number:** 608-487-0338

# LEADERSHIP TEAM OF SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - 2020

## Administrative Church Council

Pastor.....	Rev. Loretta Waughtal
Chairperson.....	Toni Burrows – '21
Vice Chairperson.....	Cheryl Isensee – '21
Recording Secretary.....	Lynn Humphrey – '20
Financial Secretary.....	Heidi Sullivan (employee)
Treasurer.....	Bev Donahue (employee)
Lay Member to Annual Conference.....	Donna Burnham – '21
Alternate Lay Member to Annual Conference.....	Priscilla Hemmersbach – '21
Chairperson of Trustees.....	Dave Kemp – '21
Chairperson of Finance.....	Paul Foulke – '20
Chairperson of Staff/Pastor/Parish Relations Committee.....	John Lodico – '21
Chairperson of Membership Committee.....	Cyndi Wise – '21
President of United Methodist Women.....	
Church School Superintendent.....	Lynn Humphrey – '21
Lay Leader.....	Priscilla Hemmersbach – '21

## WORK AREA CHAIRPERSONS:

Nurture Committee.....	Cyndi Wise
Outreach/Mission Committee.....	
Committee on Records & History.....	Margie Lakowske
Volunteer Coordinator.....	Peggy Wright
Youth Director.....	

## ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

### MEMBERS AT LARGE

'20 – Rich Zidich  
 '20 –  
 '20 --  
 '21 – Jeff Burrows  
 '21 – Cathy Nichols  
 '21 – Melissa Culpitt  
 Young Adult –  
 Youth – Emma Blackdeer

### STAFF/PASTOR/PARISH RELATIONS

'19 – Lisa Arvizu  
 '20 – Sara Blackdeer  
 '21 – John Lodico (Chair)  
 '21 – Jenny Johnson  
 '21 – Priscilla Hemmersbach (Lay Leader)  
 '21 – Donna Burnham (Lay Delegate)

### TRUSTEES

'20 – Dave Kemp (Chairperson)  
 '20 – John Lodico  
 '20 – Pete Foss  
 '20 – Bob Nichols  
 '20 – Mary Talsky  
 '20 – Dick Gajewsky  
 '20 – Tom Graber  
 '21 – Gary Ascher  
 '21 – Wilfredo Rivera (El Buen Pastor)  
 '21 – Priscilla Hemmersbach (Lay Leader)

### FINANCE

'19 – Russell Janzen  
 '20 – Paul Foulke (Chairperson)  
 '21 – Julie Hanson  
 Church Council Chair- Toni Burrows  
 Memorial Comm. Rep. – Tom Hemstock, Jr  
 Mission/Outreach Rep. - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Trustee Rep. – Dave Kemp  
 SPPRC Rep – John Lodico  
 Finance Secretary - Heidi Sullivan  
 Treasurer - Bev Donahue

### LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

Pastor Loretta Waughtal, Chairperson  
 '20 – Eileen Gajewsky  
 '21 – Cathy Nichols  
 '21 – Cyndi Wise  
 Church Council Chair – Toni Burrows – '21  
 Lay Leader – Priscilla Hemmersbach - '21

### MEMBERSHIP

Pastor Loretta Waughtal  
 '20 – Beverly Laufenberg  
 '21 – Cyndi Wise (Chairperson)  
 '21 – Margie Lakowske  
 Office Manager

## WORK AREAS

### **NURTURE**

Cyndi Wise (Chairperson)  
Cheryl Isensee  
Amy Kiefer  
Emily Axelsen  
Sara Kemp  
Donna Burnham  
Margie Lakowske  
Julie Rodgers  
Eileen Gajewsky  
Toni Burrows  
Church School Supt: Lynn Humphrey  
Youth Director: \_\_\_\_\_

### **MISSION / OUTREACH**

Beth Jerman  
Ann Olson  
Kathy Ekern  
Peggy Wright  
Lynn Humphrey, Secretary  
Paul Foulke  
Rich Zidich

### **RECORDS & HISTORY**

Margie Lakowske (Chairperson)  
Jeanine Houtevelde  
Julian Hutchinson  
Cindy Isensee  
Cathy Nichols  
Cyndi Wise

### **SHEPHERDING COMMITTEE**

Pastor Loretta Waughtal, Sparta UMC  
Priscilla Hemmersbach, Sparta UMC  
Cindy Isensee, Sparta UMC  
Antonia Gutierrez, Lay Missioner,  
UMC El Buen Pastor  
Wilfredo Rivera, UMC El Buen Pastor  
Gladys Soto, UMC El Buen Pastor  
Pastor Krysta Deede, Tomah UMC

### **STEWARDSHIP TASK FORCE**

Pastor Loretta Waughtal  
Paul Foulke  
Larry Humphrey  
Eileen Gajewsky  
Marty Walley

## STANDING COMMITTEES

### **AUDITING COMMITTEE**

Tom Hemstock

### **COMMUNION STEWARDS**

Maxine Gudbaur, Chairperson  
Kathy Ekern  
Carolyn Lieder

### **FOOD PANTRY COMMITTEE**

Lori Ascher  
Cheryl Isensee

### **LIBRARIAN**

Margie Lakowske

### **MEMORIAL COMMITTEE**

Eileen Gajewsky, Chairperson  
Tom Hemstock, Jr, Treasurer  
Emily Axelsen, Secretary  
Ruth Ebert  
Lori Ascher  
Dave Kemp, Trustee Representative

### **CAMPING COORDINATORS & SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE**

Amy Kiefer  
Cheryl Isensee  
Margie Lakowske

### **SUMMIT SPIRITS**

Karen Joos, Chairperson  
Julian Hutchinson  
Cyndi Wise  
Beth Jerman  
Wilmer Pearson  
Toni Burrows  
Tom Martin

### **USHER COMMITTEE**

Dick Gajewsky, Head Usher

### **VOLUNTEER SERVICES**

Peggy Wright

### **MUSIC COMMITTEE**

Ellen Hemstock, Chairperson  
Cyndi Wise  
Toni Burrows  
Karen Joos  
Bev Donahue

## **SUMC Leadership Training**

We will once again have a leadership training event for all ad council members, committee chairs and members (in fact, anyone interested in the future of our church is welcome). This year our focus will be on the transition to Accountable Leadership in the church.

**When:** Saturday, January 11, 9 a.m. - noon

**Where:** at the church

Coffee and light refreshments will be available.  
Hope to see you there!





## From the Parish Nurse:

The New Year can often bring a mixed bag of emotions and memories for many of us. Some may have just experienced the best year ever and look forward to an even greater one looming ahead. Others may have just trudged through one deep struggle after another. The fresh calendar year brings desperate hope for things to be better, with an ache for the still-fresh wounds to slowly begin their process of healing.

Whether you've just walked through the greatest year of your life, or are incredibly glad to see this one finally over, one truth still rings clear amidst it all. You are not alone. Not ever.

Our God is a "with us" God. On the heels of the celebration of the birth of our King, that reminder has the power to carry us right into a fresh, new start. He is Immanuel, God with us. And though things and people around us shift and change, our God never changes.

### A Prayer to Keep God First this New Year:

Dear God,

Thank you that you make all things new. Thank you for all that you've allowed into our lives this past year, the good along with the hard things, which have reminded us how much we need you and rely on your presence filling us every single day.

We pray for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you will guide our decisions and turn our hearts to deeply desire you above all else. We ask that you will open doors needing to be opened and close the ones needing to be shut tight. We ask that you would help us release our grip on the things to which you've said "no," "not yet," or "wait." We ask for help to pursue you first, above every dream and desire you've put within our hearts.

We ask for your wisdom, for your strength and power to be constantly present within us. We pray you would make us strong and courageous for the road ahead. Give us ability beyond what we feel able, let your gifts flow freely through us, so that you would be honored by our lives, and others would be drawn to you.

We pray that you'd keep us far from the snares and traps of temptations. That you would whisper in our ear when we need to run, and whisper in our heart when we need to stand our ground.

We pray for your protection over our families and friends. We ask for your hand to cover us and keep us distanced from the evil intent of the enemy; that you would be a barrier to surround us, that we'd be safe in your hands. We pray that you would give us discernment and insight beyond our years, to understand your will, hear your voice, and know your ways.

We ask that you would keep our footsteps firm, on solid ground, helping us to be consistent and faithful. Give us supernatural endurance to stay the course, not swerving to the right or to the left, or being too easily distracted by other things that would seek to call us away from a close walk with you.

Forgive us for the times we have worked so hard to be self-sufficient, forgetting our need for you, living independent of your spirit. Forgive us for letting fear and worry control our minds, and for allowing pride and selfishness to wreak havoc over our lives. Forgive us for not following your ways and for living distant from your presence.

We confess our need for you...fresh...new...again. We ask that you make all things new, in our hearts, in our minds, in our lives, for this coming year. We pray for your refreshing over us.

Keep your words of truth planted firm within us, help us to keep focused on what is pure and right, give us the power to be obedient to your word. And when the enemy reminds us where we have been, hissing his lies and attacks our way, we trust that your voice speaks louder and stronger, as you remind us we are safe with you and your purposes and plans will not fail. We ask that you will be our defense and rear guard, keeping our way clear, removing the obstacles, and covering the pitfalls. Lord, lead us on your level ground.

We ask that you would provide for our needs, we ask for your grace and favor. We pray for your blessings to cover us, we pray that you would help us to prosper and make every plan that you have birthed in our heart to succeed. We pray that others would take notice of your goodness and could not help but to say, "These are the ones that the Lord has blessed."

Help us to be known as great givers, help us to be generous and kind, help us to look to the needs of others and not be consumed by only our own.

May we be lovers of truth, may the fruits of your spirit be evident in our lives—your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Shine your light in us, through us, over us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. Set your way before us. May all your plans succeed that we may reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing. To you be glory and honor, in this New Year, and forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Please note-- Parish Nurse will not be in office on Wednesdays until Jan 8, 2020.** Should you need me, please call me at home and I will get back to you as soon as possible. You can also call the church office and Jan will contact me. Thank you so much.

Love and Prayers,  
Priscilla Hemmersbach, RN; Parish Nurse