

“The CHIMES” – September

Volume 54, No. 9

2019

Continuing the Conversation...

“So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.” —Romans 12:1-3 (The Message)



I don't have many opportunities to fly, but when I do I love to have window seats; I love looking out over the countryside from thousands of feet in the air. I find it amazing how orderly and simple everything looks from that vantage point.

As the plane gains altitude you can see whole neighborhoods and then whole cities and then even larger areas that seem to be laid out in grid-work patterns. The higher you go the less detail you see, everything just looks peaceful and orderly—if you could stay in the air long enough you could easily fool yourself into believing that reality is like that—a perfect patchwork quilt laid out by the hand of God himself.

But what goes up must come down and when you find yourself back on the ground, especially if you are landing at a large city, you are jolted back into the hustle and bustle of reality. Things are messy back in the real world, traffic moves fast and in so many directions; up

close life can be noisy, smelly, and hostile. It can feel much more appealing to keep our distance and just observe life without all of the messy details.

That's not what United Methodists are about though. We are a people of practical religion that rests on a foundation of grace, that unearned and God-initiated love of God. We don't avoid the messiness of life because grace pushes us into places where God wants us to be at work in our *sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life*.

We can resist God's grace, but God doesn't give up, wooing us into a partnership of bringing God's good news to a world that desperately needs to hear about and see God's love in action. John Wesley initially resisted God's grace in his search for perfect religion, but he eventually stepped out from behind the pulpit to preach in the fields (something he initially found very difficult and distasteful as he stepped out of his comfort zone) and it changed his life and the lives of thousands.

What would it look like if you stepped out of your comfort zone and committed to actively studying the Scriptures in a Bible study group—hearing other perspectives and daring to share your own? What would it look like if more of you stepped out of the safety of your Sunday morning pew and into more active ministry in and through our church...through ministries like soup supper, food pantry, free bakery table, B.A.S.H., Family Promise coordinator, Sunday fellowship, etc...mentoring or being mentored into new areas of ministry. What would it look like if we all stepped out of our comfort zones and actively lived out God's grace in our community? If you would like to struggle through any or all of these questions, let's talk!

Let's all get to living our everyday lives to fulfill the mission of Jesus and this church to make maturing disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world; and let's do it as an offering to God for all he has done for us.

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

Pastor Loretta

Administrative business...

Ad Council meeting time change

The September Ad Council meeting will be held on **Thursday, September 26** at 6 p.m. Beginning in October our regular meeting time will be the **third Thursday of the month** at 6 p.m. So October's meeting will be on October 17 at 6 p.m. This change was made because Wednesdays have too many activities scheduled making it difficult for some key leaders to attend to everything they need to.

2019 Charge Conference

Our Charge Conference this year will take place on **Sunday, October 27 with a potluck brunch immediately following worship** and then the charge conference. This year the conference will be facilitated by Pastor Krysta Deede from Tomah First UMC. Pastor Loretta will then facilitate the Tomah charge conference in return. If you are a Packer fan, no worries; the Packers have a night game and don't play until 7 p.m.

Please note: All forms for the charge conference booklet must be in to Pastor Loretta by October 6 so she can input the information on the online forms and submit them. **Also, all committee reports** for the charge conference booklet need to be in by the same date, October 6. So if you are a committee chair please be working on your reports and get them submitted to Pastor Loretta. These reports are an important part of our history and become part of our historical records. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Loretta.

Accountable Leadership Training

The Ad Council has been discussing moving from our current leadership structure of committees and Ad Council to the Accountable Leadership structure. This new model of leadership would cut down on the number of committees and meetings and make doing the administrative business of the church more efficient.

To make this change we first have to go through training and then get permission from the conference if we decide we truly want to go this route.

In an effort to complete that first step (and as a follow-up to our January leadership retreat) an **Accountable Leadership training** has been scheduled for **Saturday, October 5 with coffee at 9:30 a.m. and the workshop from 10–noon** in the church Fellowship Hall with Rev. Richard Jones. Anyone is invited and encouraged to attend this training, but if you are currently serving on a committee you really need to attend so we can make an informed decision together about the best way for us to move forward.

Roof Matching Funds Progress



Earlier this summer you received information about repair work that needs to be done on the church building to keep it from leaking like it did last winter, and causing damage to the structure of

the building. As a reminder, the actual roof (shingles) is still good for 10-15 years; the leaking problem stems from the masonry work and flashing around the roof. The trustees received a bid from Krause Construction, a contractor that specializes in church buildings, to do the needed work to waterproof the building before winter.

The entire cost of this project is \$32,960. **We have been blessed that a long-time member of the church who heard about the situation, has pledged a \$15,000 matching gift for this work.** That takes us almost half way to reaching the cost for the work. Since that first letter went out we have received \$8,576 in matching funds as of August 25. **We still have a ways to go but we can do this!**

Many important ministries happen in this beautiful, historic building. It is our responsibility as members and friends of this church family to help with the building's maintenance and upkeep so we continue to have a safe and welcoming place for worship, ministry, and fellowship.

Please be in prayer for our church, the construction workers, and our future as we move forward with this important work. **Prayerfully consider how you can support the project while continuing your regular financial support of the ministries of this church.** With all of us doing our part and working together we will be successful in raising the remaining \$9,384 (and then some, to begin an ongoing maintenance fund for the continued care of our properties).

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.



Thank you!

Thank you to John and Diane Noonan for the church gutters along the K Street entrance. The new gutters look great and the rocks at the base are doing a great job of helping to keep the mulch in place during even the heaviest rainfalls.

Congregational Connections

This month we are back, featuring some members and friends of Sparta UMC. I appreciate their willingness to share here and keep our connection alive and well. Please consider sharing your story here to help keep us all connected.

Arvilla Crocker has been a member of the United Methodist Church since the Methodist Church and Evangelical Brethren Church merged. She was married for 50 years.

Some of Arvilla's personal interests include: family visits—especially having her 5 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren spend time with her, reading, and enjoying nature movies.

Church activities she participated in include being a member of Ruth Circle. She furnished food for fellowship time after church. She brought her kids to Sunday school, made cookies for Dr. Rafferty's group, and helped with Harvest Suppers.

Some favorite memories from church are: enjoying sermons and listening to the organ. Her favorite songs are "I Surrender All" and "Amazing Grace." She was baptized at 13 years old at Third Presbyterian Church in Springfield, IL and taught Sunday school to ten little boys for two years. She cared for her husband, who had Parkinson's disease, for 20 years.

Jeff Hemmersbach has been attending Sparta UMC for 15 years. He has been married to Priscilla Hemmersbach for 15 years.

Some of Jeff's personal interests include: spending time at home—being outside, cooking/grilling. He also enjoys spending time with his grandkids and wife.

Jeff plans to become more involved in church when he retires. He used to be on Finance, but his work hours are just too unpredictable with long days.

When asked what keeps him coming back to Sparta UMC Jeff said he started coming here when he got married and finds it warm and friendly. He enjoys the worship service/sermons and the prayers from the pastor's heart.

Some of Jeff's favorite memories are the potlucks, birthday bash in January, shrove pancake supper, and the after worship refreshments. He also loves the contemporary music during worship.

Rosella Jenkins was actually confirmed at Cataract Methodist Church in 1941. She transferred to La Crosse and then to Sparta in 1955. In 1971 she moved to California and transferred to Camarillo Methodist Church and then transferred back to Sparta in 1996.

Some of Rosella's personal interests are: her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, knitting, crocheting, other arts and crafts, reading, baseball and football, and sewing (she started when she

was 10 years old). She previously enjoyed golfing and bowling.

Some of the activities she participated in at church are mostly from California: church circles and other church groups. The circle she was a part of sponsored a cottage at California Girl's Prison and met once a month there for birthdays and interacted with the girls with knitting and crocheting classes and other activities.

Favorite memories from church include the music and pageantry at Christmas and the children's choir.

Peggy Wright is a lifelong member of Sparta United Methodist Church. She was baptized, confirmed and married here. Reverend Maser performed the wedding ceremony to her first husband, Donald Woodworth on December 18, 1982 and Cyndi Wise provided the music. Donald passed in 2003 after 21 years of marriage. In 2009, she married her current husband, Richard Wright, and inherited 6 children and many grandchildren.

Peggy's interests include crosswords, color by number, going out to breakfast with family, and Friday night fish fries with family. She also enjoys spending time with their children and grandchildren. Her love for giraffes has taken them to New York to see the giraffe family for the past 3 years.

What keeps her coming back to Sparta UMC is the lifelong friends she has known since she was a child and her faith in God.

Church activities she is involved in include assembling the weekly bulletin and the monthly newsletter (Chimes). She also arranges for volunteers to help assemble the Chimes and get it ready to mail. In addition, she helps with money counting and is an usher. Peggy also mentored her nephew and niece while they were going through Confirmation Classes and enjoyed the overnight trips with their classes, other mentors and Reverend Carlson. She has also helped out with the Harvest Supper.

Memories: As a child, she remembers going out to Ethel Molstad's house for a summer picnic after Sunday School was out and they always had lots of goodies to eat. She also remembers going to church with her grandparents and dressing up for Easter Sunday in fancy dresses and usually a bonnet, too. As an older youth, she remembers attending youth group and having many activities to attend. When her kids were growing up, she taught Sunday School for 18 years. All of the kids she taught are now grown up and have their own families. She also remembers Ruth Hering playing the organ for so many years, the wonderful choir that brought such beautiful music to the services and the many pastors that she has gotten to know through the years.

Have Questions on Medicare? Get Answers Here

Is it time for you to start thinking about Medicare coverage because you will soon be 65? Are you already receiving Medicare and wonder if you have the best coverage for your circumstances? The Sparta UMC will host an information session for anyone who has questions regarding Medicare. This opportunity may be just the ticket for your peace of mind.

Blia Yang, Medicare educator from Physicians Mutual Insurance, will explain the intricacies of Medicare on **Wednesday, September 25 at 10 a.m.** This information session is free and open to the public.

Yang teaches participants about the basics of Medicare, the A, B, C, Ds of Medicare, and the options to Medicare open enrollment and how it works. She is a teacher who likes to help folks find peace of mind with their choice of options. Plan to come and bring your questions.

Beth Nowak, from our congregation, has worked with Yang in the past and affirms, "Blia is very good at what she does. She takes all the time you need, she truly wants to be sure you get what you need and want."

Yang will have informational resources available for participants. If anyone would like a one-on-one meeting for a more personal approach she would be open to setting that up also. Stay tuned for more information on this important opportunity as we get closer to the date.



of old and not so old gospel music that many in the crowd enjoyed clapping and singing along with. Some in the crowd even expressed a hope that the quartet would be back next year. After the concert we enjoyed refreshments provided by the Nurture Committee. A big thank you goes out to all who helped make this event a success.



What's Your Giving Plan?

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Now that fall is approaching, perhaps you are making plans: plans for home projects and family get-togethers, plans for work and school projects, plans for a trip or vacation. What about your church plans such as volunteering, Scripture reading, and regular prayer? Right now, I am planning a retreat with my spouse, so we can recharge our spiritual batteries. And we are planning our giving for the coming year.

Do you have a plan for giving? If not, how will you know you have been successful in being generous? We set aside a percent of our income for church and charity, most recently about 13%, and judge our year as successful if we have given it all away.

The giving plan is a spiritual discipline in that we think of God first, before we even have earned the money. By settling on a proportion first, we know exactly how much to pledge when the church's stewardship campaign comes around in the fall.

Also, we never have to ask whether we have the money. It is set aside for the Lord. So, when there is a disaster, we are not wondering where to find a little extra. We have already designated it to the Lord's work.

There is much freedom in deciding on percentage giving ahead of time. You are free of the anxiety over whether there is enough to share when the needs of others are raised up—backpacks for needy students, scholarships for seminarians, missionaries overseas, etc. Pray for direction on your giving percentage for the coming year.

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



4OneQuartet Concert a Success

The concert held on August 18 was a success, with many people from the community joining us for an evening of Gospel music. The quartet was down by one man, with the bass singer awaiting shoulder surgery, but the guys did not disappoint. They sang a good variety

Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity

Stress. Anxiety. Fear. These words capture well the state of mind of many of us in America today. We have witnessed dramatic market losses and many bankruptcies and mergers. Every day seems to bring another piece of economic uncertainty.

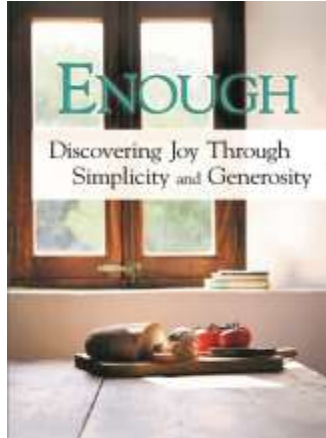
A recent survey found that over three in four Americans are stressed about the economy and their personal finances. Half were worried about providing for their family's basic needs. Over half of respondents reported feeling angry and irritable, and reported laying awake at night worried about this. The report concludes that, "The declining state of the nation's economy is taking a physical and emotional toll on people nationwide."

Join us in worship September 8-29 for a sermon series entitled *Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity*. Our nation is experiencing what many have described as the "American Nightmare." Increasing consumer debt, declines in savings, lower income growth, and a volatile stock market are all a part of our economic insecurity. We have lived in a society that tells us, "you deserve it now," whether or not we can afford it or really even need it.

I'm sure all of us have struggled with these issues at one time or another. I know I have. Beginning September 8, we are going to explore what the Bible teaches us about financial management. We'll also look at what others have learned by working through financial challenges. Each week I'll be providing you with some tools you can use to assess your financial situation and develop a financial plan with a biblical foundation. Paul Foulke will also be offering a DVD / book study on Monday evenings that goes along with this sermon series. The weekly sermon themes will be: *The Courage and Freedom to Bear Fruit; Wisdom and Finance; Cultivating Contentment; Defined by Generosity*.

These are important issues that we cannot ignore. I hope you'll join me as we look at how we can manage our financial resources and truly experience that God is "Enough." You may even know someone that could be helped by this topic, please consider inviting them to join you in worship during this series.

In Christ,
Pastor L



Enough

Beginning September 8 Pastor Loretta will begin a series of sermons based on Adam Hamilton's book "Enough". These sermons will relate to our fall stewardship campaign and finance theme: "*Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity*." I will lead a related video and book study **beginning Monday September 9 at 6:00 p.m.** The class themes include:

1. The Stock market 1942 to today.
2. The Economic Crisis.
3. Finding Financial Stability.
4. What would you take?
5. Tithing and Ten Apples.

If you are interested or have questions about the study, please contact Paul Foulke at 715-554-0246.



Remember to Pray our Breakthrough Prayer

I recently had a church member ask me for a new copy of our 608 Breakthrough Prayer because she had worn out the first copy she received. My heart sang and I happily gave her a new copy.

I hope all of you are remembering to pray for our church daily at 6:08 a.m. and p.m. (or whatever time of the day works best for you—the important part is to pray consistently and intentionally). You will find the words to our prayer below and if you need a new copy to carry in your pocket, purse, Bible, or wherever you keep it handy, please let me know. I would be delighted to have to make more copies of our prayer; just let me know if you need a pocket size or large-print copy.

—Pastor Loretta

608 Breakthrough Prayer

"What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open...See, I have placed before you an open door."—Revelation 3:7-8

God of love and power, we know that you are with us and you are for us. Breakthrough into our lives and into your church that our relationship may flourish with you and each other.

Fill us with the grace, mercy, and power of Jesus. Help us discern where your Spirit is leading. Open doors that lead us into a new season of faithfulness and fruitfulness; of growth and service for your Kingdom; exceeding our dreams and expectations. Give us faith and courage to step through the doors that you open as we faithfully follow you, in Jesus name and for your glory. Amen.

Fellowship Time and Teams

The Bible says, “*Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together.*” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

In keeping with that, it’s the time of year for us to get back to our Fellowship Time in The Gathering Place with refreshments after our Worship Service. Christian fellowship is essential to spiritual growth and many aspects of our spiritual lives depend on being together with other believers to encourage, teach, serve, and share life together.

Fellowship Time will resume on Sunday, September 8! However, we will be needing some extra help this year for some of the Sundays. I am not yet sure of volunteers for the third Sunday of the month—so if no one wants to help out we will have to cancel Fellowship Time on those particular Sundays.

I will be working on finding some servers and bakers for “fill ins,” so if you are interested in helping out please see me.

In God’s Love, Priscilla Hemmersbach



Parish Nurse Schedule

Your Parish Nurse will once again be available in the office on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. starting on Wednesday, September 4. I am available for any medication questions, vital sign checks, Advance Directives and as a resource for medical procedures/issues or just to talk—so give me a call or stop in during those hours.

Thanks! Priscilla Hemmersbach, RN
Parish Nurse



Elevator Attendants

Starting the first of the year we will **NOT be having greeters** on Sunday mornings, but we do need to make sure there are **elevator attendants-on both floors** to assist people at each service. I will be putting a sheet out for sign up as elevator attendants for next year. This is such an important role! Some people would not be able to attend worship due to physical limitations and not being able to climb the stairs, so they are very thankful for the elevator and those present to assist them, if needed. I hope everyone will make it a point to find a couple of times to sign up for during the coming year and help meet this need. Thank you!

Priscilla Hemmersbach



Lay Servant Training Weekend

You are invited to take part in this Lay Servant Training being held at Pine Lake and sponsored by the South West District Committee on Lay Servant/Lay Speaking. Please contact Corrine Daniels, contact information below, to register or for answers to your questions.

- **Dates:** Friday & Saturday, September 27 and 28, 2019
- **Times:** Classes begin at 6 p.m. on Friday, September 27 and conclude at 5 p.m. on Saturday, September 28.
- **Place:** Pine Lake Camp & Retreat Center W8301 County Road M, Westfield WI 53965
- **Cost:** \$110/per participant for attendees staying at Pine Lake. \$40/per participant for those not staying at the retreat center.

The cost includes rooms (if you are staying at Pine Lake), meals, and costs of class materials.

Participants may choose from **one** of the following classes. Please indicate your selection when registering:

- Leading Prayer – *In Wha Shon*
- Leading Worship – *Cathy Christman and Deb Verdegan*
- Spiritual Gifts – *Roxi Gnatzig and Pat Gallus*
- UM Heritage – *Vicki Brantmeyer*
- UM Polity – *Scott Carlson*
- Continuing Ed: “The Scientific Evidence for the Existence of God” – *Wesley Jacob*

Please register with: Corrine Daniels, 608-934-5258, email corrie.email@gmail.com Registration deadline is September 9, 2019.



B.A.S.H. News

We are looking for Teachers and Helpers for Wednesday Night BASH (Bible Activities & Story Hour), our children’s ministry to all children age 3 through Sixth grade! BASH will be starting on **September 18 at 6 p.m.** We will be using our Vacation Bible School materials for the first 10 weeks and then will finish up the academic year with the Deep Blue Curriculum that we started last year. We are glad to have Ellen Hemstock return as Children’s Choir Director. Anyone who has an interest in teaching or helping this year, we will be having a **teacher/ helper meeting on September 11 at 6pm.** God has called each one of us be His disciples. Please pray for BASH.

BASH Coordinator
Lynn Humphrey

Nurture News

Summer was filled with vacations and family events, and now September brings opportunities to once again participate in programs of ministry within our church and community.

September 8—“Grandparents Day,” a day to remind your grandparents, or those who are like a grandpa or grandma to you, how much they are loved and appreciated.

September 18—B.A.S.H. (Bible Activities and Story Hour) and confirmation classes begin 6-7 p.m. every Wednesday. Letters of invitation have been sent to nearly 50 children and youth. If you would like to help with BASH, please contact Lynn Humphrey at 608-269-7150 or Pastor Loretta at 608-269-6949. Our young people need you!

Thank you...Cheryl Isensee and your mother, Donna Peterson, for furnishing the delicious bars for the fellowship time after the 4OneQuartet concert. Over 70 attended the wonderful evening of music, and all enjoyed the variety of sweets—thanks so much!

Opportunities to be in ministry—please take a moment to consider these, or other areas to volunteer:

- **The Tuesday Soup Supper** just had a crew retire—the Leon Congregational Church has served the first Sunday of the month for nine years. We will surely miss them. Donna Burnham and Kathy Ekern have graciously responded, but we are still in need of two or three more volunteers. Our Tuesday evening guests are so appreciative of the crews that serve. Contact Cyndi Wise at 608-269-4529.
- The Family Promise organization will begin their program later this fall and our church, along with 12 other churches, promised to support them. Please contact Cyndi Wise, 269-4529, if you can help or have questions.

“Stay connected to God—stay connected to others.”

Cyndi Wise, Nurture Chair

Records & History Committee

THANK YOU! Records and History Committee would like to thank Ron and Kristine Phillips for furnishing the delicious cakes for Fellowship time following the service where they became members of the church! Welcome and thank you!

THANK YOU! Records and History Committee would like to thank Barb McGreevy for all of her hard work in scanning church historical documents so we can

preserve our rich history! Also, thank you to Cindy Isensee for now indexing all of those documents!

THANK YOU! Records and History Committee would like to thank Gary Ascher for donating file cabinets to the church. We will be making good use of them in the near future. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

PICTORIAL DIRECTORY UPDATE: We are on the home stretch with compiling information and proofing data for the Directory. Your patience and assistance with the Directory has been appreciated.

SAVE THE DATE: Records and History will be hosting/coordinating another “Our Community in Concert” event this year. **Mark Saturday, October 19 at 2 p.m. on your calendar.** More information will follow. You will not be disappointed!



It's back to school season and many are shopping Amazon for supplies and clothing for their students, so it's the perfect time to support Sparta United Methodist Church! When you do your back to school shopping at **smile.amazon.com/ch/39-6026139**, Amazon donates to United Methodist Church.

What is AmazonSmile? It is a website operated by Amazon that lets customers enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features as on Amazon.com. The difference is that when customers shop on **smile.amazon.com** the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to Sparta United Methodist Church! That may not seem like much, but each small donation from every one of our AmazonSmile shoppers does add up to a nice donation from Amazon! To make this process even easier, you can go directly to our support page by entering the link: **<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/39-6026139>**. Once you are on our support page you just do your shopping, complete your order and Amazon will send their donation right to our bank on a quarterly basis. It is such a quick and easy process. Please check it out! We will be so thankful that you did!

P.S. Have you started your Christmas shopping yet? Remember to use the AmazonSmile link provided above when you are looking for gift items for all those special people in your life, too!

As The Seasons Change, Enjoy Where God Has You

So the summer is over, and my favorite time of year is coming up. When the weather cools down and the kids return to school Fall will be in the air. There is nothing more beautiful than when the leaves change.

I love the changing seasons. The cooler weather Fall and Winter bring also mean I will be getting ready to change the decor of my home, with one season going out and another coming in. I will get rid of the old so we can embrace the new. Being a creature of habit, I still like to change my surroundings about every three months---although it is becoming less frequently as I get older---so more like every 4 months.

The Bible says there is a season for everything in life (see Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). If only we could embrace the seasons of our lives as willingly as we embrace the seasons of the year. It's been said that the only thing that is constant is change; but unfortunately that's what we tend to resist—especially if it means going outside our comfort zones.

God has planned the seasons of our lives with infinite wisdom. He has ordained each one, knowing exactly what fruit is to be harvested during each time frame. I believe that since His desire is to do us only good, He enjoys each season He plans for us (see Jeremiah 29:11). So why are we so prone to resist the season we're in?

It's as if we are never satisfied. When it's Summer, we want Fall. When it's Winter, we want Summer. When we are single, we want to be married. When we are married, we want children, and when we have children, we want them to be grown and out of the house. When the nest is finally empty, we miss them and want them back—at least for a little while.

But the Lord ushers in the seasons in our lives and walks us through them. All He desires is that we embrace what He is doing in our lives with faith and gratitude (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

God is always working, even in seasons when we don't see much activity. During the season of planting, when there is no harvest, God is watering, nurturing, fertilizing and containing us so that in due season we can bring forth the fruit of righteousness He desires.

After a season of harvest, He often initiates a time of pruning (see John 15:1-2). Painful though this may be, it is necessary for us to produce even more fruit. We can trust God to do whatever He needs to do in our lives today because of His proven faithfulness yesterday (see Lamentations 3:22-23).

During this new season, let's determine to count our blessings and enjoy, as He does, the season He has us in. Every day is a gift, and we should savor all the sights,

sounds, smells, friendships, fellowship, family, food and fun of the season. Let's also be thankful that God, in His infinite wisdom, planned our lives and leads us through many fruitful seasons.

Instead of wishing we were in a different season, let's embrace and enjoy the one we are in right now. As you enjoy this upcoming Fall season, embrace an attitude of gratitude in every area of your life. Pray for family, friends, and country. Pray for those less fortunate who have been victimized by natural disasters, crime, terrorism, war and financial crises. Ask the Lord to show you what you can do to be a blessing and help to those in need of comfort and provision. Ask God to ignite revival in our churches and send more laborers into His harvest fields here and abroad. (Thessalonians 5:18; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Galatians 6:9).

O God of Creation, you have blessed us with the changing of the seasons. As we welcome the autumn months, may the earlier setting of the sun remind us to take time to rest. May the brilliant colors of the leaves remind us of the wonder of your creation. May the steam of our breath in the cool air remind us that it is you who gives us the breath of life. May the harvest from the fields remind us of the abundance we have been given and bounty we are to share with others. May the dying of summer's spirit remind us of your great promise that death is temporary and life is eternal. We praise you for your goodness forever and ever. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Priscilla Hemmersbach,
Lay Leader and Parish Nurse



Lois Circle, Wesleyan Circle and United Methodist Women... Meeting Date & Time Changes

Lois Circle and Wesleyan Circle will meet jointly for the quarterly United Methodist Women's (UMW) meeting on **September 10th at 1:00 p.m. in the Chapel**. At this joint meeting the 2020 UMW Budget will be approved. Wesleyan Circle will present devotions and program. Lois Circle will serve as hostess. *This meeting will replace the regularly scheduled Circle meetings for September only.* Call Cathy Nichols at 487-9608 if you have questions.

A Word from Bishop Jung

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.
~ Ephesians 4:1-6~

The word that leaps out of this passage of scripture is “one.” Bear with *one* another. One body. One Spirit. One hope. One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One God. I shake my head when I hear people question and challenge the concept of *unity* in our scriptures – “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” My blessed siblings in Christ, this is why we are here. This is why we exist. We are the one body of Jesus Christ, incarnate and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to participate in God’s holy work of the transformation of the world. We do this together.

In the spirit and teaching of John Wesley—*Solitary religion is not to be found there. “Holy Solitaries” is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than Holy Adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. Faith working by love, is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection. (Hymns and Sacred Poems, 1739*—where he explains that we cannot be truly Christian in isolation from a faith community, we need each other. The trend toward personal and individual holiness so prevalent and popular in recent times is completely foreign to the understanding of ancient Hebrew culture, early Christian culture, and our Wesleyan heritage. We are Christian together.

In recent months, unity in the church has become not only a topic for discussion, not only the battleground for debate, but the focal point of a real effort to divide the church. Again, John Wesley offers clear and precise opinion on the matter: “It is evil in itself. To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the love, the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength, nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of separating from our brethren. And this is certainly the case with any who willingly separate from their Christian brethren.” (On Schism, 1786) There is no goodness or grace in separation, only an admission that we lack the love that can unite us together.

United Methodism proudly offers an open communion table. We do not deny the grace and acceptance of God to anyone who wishes to partake of this holy meal. And in our standard liturgy, we proclaim and request together that “through the power of your (God’s) Holy Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.” This is who we are.

But I am concerned about how different our actions are from our words and our core values and beliefs. Do our racial and ethnic minority people feel they are one with us? Do many women feel they are truly one, with equal voice and power and respect as many of their male counterparts? Do our gay and lesbian siblings feel they are one with us? And even because of our theological and political differences, I question how many of our same culture, same background, same gender baptized children of God feel they are one with each other? In a Christian fellowship where God works constantly to forgive, redeem, unite, and reconcile people, we choose instead to focus on our differences. In a denomination defined by prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace, many choose instead to focus on sins, and faults, and failings.

My distress over these realities led me to create a Bishop’s Task Force on a Wisconsin way forward —leadership dedicated to discerning a Wisconsin Option as alternative to schism and split. We cannot solve all the challenges and problems facing our church today, but we can work together to create a space for prayer, discernment, humility, and hope—a grace margin—that allows us to slow down, not be overly reactive, and to engage with one another in mutual respect and regard, to hold each other accountable to the highest standards of civility and dignity, and to put our Christian faith and values into action. We want to be a people who do not attack, do not insult or assault, and who “do no harm” in the ways they treat one another. We are making a commitment to “do all the good we can,” embracing a Golden Rule code of conduct, and seeking to think the best of one another instead of the worst.

Make no mistake, the Task Force is not doing this *for* the conference. They will be leading the conference—all of us together; clergy and laity, younger and older, of every status of education, economics, ethnicity and heritage—to make a fundamental paradigm shift. The Wisconsin Option is a choice of unconditional love and forgiveness. We will live faithfully into the Wesleyan understanding of God’s grace for all who confess Jesus as Christ and Lord. We will hold our disagreements as a sacred trust—to love those with whom we disagree and formerly judged as beloved children of God.

Let us pray for God’s presence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we truly, deeply, and honestly seek healing, wholeness, and oneness as the body of Christ. Let us spend time in contemplative reading of our scriptures and the teachings of John Wesley. Let us enter into true and faithful Christian conference and conversation – both with those with whom we agree as well as those with whom we don’t. By God’s grace, God’s will is done in us, and together we can witness to God’s miraculous work of grace. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

