

# “The CHIMES” – February

Volume 55, No. 2

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*As our larger church prepares for another General Conference this year amidst much discussion in the news media, Pastor Loretta has given this month’s space to an important message from our bishop. Some of you have told her that people outside the church are asking you what is going on with the United Methodist Church after reading recent news articles. The answer for now is, “we don’t know.” If any changes are to be made in the United Methodist Church that can only happen at a General Conference. The next General Conference will be held May 5-15 in Minneapolis, MN. There are several proposals that will be considered at General Conference, with the “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation” being only one—but one that has caused a stir in the news. At this point, and going forward, as far as Pastor Loretta is concerned our focus remains to do the ministry God has called us to in Sparta of making new and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

## Reflection from Bishop Jung on the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation

My sacred and beloved siblings in Christ, our Council of Bishops endorsed the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation proposal that offers an end to the current deep division in our United Methodist Church. I have mixed feelings about the proposal and what it means.



On the one hand, it not only recognizes our differences, but honors a very broad spectrum of beliefs, interpretations, visions, and desires for the church. Not everyone will be happy, but that has been part of our dilemma – there is no way forward that everyone will agree with or support. Our guidance to “Do No Harm,” comes to a place of doing the least harm possible in the short term, that we might do more good in the long term.

The Protocol offers a way for moderate and progressive United Methodists to be in ministry in a

fully inclusive church and for traditionalists to continue in a ministry that honors certain restrictions. This also recognizes that there is no healthy, adequate “one-size-fits-all” polity and doctrine for a wondrously diverse global church. We have arrived at a place where graceful autonomy is required for different regions of our planet to make decisions that allow for effective ministry and witness. The decisions most appropriate for The United Methodist Church in the United States are not appropriate for Africa, Russia, the Philippines, or other regions of our church. We progress, we evolve, we adapt at different levels, in different ways, at different times. In this case, unity has not been a strength.

We are in a liminal space, preparing to cross a threshold that marks a distinctive and drastic new chapter in the story of Methodism. The proposed Protocol invites us to shift our energies in significant ways. First, we cannot continue to treat members of our baptized fellowship as adversaries. The division that yields “us/them” thinking is doing no one any good. We are all in this together, “working out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” (Philippians 2:12), seeking a pathway that ceases to do harm to those with whom we disagree. If the mediation to this process tells us anything, it is that we must seek what is best for all and not just for those “on our side.” Second, we need to stop fighting over territory, property, and finances. All we possess and manage is God’s; if we separate, we must be willing to divide God’s assets in such a way that faithful stewardship may continue for all. Fighting over things will not take us to a positive future and will simply serve to damage our mission and ministry and provide a terrible witness to our world. Third, allowing a less-confrontational separation means that we stand a better chance of friendly transition. On our current course, we face the likelihood of irreparable damage and continued animosity. It is time for us to offer grace to all, to cease needless insult and injury, and to lay the groundwork for hope and healing.

On the other hand, we have failed to maintain a unity and an integrity. Relationships will change, we will experience the pain of losing loved ones, we will not see brothers, sisters, siblings, colleagues, and friends that are part of our family. The metaphor of

divorce had been used in talking about the future of the church; the reality of such a step is painful, even when some see it as the only alternative. We will no longer be what we have been, who we have been. It has been very easy to focus on the ways being together has been difficult; now we will face the reality of losing all that has been good and gracious, wonderful and effective.

Transitions are always disruptive. Whether we are picking up the pieces and arranging them in a new way or beginning from scratch to build something new, a lot of time, energy, resources, and focus are involved. It will be a challenge for us all to maintain a vision and commitment to do God's will, serve the church's mission, and offer a transformative ministry to all the world. But I believe we can make the necessary changes with love and grace if we make the commitment to celebrate the holistic kin\*dom of God as beloved community. We can do this whether we are together or working in new configurations, for we are still one in Christ Jesus.

In the coming months, as we process the Protocol for Separation and experience the decisions of the upcoming General Conference, our clergy and laity – and our communities of faith will be facing incredible and challenging choices. Who will stay and who will go? Who will leave all together and who will return? Not only “what will we do,” but “how” will be ongoing discussions. In times of immense and all-encompassing change there is great fear and anxiety, as well as excitement and anticipation. As we journey together through this momentous time, I would ask of every Wisconsin United Methodist the following things.

**Pray.** Pray for the church and its leaders. Pray for your own congregation, but also for all the congregations that will be impacted by these decisions. Pray for grace in all our actions. Pray for The United Methodist Church as it moves forward and pray for the new Methodist denomination and affiliates that will emerge. Pray for our global church – for our ongoing work of social justice, world-wide missions, and evangelism and witness – that will require our commitment and support to stay strong and vital as we work out our polity and practices for a radically new and different church.

**Talk.** Beyond talking to God, talk to each other. It is my prayer that all congregations will create space and time for the community of faith to come together for conversation, prayer, discernment, and honest exploration. People will have many questions, and while we may not have clear, specific answers, it is important that everyone have opportunity to express themselves.

**Be reflective, not reactive.** Our entire culture in the United States is suffering a time of cynicism, skepticism, suspicion, and ascribing negative intent. Reactivity makes us look for problems, to key in on what we don't like and what we disagree with. We wonder about ulterior motives and hidden agendas. I ask us all to make a conscious effort to work together for good, to see possibilities, and to prepare for a grace-filled, kind and compassionate way forward. Yes, there has been great hurt, there are things that have been done and said that cannot be taken back. But by God's grace it is time to leave the past behind and work together for a future that truly honors and glorifies God, that can allow space for effective and faithful ministry for everyone along the theological spectrum, and that creates fertile soil for healing, redemption and resurrection.

Is the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation the answer we have been looking for? Well, there is no simple solution to a complex and dynamic problem, but it is a way forward that allows us to move beyond the destruction of our disagreement and division, it is a hope that we can do less harm and that we can do more good, and it is a tangible and concrete challenge for us to work together to create a better, stronger future. This is my hope.

If you would like to read the full document on *Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation* it can be found on the internet at: <https://cdnsc.umc.org/-/media/umc-media/2020/01/03/15/48/Protocol-of-Reconciliation-and-Grace-through-Separation>

There is also a Frequently Asked Questions document found on the UM News web site at: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/protocol-of-reconciliation-and-grace-through-separation-faq>

If you would like to see a comparison of all of the proposals going to General Conference for consideration, you can see a chart at: <file:///C:/Users/Sparta%20UMC/Documents/Newsletter%20Articles/Comparison%20of%20Proposals%20to%20General%20Conference%20Chart.pdf>

If you don't have internet access there is one copy of each document in the church office; you can stop by and read the documents there if you would like (or pay for photocopies and take them with you).

A General Conference delegation information exchange will be held on March 21, at Tomah First UMC, 1:15-3pm. You are welcome to attend if you would like to hear from and talk to our delegates to General Conference.

## Breakthrough Prayer Initiative Training Event

Do you desire to take your prayers for the church to a deeper level? Well there is an opportunity coming up quickly. The Breakthrough Prayer event initially scheduled for Saturday, January 11, has been rescheduled to Saturday, February 8, due to a winter storm. Registration has been extended to Wednesday, February 5, for those who have not registered. You can register online at:

<https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=506808&> If you are bringing more than six people or have any registration questions, please contact Kristy via email [kyang@wisconsinumc.org](mailto:kyang@wisconsinumc.org) or 608-837-7328.

Every church recognizes prayer as important. But what happens when a congregation unites to pray collectively and consistently for God to break through in new and miraculous ways? You can launch your congregation into the kind of church-wide breakthrough prayer initiative that fuels the atmosphere of possibility, and the entire focus begins to shift from inward to up-and-outward. It's easier than you think—and the results will make spiritual history right in your own community and beyond.

Breakthrough prayer can be added into what already happens in the daily life of your congregation—and this workshop will provide equipping plus many stories, practical examples and ideas of how other United Methodist congregations across the country have done so with innovation and impact. Additionally, learn how you can utilize breakthrough prayer through key aspects of your weekly worship service, and develop your church's heart to reach its neighborhood with the message and love of Christ.



The speaker for this event is Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey, an ordained United Methodist elder who serves as the Director of the Missional Church Consultation Initiative (MCCI) for the West Ohio Conference. MCCI is a comprehensive 360-degree training and coaching effort that assists congregations and their pastors to jump-start a new life cycle of fruitfulness. Kibbey served as executive pastor of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio for 10 years, where she teamed with Pastor Mike Slaughter to create and deploy the vision of the church as well as provide oversight of the staff

and all discipleship/mission initiatives. Sue is also the creator of the *Ministry by Strengths* program, which helps leaders connect into individualized areas of ministry service passion, and is an adjunct professor for ministry leadership at United Theological Seminary. She is a speaker, trainer, consultant and coach across the country and will provide new insights and best practices that can set the stage in any church or setting for forward movement. Hear stories, gain ideas and learn more about the MCCI, a revitalization resourcing initiative set to launch in the Wisconsin Conference this year.

**Each church must bring a team consisting of the pastor plus at least five of your members (or as many as you like) in order to attend, in order that implementation of the training is effective.**

The training will take place on **Saturday, February 8, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Sugar River UMC, 415 W Verona Ave., Verona, WI.**



### Records and History Report

Our Church Pictorial Directories have arrived. Margie Lakowske will be distributing them after church on Sundays in the Gathering Place. If you had your picture taken you are eligible for a free directory. If you are a "snow bird" we will save your directory until you return.

Peggy Wright and your loyal group of volunteers—on behalf of all of us who are on the receiving end of your many endeavors we say **THANK YOU!** You all keep us informed and in the know!

The Library has received a collection of hardcover Stephen King and Patricia Cornwell books. Anyone interested in these authors is welcome to take any of these books. I will also be putting them in the Little Free Library periodically.

Our church will be hosting Family Promise soon. If you have any children's, teen's or young adult books that you no longer need, these may be nice additions for our guests to read while they are staying with us. Please let me know and I will get them from you or you may leave them in the Library. Thank you. Margie Lakowske

*We Are - Keeping the Eternal Flame Glowing*



*Dear Friends... On behalf of the students and staff of Sparta School District, we would like to thank you and express our gratitude to you all for the generous donation to our students. We have sent these items to our schools in need and they will be greatly welcomed by many students! Thank you...*

*Student Services Dept.  
Amber, Jeanne & Rhonda*

## **This Lenten Season Encounter the Gospel of John**

Lenten services begin on **Wednesday, February 26** with a special **Ash Wednesday** service in the chapel off the K Street entrance at **6 p.m.** The following Wednesdays in Lent will begin with a simple soup supper at 5:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall with a casual worship service immediately following supper (approximately 6:15 p.m.).

This year will follow the same format we used last year with a combination of traditional worship elements and DVD presentation with brief discussion. We will be using Adam Hamilton's *John: The Gospel of Light and Life* as we anticipate a season of spiritual growth and life-changing renewal while exploring the major themes of John, which is unique among the Gospels.

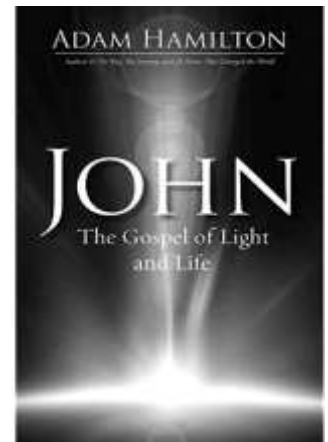
John's Gospel is largely set in and around Jerusalem, whereas the others record Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Jesus sounds different in Matthew, Mark, and Luke where he speaks in parables and in straightforward, plainspoken ways. But in John, Jesus speaks in metaphors that are more obscure.

In the other Gospels, Jesus describes the kingdom of God and the ethical necessities demanded in the Kingdom. In John's Gospel, the focus is on Jesus himself as the one who reveals God. The author of John presents Jesus as the source of life, and he wants to be sure we get this. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus calls people to follow him. In John, Jesus calls people to believe in him and to abide in him. Both following and believing in Jesus are important dimensions of Christian discipleship. Clearly, we need the insights and invitation of all four Gospels.

None of the Gospels are, strictly speaking, biographies of Jesus. But John's Gospel, more than any of the others, is something of a spiritual commentary on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. We're not meant to read it as a journalist's or biographer's account of Jesus' life. In John details of events and even the words of Jesus are about the meaning—the spiritual significance—of Jesus' life. For this reason John has long been described as “the spiritual Gospel.”

As John explores the questions of the identity and meaning of Jesus, you are invited to do the same. This series is structured to help you explore the major themes of John as we read through the Gospel, so there are suggested Scripture readings listed below for you to read before each week's service. I encourage you to approach the text actively, putting yourself into its pages and pondering how its words

speak to the meaning of Jesus for your life. To help you do that, you are encouraged to answer these three questions with each passage you read: 1) What is said in this passage about Jesus? 2) In this passage, how does Jesus bring life to me? 3) What response do these verses require of me?



In the DVD episodes Hamilton shares insights with a group of fifteen and then answers their questions. We will add our own brief discussion after viewing the weekly episodes. The confirmation students will also be participating in this Lenten worship experience so I am excited to see where our discussions take us. Sundays in Lent will follow the same weekly themes and may be partially shaped by our discussion. If you would like to delve deeper into the study of John there is an excellent book by Hamilton that goes along with the DVD.

The complete six-week schedule follows:

**Ash Wednesday, February 26 (in the chapel at 6 p.m.)**

The Word Made Flesh (read John 1)

**Wednesday, March 4 (supper at 5:30, chapel at 6)**

Miraculous Signs (read John 2-5)

**Wednesday, March 11 (supper at 5:30, chapel at 6)**

“I Am” Sayings (read John 6-11)

**Wednesday, March 18 (supper at 5:30, chapel at 6)**

Farewell Discourse (read John 12-17)

**Wednesday, March 25 (supper at 5:30, chapel at 6)**

Arrest, Trial, and Crucifixion (read John 18-19)

**Wednesday, April 1 (supper at 5:30, chapel at 6)**

Eternal Life (read John 20-21)

An offering will be taken that will equally support Sojourner's Journey for the new men's home (you can learn more about this ministry on page 9 or at: [www.sojournersjourneyinc.org/men-s-home.html](http://www.sojournersjourneyinc.org/men-s-home.html)) and Family Promise of Monroe County (you can learn more about this program on page 7 or at: <https://familypromiseofmonroecounty.com>).



**THANK YOU** to Dave Kemp and your cleaning crew! We want to thank you for the fantastic job you did on cleaning the carpeting in the offices and the Sunday School rooms. They look and smell GREAT! We really appreciate the extra time you spent on bringing new life to them!

Do I hear an AMEN?!

## Nurture Report

Submitted by Cyndi Wise

**Thank you** to all who purchased “Light the Night” luminaries for Christmas Eve. \$300 was given to the Ecumenical Food Pantry because of your generosity. The front of our Church looked beautiful with the luminaries “lighting the night!”

**Thank you** to all who helped make our annual all-church Birthday Banquet so festive and delicious with the decorated tables and wonderful cakes! Nearly 70 friends attended, and our birthday-penny offering of \$47.50 went to Volunteers in Mission (don’t know what Volunteers in Mission is? See page 6 for more information). God bless us all, as we celebrate our birthdays in 2020.

**Thank you** for the table decorations and cakes: Em Axelsen, Judy Fuhrmann, Eileen Gajewsky, Jeff and Priscilla Hemmersbach, Larry Humphrey, Cheryl Isensee, Amy Kiefer, Margie Lakowske, Cathy Nichols, Julie Rodgers, Betsy Tadisch, Mary Talsky, Pastor Loretta, Rose White, Peggy Wright.

### Looking ahead...

**February 23:** The Lenten daily devotional, “By His Wounds We Are Healed” will be available.

**Shrove Pancake Breakfast** will be prepared and served by some of the men of our church following the worship service. This annual fellowship gathering is held a few days before Ash Wednesday. Please come and enjoy!

**February 26—Ash Wednesday** evening worship service at 6 p.m. in the chapel (off K Street). A six-lesson video-based series titled “John: Gospel of Light and Life” by Adam Hamilton will be the foundation of our Wednesday evening services throughout Lent.

**March 4:** This will be the first of the Wednesday evening **Lenten Soup and Bread Suppers** in our fellowship hall starting at 5:30 p.m. Worship and the continued “John: Gospel of Light and Life” series will follow in the chapel starting about 6:15 (as soon as supper is over and the fellowship hall and kitchen are cleaned up). These Wednesday suppers and worship will continue each Wednesday through April 1. A sign-up sheet for volunteers to help prepare and serve these suppers will be posted. A full schedule of weekly topics is listed on page 4.

*Stay connected to God—Stay connected to others.*

## 2020 Birthday Banquet

The 2020 Birthday Banquet was another success (is it possible this was our thirtieth year of celebrating?!). We weren’t disappointed with the variety of 12 creatively decorated tables, a potluck feast, and all of the delicious birthday desserts. With so much sweet temptation it is nice that you are able to try any and all of the desserts you want.

We had a great attendance this year with much good conversation taking place as folks got to know their birthday-month partners better. It was wonderful to see many of our BASH children around the tables getting to know some of us older folks. When our birthday “pennies” were counted we gave \$47.50 to Volunteers in Mission. This was a truly wonderful way to celebrate together. Here’s to the next thirty years of celebrations, toodle-oo, until next time!



*Dear United Methodist Church Friends,*

*We are so thankful that Sparta is made up of wonderful people like you. Every year we are overwhelmed by the generosity and thoughtfulness of our community members. With your help, we are able to benefit so many of our students in the Sparta Area School District and help our families with their needs. By working together, we can provide the most positive and productive school experience for all students in our district. Your continued support is greatly appreciated and we are proud to have you as a part of our community.*

*Sincerely yours,  
Amber Kulig, Director of Student Services*

## **United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (VIM)**

### **Volunteers Who are Called to do Mission**

VIM provides volunteer opportunities to express Christ's love by helping our brothers and sisters in our local community, across our nation, and around the globe through disaster response activities, housing projects, and rehabilitation, education, and medical assistance.

The understanding that we are called and that we are sent is at the foundation of our faith. The scriptures are full of stories of persons who responded to a call and were sent on mission for God. Jesus spent his ministry calling persons and sending them on God's mission.

Jesus summed up the Christian lifestyle in a simple formula: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength," and "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Putting our faith into action is at the very heart of our Christian calling. The New Testament instructs those who would be followers of Jesus to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give shelter to the homeless, heal the sick, care for the widows, and nurture the children.

Through United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, every person in the church has the opportunity to serve and to live their lives more faithfully. And when we reach out and use what God has given us in the service of others, we have life-transforming experiences.

### **Wisconsin VIM (National)**

Wisconsin Volunteers in Mission coordinates the VIM activities within the state of Wisconsin, out-of-state, and also works with other agencies for national and international projects. These include disaster response activities, housing projects and rehabilitation, education, and medical assistance. Our committee is part of the Wisconsin Board of Global Ministries, the North Central Jurisdiction Volunteers in Mission, which, in turn, is part of the General Board of Global Ministries.

You can find a list of the trips scheduled in 2020 at: <https://www.wisconsinumc.org/ministries/outreach-service/volunteers-in-mission>

Click on the Wisconsin/National Trips link. Pastor L previously took a group to the VIM trip to United Methodist Children's Services in Milwaukee and the group found the work fulfilling and the experience life changing (in a good way).

### **Wisconsin IVIM (International)**

Wisconsin International Volunteers in Mission coordinates the VIM activities throughout the world. This committee is part of the Wisconsin Board of

Global Ministries as well as the North Central Jurisdiction Volunteers in Mission.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission provides volunteer opportunities to express Christ's love by helping our brothers and sisters in our local community, nation and world. These volunteer opportunities are short term trips for usually one to two weeks in length. Many of the VIM trips are open to youth and adults.



### **Giving: Concentrating on Our Need for God**

*"...they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints."* —2 Corinthians 8:3b-4

Self-denial helps us to concentrate on our need for God. It is one thing to say that God provides all the food we need, but is quite another to go without food. It is one thing to say that God provides us with income to provide for our needs, but it is quite another to give 10% of that income back to God to provide for the needs of others.

Fasting and tithing are forms of sacrifice, a Latin word that comes from combining "to make" and "holy or sacred." Over time, sacrifice has become synonymous with giving something up that is dear to us (self-denial) in order to serve a greater good, like the Kingdom of God.

Lent is a good time to remember that self-denial draws us closer to God. Lenten fasting should not be pro forma as in giving up chocolate, for example. It should be real self-denial accompanied by prayer, repentance, and soul-searching.

Sacrificial giving is a fast from spending on yourself and is equally appropriate for Lent, especially if accompanied by prayer, repentance and soul-searching. We are called to sacrificial giving year-round, but at Lent we can especially remember who and what our sacrifice is for.

Several years ago, I was part of a Disciple Bible Study group that decided during Lent to fast by skipping food between breakfast and dinner. We saved the money we would normally spend on lunch, snacks, and coffee and brought this to the class each week. In the end, we were able to donate over \$2,200 to a local feeding program for the homeless and poor.

Join me this Lent in focusing on our need for God.  
Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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

## BASH News

Thank you to Ellen and the BASH kids for the great job singing on January 19.

On **February 5**, we will have a **Summer Camp Family Information Party**. We will be serving hotdogs, chips, fruit, cheese sticks, and a drink. Bring the family and enjoy some fellowship. After we are done eating, Toni Burrows will be doing a short video on UMC Summer Camps and we will give you information on the upcoming camps. **This is open to all BASH families or anyone interested in learning about Summer Church Camps**. Any questions, please see Lynn Humphrey, Toni Burrows, or Pastor Loretta.

**Just a reminder...if school is called off because of the weather, we will NOT have BASH.**

God Bless you, Lynn Humphrey

**What: Summer Camp Informational Meeting!**

**When: Wednesday, February 5 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Where: SUMC Fellowship Hall**

**Who: ALL BASH KIDS, their parents and families!**



A supper of hotdogs, chips, beverage, fruit, and S'mores will be provided. Anyone else with children or grandchildren that may be interested in attending a Summer Camp is also invited.

Any questions, please see Toni Burrow, Pastor Loretta, or Lynn Humphrey.

**Come learn what great opportunities and adventures await the children this summer!**

## Family Promise

Family Promise is moving forward and has hired April Buchanan as the Director. Our date for hosting will be Jan. 26-Feb 2, May 17-24, July 26-Aug. 2, Dec 6-13. We will be looking for volunteers to help in several areas:

- Set up -2 people
- Activities/ Hosts- 5:30-8:30p - 2 people
- Supper Served at 6:30p - 4 people
- Meals- Supper and Breakfast Saturday and Sunday and items for a "to go" breakfast during the week.
- Overnight- 2 people 8:30 p.m. to 7 a.m.
- Serve Breakfast from 6-7:00a (could be the people who stay overnight) Except on Saturday or Sunday mornings.

There are lots of opportunities to serve and we learned on January 23 that we would have our first Family Promise guests January 26 – February 2, so preparations were quickly made for them and we had an awesome week of hosting and learning!

We will have a sign-up sheet available when it is closer to our May week. If you are interested in helping, please see me or Pastor Loretta.

More updates to come!

God Bless, Lynn Humphrey

**Lifetouch Pictorial Directories:** Our new Lifetouch Directories have arrived and are being distributed to those who had photos taken or submitted. If you have not yet received a directory and believe you should have, please call the Church Office and let us know, so we can make sure you get one.

As you receive your new directory, please double check your information in the back. If you discover any corrections that need to be made, please call the office as soon as possible. We will print a listing of any corrections that need to be made in this and upcoming issues of *"The Chimes"* so everyone can update their own directory.

Thank you!

## Pictorial Directory Updates

**Duane & Jane Hobson** corrections:

**Email address:** dhhbsn@ gmail.com

**Duane's cell phone number:** 608-397-8359

**Dorothy Zillmer** new address:

315 S. Spring St., Apt. 102

Sparta, WI 54656

## **A Note from the Financial Secretary:**

**Weekly and Monthly giving envelopes** have arrived and are in the back of the Sanctuary ready to be picked up. In order to receive proper giving credit, please make sure that either your name or your assigned envelope number are written on the envelope.

If you have any questions, feel free to give me a call at 608-487-1544. Thanks!

Heidi Sullivan, Financial Secretary

## From the Parish Nurse...

### Macular Degeneration

Macular Degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss, affecting more than 10 million Americans – more than cataracts and glaucoma combined. At present, Macular Degeneration is considered an incurable eye disease.

Macular Degeneration is caused by the deterioration of the central portion of the retina, the inside back layer of the eye that records the images we see and sends them via the optic nerve from the eye to the brain. The retina's central portion, known as the macula, is responsible for focusing central vision in the eye, and it controls our ability to read, drive a car, recognize faces or colors, and see objects in fine detail.

There are two basic types of Macular Degeneration: “dry” and “wet.” Approximately 85% to 90% of the cases of Macular Degeneration are the “dry” (atrophic) type, while 10-15% are the “wet” (exudative) type.

### Stages of Macular Degeneration

There are three stages of Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD).

**Early AMD** – Most people do not experience vision loss in the early stage of AMD, which is why regular eye exams are important, particularly if you have more than one risk factor (see below). Early AMD is diagnosed by the presence of medium-sized drusen (yellow deposits beneath the retina).

**Intermediate AMD** – At this stage, there may be some vision loss, but there still may not be noticeable symptoms. A comprehensive eye exam with specific tests will look for larger drusen and/or pigment changes in the retina.

**Late AMD** – At this stage, vision loss has become noticeable.

Dr. Carl Kupfer, the former Director of the National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health, has stated that Macular Degeneration will soon take on aspects of an epidemic as the Baby Boomers' age: “As the “baby boom” generation ages, and in the absence of further prevention and treatment advances, the prevalence of AMD is estimated to reach epidemic proportions of 6.3 million Americans by the year 2030.”

The biggest risk factor for Macular Degeneration is age. Your risk increases as you age, and the disease is most likely to occur in those 55 and older. There is currently no known cure for Macular Degeneration.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me.

Priscilla Hemmersbach, RN; Parish Nurse

**Your Parish Nurse is once again be in her office here at the Church on Wednesdays.** Should you need her before then, please call her at home (269-5359) and she will get back to you as soon as possible. You can also call the church office and Jan will contact her for you.



### February Pizza and a Movie

Who: Everyone is invited

What: Pizza and the movie...

“A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood”

Where: Sparta UMC Small Kitchen and Chapel

When: **Saturday, February 22**

**6 p.m. for Pizza / Movie begins at 6:30 p.m.**

**RSVP: Please contact Toni Burrows at 608-343-3029 before 12 Noon on February 22, if you will be attending, so we know how much pizza to order**

### A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Tom Hanks portrays Mister Rogers in A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood, a timely story of kindness triumphing over cynicism, based on the true story of a real-life friendship between Fred Rogers and journalist Tom Junod. After a jaded magazine writer (Emmy winner Matthew Rhys) is assigned a profile of Fred Rogers, he overcomes his skepticism, learning about kindness, love and forgiveness from America's most beloved neighbor. Rated PG

### Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of Neil Brown (father-in-law of Teresa Brown), for the loss of Neil.

The family and friends of Carolyn Kenyon, for the loss of Carolyn.

The family and friends of Iris Young (aunt of Tim Waughtal), for the loss of Iris.



## **Sojourner's Journey**

Sojourner's Journey is a non-denominational, nonprofit organization looking to come alongside those who are homeless and the men and women that are struggling with substance abuse in Monroe County. They are committed to cultivating a loving, respectful environment that nurtures positive personal and spiritual growth. They currently have a women's home and are in the process of opening a men's home in the near future. The residents of the homes receive all the benefits of the non-resident classes and support groups, as well as housing.

Spencer Cleary will be the director of the men's home. He has a passion for helping men who have been incarcerated and are re-entering the community. He has been working with the jail ministry for the last few years, and is hoping to leave his current job as a truck driver to work full time in the Sojourner's Journey ministry to men and women. He is also very active in bringing awareness and training to people about the human trafficking epidemic in America.

Because we (Sparta UMC) are supporting the new men's home with our Lenten offering I have included the following message from Spencer Cleary, men's home director, who spoke at our church last fall.

Hello everyone,

My name is Spencer and I am 48 years old. I live in Sparta with my amazing wife Kelly. We have been married now for six years and we have a blended family of six children, all grown. We have five grandchildren.

I'm very excited for the opportunity that the Board of Directors have given me and the men we will encounter on this exciting journey. Although I'm sure the journey will have many ups and downs, I believe that God will show his amazing grace to these men as he has shown so much to all of us. Please be in prayer for this exciting new addition to Sojourner's Journey.

My goal is to open this men's house for men who have been incarcerated and want to transform their lives with the direction of God's word. By creating an environment that is solely based on the guidelines from the word of God, we will help guide and mentor men to transform their lives from the men they used to be to the men that God wants them to be.

Men who have been incarcerated and want to change their lives, have a higher chance of success when a new environment is created. I want to help and guide them through this process by being a mentor, providing housing, teaching these men what it means to be the men that God meant us to be and helping them form relationships in the church and in the community they live in. I truly believe that a man should love Christ more than anything else. Through this love, lives are transformed; not only the lives of these men, but the lives that they encounter for the rest of their lives.

I'm very excited about how well it is going in the fund raising part of getting the men's home up and running. We have a major fundraiser coming up in March. We are bringing in Tiffany Jenkins to speak at the American Legion here in Sparta. She is an author, speaker, comedian, and recovering addict. She talks openly and honestly about addiction and how it affects everyone involved in it. I would like to encourage everyone to join us. General admission tickets are available. You can reserve your seat at our Web site: [www.sojournersjourneyinc.org](http://www.sojournersjourneyinc.org) and click on the upcoming events link.

Thank you! Spencer Cleary



## **Pastoral Ponderings**

At our most recent Ad Council meeting the question was asked, "Is there an apportionment cost per member?" My initial response was, "What? Why would you pull out one budget category for special attention? No! We have to cover all of our budget categories. We create a budget so that as a group, we have the resources to fulfill our mission to 'make new and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.'"

After giving it more thought I realized that in the United Methodist Church (UMC) we use a lot of terminology and abbreviations that can be confusing, especially if you haven't grown up in the UMC, and sometimes even if you have. So I want to give a brief explanation of a couple of things. Apportionments are the allocated share each church pays to the conference to support international, national, and regional mission. They are one part of our total budget.

The cost of our Christ-centered global ministry is significant, but it is really a small portion of our local church budget. Of every \$1 given in the offering: 85 cents stays in the local church, 6 cents goes for benevolent giving, 2 cents goes to general apportionment, and 7 cents goes to jurisdictions, annual conferences, and districts. A better term for apportionments is shared giving because we are a connectional church, meaning all leaders and congregations are connected in a network of loyalties and commitments. Being inter-connected is a large part of our United Methodist identity and sets us apart from congregational churches. If you still have questions, please stop in and talk with Pastor L. She appreciates hearing from you because if you don't bring your questions or comments she has no idea that they are out there. The United Methodist Church Handbook she gave out last year also has a wealth of information about the UMC. If you misplaced your copy of the handbook she has more copies available.