

The Clarion

March 2021

First UMC is a welcoming, accepting, caring and diverse Christian community committed to teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people through faith-based worship, exciting programs and outreach ministry.

Ponderings from your Pastor

31 but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31 NRSV

Dear Friends,

In 1966, Bobbi Gibb was the first un-official runner of the Boston Marathon. She lined up without numbers alongside the male competitors and went on to beat two-thirds of the men she was supposedly, “too fragile” to compete against. In 1967, Katherine Switzer would be the first official female runner of the Boston Marathon. Through the race, she would face criticism again for being a female running a marathon and was historically chased down by one of the race officials who was trying to tear her numbers off. He did not believe she should be racing and worried that her running would discredit the entire Boston Marathon. He was chasing after her to “protect” his marathon. It was not long after the 1967 race, upon seeing the strength of the women competitors, that the Boston Marathon began to allow women to compete officially in the race. It was their strength, perseverance, and boldness that made it possible. They did not just run the race, Bobbi and Katherine carried a whole society forward upon their shoulders.

In 1980, another woman would make history at the Boston Marathon. Rosie Ruiz would finish the race first overall, and with the 3rd best all-time women’s race time at the Boston Marathon. Although many people did not recall seeing her earlier in the race, including the female racer at the 18-mile mark who was told she was in first, Rosie burst through the finish surrounded by loud cheers. When asked about how her time compared to previous splits, she did not have a clear answer. Upon being asked why she was not sweaty or out of breath at the finish line, she said she had gotten up with lots of energy. She also drew some red flags for running a world-class time, but not being able to answer questions about her splits or sections of the course. It was 8 days later that she was disqualified from the race for cheating. It was speculated that she took public transportation within a half a mile of the finish and pushed through the crowd to get back on the course. She was also disqualified from the qualifying race she ran in New York where a spectator came forward to say she talked to her on the subway during the race. Although I am sure it felt good to “win” the race, her legacy stands in opposition to the strength and boldness of the women who came before her.

Just like with life and marathons, it really does us no good to cheat or cheapen our faith journeys. Each day we have the choice to jump in deeper, to live with boldness, and to find strength in Christ. When we choose to engage church as a way of entertainment, skip over the stories and lessons that we do not want to hear, and when we lose the daily call to serve God and neighbor, then we cheat ourselves out of the fullness of Christ in our lives. The Lenten season is another chance for us to make a choice. We are invited to go deeper; to read the Bible, pray, worship, serve others, give of ourselves, and share our faith with others. The truth is, we do not have to do any of those things, but when we do, we experience the Good News of God in new and meaningful ways. So, we ask ourselves, what will be our legacy of faith? Let us not cheapen our faith but instead boldly step forward, open to the wideness of God’s love and purpose on our hearts. As we continue to walk through Lent, I encourage us to engage together. Listen again to all of Christ’s journey. Do not omit the parts that are hard to hear, because it is in the full walk of Christ that we appreciate more the gift of Resurrection. With strength and connection, let us lean in and see again the goodness of God in Jesus Christ.

With love,
Pastor Dan





return to **IN-PERSON** worship

After much anticipation, prayer, and discernment we are glad to announce that we are ready to return to limited, in-person worship at the end of March. With the help of a strong crew of volunteers we will begin on March 28th, Palm Sunday, to welcome people back into the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings. We will continue on Easter Sunday with a few different worship offerings.

**March 28th -Palm Sunday In-Person and Online
Return to In-Person Worship (50 Person Capacity)**

**April 4th -Easter Sunday In-Person and Online
7:00am Sunrise Service (On the Front Lawn with Drive-In Radio Option)
9:00am (50 Person Capacity)
11:00am (50 Person Capacity)**

What to expect when we return:

The joy of being in worship together in the sanctuary, even if it is not the same as “usual”

Capacity of 50 persons per service

Registering for worship - online or over the phone as needed

Welcome Stations for masks, sanitizer, and check-ins

Continued use of masks during worship

Socially Distanced Seating by household

Greeters Directing Traffic before and after worship

Offering and Prayer Stations (not passed around)

Hymns, Scripture, and Prayers on the screen

Humming or singing to self with masks on throughout the service

Continued pause on fellowship hour

Emergency use of bathrooms only

Continued Drive-Thru Communion following the service

Individual Worship Bags for Children

Continued Pause on Children’s Grace Space

Limited Capacity in Cry Room

Continued Online Worship Opportunities for those not ready to be in-person



Youth Group - March and Beyond

Our 6th-12th graders continue to meet for Bible Study and Fun **each Sunday in Wesley Hall or on Zoom from 4:00-5:30pm**. ALL 6th-12th grade youth are invited to join us.

Youth Group Meetings for March:

March 7 – Echo 12 Session 8 God With Us

March 14 – Fun Day TBD (Open to suggestions from teens and parents)

March 21 – Echo 12 Session 9 Miracles of Jesus

March 28 – Easter Service Project and Fun Day

April 4 – Easter Sunday NO YOUTH GROUP.



Summer Camps

After taking a summer off during the height of the Pandemic, Lake Louise, United Methodist Camps, and Bay Shore Camp are all planning to welcome campers back to their facilities for summer 2021. Speaking as a Dean for Middle School Camp at Lake Louise, I can reassure you that we are using the most recent ACA (American Camp Association), CDC, and State of MI guidelines to ensure camp will be safe for staff and campers. My understanding is United Methodist Camps and Bay Shore Camp are also following the same guidelines. Lake Louise is planning a full summer of camping. I am working with my Middle School staff on how best to provide a Middle School Camp experience for campers while at the same time implementing safe camping measures. Camp brochures will be posted on the Youth Bulletin Board next to the Youth Room but all registrations are online. If you have questions regarding sending your child to camp this summer, please call, text, or email Rev. Alicea. Below are the websites for Camp Online Registration websites:

Lake Louise (Boyne Falls, MI) – Considering Camp
Page <https://lakelouisecommunity.org/camps/considering-camp/>

Lake Louise Early bird discounts deadline have been extended until March 15. There are other discounts available.

Bay Shore Camp - <https://www.bayshorecamp.org/>

United Methodist Camping – www.umcamping.org



Looking Ahead:

Summer Missions: We will not take a trip away this summer. Beginning in July, we will participate in “popcorn” service days in Mt. Clemens, Macomb County, and the greater Detroit area. If you have a suggestion for a day of service, talk with Rev. Alicea.

Financial Report

This will provide a report of our finances at year-end for 2020 and discuss our 2021 budget. Again, thank you for all of your incredible generosity.

2020

For 2020, our actual pledged envelope giving was \$250,895, which was more than \$12,000 above budget. Our non-pledged envelope giving was essentially at our budget of \$50,000. We had shortfalls in our income from MADD's use of the building, Christmas giving, Easter/Lent giving and loose plate giving. We had a significant shortfall of about \$15,000 in our fundraisers because we were not able to have the fish fries, the garage sale or other events. Our one-time gifts were \$16,380, which was \$6,380 over budget. Through the efforts of Pastor Dan, Harry and Wendy, we were able to obtain a federal pandemic loan for \$32,559 through TCF Chemical Bank.

The Trustees' expenses were approximately \$6,000 below budget. We also saved about \$10,000 in the Pastor's continuing education, travel and professional reimbursement budgeted funds. We also saved \$13,800 in reduced apportionments. We will, however, pay the reduced pension amount of \$9,900 because of our overall financial situation.

Overall, we ended 2020 in a much stronger position than we did in 2019. In 2019 we had a \$37,000 surplus; in 2020 we have a \$58,000 surplus, plus the loan of \$32,559.

2021

In 2021, we have pledges of \$233,529. We are budgeting, based on our past experience, \$45,000 for non-pledged envelope giving. We are putting \$20,000 into the budget from the 2020 Covid loan for salaries, because the purpose of the loan was to protect salaries. If the loan is forgiven, the other \$12,000 from the loan will be applied toward the mortgage.

We are budgeting a total income of \$322,579 for 2021, compared with a budgeted income of \$339,728 in 2020. In 2020, we budgeted expenses of \$365,865. In 2021, we are budgeting total expenses of \$364,013. We are increasing our apportionment payments 70%. We will have a budgeted shortfall of \$41,434 in 2021, compared with a budgeted shortfall of \$26,137 in 2020. We adopted a budget with a shortfall in 2019 because we had sufficient surplus to cover the budget, if necessary, and because we had so much momentum that we believed that there was a significant possibility that our giving would be more than budgeted, which did happen. Similarly, in 2021 we are adopting a budget with a shortfall with more than enough surplus to cover it, if necessary, and with optimism that we will be able to generate additional revenue as Covid conditions improve.

MINISTRY IN THE MAKING

In December 2014, we entered into a 15 year mortgage for \$698,437 with the United Methodist Union after several years of rollover mortgages where we paid only interest. In December 2015, the mortgage balance was \$647,521. In June 2016, we conducted the Ministry in the Making campaign with a goal of raising \$320,000 and paying off the mortgage by 2021. We have made lump-sum payments of \$178,639.40, with some pledges still outstanding. Our monthly interest payments have gone from about \$1,950 to less than \$800 per month. As of now, our mortgage balance is approximately \$244,369, a reduction of \$454,068 or about 65% in a little over five years. If we pay only the mortgage payment and no additional payments, the mortgage will be paid by December 2024, at the latest, a five-year reduction in the payment period. The balance as of December 31, 2021 will be approximately \$192,884. We will continue to monitor and address the mortgage. The annual cost is \$63,060, which is 18.5% of our 2021 budget. It will be a significant event to have that paid and to be able to utilize that money to do the things that truly make a church a church.

ENDOWMENT FUND

We have an endowment fund that was created for the purpose of capital improvements to and the maintenance of the Church properties. The endowment fund provides interest revenue annually to the Trustees for their expenses. It is also used for maintenance and repairs. In 2020, we used money from the Endowment Fund for the awnings, a new computer system and security cameras. Even so, the balance as of December 31, 2020 was \$445,314.26, compared to \$418,848.76 as of December 31, 2019.

In short, despite the pandemic, our overall financial situation improved in 2020, and we are optimistic that it will continue to do so.

Thank you, again for your extreme generosity.

Tim Howlett
Finance Chair

Notes from your Leadership Committee

The Leadership Committee met on January 19, 2021 via zoom:

Chairperson Report:

- Future dates for the Leadership Committee will be called quarterly with additional meetings called on an as needed basis.
- The Committee welcomed Bethany Gimm, as Co-Chair of the Pastor Parish Committee to the Leadership Committee.

Finance:

- The 2021 Budget was submitted and approved by the Committee.
- The 2021 Budget changes from 2020 included:
 - Apportionments increased from 65% to 70%.
 - Rev. Alicea's salary was approved and included (prior to this budget year an anonymous donor had provided funds)
 - Each staff member was awarded an increase in pay.
- The mortgage will be paid off at the end of 2024 with normal payments—thus eliminating 5 years from the initial mortgage amount.
- Future article and information will be forthcoming from the Finance Committee.

Pastor/Parish:

- Pastor Parish will be continuing to consider a full time Music Director. It was suggested that a subcommittee be formed to identify the required duties and qualifications.
Additional information forthcoming.

Trustee:

- The Trustees Committee announced that the alarm system has been upgraded to a digital system.
- The awnings have been installed
- The roof has some issues but is expected to hold for 2-5 years before total replacement is required.
- The lift to the Fellowship Hall has been fixed.
- Snow removal budget has been reduced.

Pastoral Report:

- Pastor Dan expressed his appreciation to those who kept the church running smoothly during his Paternity Leave.
- A Lenten study is being prepared along with a membership class.
- The Re-Opening Taskforce continues to meet.
- The January drive-thru communion had 45 participants and a good core of individuals are watching services online.

Deacon Report:

- Rev. Alicea presented a virtual presentation of the children's/youth ministry that has been ongoing. There are currently 27 children in 20 households involved.
- The Youth Group continues to meet online and in person.
- 3,125 cans and bottles were collected and 2 car loads of food was delivered to Father Bob's Food Pantry from the Reverse Advent calendar project.

The next meeting will be in March, with date to be announced.

Your Leadership Team



Steven Kinic	03/02
Hayden Maertens	03/02
Gail Spaeth	03/04
Kathleen Oakley	03/05
Breanne Tchakerian	03/05
Kelsey Bridson	03/07
Emmett Pascoe	03/09
Tim Duggan	03/13
John Bober	03/14
Jessica Dumas	03/14
Joe Beaudette	03/16
Robert Chamberlin	03/16
Donald Clay	03/16
Eric Munn	03/20
Alex Zdravkovski	03/21
Karen Zdravkovski	03/22
Gladys Wiggins	03/23
Loretta Ballard	03/24
Jeff Beebe	03/24
Juliana Solomon	03/24
Nicholas Dumas	03/26
Michael Elkins	03/28
Mary Ellen Presley	03/28
Judy Buchanan	03/29
Bonnie McCormick	03/30



Larry & Judith Alger	03/14
Jason & Melissa Machalak	03/19
Joe & Jo Beaudette	03/21
Bill & Jeri Wiza	03/24
Ronald & Jamie Brownlee	03/29



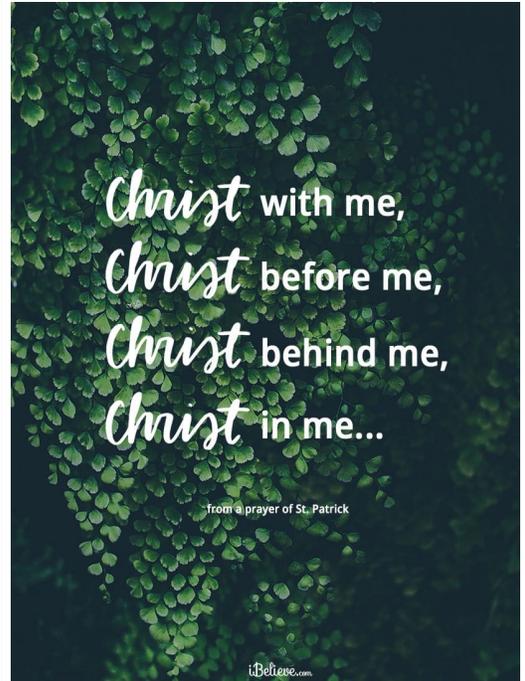
an IRISH prayer

you've blessed me
with friends
and laughter and fun,
with rain that's as soft
as light from the sun.
you've blessed me with stars
to BRIGHTEN each night;
you've given me help
to know WRONG from RIGHT.

you've given me so much,
please, lord, give me too,
a heart that is always
grateful to you.



The book club will meet **March 9th at 10:00 in the Nursery** to discuss *The Hamilton Affair*, by Elizabeth Cobb.



Our Thoughts and Prayers are with...

Our Church Family

Jessica Evans, Linda Johnston, Joyce Wells, Judy Alger, Nancy Donahue, Jamie Brownlee

Grieving

Carl Cendrowski

Our Friends and Family

Harry and Norma Kosmala's great granddaughter, Eva; Karen Rothenhauser, Rev. Donna Minarik, Dajuan Sims, Bruce Robbins, Kelsey Bridson, Jeri Wiza's mother, Betty

Our Homebound

Jo & Joe Beaudette, Marilyn Jean Borow, Shirley Champion, Irene Cloud, Karen Loos, Gerald & Barbara Pagett, Fred Thielk, Rosalie Tinkham, Patsy Weagel, Gladys Wiggins

Those Serving in the Armed Forces

Scott Bean, Adam Donahue, Brian Hill, Steven C. Kelly, Tami Morgan, Rande Phan

College Students

Brianna Akers, Emily Beebe, Hannah Berg, Annica Brocker, Nathan Buchanan, Nicholas Buchanan
Nathan Clifton, Joshua Collins, Hannah Dion, Jessica Evans, Alison Haskell, Kyle Hill, Nina Hill,
Jackson Kelly, Justin Keppler, Ashley Krynski, Claire Manning, Jack Nielsen, Nick Nielsen,
Jordan Olszewski, Sydney Olszewski, Mitchell Salisbury, Kyle Sieben, Amy Beth Simon

Contact Information

2021 First UMC Leadership Team

Linda McLatcher: Chair
Tim Howlett: Finance Chair
Harry Kosmala: Business Manager
Lois Hill: Pastor Parish Chair
Bethany Gimm: Pastor Parish Co-Chair
Tom Baber: Chair of Trustees
Justine Olszewski: Co-Chair of Trustees
Linda L. Johnston: Lay Leader
Lois Hill: Lay Member to Annual Conference
Linda Strait: Secretary
Rev. Dan Hart: Pastor
Rev. Alicea Williams: Children and Youth Ministry



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