

The Clarion

February 2023

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

2In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.3Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 2:2-3 NRSV

Dearly Beloved,

I have heard the journey of faith described as walking up a mountain. Each person walking the path will experience parts of the path before them, often finding parts of the trail are heavily worn from many footsteps before, and parts of the trail that are washed out and hard to follow. We walk the path aiming for the summit, but occasionally being sidetracked, wandering, or distracted, sometimes feeling like it is a long way up. We sojourn in places of excitement, doubt, assurance, and questions. We see others on the path who are walking slower and faster, and some whom we share a section of the journey with in supportive and meaningful ways. The path is winding, and sometimes it can feel freeing, isolating, life-giving, and unsure at different moments.

The thing we often mistake is that we mostly assume others are on our same path. We assume that there is a right and wrong way to journey. We see others nearing the summit and wonder how they tracked through the rocky road we see ahead. The truth is, there are no mountains with only one trail. When we are walking our path, we can't see the endless number of other paths on the mountain, other trails that are being traversed. We don't always think about the people journeying on another side of the mountain. They may be seeking the same end-goal, but we must admit there is no one-path-fits-all way to make it to where we want to go. Faith does not, and has not ever, worked that way. One Triune God, but many different journeys. While we are encouraged to bolster up one another on the way, I cannot know each guardrail that upheld you or broken trail along your way.

Sometimes it is easy to feel like our path doesn't fit others, or that we are doing it wrong. I think the greatest comfort and reminder of God's love, grace, and purpose for our lives, is the Bible. It is the Bible, and the people that God teaches us through, that remind us that if we continue to seek God, our faith journey, step by step, helps us to grow into who God created us to be. Somebody who is loved, loving, and thankful for the journey.

Throughout our Lenten season our sermon series will focus on the journey of faith. We will be exploring the stories of different Biblical characters who represent different places of faith and following God. We will hear from new believers who speak with passion for their encounter with a living God, and we will talk about Jesus and how his closest friends and followers were filled with doubt. We will talk about moments in our lives when we feel stretched and tested, and learn from some of our Biblical heroes who broke the expectations of their roles. For every time we feel all alone, or every time we wonder what God intends for us, we can turn back to all the people that God choose to carry the message of faith.

As we navigate the mountain, let us not lose sight of the reason we climb. Our lives are still being revealed. God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are breathing life into our lungs, strengthening each step. No matter where you are on the journey, God is with you. Keep your footing, there is beauty ahead.

With Love,
Pastor Dan



Youth Group and Children's Ministry



Summer Missions

This summer, **June 18-24**, we will return to Newberry, Michigan to share God's love in the Upper Peninsula with God's Country Cooperative Parish. This event is for all youth grades 6th-12th and all adults. The week will be filled with fun, laughter, hard work, and exploring the U.P. If you are interested in going on the mission trip this summer, see Rev. Alicea.



Summer Camp

Summer Camp registration is open for all United Methodist Camps. If you would like more information about going to camp this summer, please see Rev. Alicea. Camperships are available. Camping is fun! Camping is meeting and making new friends! Camping changes lives. Here are the websites for exploring the many opportunities to camp this summer:

www.lakelouisecommunity.org

www.bayshorecamp.org

www.umcamping.org



Families with Children Events

Our next Family Event is Favorite Game Day! Join us at church in Wesley Hall, **February 4th, beginning at 3:30** for a fun afternoon of games. Bring your favorite game to share with us and maybe learn a new game. Pizza arrives at 5:00 to round out the afternoon. Come when you can and leave when you must we will play until 6:00! See you soon!

The 345 Club

5 students and 3 adults met on January 22 to play Laser Tag! Lots of fun! All 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders are automatically members of our 345 Club. Friends are always welcome! Our next event is **Sunday, April 30**. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for details.



Children's Ministry Team

We are forming a Children's Ministry Team that will meet on a regular basis (according to and dependent on team members schedule) to meet the needs of our expanding Children's Ministry. If you are interested in helping to plan, organize, lead, generate ideas, or help in any other way, please contact Rev. Alicea.

Lenten Study – A Way Other Than Our Own by Walter Brueggemann

The Lenten season is a time for us to grow spiritually and remember the journey of Jesus to the cross. I have always felt like Lent is the perfect time for us to stretch our theological wings, ask questions that help us grow in faith, and open ourselves to the movement of God within our lives. This Lenten season I am inviting you to explore a voice that may be different than you have heard before. Walter Brueggemann is a retired Old Testament professor from Columbia Theological Seminary and is one of the most respected, and occasionally challenging, voices in religious writing today. Throughout Lent I am inviting you to read along with me through Walter Brueggemann's daily Lenten devotional, "A Way Other Than Our Own." This devotional gives us a daily devotional each day from Ash Wednesday through Easter. Brueggemann's words are often challenging, asking us to consider power, peace, and what it really means to follow Christ.

On **Tuesdays at 2:00pm from February 28th- April 4th** we will explore the previous week of devotions and talk about any questions, inspirations, or disagreements we have with the devotions. I will have some prepared questions, but feel free to bring any additional thoughts to our meeting. We will meet in the youth lounge and will also have zoom available for anybody who wants to join online.

If you are interested in joining, there will be a sign-up sheet available **February 12th**. If you are interested in the devotional, but not the class, please let us know in the office. **Books are \$10 and will be available in the office.**

I hope that this season of Lent will be a gift to you in your faith journey. I hope this devotional aids us all in that journey.

-Pastor Dan

Ready, Set, Go to the Annual First UMC Friday Fish Fries!!

*Fish & Chips or Baked Fish
Potato, Vegetable, Mac & Cheese,
Coleslaw, Roll & Dessert
Ticket Prices \$12, Kids 6-12 are \$5
Kids 5 & Under are Free*

*Please mark your calendar for February 24th, March 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st and
April 7th. Sign up sheets are on the window in Wesley Hall.*

*Looking forward to seeing you on those dates. We need all the workers we can get.
Tickets will be on sale soon. Thank You ALL! Sue Tregembo*





February Series – Neighborly

For the first three Sundays of February (until the beginning of Lent) we are going to be talking about what it means to be a good neighbor. We will talk about the Biblical foundation of being a good neighbor and what that means for us, will tackle some of the common difficulties we find in being a good neighbor, and we will talk about the difference between us being a good neighbor in our personal life and being a good neighbor as a church. As we prepare for this series, feel free to get ahead of the curve. Start showing Christlike love to your neighbors today!



Join us for our
Ash Wednesday service
as we enter into Lent
together. The worship
service is **Wednesday,**
February 22nd,
beginning at
7:00 pm.

This service marks the beginning of Lent; a six week time of reflection, confession, repentance, and forgiveness as we prepare for the Hallelujah of Easter and the promise of hope and resurrection. Come and enter Lent in a right spirit being marked with forgiveness and grace.



Women With Faith will meet **February 20th at 1:00 p.m** in the Wesley Hall. Rev. Alicea will give us a program on church calendar year.



For the quarter ending 12/31/2022 the Endowment Fund generated \$2,160.67 for the Trustees to use for building maintenance and improvements. The total income for the year 2022 was \$9,153.46. The value of the Fund on 12/31/2022 was \$402,897.16.

Ken Fowler



FINANCIAL REPORT

This will provide a report of our finances at year-end for 2022 and discuss our 2023 budget. Again, thank you for all of your incredible generosity.

2022

For 2022, our actual pledged envelope giving was \$217,143, which was about \$9,000 under budget. Our non-pledged envelope giving was about \$90,000, which was about \$20,000 over budget. Christmas giving, Easter/Lent giving and loose plate giving were collectively about \$3,000 below budget. Our fundraising revenues were over budget. Our one-time gifts were \$22,697, which was \$12,697 over budget. Our miscellaneous gifts were about \$10,800 under budget. Overall, our revenues were about \$16,000 above budget.

The Trustees' expenses were approximately \$3,300 above budget, primarily because of increased insurance and utility costs. Our salary and benefit costs were about \$3,000 below budget. Our total expenses were about \$2,000 below budget. We also paid our apportionment at 75%, the highest rate in several years.

We budgeted a shortfall of \$30,641 in 2022 knowing we had surplus from 2021 to cover any shortfall. Our actual shortfall in 2022, between expenses and revenues, was \$14,434. Overall, we ended 2022 with a surplus of approximately \$47,600.

2023

In 2023, we have pledges of \$235,332, which includes some pledges from previous non-pledge faithful givers. We are budgeting, based on our past experience, \$70,000 for non-pledged envelope giving. We are also budgeting \$12,000 for fundraisers.

We are budgeting a total income of \$349,507 for 2023, compared with a budgeted income of \$342,078 in 2022 and an actual 2022 income of \$358,079. In 2022, we budgeted expenses of \$372,719 and had actual expenses of \$370,814. In 2023, we are budgeting total expenses of \$387,578. This includes 4% pay increases for the pastors and all staff and increasing our apportionment payments to 80%. We will have a budgeted shortfall of \$38,071 in 2023, compared with a budgeted shortfall of \$30,641 in 2022 and \$41,434 in 2021. We adopted a budget with a shortfall in 2021 and 2022 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 in both years. Similarly, in 2023 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 we continue to grow.

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 \$241,685, with some pledges still outstanding. Our monthly interest payments have gone from about \$1,950 to less than \$200 per month later in 2023. As of now, our mortgage balance is approximately \$69,000, a reduction of \$629,437 or about 90% in a little over eight years. If we pay only the mortgage payment and no additional payments, the mortgage will be paid by January 2024, at the latest, almost a six-year reduction in the payment period. We hope to have the mortgage paid sometime in 2023. The monthly mortgage payment is \$5,255, so paying it early will result in real savings in the budget. The annual cost is \$63,060, which is 17% of our 2023 budget. We will continue to monitor and address the mortgage and to accept contributions.

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. The balance as of December 31, 2022 was \$402,897.

In short, our overall financial situation improved again in 2022, and we are optimistic that it will continue to do so.

Thank you, again for your extreme generosity.

Tim Howlett
Finance Chair

Joys to Share



February Birthdays

Janet Wilden	02/01
Jo Beaudette	02/02
Morgan Wiza	02/04
Hunter Berg	02/05
Jocelyn Prevost	02/05
Stella Wilden	02/06
Shelby Alger	02/07
Ben Oakley	02/07
Kim Rueger-West	02/09
Sandy Baber	02/10
Karen Harris	02/10
William-Cliff Tinkham	02/11
Jamie Brownlee	02/12
Julie Strayer	02/15
Jo Fowler	02/18
Carolyn Merlo	02/18
Jean Lakin	02/19
Kitty Kinic	02/22
Paul Tregembo	02/22
Caleb Parker	02/24
Alma Chisnell	02/26
Suzan Littlejohn	02/28



February Anniversaries

Thomas & Judy Northrop	02/03
Derald & Patricia Van Camp	02/07
Deborah & Jacques Tchakerian	02/10
Paul & Suzanne Tregembo	02/19
Brandon & Ashley Gawthrop	02/23



Dear Friends,
 Thank you very much for your generous gift at the end of the year. It was a full year indeed, seeing the return of our Children's Christmas Play and the beginning of the Genesis Bells. I am humbled each week by the joy and enthusiasm in our children and youth and by your commitment to lovingly care for them. Thank you for the past 5 years of ministry at First UMC. I am looking forward to the next 5.
 Peace,
 Rev. Alicea

To My Church Family,
 Thank you all for the many cards and prayers during my recent surgery and recovery. I really appreciate your thoughtfulness and look forward to being back to church in person. As I always say "I love my church". Thanks again.
 Linda McLatcher



Dear church family,
 Thank you very much for all of the prayers and cards in the passing of my brother and recent foot surgery. I appreciate you all so much.
 Sue Tregembo

Thank you to all who have helped restock our "Blessing Box" by participating in the "Reverse Advent" mission project. We received many wonderful items that will benefit the needy/homeless of our community. Your generosity is truly appreciated!

Thank you to the quilters for my beautiful 90th Birthday quilt. It brings back great memories of our trips to Hawaii and Michigan.
 Ken Fowler

Beloved Church,
 On behalf of the staff, I would like to thank everybody for the contributions made to the staff Christmas gifts. Your generosity makes a wonderful difference for our staff, and receiving these gifts makes a difference for our families. We feel the love of the church each and every day, and this is yet another way that our staff feels honored and valued by this church. Thank you, and know we feel so blessed to serve this church in ministry alongside you.
 -Pastor Dan and FUMC Staff



Our Thoughts and Prayers are with...

Our Church Family

Tom Hill, Rev. Alicea Williams, JoyAnn Wells-Flanigan, Linda McLatcher, Makayla Landrum, Dee Jay Whittam, Elaine Walton

Grieving

Irene Cloud, Thomas Luckey, Doug West

Our Friends and Family

Donna and Darrell Miller's sister-in-law, Reggie. Dawn Meredith's mother, Vivian; Marty & Marsha Lynch's nephew, Jack; Rev. Alicea's cousin's husband, Blake

Our Homebound

Jo & Joe Beaudette, Herb & JoAnn Brush, Marilyn Jean Borow, Shirley French, Barbara Knuth, Suzan Littlejohn, Karen Loos, Carolyn Merlo, Marilyn Nielsen, Barbara Pagett, Kay Sommers, Ruth Swistock, Fred Thielk, Del Thomas, Linda Tinkham

Those Serving in the Armed Forces

Scott Bean, Cory Berg, Hannah Dion, Matthew Juras, Tami Morgan, Brendan Price

College Students

Brianna Akers, Emily Beebe, Aniella Bowman, Nathan Buchanan, Nicholas Buchanan, Kobe Champion, Maria Chesnutt, Nathan Clifton, Katie Crossman, Jack Eckert, Jessica Evans, Alison Haskell, Danny Haskell, Kyle Hill, Aaron Hudock, Jackson Kelly, Justin Keppler, Megan Kosmala, Ashley Krynski, Emily Longstreth, Colin McCallister, Claire Manning, Jack Nielsen, Gabrielle Olszewski, Bailey Price, Mitchell Salisbury, Sarah Salisbury, Rachel Shier, Kyle Sieben, Jake Williams, Alex Zdravkovski

Contact Information

2023 ***First UMC*** ***Leadership Team***



57 Southbound Gratiot Avenue
Mount Clemens, MI 48043
Church Phone: 586.468.6464
www.mountclemensumc.org

Chair: Warren Minarik
Vice-Chair: Terri Brown
Finance: Tim Howlett
Lay Leader: Sydney Olszewski
Secretary: Keith Rosso
Staff Parish Relations: Lois Hill
Trustees Chair: Justine Olszewski
Member at Large: Sheila Strunk
Member at Large: Kim Rueger-West
Clergy: Rev. Alicea Williams, Rev. Dan Hart

Senior Pastor, Reverend Dan Hart
Email: pastordan@mountclemensumc.org
Deacon, Reverend Alicea Williams
Email: alwharpist30@gmail.com
Office Manager, Wendy Jones
Email: office@mountclemensumc.org