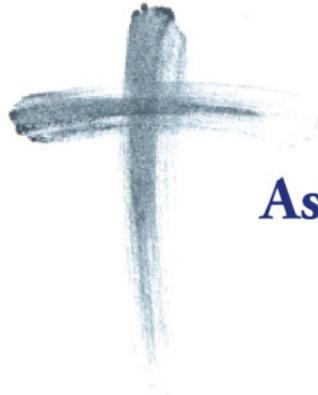


SPIRE Newsletter



February 2021



Ash Wednesday
— Lent Begins

[View MUMC Online Calendar](#)

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

- Feb. 1: Family Promise meal service
- Feb. 1: Outreach Auction begins
- Feb. 1: knitting kits arrive
- Feb. 3: Women's monthly prayer meeting
- Feb. 4: Men's monthly prayer meeting
- Feb. 11: Reflections book group meets
- Feb. 17: Upper Room Morning Devotion during Lent begins
- Feb. 18: morning session of Lenten group study begins
- Feb. 21: Lent wreath assembly
- Feb. 23: evening session of Lenten group study begins

WORSHIP SERMON SPOTLIGHT

- Feb. 7: Philippians 2:14-18, Do everything without grumbling
- Feb. 14: Philippians 3:1-11, The priceless value of knowing Christ
- Feb. 17: Ash Wednesday service 7 pm
- Feb. 21: Philippians 3:12-21, How to

Outreach Auction 2021

Most all of 2020 and the start of 2021 have been challenging times for all of us because of COVID-19, and we have had to embrace new and different ways of practicing our Christian faith. Our annual Outreach Auction, usually a lively in-person evening of faith, family, and fun, will be new and different this year, as well. The Outreach Committee is asking for your donations to support our many charities, which include Northcott Neighborhood House, Family Promise, Family Sharing, COPE, St. Vincent de Paul, Repairers of the Breach, Pathfinders, Youth Mission Trips, Dominican Republic Missionaries, and many, many more.

Please donate what you can **during the month of February** either on the church's website or by mailing a check to MUMC, with the notation

measure your success?

Feb. 28: Children's service

WORSHIP MUSIC

Feb. 7: Some Sanctuary Choir members

Feb. 14: Some Women's Choir members

Feb. 21: Rick & Michelle Hynson

Feb. 28: Children!

"outreach auction".

The Outreach Committee is truly grateful for your participation in this year's Outreach Auction.

Katie Jackson

Outreach Committee Chair

Lent 101 by Rev. Penny Ford

WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a season of the Christian year where Christians focus on simple living, prayer, and fasting in order to grow closer to God. At Jesus' baptism the sky split open, the Spirit of God, which looked like a dove, descended and landed on Jesus, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, My Beloved, with whom I am pleased." Afterward, as told in Matthew 4:1-11, the Spirit sent Jesus into the wilderness, where he fasted and prayed for 40 days. During his time there he was tempted by Satan and found clarity and strength to resist temptation. Afterward, he was ready to begin his ministry. Maybe Jesus needed some time with God to sort through the major changes happening in his life. Maybe he needed to get away from family, friends and the familiar routine in order to see God (and himself) more clearly. Perhaps he wanted some intentional time with God as he searched for direction and answers. Like Jesus, we may need to take some serious time to pray and listen for God.

WHEN IS LENT?

It's the 40 days before Easter. Lent excludes Sundays because every Sunday is like a little Easter. Basically, it's about one-tenth of a year (like a tithe of time).

WHY ASHES?

In Jewish and Christian history, ashes are a sign of mortality and repentance. Mortality, because when we die, our bodies eventually decompose and we become dust/dirt/ash/whatever. Repentance, because long ago, when people felt remorse for something they did, they would put ashes on their head and wear "sackcloth" (scratchy clothing) to remind them that sin is pretty uncomfortable and leads to a sort of death of the spirit. This was their way of confessing their sins and asking for forgiveness.

WHAT DO CHRISTIANS DO WITH ASHES?

At an Ash Wednesday service, people are invited to come forward to receive the ashes. The minister will make a small cross on your forehead by smudging the ashes. While the ashes remind us of our mortality and sin, the cross reminds us of Jesus' resurrection (life after death) and forgiveness. It's a powerful, nonverbal way that we can experience God's forgiveness and renewal as we return to Jesus.

TOP TEN THINGS YOU CAN TRY FOR THE LENTEN SEASON:

10. Try an electronic fast. Give up TV, Facebook, texting, tweeting, email, and all things electronic for one day every week. (Or every day of Lent!) Use the time to read and pray.

9. Start a prayer rhythm. Each day of Lent, go to The Upper Room's prayer wall and pray for another person.

8. Go deeper. Take an online course as a part of your Lenten discipline.
7. Forgive someone who doesn't deserve it (maybe even yourself).
6. Give up soft drinks, fast food, tea, or coffee. Give the money you save to help folks in a different part of the world who are in crisis.
5. Create a daily quiet time. See how it can help you add spiritual practice to your daily life beyond Lent.
4. Cultivate a life of gratitude. Write someone a thank-you letter each week, and be aware of how many people have helped you along the way.
3. Spend time in visual meditation and prayer.
2. Volunteer one hour or more each week with a local shelter, tutoring program, nursing home or prison ministry.
1. Pray for others you see as you walk to and from classes or drive to and from work.

The Rev. Penny Ford is senior pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. This article originally appeared on UpperRoom.org and is used by permission of The Upper Room.

From the Pastor

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, February 17, this year. You may ask, "Why do I need Lent?" Let me quote what the Rev. Penny Ford said. She is the senior pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. "Are you searching for something more? Tired of running in circles, but not really living life with direction, purpose or passion? It's pretty easy to get caught up in the drama of classes, relationships, family, and work. Our lives are filled with distractions that take us away from living a life with Christ. We try to fill the emptiness inside us with mindless TV, meaningless chatter, stimulants, alcohol, too many activities, or other irrelevant stuff. We run away from life and from God. Lent is a great time to repent — to return to God and refocus our lives to be more in line with Jesus. It's a 40-day trial run in changing your lifestyle and letting God change your heart."

I believe what she said reflects our lives in many ways, and we have room for improvement "to return to God and refocus our lives to be more in line with Jesus." So I invite all MUMC members to participate in the **Special Services**, shown below, and at least one of the **Lent Activities**, also shown below, during Lent 2021 to grow in faith together in Christ.

Special Services

February 17: Ash Wednesday Service at 7 pm

March 28: Palm Sunday Service at 9:30 am

April 1: Maundy Thursday Service at 7 pm

April 2: Good Friday Service at 7 pm

April 4: Easter Sunday Service at 9:30 am

Lent Activities

Growth Group Studies: Tuesdays at 7 pm and Thursdays at 11 am, February 18 – March 30; for details, please see **All Church Lenten Growth Group Study** below.

Daily Breakthrough Prayers: MUMC Breakthrough Prayer Team will provide prayers for your daily prayer time this Lent and beyond. Stay tuned!

Upper Room Morning Devotion: Monday–Friday (February 17 – April 2) at 7 am; for details, please see **33-Day Upper Room Morning Devotion During Lent** below.

Lent Wreath; for details, please see **Children's Ministry** article.

Have a blessed Lent 2021!
Pastor Sue Lee

All Church Lenten Growth Group Study

The Education Team will offer a great Lenten study titled “If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat”, authored by John Ortberg, for all MUMC members to participate.

In this DVD study, John Ortberg invites you to consider the incredible potential that awaits you outside your comfort zone. Out on the risky water of faith, Jesus is waiting to meet you in ways that will change you forever, deepening your character and your trust in God. The experience is terrifying. It’s thrilling beyond belief. It’s everything you’d expect of someone worthy to be called Lord. The choice is yours to know him as only a water-walker can, aligning yourself with God’s purpose for your life in the process. There is just one requirement: If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat.

It is a six-week study, offered twice each session, Thursday mornings at 11 am and Tuesday evenings at 7 pm. The first sessions will be Thursday, February 18 and Tuesday, February 23. Each session will last one hour. No reading preparation is required to participate in this study. Just come as you are and enjoy the DVD presentation, discussion, and fellowship! We will be doing the study via Zoom. Please contact Pastor Sue to receive a Zoom invitation.

33-Day Upper Room Morning Devotion during Lent

During the journey to Easter this year, from February 17– April 2, Monday–Friday, at 7 – 7:30 am, if you are interested in starting your day with a devotion from the Upper Room, reflection on it, and prayer with fellow Christians, contact Pastor Sue so that she can send you a Zoom invitation.

Children's Ministry

Lent Wreath

Lent is just around the corner. Ash Wednesday is February 17. Children’s Ministry would like to invite the entire congregation to join in the making of a Lent Wreath for your family. It will be a wonderful way to count down the Sundays until Easter in your home.

Unlike Advent wreaths where a new candle is lit each week and the light slowly gets brighter, during Lent each week the light gets progressively darker, until there is complete darkness on Good Friday. On Easter Sunday all of the candles are lit as we celebrate the best news ever that He has Risen!



The Lent Wreath Kits will be preassembled with instructions. You have the option of picking it up at church or having it delivered to your home. We will hold a Zoom gathering on the First Sunday of Lent, February 21 at 3 pm, to put the wreath together so it is ready for devotions before dinner. The wreath can also be assembled alone for those who would prefer that.

Join in the Lent Wreath activity by emailing childrensmin@mequonumc.org or calling Gayle at 414-840-2141 to let her know what delivery method you prefer.

Children's Lent Daily Devotion and Activity

The MUMC children will be marking the 40 days until Easter with a daily Bible reading and a Lamb countdown activity. They would like to share that fun with other children. If you know any child who would have fun counting down the days of Lent in their home, please contact childrensmin@mequonumc.org or call Gayle at 414-840-2141. The activity can be dropped off or mailed. We want to share the joy that He has Risen!

Important News from the Finance Committee

Dear Members of Mequon United Methodist Church,

During 2020, a year of profound uncertainty, the trustees and members of the finance team worked to secure several grants. The largest was worth \$41,500. This grant bought us time, allowing us to retain all employees at full pay for the entire year. Hourly employees held down the fort, working at home and in the office. However, payroll costs currently represent 2/3 of our operating budget and far exceed the benchmarks for peer churches. In comparison, our expenditures are more appropriate for a congregation twice our size. Further, the ages of our youth are skewed like a barbell, with our last two high schoolers departing for college in the Fall. To that end, members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) interviewed each staff member, matching positions to program needs and members served. Two difficult decisions were made: one was to eliminate the Youth Choir Director position effective December 31, 2020 and the second was to suspend the Youth Director position effective August 31, 2021 until we have high school youth in church again.

Over the last decade or so, the changing demographics of the church have presented the Finance Committee with a vexing challenge. We have lost numerous long-term members to retirement relocations, to illness and death. These member's total contributions covered upwards of 1/3 of our operating expenses. However, the size of our building and grounds and staffing remained the same. Conference apportionments, which are based partially on membership rolls and to a much greater degree on church expenses, often exceeded our means. While many members have raised their pledges and we have gained several new members, we have not been able to make up the financial shortfall.

The following were SPRC recommendations, which were vetted and approved by unanimous votes of the Finance Committee and Administrative Council in December 2020. In 2021, hourly employees will work a budgeted number of hours, but the position of Nursey Care Provider has been suspended until full services resume. Until full in-person services resume, salaried employees will work at a reduced rate. Finally, until more middle and high school age students join our church family, youth ministry and youth choir positions will also be suspended and filled by volunteers during a (hopefully short) period of growth. We ask for your compassion and support for Ellen Shuler, Patrick Curran, and Jenna Burns who will be most affected by these changes.

With the 2021 budget in place, our goal is to pay a minimum of 75% of our apportionment this year. Within three years, with growth achieved from personal

invitations, church initiatives, and programming, we plan to be in line with peer benchmarks, fully match staffing to our people and programming needs, and to pay our apportionments in full. In the meantime, we hope our members will commit to giving their best gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

To be sure, the Mequon United Methodist Church has much to be thankful for. We have a solid balance sheet and our dedicated accounts, the safety net for our church programming, are robust. Church expenses, which are 1/3 of our operating budget, are monitored closely and then reduced by 25% due to our cost sharing partnership with the YMCA. The Capital Campaign reserves have minimized the impact of improvements, repairs, and maintenance. Finally, new initiatives and programming have had a positive impact on membership. Post COVID-19, we look forward to new opportunities for growth with outreach activities, summer camps, and tailored programming.

Thank you all for your generosity and support. We are all in this together and we want to be as transparent as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Pastor Sue, Mike Debbink, or Karen Huffman directly.

Kind regards,
The Finance Committee

Mequon United Methodist Church Membership Covenant

“As members of this congregation, will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?”
(Baptismal Covenant, UMH 38, paragraph 15)

As a member of Mequon United Methodist Church,

- **Prayers:** I will set aside a time daily for devotions and prayer. I will pray for my church, its ministry, and church leaders.
- **Presence:** I will strive to attend weekly worship services and growth group studies to grow in faith.
- **Gifts:** I will honor God by giving my income with the goal of tithing.
- **Service:** I will give my talents and service to make God’s love real to others in my church and beyond church walls.
- **Witness:** I will be a unifying church member by acting with love toward other members, by engaging my conversations about my church in a positive way, and by inviting those who don’t have their church home to my church.

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With God’s help, I commit myself to follow Jesus Christ as I faithfully participate in the ministries of Mequon United Methodist Church by my prayers, my presence, my gifts, my service, and my witness.

Announcements

Mark Your Calendar with Family Promise Dates for 2021. Although we are still unable to host Family Promise families at the church, MUMC will be serving a meal to the families at the Chalet Motel on the Monday of each of our scheduled Family

Promise Weeks. The dates we are scheduled to provide meals are February 1, April 5, and June 7. Pam Layton will send requests for food prior to each date.

Great Knitting News! MUMC was awarded a grant from the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation for our knitting ministry. This innovative ministry includes knitters from our own congregation and from Newcastle Place, many of whom are still in lock down for safety. What a great way to use this time to help others. This ministry gives hand knit prayer shawls, hats, mittens, and scarves to members of our congregation as well as Family Promise participants.

Yarn has been purchased and kits made. They will be delivered to MUMC and Newcastle Place on Monday, February 1. Please find a kit you'd like to knit and bring back the finished product in the original bag. If you have questions, contact Marie Widder at mwidd@wi.rr.com or call her at 262-751-1052.

We are spreading our love ministry in so many ways!

Our ministry continues! MUMC needs you more than ever! Please consider making your donation online. It's simple, safe and secure, and will maintain our church and keep it ready for your return. Simply go to our church website, www.mequonumc.org, click on the words DONATE ONLINE NOW! and follow the prompts.

Questions? Contact Karen Huffman, Treasurer, at 262-957-6273, or our Accountant Laurie Rausch at finance@mequonumc.org.

February Prayer Meetings on Zoom

The women's monthly prayer meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 3 at 7:30 am, and the men's monthly prayer meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 4 at 7 am will be held on Zoom. Please let Pastor Sue know if you would like to participate, and she will send you the link.

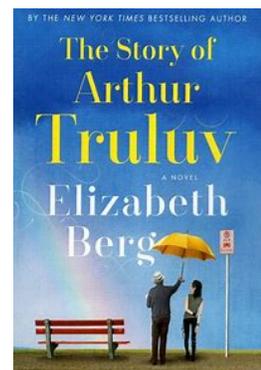
The musicians who provide our Sunday music are gathering in small, masked groups to record music for our worship services. As you see in the Sunday morning videos, they are also observing social distancing. Yes, this is challenging, but well worth it! A big "thank you" to all who are participating!

Reflections Book Group

The Reflections Book Group will meet Thursday, February 11 at 7 pm on Zoom. Our February discussion book is *The Story of Arthur Truluv* by Elizabeth Berg.

From amazon.com...*For the past six months, Arthur Moses's days have looked the same: He tends to his rose garden and to Gordon, his cat, then rides the bus to the cemetery to visit his beloved late wife for lunch. The last thing Arthur would imagine is for one unlikely encounter to utterly transform his life.*

Eighteen-year-old Maddy Harris is an introspective girl who visits the cemetery to escape the other kids at school. One afternoon she joins Arthur—a gesture that begins a surprising friendship between two lonely souls. Moved by Arthur's kindness and devotion, Maddy gives him the nickname "Truluv." As Arthur's neighbor Lucille moves into their orbit, the unlikely trio band together and, through heartache and hardships, help one another rediscover their own



potential to start anew.

Reflections is a women's book group that meets monthly for discussion and fellowship. New women are always welcome. Contact Barb Henneck at bhenneck@wi.rr.com to learn about the group or to request a Zoom invitation to the February meeting.

Looking ahead. . . our March discussion book will be *An Unwanted Guest*, by Shari Lapena.

Outreach Committee Updates

Pathfinders

News from the Mission Outreach Committee sharing a letter received from Pathfinders of Milwaukee to let you know how much your kindness is appreciated:

December 28, 2020
Mequon United Methodist Church
Karen Stern & Susan Yorio
11011 N Oriole Ln
Mequon WI 53092

Dear Karen & Susan,
Thank you for your recent gift of a vehicle full of holiday gifts for our youth. Your donation in support of Pathfinders' mission – empowering youth, changing lives – is an investment in a stronger community. We know everyone benefits when our community's young people are thriving.

Your generosity has helped Pathfinders work alongside youth in crisis since 1970. As we honor our 50th anniversary, we also honor the generations of youth who have benefited from our innovative programming. Day after day and year after year, youth experiencing trauma come to Pathfinders seeking shelter, housing, basic needs services, counseling, employment, education and positive connections.

Thanks to your contribution, youth are finding the resources they need to thrive. As one of our youth shared: "A lot of doors have opened for me since I came to Pathfinders. Not only physically, but mentally. When I first came here I didn't know how to cope with a lot of things... but here, I get a sense of me and people are willing to go above and beyond to help me out."

Thank you again for supporting Pathfinders. We look back on the positive impact we have had on youth for the last 50 years with gratitude and look forward to continuing to work together with optimism. Together, we can make our community stronger and filled with promise for all young people.

Sincerely,
Lauren Domski
Volunteer & Community Engagement Manager

Repairers of the Breach

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Repairers of the Breach clothing

and personal hygiene mission project. We collected over two large bags of adult underwear and socks, along with a bag full of hand knitted scarves, hats, and gloves provided by our MUMC knitters. There was even a box of art supplies for their Art Therapy studio which is run by Mount St. Mary University's Art Department. We also took along personal hygiene items from our Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service supplies. And, thanks to your generosity, we were able to give Repairers of the Breach nearly \$600 in monetary donations to help them purchase other much needed items. This non-profit agency is very grateful for all you have done for the homeless adults who rely on their daytime services.



Family Promise

MUMC's Family Promise Ministry Team has three Monday dates scheduled in 2021 so far when our church will provide and prepare hot meals for Ozaukee County neighbors who are homeless: February 1, April 5, and June 7.

Please mark those dates on your calendar so on those days, you may want to help provide meals or be reminded to pray for the success of our Family Promise network helping homeless children and adults rebuild their lives and get back into homes of their own. That work is needed more than ever in this time of COVID-19. There are still people in our county who don't know or don't believe homelessness is a problem for residents in Ozaukee. But we, MUMC members, know differently. Before last year, we greeted, made meals, provided compassionate care and housed children and adults, four households at a time, in our church. We know their stories and how hard it was for them to get back on their feet. And that was B.C. ... Before COVID-19.

Last year when COVID-19 hit, all the churches in our Family Promise interfaith housing network had to shut the doors to our buildings for health safety but our interfaith network did not stop helping homeless families. Instead, many, many more were served than in previous years. Here are the numbers:

Individuals Served in 2019: Adults 68 Children 61 TOTAL 129

Individuals Served in 2020: **Adults 469 Children 453 TOTAL 922**

Family Promise staff and volunteers scrambled. We sought and tapped every possible financial resource to keep families safely housed. For those needing emergency shelter, we arranged for 10 (or more!) households at a time to stay in a local motel, and our Housing Network churches paid for or cooked daily meals while Family Promise's small staff provided the compassionate care and guidance everyone needed. On holidays, we all contributed in extra special ways to help our families have as bright and happy time as possible.

We continue in 2021 to need that motel housing for emergency shelter. Volunteers from each church, like MUMC, still cook and deliver meals at least one day a week; but on most days, we've had to tap the services of a professional chef to prepare meals. So, if you are feeling fortunate to have a home of your own, food in your

cupboards, and the freedom to enjoy life despite limitations on socializing with others in person, please consider sending a donation once in awhile to MUMC, earmarked "for Family Promise", to keep on helping our Ozaukee County neighbors.

From Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Bishop Jung shared this Reflection on January 24, 2021 on the Wisconsin Conference website:

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1:16-20, NRSV)

There is a very compelling image in this passage of scripture that catches our attention, "I will make you fish for people." Now, probably most of us do not make our living by fishing, but we all do something. It may be a professional vocation, a volunteer service, attending school, caring for home and family, an artistic pursuit, or a retirement hobby. (It may simply be finding the strength to get up in the morning!) But we are all engaged in daily lived pursuits.

What if Jesus offered the same transformative call to each of us? What if all of our tasks became "God's tasks?" What if every activity became a "Christ act?" What if, instead of saying, "I am a teacher," or "I am a butcher," or "I am a politician," (or "I am a pastor,") we would say, "I am a Christian, who happens to teach, or cut meat, or govern, or shepherd a congregation." How does this change our sense of calling and purpose?

Almost all Christians agree that our world would benefit from more Christ. We all see the need for more justice, more healing, more peace, more love, and more kindness. We all see ways that greed and corruption and violence and hostility are doing harm and tearing people apart. We may sometimes question, "Why does God allow all of this to go on?" I have certainly heard this question many times during the current pandemic. But God is present to address these challenges. God is present in us.

We are the body of Christ, discerning and doing God's will in the world. We are God's love, God's grace, God's comfort, and God's strength. We are God's instruments for good in the world, to stand firm against the evil all around us. We are fishers of people, using our God given gifts and talents to serve one another. It doesn't matter what we do "for a living." For life, we are children of God, filled by God's Spirit, joined together to be the body of Christ.

We don't have to abandon everything to follow Jesus; we merely have to faithfully follow where we are and allow God to transform "what we do" into what God needs done. No matter our daily tasks, we can do all to the honor and glory of God, and by so doing, we can trust that God will use us in the sacred work of transforming this world into the very realm of God.

Prayer: *Almighty and wondrous God, work your will in and through us. Take the*

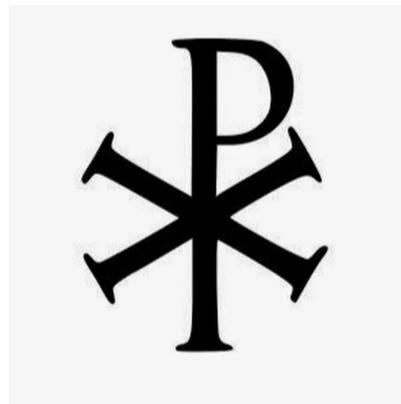
labors of our hands and hearts and bless them, using them to do your will. Bless our efforts and help us to grow in every way into the people you need us to be. We ask this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Christian Symbol of the Month

February

Chi Rho

“Chi” and “rho” are the first two letters in the Greek spelling for Christ (XPICTOC, pronounced “Christos”). The blending of these two letters into one symbol formed a “sacred monogram.” Early Christians created many such symbols as codes to indicate their discipleship while avoiding detection by Roman persecutors. Many variations of the Chi Rho symbol exist, incorporating a cross, a shepherd’s crook, the Greek letters alpha and omega, an anchor, and other images.



Deadline for SPIRE copy: the 25th of the month prior to publication's edition. Send copy to news@mequonumc.org to be included in the monthly SPIRE or the weekly Sunday bulletins.

Disclaimer: Editor reserves the right to edit content.

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9:30am Worship Service

10:30am Fellowship

www.mequonumc.org

