

SPIRE Newsletter



February 2023

Our Mission: Connecting people to Jesus Christ and to one another

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CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Feb. 1: 7:30 am, women's prayer meeting, Parlor

Feb. 1: RSVP deadline for Mission Outreach Dinner/Auction

Feb. 2: 7 am, men's prayer breakfast, Parlor

Feb. 9: 7 pm, Reflections Book Group, home of Suchi Kantameni

Feb. 11: 5 pm, Outreach Dinner/Auction at River Barn

Feb. 11: clothing and personal hygiene collection ends for Repairers of the Breach

Feb. 12: 10:45 am, blood pressure monitoring after service, Parlor

Feb. 22: 7 pm, Ash Wednesday service

WORSHIP SERMON SPOTLIGHT

Feb. 5: Pastor Carly Kuntz, retired UMC pastor, Matthew 5:13-20

Feb. 12: Allison Tinsley-Fuller

Feb. 19: Transfiguration Sunday, Matthew 17:1-9

Feb. 22: Ash Wednesday, Psalm 51:1-17, Repent and Believe the Gospel

Feb. 26: Children's Service

WORSHIP MUSIC

Feb. 5: Praise Ensemble

Mission Outreach Dinner/Auction Set for February 11

“Let God’s love warm your heart.” This is the theme of this year’s annual dinner and fundraiser sponsored by the Mequon United Methodist Church's Mission Outreach team. This is our first in-person leadership dinner and fundraiser since the celebration of our 35th anniversary in 2020! **The event will be held on Saturday, February 11, 2023, at 5 pm, at River Barn, 9808 N. Cedarburg Road, Mequon.**

Our evening will begin with a cocktail hour, including wine, beer, soda, water, and light appetizers, followed by a scrumptious dinner catered by A to Z Dinners, owned by Andrew Koser and Lauren D'Amico Yorio. Attendees may choose Tuscan Chicken with Tomato Parmesan Sauce or Cauliflower Steak with Tomato Parmesan Sauce (vegetarian option) as the main entree. Dinner will also include a Mixed Greens Italian Salad, French Green Beans, Potato Puree, and Marble Cake for dessert. Dietary restrictions? Please include a notation on your RSVP card or contact Karen

During the evening, Mission Outreach members Katie Jackson and Susan Yorio will provide reflections regarding our 2022 activities and present MUMC's first annual leadership award to our Mission Outreach partner, Pathfinders of Milwaukee.

Funds will be raised from ticket sales, donations, a limited number of silent auction items including Bucks tickets, Brewers tickets, three personal and convenient MUMC parking spaces, two wine baskets, and Raise the Paddle. Thank you to our generous donors: Pat Stapelkamp, Glen Van Fossen, and Reflections Book Group. As always, 100% of the net proceeds support our Mission Outreach activities and selected partners for the year.

Finally, and most importantly, we will celebrate being together! In keeping with our cozy winter theme, the attire will be winter casual: fleece, flannel, and sweaters are welcomed and encouraged.

Invitations were sent out in early January and are available in the church office. Please send or drop off your RSVP by Wednesday, February 1.

Mission Outreach Committee
Mequon United Methodist Church

From the Pastor

Whenever I see our family videos and pictures, I find that memory is a really fragile thing. I forgot how small Min and Wes had been, and how “young” Chris and I had been, until I saw those pictures and videos. That experience happens repeatedly. It’s difficult to keep something in our memory, so we need to be reminded over and over again. The same goes for the story of Jesus and His love for us. Lent is a perfect time to do that.

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, February 22 this year. During Lent, we will hear the story of Jesus: His journey toward Jerusalem, temptations, crucifixion, and the resurrection. As we hear the challenges He faced along the way, we remember the person of God who knows how it feels to have doubt, fear, sorrow, losing loved ones, and the temptation to turn away from God. Consequently, we find evidence of God’s love in our times of doubt, fear, sorrow, pain, and temptations, as we examine our own lives.

In this Lenten season, God is inviting us to spend some time to remember the defining stories of our faith and to experience once again God’s presence, love, and the new life found in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. To make Easter more meaningful this year, please join us in **the special services of Lent** and a church-wide growth group study that will be offered in March. Let’s experience the presence of God and life together as a church family during this Lenten season as we worship, study, pray, and have fellowship together.

- Ash Wednesday, February 22, 7 pm
- Palm Sunday, April 2, 9:30 am
- Maundy Thursday, April 6, 7 pm
- Good Friday, April 7, 7 pm

- Easter Sunday, April 9, 9:30 am

In Christ,
Sue Lee

What is Lent and why does it last forty days?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "lencten" meaning "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of spring. The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by new converts and then became a time of penance by all Christians. Today, Christians focus on relationship with God, growing as disciples and extending ourselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of ourselves for others.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter." This is why you will see the designation "Sunday in Lent" rather than "Sunday of Lent" in the naming of these Sundays. On each Lord's Day in Lent, while Lenten fasts continue, the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.

Announcements

Please join us in our two church-wide growth group studies being offered this year at MUMC. The Lenten study will be offered in March and the pre-Advent study will be offered this fall. Details about the Lenten study being offered in March will be in the Thursday email blasts, the church bulletin inserts, and the March edition of the Spire newsletter.

Pastor Sue will be out of the office from January 30 to February 15. In her absence, emergency pastoral care will be provided by Pastor Lourdes Magalhaes of Cedarburg Community United Methodist Church. She may be reached at: Office, (262) 377 3832; Email, pastorlourdes@cedarburgcumc.org; or cell phone, (973) 856-4072.

February Prayer Meetings

The women's prayer meeting will be held Wednesday, February 1 at 7:30 am, and the men's prayer breakfast will be held Thursday, February 2 at 7 am, both meetings in the parlor. All are welcome!

Kids' Night Out on Friday, February 3, from 6-8 pm. Join us in Fellowship Hall for dinner, cookie decorating, songs, games, and more! Please RSVP to childrensmin@mequonumc.org.

The Reflections Book Group will meet Thursday, February 9 at 7 pm at the home of Suchi Kantameni. Our February discussion book will be *The Henna Artist* by Alka Joshi. Please contact Barb Henneck at bhenneck@gmail.com for more information about the group or our February meeting. Reflections is a women's

book group that meets for discussion and fellowship. New women are always welcome.

AV Team Wants YOU! If you want to use your technical chops to serve the Lord, please let us know and we'll provide you with details and start your training! Contact any AV Team member: Marilyn Zwissler, Dave Traut, Jenna Burns, Shelley Burns, Patrick Curran, or Matt Fuller.

From Elna Hickson: Thank you to all those who have offered prayers and swift recovery of my fractured wrist; for all the words of gratitude and appreciation of my music and presence during my years at MUMC and finally for the concrete expression of appreciation shown in the Gift of Love Check. An overwhelming surprise. When the special occasion arises, Lloyd, Eric and I will remember the generosity, caring, and love shown by our MUMC family.

Mission Outreach Ministries

New Clothing & Personal Hygiene Collection for Repairers of the Breach

Repairers of the Breach is a ministry that provides the only daytime shelter for homeless adults in downtown Milwaukee. It is a place where homeless men and women can find the resources they need to get back on track. This organization was started by homeless people who knew the importance of community, faith, and encouragement to make the transition to a sustainable lifestyle. Repairers provides a warming room, food, showers and laundry, a learning center, a medical clinic, art therapy, spiritual renewal, and much more.

Until **February 11, 2023**, we are collecting the following items that Repairers desperately needs:

- Men's and women's socks, all sizes
- Men's underwear, T-shirts, and boxers, all sizes
- Women's underwear, all sizes

The above items must be new and preferably in the original packaging. If you have gently used and cleaned winter clothing, those items are also welcome.

Personal Hygiene items:

- Razors, Shaving Cream
- Foot and hand warmers
- Chapstick
- Deodorant
- Shampoo (travel size)
- Toothpaste and Mouthwash
- Soap (travel size)
- Laundry soap

Please place the clothing in the Hunger Task Force boxes in the Narthex and by Fellowship Hall. Please place the hygiene items in the bins in the Narthex.

Volunteers from the Mission Outreach team will take the items to Repairers of the Breach. Coordinator: Marilyn Zwissler. Website: <https://www.repairers.org/>

From the Wisconsin UM Foundation

February 2023

Scott tells a story about when his church group visited Russia and he met a ten-year-old Russian orphan named Sasha who, for some reason, latched on to him. Sasha took Scott by the arm and led him through the orphanage, showing off his room and the place he ate meals. All the while Sasha's eyes were filled with joy and laughter. In spite of the fact that Scott spoke little Russian, and Sasha spoke no English, they connected. As the church group prepared to depart, Sasha sat beside Scott, pulled a silver ring from his finger, and held it out for Scott to take. His eyes filled with tears and Scott spoke the only Russian word I knew — "Nyet, nyet." (No, no.) This child, who had nothing in the world to call his own except this ring, desperately wanted to give this ring to him. When asked why Sasha wanted to give his only possession away, Sasha responded through an interpreter, "Because I am so thankful Scott came." For Sasha, abundant joy, extreme poverty, and a heart filled with gratitude overflowed in a wealth of generosity.

For many of us who have so much, we want more. We are not thankful for what we have and always look for the "something more." And truth be told, it's never enough. What would happen if, by God's grace, our desire to gain more and have more could be transformed by gratitude into a heartfelt desire to give more? What would happen if in a spirit of gratitude, we spent as much time figuring out ways to give as we spend figuring out how to earn, have, and keep?

Can you recall a time when you were truly thankful despite negative circumstances? Can you recall a time when someone who could least afford it gave you a generous gift? What was it like? How did you respond?

Rev. Jason Mahnke
Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

From the Wisconsin Conference

Weekly Devotion for January 2, 2023, by Tsuker Yang

Insights for Living in the New Year

I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. Ecclesiastes 3:10-13

Happy New Year! Thanks be to God for a new day and a new beginning, a time to start fresh, and a season of jubilation for whatever you are planning to do. God has given us the mind with a sense of the past and future, but we know not what the future holds. Only God knows. However, we can glean from the wisdom of the wise and faithful as we charter into this new year. My hope is that we will experience life in its fullness and abundance, for these are God's gift and will for us.

The Bible considers Solomon to be one of the wisest persons ever lived, and especially for his time. Solomon was credited as the author of Ecclesiastes,

Proverbs and Song of Songs. Perhaps, we can reflect and gain insights from the words of Solomon for living the new year:

- Our work will continue, so don't let worry overcome us. Work is a part of life. In his words, Solomon said, "God has given to everyone to be busy with." Our work may be the same, or it may change, but it will continue. What is important is that we will have a job, and will always be busy, unless we choose not to. Let's not be worried but thankful.
- We should consider doing something new and current. Learn something new, do something new, meet new people, visit a new place, join a new Bible study, make changes to our routines, time and behaviors. "God has made everything suitable for its time," said Solomon. We are living in a rapid changing time. Consider what is suitable for you in today's time, culture and society, and seek to practice it in your life.
- Remember our past, but more importantly, focus on our future. "God has given us a sense of past and future." Let's focus on the future, not the past or even the present. Determine what that future is and dedicate your work, time and treasure to it. Imagine this also with your church.
- Know that God is with us and wants the best for us and of us ... to be happy and enjoy life as long as we live. God will help us along the way of life, providing our needs. We will have food to eat, water to drink, clothes to wear and a place to sleep. But we first must work out our toil and God will add to it. All these are "God's gift that we should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their work."
- Fear God and we will gain wisdom for living. As it is said in Proverbs, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life" (Proverbs 9:10-11). In other words, pay attention to God and God's words, including our worship, and we shall live.

Let's pray: *God of time and God of season, God of wisdom and God of life, the Creator of heavens and earth, thank you for this new year. Give us the wisdom to live, to give you praise and glory, and to serve you and our neighbors, as we charter into the new year not knowing what is ahead of us. Protect us and provide us with your gift of loving mercy and grace that we may find the new year filled with happiness and joy. This we pray in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, Amen.*

Weekly Devotion for Monday, January 23, 2023, by Rev. Tsuker Yang

The Call of Micah Continues

"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:6-8

I heard this text read or alluded to in a couple of messages in the past few weeks, primarily related to the Martin Luther King Jr.'s celebration and his dream of the beloved community where every human being is "cared for, absent of poverty, hunger, and hate", and living together in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood. I think this is also the reason we are called to live our faith and life as United Methodists. The word "united" tells us that we are not separated or individual, but

together and one for a common purpose... “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” And the world we hope to transform is not any different from the dream of Martin Luther King Jr. for a beloved community.

What is striking in my reading the text this time is the emphasis on the numbers: “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil.” Today we see and hear disheartening statistics from every area of life that affect people’s well-being. Besides the cause of Covid-19 and natural disasters, people are suffering from wars, gun violence, hunger, poverty, heart disease, injustice, human trafficking, racism, discrimination, air pollution, climate change/weather, and many others. The statistics in any one of these areas is always alarming. Here are some:

- 14.9 million deaths associated with Covid-19 from January 2020 to December 2021
- 1.9 million new cancer cases in 2021, and 608,750 deaths
- 3.1 million children are starving every year, and 38 million or more Americans face hunger every day
- 24.9 million people worldwide are victims of human trafficking
- 773 million people worldwide are illiterate
- 2.7 million people worldwide surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ every year
- 47% of US adults in 2020 belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque, surveyed by Gallup, which is less than half of the US population

For these reasons, the message of Micah and the dream for a beloved community continue with us. What is required of us? It may not be the giving of thousands of dollars to charity or tens of thousands of hours to service, but to do “justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.” The meaning of this is a call for changes of heart, attitudes, and behaviors. Most of us don’t have much to give and may not be able to serve, but how we live our lives is what matters.

It is not how much we give but how much we care for those who are in need and around us, even when we cannot give. Not every person is needed of giving or service, but relationships, understanding, acceptance, respect, kindness, equity, hospitality, and love. Living in these attributes is the essence of the beloved community. To transform the world, first, let us be transformed. As we live out a transformative life, we may become agents of change without knowing it for those who surround us. And, together, we can transform our community, if not the world, to a beloved community.

Soul Food by Bishop Jung

As we begin this new year, my prayer is that we focus on the love of God. This is a call from the Bible. Paul prays in 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 that, *“the Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all people, even as we do toward you: to the end may God establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God...”*

May we fill everything with God’s abundant, unconditional, all-embracing love; genuinely loving others as God loves us. Let us not forget that God’s heart includes all and extends the divine love to all. When we look around, there are neighbors who are suffering from illness, loneliness, poverty, mental illness, and/or marginalization. God calls us to love all – the least (by societal standards) and the

lost (See Matthew 25). There are many who, in their racial, cultural, sexual/gender identity, economic status and/or circumstances, are not respected for their human rights. The Bible often invites us to bring all people into the hearts of our Christian community of care and of love.

We are called to “loving discipleship,” which is sometimes referred to as a transformative reversal of order. We are transformed when we love no matter our theoretical, theological, or economic stances. Foremost, Jesus taught that those who want to be honored must humble themselves and empty themselves. These are the essential points of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Greek word Kenosis, “emptying”, is a beautiful expression of love in Christian community.

I ponder upon the words found in Philippians 2:5-11: *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness and being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name above every other name so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God...*”

My hope for this new year is that we love each other, pray while loving, and love while praying. I hope that when we read the Word daily, we read it with love and believe that the only way to obey God’s Word is to love. Let us be courageous and love without any conditions. May we take courage from each other to create a world where everyone is treated equally and loved equally.

We love, YES! Only by love are we saved, reached, and loved.

Know that I am praying for you.

Hee-Soo Jung, Bishop
Wisconsin Conference

Christian Symbol of the Month

Hen—The hen represents Jesus’ deep care and compassion even for those who killed prophets God had sent to them. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” mourned Jesus shortly before his death. *“How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.”* Matthew 23:37, ESV



Our Vision: To be THE bridge to community connection, collaboration, and common ground through Jesus Christ

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.

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Sunday Schedule:

9:30am Worship Service

10:30am Fellowship

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