

SPIRE Newsletter



March 2023

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

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CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Mar. 3: 6 pm, Kids' Night Out, Fellowship Hall

Mar. 7, 14, 21, and 28: 11 am, Lunch Bunch, Parlor; new growth group study, He Chose the Nails

Mar. 9, 16, 23, and 30: 7 pm, via Zoom, new growth group study, He Chose the Nails

Mar. 9: 7 pm, Reflections Book Group meets at the home of Barb Henneck

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

Apr. 2: 9:30 am, Palm Sunday service

Apr. 6: 7 pm, Maundy Thursday service

Apr. 7: 7 pm, Good Friday service

Apr. 9: 9:30 am, Easter Sunday service

Apr. 9: 10:30 am, Easter egg hunt, MUMC back yard

WORSHIP SERMON SPOTLIGHT

**Sermons in March and April:
The Parables of Jesus**

Mar. 5: Parable of The Weeds

Lenten All-Church Growth Group Study Begins Soon

He Chose the Nails
by Max Lucado

There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. Romans 3:22-25 NIV

Every gift from God reveals his love. But no gift reveals his love more than the gift of the cross. Much has been said about the gift of the cross itself, but what of the other gifts? What of the nails, the crown of thorns? The garments taken by the soldiers? The garments given for the burial? Have we taken time to open these gifts? Jesus didn't have to give them, you know. The only act required for our salvation was the shedding of blood. Yet he did so much more.

The hill of the cross is rich with God's gifts. So let's examine them. Let's unwrap the gifts of grace as if for the first time. And as we touch them, as we feel the timber of the cross and trace the braid of the

Among the Wheat, Matthew 13:24-30

Mar. 12: Parable of The Sower, Matthew 13:1-23

Mar. 19: Parable of Hidden Treasure and Great Price, Matthew 13:44-46

Mar. 26: Parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31

Apr. 2: Palm Sunday, Matt 21:1-11

Apr. 6: Maundy Thursday, John 13:1-17 and 31b-35

Apr. 7: Good Friday, Luke 23:26-49

Apr. 9: Easter Sunday, John 20:19-31

Apr. 16: Parable of The Rich Fool, Luke 12:13-21

Apr. 23: Parable of The Unforgiving Servant, Matthew 18:23-35

Apr. 30: Parable of The Persistent Widow, Luke 18:1-8

WORSHIP MUSIC

Mar. 5: Chancel Choir

crowns and finger the point of the spike, we need to pause and listen. Perchance we will hear him whisper: *I did it just for you.*

In accordance with our mission to connect people to Jesus Christ and each other, please prayerfully consider committing to participate in our all-church studies. It will be a 4-week study, offered twice each session:

- Tuesdays, March 7, 14, 21, and 28, at 11 am in the Parlor
- Thursdays, March 9, 16, 23, and 30, at 7 pm via Zoom.

The sessions include:

- He Chose to Be One of Us (Crown of Thorns)
- He Chose to Forgive Us (Nails)
- He Chose to Love Us Forever (Cross)
- He Chose to Give Us Victory (Empty Tomb).

Sessions last only one hour. That is only a 4-hour commitment to grow your faith and seems very little when compared with Christ's sacrifice so that all who believe in him will receive salvation and the gift of eternal life.

This year's Lenten study is based on Max Lucado's book *He Chose the Nails*, which may be purchased on E-bay or Amazon. If you are interested in participating via Zoom, please include your email address on the sign-up sheet, located in the Narthex. You can also sign up by emailing the office at office@mequonumc.org.

Jean Paulus, Chair
Education Committee

From the Pastor

Genuine friends are priceless treasures. We are made in the image of God. One aspect of being an image bearer of Holy God is that God created us for meaningful relationships with others. By God's design, we are made to share life with others, as well as to give and receive love, care, and compassion.

There is an old Korean saying, "If you have three true friends, you are a successful person." This saying implies that having true friends is not an easy thing to do. In fact, we have to be willing to invest our time and to open up ourselves to others if we want to build a meaningful relationship with them.

Thankfully, Jesus is the best friend we can have, but we also need close relationships with others to have the life God intends us to have. Growth group studies give us a great opportunity to build the relationship we are hungry for in

Christ. MUMC offers Church-Wide Growth Group Studies twice a year: Lent and Pre-Advent season. Our Lenten study this year is *He Chose the Nails* by Max Lucado. Please join in this great study to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to be connected more deeply with other brothers and sisters in Christ at MUMC.

Have a blessed Lenten journey with Christ,
Sue

Announcements

Find the Joy of Salvation! Lent is here. Join your MUMC Family in the prayers, readings and meditations in *The Joy of Salvation*, a book of Lenten devotions inspired by the writings of Henri Nouwen.

One of the most beloved spiritual thinkers of the 20th century, Nouwen wrote tenderly about the joy that ultimately comes to us through the knowledge that we are saved by Christ and his cross. Excerpts from Nouwen's inspiring insights are paired with original reflections and prayers in this booklet for each day of Lent. Pick up your copy in the narthex— it's MUMC's gift to you for your Lenten journey.

A GREAT BIG THANK YOU from the Outreach Team

We know that you, Christ, are a great provider, and we give thanks to you for allowing us to use our resources to help others with food and shelter insecurities at our recent fundraiser.

We can all sleep a little easier knowing that a portion of our assets helped with this need. Together our net was \$14,000.00, of which 100% goes to our selected community organizations. We appreciate you for letting God's light shine upon you because God loves a cheerful giver.

Katie Jackson, Chair
Outreach Committee

The March/April issue of the Upper Room Daily Devotional Guide is available in the Narthex. If you are unable to pick up your copy, call or email the church office and we'll mail one to you.

Letter of Appreciation

Dear MUMC family,

It has been my pleasure to serve you in the capacity of audio/visual technician over these past two years. I appreciate your support as we journeyed together through the pandemic and entered into the world of livestreaming our worship service. As I transition into a new role on the A/V team, I am thankful for being able to serve MUMC in this way.

I am especially grateful for the team that came together to make broadcasting our service possible. Thank you to everyone who stepped up to assist us during these early stages of our online worship services. Special thanks go to David Traut, Shelley Burns, Jenna Burns, and Patrick Curran.

I am confident that I am leaving this leadership position in good hands with Nick and Steve Hoffmann. They are quickly learning the system and learning about MUMC as a community.

Your generous gift and gracious support will always be remembered with gratitude. This is a special community and Doug and I look forward to being a part of it for many years to come.

Sincerely,
Marilyn Zwissler

Welcome New Staff

Welcome Our New Housekeeper-Custodian, Sheila Blanks!

Meet Sheila Blanks, MUMC's Housekeeper-Custodian, who has been keeping our church clean, sanitized, and neat for over a year now. She joined our MUMC staff during a time when COVID-19 was of great concern and, somehow, we missed the opportunity to make introductions. Sheila is a very skilled, experienced cleaner, including more than 10 years of managing and training cleaning staffs for large facilities. She now works full-time for MATC, part-time for our church, is going to school studying real estate, and working on her own newly purchased house. Sheila cleans MUMC either very early in the morning or late at night when no one else is in the church, but if you have the opportunity to see her, stop and chat. Ask her about Bisquit, her lively little Shih Tzu. She has great stories and really loves that little dog!



Please welcome Sheila to our MUMC Family.

Welcome Our New Pianist, Ana Fau!

Please join us in welcoming our new pianist, Ana Fau! A native of Argentina, Ana began studying piano at age six, and her music career started at age 18, performing at the San Martín Cultural Center of Buenos Aires, and the National Radio of Argentina.

She is a graduate of the Rimsky Korsakov State Conservatory of Saint Petersburg, Russia, and has toured internationally, including the Chopin Festival of Corpus Christi, Texas, the Ateneo Theater of Madrid, the Grieg International Festival of Norway, the Velia Festival of Italy, and numerous places in East Germany.

Ana has her Master of Arts Degree in Music and is a piano instructor at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. Also, Ana is accepting new students for piano lessons at Mequon United Methodist Church. If interested, contact her at 414-897-4435.



Please welcome Ana to our MUMC Family.

Welcome Our New Accountant, Kathy Windis!

Please join us in welcoming our new Accountant, Kathy Windis. Kathy has a Bachelor's Degree in Business

Administration from UW-Milwaukee and has worked as a staff accountant or in financial administration for over 25 years, most recently with churches in Arizona.

Kathy enjoys traveling and volunteering for the arts—at the theater, art museum, and symphony.

Please welcome Kathy to our MUMC Family.



News from Children's Ministry

Kids' Night Out Pajama Night

Join us Friday, March 3 in Fellowship Hall from 6-8 pm for Kids' Night Out. Wear your PJs because it's pajama night! We will be playing games, making a project, and having "breakfast for dinner." Invite your friends and family. Please RSVP to childrensmin@mequonumc.org.

Easter Egg Hunt

Lent has begun. Easter is around the corner. Mark your calendar for our annual Easter Egg Hunt. On April 9 at 10:30 am, immediately following our Easter Sunday worship service, the children are invited to hunt eggs in our MUMC back yard. Invite your friends and family! Please RSVP to childrensmin@mequonumc.org.

Reflections Book Group

MARCH REFLECTIONS

The Reflections Book Group will meet on Thursday, March 9 at Barb Henneck's home. We begin at 7 pm. Our discussion book will be *The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams.

Reflections is a women's book group that meets for discussion and fellowship. Our meeting schedule is determined on a month-to-month basis. New women are always welcome. Contact Barb Henneck at bhenneck@gmail.com for more information about the group or our March meeting.

Looking ahead . . . our next book will be *Search: A Novel* by Michelle Huneven.

From the Wisconsin Conference

Weekly Devotion for February 6, 2023, by Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Children of God

You are all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Now if you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29, CEB

When I am with my granddaughter, Sydney, I think about the significance of my relationship with her. I think about how much I love her unconditionally. I am blessed to be in a relationship with her: it is in our talks, simple walks, and shared

meals that brings us mutual enjoyment. It is true joy.

As I reflect on my relationship with Sydney, I think about an essential Christian principle, of relationship building with God, each other, and with all of God's creation. As we know, our earthly relationships take place in an ever-changing world that requires deep mutual understanding, love, learning, and humble self-sacrifice that transcends prejudice.

We love and respect each other because we are all God's children. Paul describes this unity in God as the familial intimacy of children. It is through the baptism that we become siblings who share one blood.

Dear siblings, how much these words and confessions can unite us and become the premise of our identity. We can become one, so these words and confession become covenants and promises. "...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (verse 27).

I hope that we will embrace again, with gratitude, the premise that the source of our identity is Jesus Christ and take responsibility for our mission together. May we continue as partners and friends in ministry with care and love, advancing the kingdom of God through our kinship in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Weekly Devotion for February 27, 2023, by M. Park Hunter

Anyone and Everyone

Nicodemus said, 'How are these things possible?' Jesus answered, 'You are a teacher of Israel, and you don't know these things? ... God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.' John 3:9-10,16-17 CEB

John 3:16 is perhaps the most famous and beloved Bible verse in the world. Martin Luther, who launched the Protestant reformation, called this "the gospel in miniature." And indeed, it is good news, the best of news! God loves us and wants to save us; that's why Jesus came. If we believe in Jesus, we'll have eternal life.

Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*, drives the point home like a rock star's mic drop: "This is how much God loved the world: He gave us his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life." Boom. This is the way.

We are now in the season of Lent, the 40 days of reflection and repentance leading to Holy Week and Easter. We began this season with snow and ashes and long dark nights. Reflecting on how we've fallen short and failed our Lord is an important and humbling part of our journey to the cross.

But lest we be tempted to judge ourselves – or others! – too harshly, it is good to read on. The very next verse, John 3:17, furthers clarifies Jesus' mission: he did not come to judge or to condemn, but to offer salvation. Jesus holds his open hand out to the world, inviting us, beckoning us, offering us a precious gift freely given.

It's the height of human pride to think that we are too sinful for Jesus to save us. It is the height of human hypocrisy to judge that others are outside the reach of God's grace. Jesus might well look at us with the same astonished expression he

showed Nicodemus: “How is it you claim to follow me and don’t know these things?!”

Because that’s the gospel in a nutshell. Jesus doesn’t lead with judgment, but with grace. Jesus doesn’t hoard the golden tickets but lavishes the world with love. We can’t put a box around his generous offer. God sent Jesus so that anyone, everyone – you, me, those folks across the aisle, the people down the street, the guy on TV, the person you hate most – everyone and anyone can have eternal life through him.

Odds are, when we get to heaven, we’re going to be surprised by all the folks we meet. (Some of them might be surprised to see us, too!) But what a day of rejoicing that will be!

Prayer: Lord, as we journey through Lent, recall to our hearts and minds our sins, so that we might repent. But also remind us of your love, so high and deep and wide that no obstacle can block it. May we live brighter, holier lives that dispel the gloom of this world, that others might know love and hope. And may we move together through darkness toward the glory of the resurrection. Amen.

Christian Symbol of the Month

Coins—The Bible often uses coins to symbolize human greed. During Holy Week, 30 silver coins – usually shown with a bag or purse – represent Jesus’ betrayal by his disciple Judas (Matthew 26:14-16). Many of Jesus’ teachings are about money, including the parable of the lost coin. Coins also symbolize giving as an act of worship, just as the widow offered her last two coins, worth only a few cents. Mark 12:41-44

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.

Disclaimer: Editor reserves the right to edit content.

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Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 9am-1pm

/ Closed Fridays

Sunday Schedule:

9:30am Worship Service

10:30am Fellowship

