

SPIRE Newsletter



December 2021



Merry Christmas!

[View MUMC Online Calendar](#)

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Dec. 1: Women's prayer meeting
Dec. 1: Charge Conference re: Boy Scouts of America
Dec. 2: Men's prayer meeting
Dec. 6: Family Promise host week begins
Dec. 6: Giving Tree donations end
Dec. 8: TCI survey results discussion via Zoom
Dec. 9: Reflections Book Group Christmas party
Dec. 11: Children's Christmas Gingerbread Bash
Dec. 12: Repairers of the Breach clothing/hygiene collection begins
Dec. 13: Charge Conference re: celebrating MUMC ministry
Dec. 24: Christmas Eve
Dec. 25: Christmas Day

Mission Outreach Family Promise Needs MUMC

MUMC's next host week is December 6 and it appears we are going to be feeding quite a crowd. Currently there are 10 adults and 6 kids (plus 2 infants) in the shelter. Last week we were celebrating that 3 of our individual adults had moved out of the Chalet and into housing. That simply meant there was room for an influx of new families. In order to feed 16 people we are going to need to expand beyond those who have been our regular cooks. If you have been thinking of being part of the Family Promise support team, now is the perfect time. If you want to find someone to partner up with and

Jan. 1: New Year's Day
Jan. 2: Repairers of the Breach clothing/hygiene collection ends
Jan. 11: new Bible study begins

WORSHIP SERMON SPOTLIGHT

Worship in December

Dec. 5: Second Sunday of Advent; Matthew 1:18-25, The Father of Jesus

Dec. 12: Third Sunday of Advent; Children's Christmas Pageant during worship service

Dec. 19: Fourth Sunday of Advent; Christmas Cantata during worship service

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve service at 5 pm, John 1:1-14 and John 3:16

Dec. 26: Ecclesiastes 12:9-14, So What?

WORSHIP MUSIC

Dec. 19: Hymns, #221 "In the Bleak Midwinter" and #238 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Dec. 19: Christmas Cantata

Dec. 24: Gift of Music

Jan. 23: Gift of Music

share cooking and assembling and delivering the meals, that is great. But if you are more comfortable contributing some portion of a meal that's fine too. We will coordinate all donations. Email, call, or text Pam Layton or Connie Pukaite if you can provide food or cash, or want to help in packaging and delivering meals the week of December 6.

Christmas at the Chalet - Sponsor a family

Since we now have families in the shelter, Family Promise staff will be working with churches to organize an effort to make sure each family feels the community support during the Christmas season. Last year we provided room decorations the first Monday in December, food treats the second Monday, and gifts for each family member the third Monday. We will be sending out more details as we receive them. Please set aside a bit of your Christmas giving energy and budget to support this ministry. Last year the family we sponsored was so toughed by the generosity and thoughtful caring of our members.

Mission Outreach Repairers of the Breach Serving the Vulnerable and Forgotten Life-saving, Life-sustaining, Life-restoring

Mission Outreach Repairers of the Breach Clothing and Hygiene Collection
December 12, 2021 – January 2, 2022

We are proud to support Repairers of Breach again this winter. Repairers, celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, is doing so much to help homeless men and women in Milwaukee. Since we began partnering with them eight years ago, we have seen their ministry grow to include not only a daytime shelter, but also a medical clinic, a learning center, job seeker assistance, an art therapy studio, shower and laundry facilities, and a mealsite. Repairers of the Breach is one of the few daytime shelters for homeless adults in Milwaukee. It is the place where people go to get out of the cold during the day, take a shower, visit a doctor, learn computer skills, find job search assistance, get a meal, and find a supportive community.

One of the unmet needs that we are focusing on is new underwear and socks for

both men and women, and personal hygiene items. They especially need:

- Black socks and white socks for men
- Underwear for men and women, especially large sizes
- T-shirts for men – all sizes
- Personal hygiene items including shampoo, soap, toothpaste, mouthwash, razors, chapstick, shaving cream, and hand-warmers; they do not need toothbrushes.

Of course, clean winter clothing for adults is always welcome. Coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, and scarves are certainly needed. Just make sure everything is clean and in good condition. This is a perfect project for our knitting ministry as well. Bring your items to church and put them in the collection boxes in the narthex or on the bench in the entrance. Mission Outreach will deliver the donations in January.



To learn about all the services Repairers of the Breach provides to those in the most need in our community, go to their website at <https://www.repairers.org/>. For more information contact Marilyn Zwissler.

Mission Outreach
Christmas Giving Tree
Supports Pathfinders of Milwaukee
Sharing the Gift of Christmas with Those in Need

This year, we at MUMC, will once again support the mission work of Pathfinders of Milwaukee. Please visit their website at pathfindersmke.org to more fully understand the vast array of services they provide for youth and young adults. Or you can refer to the article directly below entitled "What Pathfinders Provides for Milwaukee Youth and Young Adults" for an overview of services Pathfinders provides for this at-risk population.

Due to the ongoing conditions and concerns occurring with COVID, the Mission Outreach Committee will, once again, be protecting the members of our congregation. We are asking MUMC members to provide monetary donations, and Mission Outreach Committee members will do the shopping.

A donation amount of your choice is welcome and we are grateful for any amount you give to this worthy organization and the young clients they serve.

In the past, the average donation amount has been \$40 - \$50 per MUMC members who donated. Your generosity has always allowed us to provide MANY gifts for the youth and young adults supported by Pathfinders of Milwaukee. Last year this equated to MUMC members providing gifts at a total value of \$2230!! Amazing!

Instructions:

Starting Monday, November 15, donations can be given on-line or by check.

For online donations, go to www.mequonumc.org; click on Donate; click on Make

An Online Donation; choose Christmas Giving Tree in the drop-down box.

For monetary donations, please make checks payable to MUMC with “Giving Tree” in the notation line. **Leave your check** in the secure box outside of the church office or **mail to**: MUMC 11011 N. Oriole Lane Mequon, WI 53092.

In order to allow time for the Mission Outreach Committee members to shop and have gifts ready for Pathfinders for Christmas giving, **we would appreciate receiving your monetary donations by Monday, December 6.**

Questions? Contact Karen Stern, 262-227-7811, or Susan Yorio, 262-853-3933.

Smile and know you just made Christmas brighter for a Milwaukee area youth or young adult! Thank You and Merry Christmas!

What Pathfinders Provides for Milwaukee Youth and Young Adults

Pathfinders brings safety, hope, and healing to youth in crisis in the greater Milwaukee area.

These youth are facing interconnected issues such as homelessness, sexual abuse, exploitation, drug and sex trafficking, mental health challenges, and other forms of trauma.

Pathfinders provides a continuum of services to ensure young people have access to all resources they need to find stability. Services include supported housing, a youth shelter, a drop-in center, anti-sexual violence services, education, and mental and physical clinical health services. Pathfinders also provides Street Outreach, a team that takes Pathfinder’s resources directly to the streets. This allows a sharing of resources including basic needs items, sexual and mental wellness, education, and the ability to support and give youth safe exit from the streets.

From the Pastor

On Christmas morning in 1864, while the Civil War still was raging, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was grieving the death of his wife who had passed away three years ago. Then word came that his son was gravely wounded in battle. That is when Longfellow sat down and wrote “Christmas Bells,” a poem on which one of the most beloved carols, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” was based. The first lines of the poem read:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*



Historians claim that as Longfellow continued to write, his mind became filled with thoughts of all that was going on in his country at the time. The Civil War was in full swing; the battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg were not more than six months past; tens of thousands had died in those battles, and even more were wounded or missing. It was not a peaceful time in his country and his personal life. So the poem continues:

*And in despair I bowed my head;
'There is no peace on earth,' I said;
'For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!'*

Now in 2021, we aren't strangers to what he wrote 157 years ago, are we? How can we guard our hearts from despair in these challenging times that we are walking in? Our Lord, the Prince of Peace has promised Peace to us. He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives." (John 14:27) Friends, the peace Jesus has promised does not hinge on what is going on in or around us. It's like the eye of a storm where calm exists while storms are raging all around us. With God's peace within him, Longfellow ended his poem with these words:

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!*

Friends, when Jesus walked out of the cold stone tomb on that first Easter morning, he showed us that suffering and evil do not have the last word, but our loving and just God does. So we can also say what Longfellow said, The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail. With peace on earth, good-will to all!

May the Peace of God that passes all human understanding be with you in this season of Advent and beyond!

Merry Christmas everyone!
Pastor Sue Lee

Special Charge Conference Set for December 1 Regarding the Bankruptcy Filing by the Boy Scouts of America

Dear MUMC and friends,
Our church, like many Methodist churches throughout the country, has enjoyed a service relationship with Boy Scouts for a long time. In fact, last weekend Scouts had an overnight camp-out in MUMC's Marsh Meadow, and worked on Saturday to mulch MUMC's community gardens in preparation for winter.

However, the national organization of Boy Scouts is currently working through some difficult issues. The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) filed for bankruptcy after numerous lawsuits were filed for sexual abuse that may have happened even years ago. As part of the bankruptcy process, local United Methodist churches across the country had the opportunity to file a Proof of Claim. Filing a Proof of Claim indicated, among other things, that the local church had a right to be indemnified, that is, protected by BSA as well as by BSA insurance policy coverage for any claim that could be filed against the local church by a scout survivor.

MUMC has been and still is a charter organization for one of Mequon's local Boy Scout Troops, and therefore, a lawsuit **could be** filed by an abuse survivor against our local church, though we are unaware of any such potential claim at this time.

MUMC filed a Proof of Claim and now has the opportunity to vote on the BSA bankruptcy plan. Because local churches' votes must be received by December 14, 2021, and because we will not know if all local United Methodist churches will be covered against BSA claims until November 23, 2021, all United Methodist local churches that filed a Proof of Claim must prepare now to record their vote. **Our congregation's vote is critical to ensure MUMC will be protected from any potential lawsuit that could be filed if an individual claims they were abused while in a scouting program associated with our local church.**

A special charge conference has been set for **December 1** to approve the following motion, the exact wording for which will be provided by the United Methodist Conference after Tuesday (Nov. 23) of this coming week, but before the Special Charge Conference.

The motion will generally read: We the **Mequon United Methodist Church** (approve or disapprove) the BSA plan of reorganization, and give authority of the chair of the Board of Trustees to execute the plan ballot document.

In Christ,
Joel Huffman
Chair of the Administration Council
November 22, 2021

Announcements

December Prayer Meetings—The women's monthly prayer meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 1 at 7:30 am**, and the men's monthly prayer breakfast, is scheduled for **Thursday, December 2 at 7 am**. Both will be held in person, in the parlor. All are welcome!



Find out how our MUMC members responded to the September survey we did to kick off our church commitment to Transforming Church. The Transforming Church Insight (TCI) Survey Walkthrough will be offered on **Wednesday, December 8 at 7 pm** via Zoom. Pastor Sue will email a link to the Zoom call.

2021 Annual Charge Conference to celebrate MUMC ministry will be on **Monday, December 13 at 7 pm** in the sanctuary at MUMC. Pastor Clarissa Martinelli of 5th Avenue United Methodist Church will preside at the conference. Come join us!

Tai Chi Groups resumed November 29. We meet in the Fellowship Hall every Monday and Friday at 12:30 pm. Each session lasts about 45 minutes, and will include 30 minutes of gentle exercises and 15 minutes of a Tai Chi routine. Everyone is welcome!

Questions? Call Katie Jackson, 262-236-9136, or Marilyn Ramirez, 262-243-5082.

Visit our NEW and IMPROVED website at www.mequonumc.org. The new design is more visitor friendly with an open and inviting design using plenty of MUMC photos. If you find an error or need the password to the Members Only link, please contact the office.

Our ministry continues! MUMC needs you more than ever! Please consider making your donation online. It's simple, safe and secure. 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.

If you plan to renew or increase your online giving for 2022, please be sure to complete a pledge card and drop it off at the church office as soon as possible. Pledge cards are needed to complete our 2022 budget. Thank you in advance for your generosity and support.

Karen Huffman, Treasurer

THANK YOU from the MUMC Mission Outreach Committee and Family Sharing of Ozaukee County whose Mission Statement is "Helping serve the needs of low-income, elderly, and disabled residents of Ozaukee County."

As a congregation, MUMC gathered and donated 55 full bags of non-perishable Thanksgiving food items and on October 10, Bread Sunday, \$538 was donated by our church members. All food and funds benefited Family Sharing of Ozaukee County for Thanksgiving meals! Your generosity was greatly appreciated by Ozaukee County residents in need!!! Much gratitude!

MUMC teamed up with Welltopia Pharmacy to offer a COVID-19 booster shot clinic at the church on Wednesday, November 3, which was MUMC's eleventh vaccination clinic. 82 people were served. Many of them attended one of our ten prior vaccination clinics held in February and March of this year. Some participants needed assistance with registration, paperwork, and/or physically, and were quite grateful for the attention and care they received from our volunteers and the staff at Welltopia. Altogether, 910 vaccination and booster shots have been delivered at MUMC during 2021. Thank you to everyone who made this possible and for your support.

Warm regards,
Karen Huffman, Connie Pukaite, and Susan Solverson
COVID-19 Vaccination Team members

Volunteers needed! Usher and Liturgist sign-ups for the fall are posted on Signup Genius. The Greeter and Coffee Hosts sign-ups are also available on Signup Genius. The Flower Chart is posted in the hallway outside of the church office, across from the elevator.

News From Children's Ministries

Christmas Gingerbread Bash is set for Saturday, December 11 at 11:30 am at MUMC. Pizza lunch will be provided. "Gingerbread Bash" is a fun, hands-on Christmas event for kids and families. We will build gingerbread nativities, hear the Christmas story from the Bible, sing songs, and discover that sometimes the greatest gift comes in the most ordinary box in a manger.

ALL are welcome. Invite your neighbors and friends. Join us and get in the Christmas spirit. Don't want to build a nativity? Come and help us get messy. RSVP to Gayle at childrensmin@mequonumc.org.

Children's Christmas Pageant

Join the MUMC children as they celebrate the meaning of Christmas on **Sunday, December 12 during the 9:30 am worship service.** Enjoy your favorite Christmas carols as the children retell the story of Jesus' birth and sing "sweetly o'er the plains" as they remind us of the "joy to the world" and to "let every heart prepare Him room."

If you have children that you know would like to have a meaningful Christmas experience by joining us, please email Gayle at childrensmin@mequonumc.org. All are welcome. **We will have dress rehearsals on Saturday, December 11 at 10 am and Sunday, December 12 at 8:30 am.**

Reflections Book Group

REFLECTIONS CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Reflections book group will celebrate Christmas on Thursday, December 9, beginning at 6:30 pm at the home of Susan Caldwell, 1926 W. Hidden Reserve Ct. Bring a wrapped gift (\$20 value) if you would like to participate in our gift exchange. Please contact Susan at susancaldwell@outlook.com to RSVP and to volunteer to bring an appetizer, dessert, or beverage to share. No book discussion this month.



Reflections is a women's book group that meets monthly for discussion and fellowship. New women are always welcome! Contact Barb Henneck at bhenneck@gmail.com for more information about the group.

Looking ahead . . . our January discussion book will be *The Paris Library* by Janet Skeslien Charles.

Education Committee Update

EVERYBODY'S NORMAL TILL YOU GET TO KNOW THEM

Adult Education Chair Jean Paulus reports: We have a great new Bible study beginning on Tuesday, January 11 at 11 am. This study is based on the book *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them* by John Ortberg. The book can be purchased on Amazon.

She would like to share a short excerpt from the book with you:

NORMAL? WHO'S NORMAL? Not you for sure! No one you've ever met, either. None of us is normal according to God's definition, and the closer we get to each other, the plainer it becomes. Yet for all our quirks, sins, and jagged edges, we need each other. Community is more than just a word—it's one of our most fundamental requirements. So how do flawed, abnormal people such as ourselves master the forces that can drive us apart, and come together in the life changing relationships God designed us for?

If you have never tried Lunch Bunch before, now just might be the time to give it a try. We meet for an hour, have thought-provoking conversations with Pastor Sue leading the study, and then enjoy lunch and fellowship downstairs.

If you have any questions, or would like more information, please feel free to call Jean at 262-502-0512.

Music Ministry News

The Sanctuary Choir rehearsals and worship service dates are as follows:

Sunday, Dec. 5: no rehearsal

Sunday, Dec. 12: rehearsal, 10:45 am - 12: 15 pm

Saturday, Dec. 18: dress rehearsal; 8:30 am set up; 9 am solo quartet; 10 am - 12 noon full choir

Sunday, Dec. 19: rehearsal, 8:30 am; **Christmas Cantata, 9:30 am during worship service**

Friday, Dec. 24: rehearsal, 4:30 pm; **Gift of Music, 5 pm during Christmas Eve worship service**

Sunday, Jan. 9 (Jan. 16): rehearsals, 6 pm - 7:30 pm; (opposite game time)

Sunday, Jan. 23: rehearsal, 8:42 am; **Gift of Music, 9:30 am during worship service**

Choir will break from December 25 - January 2, resuming rehearsals on Sunday, January 9 at 6 pm - 7:30 pm. The complete 2022 schedule details are coming, with choir rehearsals generally either after church at 10:45 am, or at 6 pm in the evening each Sunday.

Mission Outreach Ministries

We are pleased to offer the last in a series of Outreach Committee articles describing the charitable organizations and ministries we honor with our time and treasure. With your faithful support, we are helping to make God's Love Real. Thank you!

In addition to Food Security and Care & Advocacy, Mission Outreach is laser focused on Shelter & Sanctuary. Thanks to family and friends of the Mequon United Methodist Church, we are proud to support thoughtfully chosen non-profit agencies including Family Promise, Kathy's House, Pathfinders, Repairers of the Breach, and United Methodist Children's Services.

Family Promise of Ozaukee County, which hosted its first family in December of 2015, helps rebuild lives with compassion by providing resources to families at risk of homelessness. During 2020, the number of households served grew from 56 to 185 and individuals from 129 to 450! In Family Promise's infancy, church congregations took turns housing individuals and families. Since the pandemic, however, clients have sheltered at the Chalet and received meals from church groups on a rotating basis. Early this year, Family Promise received a block grant to begin renovation of buildings to serve as transitional housing for clients. To learn more, visit www.familypromiseoz.org. In 2021, Mission Outreach allocated \$1,000 to the dedicated account for Family Promise for emergency funding, miscellaneous expenditures, and 25% of the church's \$2,000 annual commitment.

Kathy's House, an affordable hospital guest housing facility for visitors to Wisconsin, was established in 2001 in loving tribute to the daughter of Dick and Judy Vogel who died of cancer the year before. This year, a new and larger facility was built to address need for additional, and permanent, square footage. In the last

twenty years, several dedicated church members have volunteered their time and talent to the operation of Kathy's House. During that time, the facility has provided over 150,000 lodging nights and assistance, such as transportation, to over 22,000 individuals. To learn more, visit www.kathys-house.org. In 2021, Mission Outreach allocated \$500 to Kathy's House.

Pathfinders has been operating for over fifty years as a shelter for runaways and homeless youth. The organization provides safe temporary and supported housing in addition to a drop-in center, the first in Milwaukee to focus on at-risk teens and young adults. In 2020, approximately 4,100 youth accessed Pathfinder services. Of that number, 760 received intensive case management and counseling. To learn more, visit www.pathfindersmke.org. In 2021, Mission Outreach allocated \$500 to the Pathfinders. In addition, the committee will host an annual Christmas Giving Tree to support Pathfinder youth.

Repairers of the Breach (ROTB) is celebrating thirty years of operation serving as Milwaukee's only daytime homeless refuge and resource center for adults open 6 days per week. The organization offers lifesaving, life-sustaining, and life-restoring programs designed to promote self-reliance and independent living. In 2020, the shelter averaged 2,200 visits per month (at-risk and homeless). In addition to the shelter, ROTB offers meals, health care, clothing and other essential resources. To learn more, visit www.repairers.org. In 2021, Mission Outreach allocated \$1,000 for Repairers of the Breach. In addition, the committee raised funds and collected new socks, undergarments, and winterwear for those in need.

United Methodist Children's Services addresses poverty by delivering care and compassion to individuals and families with housing, childcare, resources, and community engagement. To learn more, visit www.umcs-wi.org. In 2021, Mission Outreach allocated \$500 to United Methodist Children's Services.

From the Wisconsin UM Foundation

Scarcity or Abundance—What are You Looking For? December 2021

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7

Pastor John Pavlovitz tells a story about a time when he was a young youth leader and he found himself overly worried about the future. He was sharing his concerns with his pastor, who replied, "John, do you know why a bluebird finds worms? Because that's what it looks for." John remembers his pastor continuing to tell him that much of what we discover in this life is about the questions we ask, the things we give attention to, and the way we invest our time. The more John was aware of the orientation of his life at any given moment, and the more intentional he was along the way, his pastor counseled, the more John could rest in knowing that he'd eventually end up where he needed to be.

What are you aware of during this Advent and Christmas season? What are you looking for? With global supply chain issues along with the commercialized nature of the holidays, it is easy to fall into a scarcity mindset. However, if we choose to focus on the blessings we have and look to see where God is at work in our lives, in our churches, and in our communities, we are more likely to experience the joy and peace, not only of the season but that Christ offers all, no matter what time of

year.

Rev. Jason Mahnke
Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

From the Wisconsin Conference

Editor's Note: From the beginning of the pandemic until the end of August 2021, the Cabinet of the Wisconsin Conference posted a daily devotion, called a Reflection, to their website. Since September 1, they are posting a weekly Reflection. Each Reflection is well written and thought-provoking; the two below are exceptionally so.

A Reflection for November 1, 2021, by Sue D'Alessio

With Sighs and Hope and Assurance in God

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose. Romans 18:26-28

If you're like me, the past eighteen months have been a pandemic season which has challenged and stretched us beyond what we ever thought possible. Of course, there are many situations and events in our lives which do this as well – death, life-threatening illness, natural disasters, community tragedies and on. These are gut-wrenching events which cause us to question the meaning of our lives and our relationships, which devastate our reality and the perception of assurance and security in our lives.

However, this pandemic season has seemed to combine all these aspect for well over a year – challenging us as individuals and in community. We have yo-yoed from dismay to hope of an end in sight, back to worry and fear, back to hope, and back to despair again. We have dealt with the requirements for the health and good of all by masking, distancing, not gathering in person, Zooming, and vaccinating. Has there ever been a time in recent history when we needed more the global intervention of the Spirit which hears the groans of our hearts when our sighs have no words left? We deeply need this assurance that God is with us bringing all together for good.

Most of the time, at least in my experience, we operate assuming we know what the future holds for us. We know that disaster may happen at any time, yet we live with a sense of security and assurance that life will continue on close to what we already know. Even disasters have some sense of assurance in them. For instance, when my mother was diagnosed with Stage 4 Lymphoma, she commented, "Well, at least I know what I will die of!" Though she/we never wanted that diagnosis for her, at least she felt an assurance that she knew what the future probably would hold for her.

This pandemic is different. Right now, we have no idea what the future holds. Everything we lived with, and almost every security and assurance we held about how the world and how our lives work, are called into question. We have been isolated far more than we ever imagined.

We have learned (video and Zoom conferencing and worship, vaccinations,

working at a distance) more than we wanted to learn and, for the most part, have prevailed, survived, and even thrived. Still, we don't know much of anything about what we can expect for the future. This is daunting, and easily overwhelming and dismaying.

In a listening session with the new president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Rev. Dr. Javier Viera, he was asked how he can lead with confidence in these unsure, insecure times. His response has influenced my perspective about these unsure times. He replied (my paraphrase), "I don't know if I can lead with confidence about what to expect, exactly. I do know that I can lead with confidence in the future – that there is a future – even when we don't know what it will look like."

I have stopped seeking assurance and security in what the future will look like (well, mostly have stopped). Instead, I am leading and serving with confidence in the future that is God's future. I can place my confidence in God, who hears our sighs and understands, who searches our hearts and knows our needs and hopes, and who works all things (yes, ALL things) together for good. May we all live and serve and join together as God's people in Christ, assured in the God who is present and weaving our lives into the future for good, for hope, for healing, for reconciliation, for grace, and blessing.

Spirit God, hear our sighs, the groaning of our world, the hopes of our hearts, the needs of the marginalized, the dreams of who we can be as we follow Christ in our living. Thank you for weaving us together into your future of grace and justice, of promise and blessing. We give thanks for the saints who have lived in your assurance and hope and from whom we can learn how to trust, and how we can serve you wholeheartedly. We pray in the name of the One who taught us how to live, Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen.

A Reflection for November 8, 2021, by Tsuker Yang

Unless God Be the Center

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved. Psalm 127:1-2

Recently I was sponsored to a Walk to Emmaus which was a three-day spiritual journey. Many Wesleyan concepts were taught, grace being the emphasis in several topics. In reflection, grace was a means or gift freely given but it was not a one-time gift or at once completed to the one who received it. I learned that grace is a process of growing in God through the continuity of piety, Bible study, and action. These three are integral parts in the life of a believer. Like a stool with three legs, each leg supports the other, and together, they hold the seat firm and strong. Piety, Bible study, and action hold firm the grace that which we have received.

What holds your life firm, strong, fulfilling, and at peace these days, and especially during a challenging time? Is it your connection of life with social media (such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.), your mobile device and technology or the internet? Is it your work, your bank account, your friends and family that keep your life at peace and fulfilling? No doubt we can't appreciate life without them. However, I believe there is more support to life than these, God being the center of all.

The Psalmist spoke of God as our most viable support in life, “Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain...” We get many legs of support in life, but God is being the strongest leg in all. I remember a commercial for American Express a long time ago that said, “Don’t leave home without it.” We can’t always depend on the AE Card or any other card or legs of support as we travel the journey of life. What we can’t leave home without is God more than anything else. We will find meaning and fulfillment, peace and joy, safety and health, healing and love in life to the fullest when we have God on the journey with us, being the center of our lives. Truly, without God, our toil of life is vain, meaningless, and we will go without much sleep. How does God fit into your life support today?

God, Almighty, you are a blessing to my life. My life, my hope, my work, my all is in you, Lord. Every day you give me what I need and prepare me to be what I should become. You are the center of my life. Without you, I am nothing. Without you, I won’t be where I am today. Without you, life is just a toil in vain. Thank you, Lord. Help me to trust in you more, and be faithful to you today, in all that I am and all that I do and all that I have. You are my rock, my refuge, my stronghold, and my redeemer. Amen.

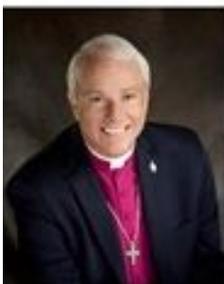
More from the Wisconsin Conference

Bishop Bickerton elected as next president of UMC Council of Bishops

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Bishop Thomas Bickerton, the residential bishop of New York Conference, was elected on November 3, 2021, as the next president of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church (COB) during the bishops’ online meeting via Zoom.

“It is very humbling to be asked to offer my leadership at this point in the church’s life and work,” Bishop Bickerton said after the election. “While the road ahead will no doubt present us with great challenges, I celebrate a faith which offers the firm assurance that God will provide us with the light we need to find the next step on the path. My prayer is that with grace and deep respect, we will continue to find ways to love one another as a response to God’s great love for us. I pledge to lead out of that same conviction and covet the prayers of the church as we embark on this journey together.”

Also elected were
President-Designate:
Bishop Tracy Smith Malone
of East Ohio Conference
and Secretary: Bishop L.
Jonathan Holston of South
Carolina Conference.



Shown at right, from left to right, are Bishop Bickerton, Bishop Malone, and Bishop Holston.

The current officers are Bishop Fierro Harvey, president; Bishop Bickerton, president-designate; and Bishop Tracy Malone as secretary. The new officers will take office at the end of the 2022 spring meeting of the Council of Bishops. Bishop Harvey will serve as the immediate past president of the Council.

Bishop Harvey calls on COB to lead by love. As the COB began its virtual meeting,

the current president of the council, Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, called her colleagues to a time of leading by the example of love. The bishops, meeting online because of the continuing world-wide pandemic, heard Bishop Harvey say, “It’s time to face the reality that our Big Tent is having trouble holding up to the winds of change.” Bishop Harvey serves the Louisiana Annual Conference, which has seen more than its fair share of heavy winds, rain, and flooding in recent years.

The bishop said that the denomination is in a waiting period that began last year and is now extended to at least 2022, when the postponed 2020 General Conference is scheduled to meet. During this time of waiting, she said, there is the “potential to shift our focus from the very people we are called to serve.” Quoting John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, Bishop Harvey said that for him, 1 John 4:19 was the “sum of the whole gospel: ‘We love God because God first loved us!’” She urged all United Methodists to do the work of shaping a new future for the church led by love. “There are many conversations taking place, many narratives being formed,” Bishop Harvey said. “It is time for us to join together and shape the future for the continuing United Methodist Church.” Noting that United Methodists are called to do this work with head connected to heart, she said she believed that this is what will keep many people “in The United Methodist Church.” “Our Methodist DNA calls us to love – to experience love, to be love in a world that does not know love. Love calls for civil discourse. Love calls for a heart of peace,” Bishop Harvey said.

“We must use this time well – with or without a General Conference and out of our love for one another – put our rhetoric aside,” she said, “and begin to work together so that the gospel has a chance of being proclaimed.” Bishop Harvey made it clear that she is working hard to shape the continuing United Methodist Church. “That is my call,” she said. “It honors my ordination and consecration vows. It is who I am. I am and will continue to be an Elder, a Bishop, in The United Methodist Church.” Her prayer, she said, is that The United Methodist Church receives and honors the gifts of all of God’s children. “Black, Brown, White, Asian, straight, gay, transgendered – ALL of God’s children – ALL of whom offer their gifts to God and to the church.”

And the bishop also wanted to make it clear that whatever a “future” United Methodist Church may look like, “you will have a home. If you consider yourselves liberal or evangelical, you will have a home. If you see yourselves as progressive or traditional, centrist or conservative, center-right or center-left, you will have a home in the Future United Methodist Church.” And that’s because, she said, “that is what I believe the Kingdom of God looks like.”

Soul Food by Bishop Jung

Welcome to a Community Based on Sharing

The way Luke tells it there was a day that the mission of the seventy returned with joy. In days of pandemic, rampant racism, and rapid change—where is joy to be found?

Turn the page back to chapter ten. In the first nine verses itinerants are sent with instructions not to carry a purse or bag or extra clothing. They were sent empty-handed to towns and places Jesus intended them to go. When the itinerants were received by householders—those who were settled—the itinerants were to eat what

was set before them and stay. Make relationships that are both receiving and giving. Then the itinerant can cure and teach that where the sharing of gifts arises, the Kingdom of God has come near. Relationships that live out an intentional interdependence caused the seventy to not just give and burn out giving—but return with joy.

Where the sharing of gifts arises, the Kingdom of God is made known. Our United Methodist polity is based on this sharing. The two great covenants of United Methodist life are the apportionment and appointment. The design of Wesley was that the gifts of the itinerants were shared and deployed where the needs called for this sharing—that is the essence of our appointment process. This sharing has allowed us to make appointments in places that other denominations have abandoned, and megachurches would not invest in. The apportionment similarly means we share for the benefit and needs of the whole. This work of healing and sustaining puts us in daily relationship with each other. United Methodists have sustained mission and disaster relief with innovation and vigor because we know when the sharing of gifts arises, the Kingdom of God has come near.

This requires storytelling—or we share gifts but no longer see transformation. Storytelling helps us see the faces the way the seventy could see eye to eye. Perhaps you have grown tired of this system. Sometimes our talk becomes church language absent transformation stories. Go to umcmmission.org or umc.org or wisconsinumc.org and take time to sit with the stories that they might change you. Where the sharing of gifts arises, the Kingdom of God is made known.

The seeds of previous mission efforts are sustaining us in days our clergy supply is challenged. The days are long past that our ministry could be sustained only by clergy that are Wisconsin-born. Forty percent of our clergy are not Wisconsin-born. We gratefully acknowledge that the mission work of previous generations to South Korea, Africa, and Central America now blesses us with an international supply of highly educated faithful and gifted people in our pulpits.

I write to affirm you and encourage. The outpouring of support for our Afghan neighbors at Fort McCoy is beautiful. Your ongoing support of our health and welfare ministries and conference apportionments sustains vitality so that the next generation can enjoy the fruit of ministry we enjoyed. Do your best to finish the year by paying your apportioned share at 100%. Stories of your faithfulness come to me daily and I want you to know my joy and appreciation for your ministry. You inspire me. I will keep praying for you. Please keep praying for me.

In the hope that is ours in Christ,
Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Christian Symbol of the Month

Advent Colors

One of the season's symbolic colors is blue, representing hope. During Advent, we wait in hope to celebrate again God's coming in human form, and we look forward in hope to Christ's coming in glory at the end of the age. Purple symbolizes the royalty of Jesus, the coming Prince of Peace, and the penitence with which we receive him. Some congregations also use pink or white candles in Advent wreaths, with pink symbolizing joy and white symbolizing the Christ child.



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10:30am Fellowship

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Your copy should address 3 key questions: Who am I writing for? (Audience) Why should they care? (Benefit) What do I want them to do here? (Call-to-Action)

Create a great offer by adding words like "free" "personalized" "complimentary" or "customized." A sense of urgency often helps readers take an action, so think about inserting phrases like "for a limited time only" or "only 7 remaining!"