

SPIRE Newsletter



January 2022



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CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Jan. 11: Bible study begins, in person at Lunch Bunch
Jan. 13: Reflections Book Group
Jan. 13: Bible study begins, via Zoom

WORSHIP MUSIC

Jan. 2: Praise Ensemble
Jan. 9: Elna Hickson and Deanna Gibeau
Jan. 16: Penny and Dale Parkinson
Jan. 23: Chancel Choir
Jan. 30: the Hynsons and Gibeaus

New Bible Study Starts in January

EVERYBODY'S NORMAL TILL YOU GET TO KNOW THEM

Adult Education Committee Chair Jean Paulus reports that MUMC has a great new Bible study beginning on Tuesday, January 11 at 11 am. MUMC will also offer this Bible study via Zoom beginning on Thursday, January 13 at 7 pm. The study is based on the book *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them* by John Ortberg. The book may be purchased online.

Jean 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 would like to participate via Zoom, please let Jean or Pastor Sue know so that you can be sent the Zoom invitation.

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

From the Pastor

Psalm 23 is one of the most beloved psalms. My favorite verse is verse 5: "You (God) prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Don't you love it? You see, the table means a banquet or party, and it's not after the battle, but it's happening in the middle of the battle, in the presence of your enemies! How cool is that? Picture this: There is a banquet in a combat zone. The party is offered when you're under attack. God is hosting the party. You are exhausted and you are about to fall over, and you need God's strength, nourishment, and refreshment. God wants to give you the strength to fight and win the battle. So, God invites you to come to the table. "What's on the menu?" you may ask. Trust me, it's not macaroni and cheese and that type of food. You will be fed with the best "food" as you have fellowship with Him in the battlefield.

Friends, having fellowship with God in the middle of your battle is what you need to win the battle in 2022 and always. We often say that we can't or shouldn't have a "party" until a "battle" is over in our lives. But the psalmist says the opposite: We can have peace, joy, and happiness, and all good things that our Lord has prepared for us in the middle of our storms of life. So come to the table the Lord prepares for you, be fed through worship, growth group studies, serving those who need to experience God's love, presence, and much more so that we may win various battles together in the presence of God!

Happy and healthy new year in Christ!

Pastor Sue Lee

Announcements

MUMC is reinstating its mask requirement to enter the church building as COVID-19 continues to spread in our community. Effective December 24, 2021, masks are now required.

A message from Parish Nurse Team, MUMC Health Advocate:

Vaccines are the best public health measure to protect people from severe illness, hospitalization, and death. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

recommends everyone over 5 years of age to get fully vaccinated. With the omicron variant spreading rapidly and being highly contagious, MUMC will require masks to be worn indoors by everyone over 2 years of age until further notice. **We will also suspend coffee hour until further notice.** We truly want you to be safe and healthy.

Our Worship Services Need You

Signups are once again available to everyone to participate in our Sunday Worship Services. Signup NOW for services starting in 2022. It's easy.

- 1) Go to www.mequonumc.org
- 2) Click on the **Volunteer Opportunities** button at the bottom of any page. (or go directly to www.mequonumc.org/volunteer-opportunities.html).
- 3) Click on the link for any of the volunteer options and signup via Signup Genius.

Ways to volunteer:

Altar Flowers

Ushers

Liturgists

Coffee Hosts (limited schedule)

Greeters and Communion Hosts (on hiatus for now)



Note:

- The Altar Flowers list is moving from a list in the foyer to online.
- Coffees will be held in Fellowship Hall to provide room for social distancing. Coffees will be held only on the first Sunday of the month January through March with Palm Sunday, Easter and Mother's Day being added in April and May for a total of eight Sundays through May 2022. Additional dates will be revisited going forward. Instead of assigning people as has been done in the past, we are moving the list to our online volunteer system. **Editor's note: Effective December 24, 2021, Coffees are suspended until further notice.**
- If you do not have internet access and would like to participate, contact the office.

Signup soon and often! Enjoy the fulfillment that comes with being a Worship Service volunteer!

If you have volunteered to be a **COFFEE HOST** after church on Sunday, here is what you need to know!

Both decaf and regular coffee, as well as cream and sugar, are provided by the church. **YOU** may provide one or two munchies, in single portions, to go with the coffee. Also bring a gallon of juice; light colored juice, like apple juice, is best.



Coffee Fellowship

Because of COVID-19, coffee is being served in Fellowship Hall at the present time. **Editor's note: Effective December 24, 2021, Coffees are suspended until further notice.**

You can start making the coffee before you come into the sanctuary. If church is half filled, make only one carafe of both regular and decaf. If church is filled, make two carafes of each.

Instructions for making coffee are on the inside of the white cupboard doors above the coffee maker. The instructions are easy to follow.

While the coffee is being made, you can put the coffee cups, juice cups, and food out on the counter that faces Fellowship Hall. If you want to use small plates or napkins, they are in the closet to the right as you leave the kitchen. Sugar is in the cupboard by the coffee, and creamer pods are in the refrigerator.

Please clean up before you leave. Be sure everything is put away and the coffee carafes are washed out. Thank you for your service!

Questions? Ask Ann Miller (262-242-3490).

Mission Outreach Ministries

Dear MUMC and Friends,

Blessings to you! As we look back on 2021, MUMC's Mission Outreach Ministry has much to celebrate, thanks to your fabulous generosity that enabled us to so positively impact hundreds, even thousands, of deserving people in need. Even though we did not host an in-person auction in 2021, you helped us raise over \$13,000, a true achievement that enabled our mission to continue our focus on food, shelter, clothing, care, and advocacy. As Matthew 6:21 says, *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* You spoke from your hearts and we were able to continue, even expand, our support for the following organizations, locally and abroad:

- Northcott Neighborhood House
- Family Promise
- Family Sharing of Ozaukee County
- St. Vincent de Paul Meal Site
- Kathy's House
- Repairers of the Breach
- Pathfinders of Milwaukee
- Dominican Republic Missionaries
- United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)
- Advocates of Ozaukee County
- Hunger Task Force
- Interfaith Caregivers
- United Methodist Children's Services
- MUMC Community Gardens
- Milwaukee Rescue Mission
- Midwest Mission Distribution Center (expanded)
- Meals on Wheels (new)
- Prayer Shawl Ministry (new)
- COVID-19 vaccination site (new)

We hope you have been able to read about some of these successes throughout the year in the Spire, including our new Prayer Shawl Ministry that knitted dozens of scarves, mittens, and hats for the sick; "pop and drop" food drives; our "growing" community gardens that create community and which in two years have provided

over 2,700 pounds of produce shared with food pantries and Family Promise; and our goal of becoming one of only a few permanent collection sites for UMCOR through the Midwest Mission Distribution Center where every \$1 donated translates to \$9.74 in supplies.

As we look forward to 2022, COVID-19 has only increased food and home insecurity. Let us speak from our hearts again as we reflect on our blessings and the needs of our community. Please prayerfully consider supporting us in 2022 as you have in the past. As Christians, we realize that giving is an act of worship and that we receive more in return than we give, as we recall Proverbs 11:25: *A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

Unfortunately, again due to concerns over COVID-19, we think it is prudent to postpone an in-person auction another year and ask for your direct contributions in lieu of an event. Giving directly is so critical to our impact. In addition, we also want to have a little fun and give you more ways to contribute, just in time for Valentine's Day! We plan on bringing back a limited number of past favorites, such as Bucks and Brewers tickets (fun!), wine and margarita baskets (yum!), a fabulous day at the lake with activities (priceless!), and, of course, your very own parking space (irreplaceable!). We plan to do this virtually, through a silent auction and after worship services, with winners announced on February 14. Please look for more details this month and next.

Thank you again so much. You truly embody MUMC's vision of "Making God's Love Real" for those around us who are in need.

In Christ,

Katie Jackson, Mission Outreach Ministry Chair

Pastor Sue Lee - Jenna Burns - Lisa Gorski - Joel Huffman - Karen Huffman - Jim Layton - Karen Stern - Ireene Sullivan - Kim Waters - Marie Widder - Susan Yorio - Marilyn Zwissler

Mission Outreach: Pathfinders of Milwaukee

Extreme Gratitude from the MUMC Mission Outreach Committee and Thank You to MUMC Members for the 2021 Christmas Giving Tree

YOU, the Mequon United Methodist Church congregation, donated \$2,335 for the Christmas Giving Tree mission for Pathfinders of Milwaukee! As has occurred in the past, with your donations we were able to purchase Pathfinders' entire wish list and more! Items donated were given to individual Pathfinder clients and are also being enjoyed by the youth and young adults at Pathfinders' facility.

The list of gifts MUMC donated included multiples of the following items: cozy blankets, clothing, backpacks, gym bags, earbuds, phone chargers and cords, personal hair/nail/bath care products, wallets, journals, Target gift cards, Walmart gift cards, Culver's gift cards, McDonald's gift cards, and Wendy's gift cards.

Pathfinders' mission includes four core initiatives for Milwaukee youth and young adults: 1) Housing & Shelter, 2) Education, 3) Family Engagement, and 4) Youth Empowerment. Your kindness and care for these young individuals is greatly appreciated!

Mission Outreach: Family Promise

A huge Thank You to all who donated gifts to support our Christmas at The Chalet Family Promise project.

Holly and her four children will certainly have a brighter outlook and know that they have a group of friends who care about them. Thanks to all of you who shopped, wrapped, and delivered this huge collection of gifts.



Above, L to R: Jordyn Baker, Brinya Baker. Below, L to R: Maxwell Traut, Jordyn Baker, Simon Traut



Music Ministry News

From Deanna Gibeau, MUMC Minister of Music

Music Ministry 2022 ensembles are being created to lead and encourage every MUMC church member and visitor to actively participate in some facet of our musical worship and to find joy and community in the Holy Spirit through our musical praise offerings:

- **Praise Ensemble** – This group will perform contemporary and popular music, offering band-led songs of praise that encourage the full congregation to sing along, clap and move with the music when it naturally fits. So far, Jeff Nowak is our guitarist and Deanna Gibeau plays piano and sings for our Praise Ensemble. We are looking for singers, guitarists, bassists, other instrumentalists, and percussionists to join us. We will rehearse usually on Sundays at 4pm or after church if the scheduling requires it. We hope to offer music for our service once each month in 2022.

- **Chancel Choir** – Continuing in the vein of a well-established and excellent choral tradition at MUMC, Chancel Choir will rehearse on Sunday evenings from 6:00pm-7:30pm. We will continue to prepare annual cantatas for worship, as well as a monthly anthem for Sunday services. A portion of our rehearsal time will be

devoted to the preparation of anthems for all-women's voices and/or all-men's voices so that we can continue to offer the occasional anthem from this beautiful repertoire as well.

• **Joyful Jam** – Beginning in February, children and their parents, grandparents, and any other adults (young, middle-aged, and older, with or without children) are all welcome to our Joyful Jam, 11 am until 12 noon. Stay tuned to learn more and be prepared to get involved in this multigenerational musical gathering for two Sundays each month. I ran a children's music program for about ten years that would regularly visit and have class with our Grand Friends at Cedar Community. The parents of the children and adult staff were participating as well and the atmosphere of that multigenerational group singing, playing, dancing, and laughing together was magical and a lot of fun. I imagine that our MUMC Joyful Jam could be much like that.

For January we have many wonderful Gifts of Music scheduled. Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Reflections Book Group

The Reflections Book Group will start the new year with a meeting on Thursday, January 13. We begin at 7 pm in the Parlor. Our January discussion book is *The Paris Library* by Janet Skeslien Charles. Amazon.com offers this summary:

Paris, 1939: Young and ambitious Odile Souchet seems to have the perfect life with her handsome police officer beau and a dream job at the American Library in Paris. When the Nazis march into the city, Odile stands to lose everything she holds dear, including her beloved library. Together with her fellow librarians, Odile joins the Resistance with the best weapons she has: books. But when the war finally ends, instead of freedom, Odile tastes the bitter sting of unspeakable betrayal.

Montana, 1983: Lily is a lonely teenager looking for adventure in small-town Montana. Her interest is piqued by her solitary, elderly neighbor. As Lily uncovers more about her neighbor's mysterious past, she finds that they share a love of language, the same longings, and the same intense jealousy, never suspecting that a dark secret from the past connects them.

Reminder to those attending the meeting: Please remember to bring donation items for our Outreach Auction basket.

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 or our January meeting.

Looking ahead . . . our February book will be *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi.

From the Wisconsin UM Foundation

A few years ago, I read a fun book by A.J. Jacobs called *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. It's important to note that Jacobs, a journalist and author, is Jewish and agnostic. For one year, he tried to follow every biblical "rule" as literally as possible. This includes well-known rules like "Love your neighbor" and the Ten Commandments, as well as lesser-known commands to stone adulterers (which he does by throwing little pebbles at a rather cranky man he meets in a park who brags to Jacobs about an

affair he is involved in).

Jacobs also decided to follow the biblical instruction to tithe, deciding to give away 10 percent of his income. After convincing his wife to join him, Jacobs gave the donations away to several charities electronically. He describes his experience this way, “The giving was painful. I mean, 10 percent? That would have an impact on our lives. Vacations would need to be scaled back; new furniture would have to wait. It was huge. When I pressed ‘send’ on the donations, my palms got wet, my heart rate spiked.”

In giving, Jacobs felt the fear that is common to all of us. The fear of not having enough. However, that wasn’t all he experienced. He continues: “It was a pain mixed with pleasure. When the confirmation email pinged in, I felt good. There’s a haunting line from the movie *Chariots of Fire*. It’s spoken by Ian Charleson, who plays a deeply religious sprinter in the 1924 Olympics. He says: ‘When I run, I feel his pleasure.’ And as I gave away money, I think I might have felt God’s pleasure. Which is odd. Because I’m agnostic. I don’t know if there’s a God or not, but still I’ve felt some high sense of purpose. It was like a cozy ember that started at the back of my neck and slowly spread its warmth through my skull. I felt like I was doing something I should have done all my life.”

Ultimately, Jacobs’ generosity changed him. I wonder, how our relationship with God and our lives might be vivified because of our giving?

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, 2021, they have posted a weekly Reflection. Each Reflection is well written and thought-provoking; the two below are exceptionally so. Bolded emphasis is the Editor's.

Weekly Devotion for December 6, 2021, by Forrest Wells

The other day as I was accomplishing a household chore, I found myself feeling lighthearted and singing a silly but old favorite tune:

Oh, you can't get to heaven (Oh, you can't get to heaven)

On roller skates, (On roller skates,)

'Cause you'd roll right by ('Cause you'd roll right by)

Those pearly gates. (Those pearly gates.)

I don't know about you, but I haven't found it easy to be lighthearted lately. The almost two years of pandemic have been an enormous, often unconscious, weight upon us that has affected all parts of life and caused such grief at loss of health and life. Additionally, with all too much regularity we hear of senseless random acts of violence—whether a shooting in Michigan, the Waukesha Parade Tragedy, images of racial injustice, desperate souls trying to escape dire situations through risky mass migration, hunger, homelessness, devastating climactic events, and so much more. We witness daily reminders of the fragile nature of human life and “man’s inhumanity to man.” What is there to be lighthearted about?

My answer comes from the third Sunday of Advent’s lectionary reading. In Paul’s

letter to the Philippians, we read from chapter 4:4–7:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

People often remark how I seem so happy in my Facebook selfies and other pictures. Let me confess that my heart is often heavy these days and at times the disruptions of violence, injustice, and human suffering feel too much to bear. The challenges that face the Church of Jesus Christ and the United Methodist Church are an additional burden of responsibility that I carry each day. Yet, I hear the Advent invitation to “Rejoice in the Lord.” The God invitation is to hold compassion for the world and hope in God together. **To allow ourselves to be despondent because of the suffering all around us does not honor God. Rather, it demonstrates that our trust is really in ourselves alone to end or atone for the troubles of the world.** This is too much confession, I apologize! When I am downcast, sad, and brokenhearted because I can’t fix the troubles of the world, this passage from Lamentations 3:21–23 comes to mind. At the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the forced exile and slavery of his people, the writer proclaims:

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning, Great is Your faithfulness.

Jesus said that in this world we will have trouble, “but fear not, I have overcome the world.” This Advent as we acknowledge reality, let us celebrate our redeemer! Let us put our hope in Jesus the Messiah. Remember the Lord is near. We are not in this alone. We are together as the family of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say, rejoice!

Prayer: Gracious God, our hearts are often troubled by world events, economic events, and family and personal situations that we can’t control. Thank you for being with us in the messiness of life. Comfort us and help us to rejoice once more in the hope we have in you, through Jesus our Messiah. Amen.

Weekly devotion for December 20, 2021, by Kate Croskery Jones

“Change My Heart, O God

Change my heart, O God, Make it ever true;

Change my heart, O God, May I be like you.

You are the Potter, I am the clay;

Mold me and make me, This is what I pray.”

Words & Music by Eddie Espinosa © 1982 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

Bob Inglis changed his mind (and his heart). In his 12th year in the United States Congress, at the urging of his 18-year-old son, he agreed to revisit his view on climate change. From his own studies he discovered that climate change is real. He also met a scientist whom he came to understand as worshiping God by caring for the climate (and not anti-religion as he had presumed). This transformation led him to introduce legislation in Congress to reduce climate change. He was “primaried” in the next election and lost very badly receiving only 29% of the votes

to his opponent's 71%.

Changing one's mind can be very costly and often takes more than a modicum of courage. Even more costly, however, as Bob pointed out, is the failure to change or grow.

I do not write about Congressman Inglis' loss to discuss climate change or even the political situation he faced, but about change. Bob, a practicing Christian, observed that in the Christian faith tradition, transformation, that is, changing one's mind and one's heart, is a positive thing. I agree.

The prophet Isaiah proclaims that God is doing a new thing! (Isaiah 43:19). The song *Change My Heart, O God*, above, comes from Isaiah 64:8, acknowledging our need to be molded like clay in God's hands. Jesus changed up old laws about retribution (Matthew 5:38), relations with other races, such as Samaritans (Luke 10, John 4, etc.) and even with women, lepers, beggars, tax collectors, and sinners. He reminds us that when we do anything unto the least of our siblings, we do it also unto him. (Matthew 25:40). Our Wesleyan expression of "going on to perfection," and the notion of "sanctifying grace," demonstrate this commitment to change. Day by day, change—and we are restored to holiness and wholeness. This affirms Bob Inglis' observation about our faith. The belief in change and the hope to be shaped to be evermore Christ-like does not make the endeavor easier. Our views become part of our identity, and change even in the presence of overwhelming evidence, and even God's commandments, can be exceedingly difficult.

In his sermon on Christian Perfection, John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement notes:

No one, then, is so perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. Nor, Secondly, from mistake; which indeed is almost an unavoidable consequence of it; seeing those who "know but in part" [1 Corinthians 13:12] are ever liable to err touching the things which they know not... The best and wisest of men are frequently mistaken even with regard to facts; believing those things not to have been which really were, or those to have been done which were not. Or, suppose they are not mistaken as to the fact itself, they may be with regard to its circumstances; believing them, or many of them, to have been quite different from what in truth, they were. And hence cannot but arise many farther mistakes. (Sermon 40, *Christian Perfection* by John Wesley © 1999 by the Wesley Center for Applied Theology)

I so appreciate John Wesley's words in this era of misinformation and "alternative facts." Misinformation is not a new thing, although their amplification by social media and other sources may well be new. Yet, we can lay down the burden of carrying in our heart of hearts what we know to be wrong and embrace what God newly reveals to us with joy. There is truly a release that comes with shedding part of our identity informed of that which is wrong.

Part of being disciples of Jesus Christ, is being willing to grow, shedding what we once believed when newer, deeper truth about ourselves, our neighbors, and our world is revealed to us. Wesley pointed to our reality using Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:12: *We first see in a mirror dimly, and know only in part, but someday we will know fully.*

Until that day, as we prepare for the coming of Christ into our heart, I leave you

with more words of St. Paul:

Finally, siblings in Christ, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8–9)

Christian Symbol of the Month

Olive Branch

The olive branch is a symbol of peace, harmony, and healing. Olive trees provide shelter, as well as oil used for ointment and consecration. The olive branch also represents deliverance from hardships and anxiety because a dove brought an olive leaf back to Noah's ark after the flood ended (Genesis 8:11).



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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