

# SPIRE Newsletter



September 2021

## START A NEW SEASON

Back-to-Church Sunday      September 19

Mequon United Methodist Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. • [www.mequonumc.org](http://www.mequonumc.org)

[View MUMC Online Calendar](#)

[View Printable Calendar \(PDF\)](#)

### CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

**Sept. 2:** Men's prayer meeting, 7 am (parlor)

**Sept. 4:** Women's prayer meeting, 8 am (parlor)

**Sept. 6:** Labor Day—church office closed

**Sept. 9:** Reflections Book Group resumes (parlor)

**Sept. 12:** In-person Sunday School resumes, 9:45 am

**Sept. 12:** Blood pressure screenings resume, 10:45 am (parlor)

**Sept. 13:** Family Promise host week begins; ends Sept. 17

**Sept. 14:** in-person Lunch Bunch resumes at 11 am every Tuesday (fellowship hall)

**Sept. 19:** National Back-to-Church

## From the Pastor

We are coming to the close of another Summer, which means another season is just around the corner. Time flies, doesn't it? During the month of September, as many are settling back into their schools and jobs following vacation, we, Jesus' followers, look to the church once again for inspiration and fellowship to continue to grow in Christ in knowing and loving God. Your church, MUMC, is here to help your walk with Jesus Christ.

Our Back-to-Church worship service will be held on September 19 at 9:30 am. It will be followed by our "Rally Back to Church", an outdoor festival with games, food, activities, and music that invites our children back to the Sunday School year.

I invite you to take a few moments prayerfully to consider a few people

Sunday

**Sept. 19:** Back-to-Church Rally (outside, after church services)

**Sept. 19:** church survey begins

**Sept. 23:** desserts for Meal Site

**Sept. 26:** Stewardship Campaign begins

**Sept. 26:** Blessing of Pets at 4 pm (outside church)

**Sept. 30:** desserts for Meal Site

**Oct. 2:** Marsh Meadow workday

**Oct. 18:** church survey ends

**Oct. 25:** Family Promise Host week begins; ends Oct. 29

**Oct. 30:** Marsh Meadow workday

#### **WORSHIP SERMON SPOTLIGHT**

**New Sermon Series: Start a New Season with Inner Strength**

**Sept. 5:** Inner strength in times of anxiety, Matthew 6:25-34

**Sept. 12:** Inner strength in times of loneliness, John 15:12-17

**Sept. 19:** Inner strength in times of rejection, Psalms 139:1-14

#### **WORSHIP MUSIC**

**Sept. 5:** Peter Gibeau

**Sept. 12:** Deanna Gibeau

you would like to invite to our Back-to-Church Sunday. I believe some of your friends or family members are waiting for your personal invitation to the path following Jesus Christ and they will be eternally grateful for that invitation.

We hope to see you on this very special day as well!

In Christ,  
Sue Lee



## **Transforming MUMC**

Exciting News!! Lilly Endowment, a private philanthropic foundation that supports community development, education, and religion, has provided a 3-year grant for Mequon United Methodist Church and three other churches in southeast Wisconsin to participate in a program called "Transforming Church: A Visioning Roadmap." The other churches in our 'Church Cohort' are Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Racine, Christ Church United Methodist in Racine, and Spirit Alive! Church in Kenosha.

Transforming Church is designed to help congregations thrive by helping them discover their unique contribution to their local community, congregational life, and Christian tradition. Consulting advisors will provide pastors and congregational leaders from our four churches the tools needed to establish initiatives aimed at meeting evolving cultural and community contexts while protecting the unique values and identity of each individual church.

A thriving congregation is a unique congregation, embracing its own sense of identity while remaining firmly rooted in Christian practices and traditions. Specific outcomes will vary from church to church. Rather than focusing on model-based metrics, such as attendance or giving, JH Consulting & Leighton Ford Ministries will help each congregation:

- Clearly identify their rapidly changing social and cultural context, and the issues that context creates for their congregation
- Effectively prepare members and leaders to begin the process of necessary change
- Gain greater clarity about their values, mission, and strategic direction
- Develop an enhanced sense of community
- Increase the level of ministry partnership between staff and laity
- Increase ministry outreach in their community

Activities over the three years will include:

- Pastors participating together in leadership development led by consultant and coach, John Holm
- Lay leaders from each church participating in four retreats focused on discovering, visioning, and implementation
- Members of each congregation engaging in focus groups, surveys and a debrief process

FIRST STEPS START IN SEPTEMBER! MUMC's Administration Council will join other church leaders in a one day retreat on September 25, and ALL MUMC MEMBERS will be asked to complete a Transforming Church Insight congregational survey. At a broad level, survey questions will measure:

- Community: Our church's relational connections, friendliness, and hospitality.
- Code: Our church's sense of identity.
- Calling: How MUMC members feel about leadership, change management, and financial stewardship
- Cause: The impact our church has on our members as well as in the local community.
- Change: Our church's capacity for change

Here is what the First Presbyterian Church of Orlando said after participating in Transforming Church visioning: "The Transforming Church journey was a game-changer for us! By God's design, the process allowed us to honestly confront current issues while prayerfully considering how we might live into a new future. It completely re-energized our staff, elders and congregation, and – for the first time – we have a roadmap for the future that is driven by the Holy Spirit as discerned by the collective will of His people."

Of the other churches around the country that have participated in this program, 98% reported an increase in local ministry, a greater sense of community, and a dramatic increase in attendance and engagement in ministries.

The survey will be available September 19 to October 18. Please consider it prayerfully, and respond fully and sincerely. Your response will be vital in guiding MUMC's future. Help prepare MUMC for an even brighter future as we, collectively, strive To Make God's Love Real in a changing world.

**From the Adult Christian Education Team:**  
**Church-wide Study Begins in Late September**

Just as our children are beginning their school year, those of us at MUMC have an opportunity to discover the privilege and responsibility of belonging to a local church. Beginning the last week of September we will begin a four week study of

Thom S. Rainer's book, "I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference".

**Our goal is to have every member participate in a one hour class once a week for four weeks.** Here is a complete schedule:

Week One

Zoom: Tuesday, September 28 at 7 pm  
Zoom: Thursday, September 30 at 11 am  
In-person: Thursday, September 30 at 7 pm  
In-person: Saturday, October 2 at 9 am

Week Two

Zoom: Tuesday, October 5 at 7 pm  
Zoom: Thursday, October 7 at 11 am  
In-person: Thursday, October 7 at 7 pm  
In-person: Saturday, October 9 at 9 am

Week Three

Zoom: Tuesday, October 12 at 7 pm  
Zoom: Thursday, October 14 at 11 am  
In-person: Thursday, October 14 at 7 pm  
In-person: Saturday, October 16 at 9 am

Week Four

Zoom: Tuesday, October 19 at 7 pm  
Zoom: Thursday, October 21 at 11 am  
In-person: Thursday, October 21 at 7 pm  
In-person: Saturday, October 23 at 9 am



The variety of times and days and the Zoom or in-person format will make it convenient for everyone to participate. Pastor Sue will lead the study and Gayle Meyer and Sue Solverson will facilitate.

Ronnie Floyd, formerly the senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, said this about the book: "Timely. Needed. Powerful. Simple. Clear. Biblical. The book needs to be read by every pastor and church member globally. Find a way to get it to every Christ follower. I will do all I can to do it in my church. Thank you for calling us back to the Bible."

As they say in the business world, your return on time invested will be great and your faith journey will be enhanced. Please sign up by emailing or calling Pastor Sue or Carol Bayne at the church office.

Many thanks,  
Glen Van Fossen

## Music Ministry News

**Make a Joyful Noise on September 5, 12, and 19!**

When I was 12 years old, I and my middle school friends started singing with the St. Paul's United Methodist choir in Manitowoc. We were invited to "join the adults" to sing (this was when we had also started our confirmation process, summer camps, and VBS leadership), and I looked forward to singing and learning to make

a joyful noise with the nurture and care of the adults around us each week. It was fun!

On September 5 and 12, after church services, I am inviting our youth ages 6th grade and older, along with any adults interested in singing with us in the Sanctuary Choir, to prepare the Gift of Music for our service on September 19. The songs I have chosen are lively, beautiful, and a joy to sing together in praise. We need your voices!!! Please come and sing if you want to, even if you are shy or unsure. Perhaps you've all heard the refrain, "all God's creatures have a place in the choir, some sing low and some sing higher...", and I truly believe there is a place for everyone to sing if you have the desire.

I will have a singer's mask available for everyone and conduct the rehearsal socially distanced with a break after 30 minutes to change locations and keep everyone safe.

*Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and praise is becoming. Psalm 147:1.*

I look forward to seeing you there!  
Deanna Gibeau

## News From Children's Ministries

Sunday School resumes on Sunday, September 12 at 9:45 am. We are back to holding Sunday School in person. We have a fun packed year of digging into the stories of the Bible, God's great love, and the life of Jesus. Children will not want to miss a week.

On Sunday, September 19, we will be holding our annual Rally Back to Church and Sunday School event immediately following our Rally Back to Church service. There will be games, crafts, snacks, music, and more. All are welcome to join us and share the excitement of getting back to church.

Wanting to share your talents within our church? Consider volunteering to be a Sunday School teacher. It is easy. The lessons and supplies are provided. It is one Sunday a month (or less). That's 45 minutes a month! You do not need to have a child in Sunday School. They love and learn from all. There is no greater joy than seeing the light of God shining through the face of our MUMC children as they learn they are treasured. Make God's love real.

For more information on Sunday School, Rally Day, or volunteering, please contact [Gayle Meyer](mailto:GayleMeyer@mequonumc.org) at [childrensmin@mequonumc.org](mailto:childrensmin@mequonumc.org)

## Announcements

**Sonlight is in need of some additional riding toys** (tricycles, etc) for children ages 2 through 5. Perhaps you have such a toy you no longer need and would be willing to donate it to Sonlight. If so, please contact Sue Lyon, Director, at 262-242-4771 to make arrangements for delivery or pick-up. Thank you.

Ed Mordy  
Church Trustee

**Lunch Bunch is Back!** After nearly a year-and-a-half hiatus from in-person meetings due to COVID-19, the Lunch Bunch will resume in-person bible study on Tuesday, September 14. The group will continue with its study of Ephesians, which began last spring on Zoom. The Lunch Bunch will meet in Fellowship Hall every Tuesday at 11 am for study, followed by lunch at noon.

On September 14, Glen Van Fossen will provide the lunch in honor of Nancy Gruner—a faithful member of the study group for many years. All are welcome to the Lunch Bunch study. A Zoom option will also be available for those who wish to participate online. Just let Pastor Sue know if you'd like to join the study.

**MUMC has two opportunities to help with the Meal Site program in September**—on Thursday, September 23 and Thursday, September 30. Due to the pandemic, we are not serving meals; our contribution is limited to cookies, dessert bars, and brownies, bagged in individual servings. Please place 3 cookies, 2 brownies, or 2 dessert bars in a snack or sandwich bag. Please bring your baked goods to the church by 4:15 pm on the above dates. There will be a box on the bench inside the front doors where you can deposit your baked goods. Questions? Contact Ireene Sullivan at 262-242-3832.

**A service for the blessing of pets** will be held at 4 pm on Sunday, September 26 outside at MUMC. A blessing of pets/animals acts as a witness to God's and the church's love, care, and concern for creation. As we recognize our mutual interdependence with God's creatures, the church's witness of stewardship of creation is strengthened.

Each pet will receive a prayer of blessing at the service. Please bring your pet(s) to the service to witness God's love and His care for animals. Invite your neighbors to this service also!

**Marsh Meadow workdays are set** for Saturday, October 2 and Saturday, October 30, both days from 9 am to Noon.

We will be clearing buckthorn from the Marsh Meadow. Please bring leather gloves and loppers. Linda Mordy will provide water and snacks. If you have questions, phone her at 262-242-8091.

**Ireene Sullivan would like to extend a heartfelt "thank you"** to every baker who has so generously provided desserts for Meal Site during the pandemic. The response has been fabulous! Thank you!

## Parish Nurse Team Report

### Blood Pressure Screening Returns September 12

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the artery walls. Arteries carry oxygen-rich blood and nutrients to the tissues of the body. When the artery pressure is higher than normal and remains high, these vessels become damaged. Arteries become firm, less elastic, and have reduced ability to move blood through the body. High blood pressure (hypertension) creates risk for other health conditions by damaging the heart, brain,

kidneys, and eyes.

Hypertension is known as the “silent killer” because it has no warning signs or symptoms. Many people are unaware they have high blood pressure. Measuring your blood pressure is the only way to identify this condition. Hypertension can be managed and your risk for other serious health problems reduced.



The Parish Nurse Team offers monthly blood pressure screenings on the second Sunday following the worship service. The next screening will take place on September 12 in the parlor. We care about you and your health. Life is precious; preserve your health.

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.* Proverbs 4:23  
NIV

Susan Solverson  
Parish Nurse Team Chair

## Reflections Book Group

### **SEPTEMBER REFLECTIONS**

The Reflections book group will resume monthly meetings in September. Our September meeting will be Thursday, September 9 at 7 pm in MUMC’s parlor. Join us for a discussion of *Beneath a Scarlet Sky* by Mark Sullivan.

Amazon.com offers this summary: *Pino Lella wants nothing to do with the war or the Nazis. He’s a normal Italian teenager—obsessed with music, food, and girls—but his days of innocence are numbered. When his family home in Milan is destroyed by Allied bombs, Pino joins an underground railroad helping Jews escape over the Alps, and falls for Anna, a beautiful widow six years his senior.*

*In an attempt to protect him, Pino’s parents force him to enlist as a German soldier—a move they think will keep him out of combat. But after Pino is injured, he is recruited at the tender age of eighteen to become the personal driver for Adolf Hitler’s left hand in Italy, General Hans Leyers, one of the Third Reich’s most mysterious and powerful commanders. Now, with the opportunity to spy for the Allies inside the German High Command, Pino endures the horrors of the war and the Nazi occupation by fighting in secret, his courage bolstered by his love for Anna and for the life he dreams they will one day share.*

Reflections is a women’s book group that meets monthly for discussion and fellowship. New women are always welcome. Contact Barb Henneck for more information about the group.

*Looking ahead . . .* our October book will be *The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding* by Jennifer Robson.

## Mission Outreach Ministries

We are pleased to offer the latest 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!

## **Santo Domingo Missions/The Graner's**

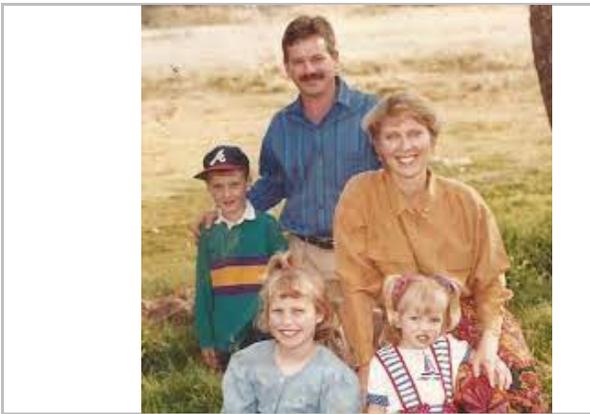
Ardell Graner's Retirement Message to the Dakotas Conference

By: Ardell Graner, UMC Global Ministries Missionary

Ardell Graner, a native of North Dakota, will retire after serving 32 years as a United Methodist Global Missionary. She and her husband Gordon, who retired in 2020, blessed people with mission outreach and shared the Good News in Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. They will continue to be connected to the Dakotas Conference through Solar Oven Partners, with oven distributions through Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana. Read the full message and more at <http://granerfamily.org>

*Dear Friends,*

*Gordon retired on September 1, 2020, and I will be retiring the end of September this year, 2021. Our good friend said we are rounding the third base of life. Everything seems to look better when you see it from a baseball perspective.*



*Those first pictures from the moment we arrived in Bolivia are very telling. Jenny was five years old when we left West Fargo, North Dakota in September 1989. It was Gordy's birthday, and we would soon celebrate our tenth year of marriage the month after we arrived in LaPaz, Bolivia.*

*Samuel was three years old and baby Hannah was born in Cochabamba a year and a half later. Gordy and I felt well prepared and called to leave home for another country. I had worked at two universities, including a public and private college. Gordy had done technician work at a university, gone to seminary, and worked with refugees coming from many countries around the world. Neither of us questioned God's call in our lives, even though we were always trying to interpret it. Our children were innocent as doves, all the while brave as children can be. With God's blessings and grace, we went...*

*In the past 32 years, we have been sustained by your prayers, support, and encouragement through your emails, notes, birthday, and holiday cards. Together, our covenant partnership in mission is strong and alive. Your prayers uplifted our family, and we are so grateful for them.*

*Our greatest desire is that you have known God's blessings through our relationship, and the relationships with our sisters and brothers in Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. We are one family in Christ, working together for the Kingdom of God on earth.*

*We are in God's hands. We encourage you to continue to support our beloved United Methodist missionaries, who serve God alongside our brothers and sisters around the world.*

*We are deeply appreciative of our relationship with you.*

*In God's love and mission,  
Ardell (and Gordon) Graner*

The Mission Outreach Committee has provided financial support for Ardell and Gordon Graner in Bolivia and the Dominican Republic for over twenty years. In 2021, the Outreach Committee honored our annual church commitment of \$2,500. This year, in anticipation of retirement, and continuing COVID-19 related restrictions in the Dominican Republic, we donated \$1,000.

## **Family Promise Assists the Homeless**

### **Ozaukee County Homeless Families Still Face Hardship, Need Family Promise**

COVID-19 restrictions and problems seem to have eased up for many of us but for individuals and families overwhelmed by financial stress or loss of their homes, Family Promise of Ozaukee County remains their go-to resource for desperately needed shelter and assistance to get back on their feet.

Family Promise continues to receive a high volume of calls for help every day. Family Promise staff is able to tap resources and provide guidance that diverts most callers from losing their homes but for those whose circumstances require more time, patience, and resources to resolve issues, safe shelter and meals remain critical, life-sustaining needs. Since January this year, Family Promise has sheltered 39 households (70 individuals).

Since COVID-19 hit, our Family Promise Interfaith Network, through which MUMC collaborates with other churches, has been unable to provide shelter inside our own buildings. The pandemic quickly demonstrated how easily illness could spread through homeless families and volunteers alike.

Until a stand-alone shelter can be built, Family Promise has arranged to provide safely-distanced shelter in a Mequon motel, supported by generous donations from supporters who continue to recognize the needs of people in our own county. Providing meals every day is ministry that MUMC and other churches in the Interfaith Network have committed to fulfill for families needing shelter.

MUMC cooks are needed during our next Host Week, from Monday, September 13 through Friday, September 17.

We need cooks to prepare meals for 8 to 16 people (children and adults) each day, depending on how many are in shelter, to be delivered daily around 5 pm. Meals usually consist of a main dish, vegetable(s) and/or salad, dessert or fruit, and sometimes a bread roll. MUMC provides take-out containers for packaging each meal, napkins, flatware, and large bags to transport the meals to the motel.

MUMC members or friends willing to prepare one day's full meal for all guests, or to contribute part of one day's meal, please contact scheduler, [Pam Layton](#), by

phone at 262-290-1448 or email her at [p.layton90@gmail.com](mailto:p.layton90@gmail.com) or coordinator, [Connie Pukaite](mailto:Connie.Pukaite), by phone at 262-242-2778 or email her at [atpukaite@sbcglobal.net](mailto:atpukaite@sbcglobal.net)

Plan ahead ... MUMC's next Host Weeks, when we will again need cooks, are October 25-29 and December 6-10.

## Membership Covenant Renewal Coming Soon

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Mequon United Methodist Church "Membership Covenant Renewal". When is it? Sundays beginning September 26 through October 24. Why? As we joyfully return to in-person worship and invest in a healthy and vibrant church community, it seems an appropriate time to revisit the commitment we made as members of Mequon United Methodist Church. What is the Membership Covenant you ask?

### Mequon United Methodist Church Membership Covenant

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

As a member of Mequon United Methodist Church,

**Prayers:** I will set aside a time daily for devotions and prayer. I will pray for my church, its ministry and church leaders.

**Presence:** I will strive to attend weekly worship services and growth group studies to grow in faith.

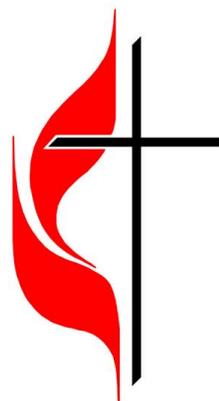
**Service:** I will give of my talents and service to make God's love real to others in my church and beyond church walls.

**Gifts:** I will honor God by giving my income with the goal of tithing.

**Witness:** I will be a unifying church member by acting with love toward other members, by engaging my conversations about my church in a positive way, and by inviting those who don't have their church home to my church.

We look forward to you joining us on this journey of renewal!

Administration Council and Finance Committee



## From the Wisconsin UM Foundation

### Stewardship Connecting Vision and Generosity September 2021

*Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8*

After serving my first local church part-time as a college student for two years, I had just finished leading my last worship service and was greeting folks at the door. One gentleman shook my hand and said, "Jason, thank you for being our pastor. I think one of the things I liked about you the most is that you never talked about money." I've thought about his statement many times over the years. I've also

heard the same sentiment repeated by both laity and clergy in many ways.

We tend to see financial stewardship and money as a “necessary evil.” It’s something we must deal with to get to real ministry. In his short book, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*, Henri Nouwen challenges this view of money and stewardship (which he calls fundraising). He writes: Fundraising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission. Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission. We are declaring, ‘We have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you – your energy, your prayers, and your money – in this work to which God has called us’.

I wonder what vision God has entrusted to you and your congregation that you can invite others to be a part of through their prayers, their presence, their service, their witness, and their gifts.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

## From the Wisconsin Conference

Editor's note: Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Cabinet in our Wisconsin Conference has posted a daily devotion, called a Reflection, that is worthwhile reading. Each one is well written and thought-provoking; many, like the two below, are exceptionally so.

Reflection for August 16, 2021, by Forrest Wells

### Endings

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”* Revelation 1:8

“...and lo, I am with you always [remaining with you perpetually—regardless of circumstance, and on every occasion], even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20b

Life is fragile, delicate, precious. We seek to hold on to so much in this world, whether relationships, positions of power, or memories of the way things were. Yet, life is full of endings. People graduate from one thing to move on to the next. We change schools, jobs, homes to seek something better or more permanent. We certainly hope some things will end, like pandemics, disease, poverty, homelessness! I have etched in my brain the voice of Joyce Alford encouraging me and others when going through difficult times when she would say, “This too will pass.”

I have had many endings in my life. I said tearful goodbyes to two youth groups I directed before entering seminary. So far I have had to say goodbye to seven local church appointments and superintending assignments in four districts. I have said goodbye to high school and college friends, a seminary community, and countless deaths of family, loved ones, and friends. Saying goodbye is a part of life and I hate it. It seems that just when I start to feel comfortable and “at home” it’s time to go.

Bill Hybels used to talk about the importance of building relationships outside the church to be an influence on others for Christ. For the last 21 years I have been a member of a golf community where I did not know anyone before I joined and in

which I am the only clergy person. I can't say that I have made any close friends. I certainly have put up with a lot of good-natured jokes about my calling as a clergy; people often apologize after "taking the Lord's name in vain." People have shared joys and griefs in quiet moments, and I have tried to maintain an even and positive presence. But now it looks like the club and its membership will be disbanded after this summer and I am sad. Even though I have been an "outsider" at the club because I'm not a good golfer and not a gambler, it has been the one place that has been stable in my life for 21 years. In that time period I have transitioned through seven houses, four pastoral appointments but one golf club membership. Can't anything stay stable?

We value the stability of life and the belonging of community, yet the truth is that there is no permanence this side of eternity. Friends are grieving a devastating car accident that killed their teenage son. Today there are tears and outcry from Afghanistan as some semblance of stability comes to an end and terror reigns. Wildfires burn the homes and hopes of people in western USA.

COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how fragile we are as a human community. We yearn for stability and belonging, yet our life situation and relationships can turn starkly and without warning. My only stability is Christ Jesus, who holds all life from beginning to end and throughout eternity. Jesus has promised to never leave me or forget about me. God walks with me in the deepest valleys of my life. It is good to know that there is a Love that will never end.

*Gracious God, when we are torn by tragic endings or when we are simply sad when situations in our lives change, help us to hold onto you as you hold onto us. In Jesus name, the Alpha and Omega we pray. Amen.*

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Reflection for August 23, 2021, by Tsuker Yang

### **Improving Your Services**

*You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore, rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.... If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. James 1:19-21, 26*

James is very practical in his writing. He was concerned about faith and action. He applied Scripture directly to life situations. He said for us to be "doers" of the word. In other words, he means our faith should produce good works which include our language. What we do is important, but what we say is equally important. Language involves both verbal and nonverbal. Language itself is an action such as our emotional and facial expressions, tones of voice, choice of words, when and how we speak in our communication with one another. Language can hurt and heal depending how we use it.

Many years ago in my early years of ministry I had a church family that had stopped coming to church. I was curious why they had not been coming to church. The wife was a member of the Administrative Board. One day at a meeting I asked her why she and her family had not been to church. To my surprise she said her husband was hurt from something that I said in a previous meeting. My words at the time were intended for everyone but this family felt offended as a direct response and judgment to their situation. They left the church not long thereafter.

I wonder how I could have done better to serve this family. There are many things I could say or not say to minister to this family. What was said I could no longer retract. What was hurt is not easily healed. The family was wounded. Conflict and misunderstanding often arise in the church because of words or languages we use. As leaders and ministers of the Gospel we meet many people and engage in many meetings and conversations weekly. We can serve well if we will heed James's words, be more attentive to listening than speaking and use positive languages. Today, I challenge you to think of the people who have been hurt or isolated because of what you have said or the language you have used, and reflect on those situations and what you could have said better or how you might improve your language.

*Loving God, I want to serve the people who you have put in my ministry. Help me to do the right things and say the right words that will strengthen their faith and love for you. Forgive me the mistakes I have made and teach me how to serve in all that I do and say. Amen.*

## Letter From Bishop Jung

August 25, 2021

Dear Beloved Siblings in Christ,

We have arrived on the shore of a defining moment. Afghan refugees are landing in Wisconsin and with their hasty departure, they are arriving with the ingredients of grief, trauma, and fear.

Refugees are being processed here in Wisconsin at Fort McCoy in an effort the US Army is calling "Operation Allies Refuge." We might name it a "Good Samaritan" moment that will help us renew appreciation of who our neighbor is in ways that heal us and them. Many of us have come from refugee moments after wars in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe.

I write today in partnership with Donna Veatch, Chair of the Wisconsin Conference Committee on Immigrant & Refugee Ministries. Together we will ask you to pray and consider how United Methodists in Wisconsin can respond to this crisis.

Let's remember the 2016 Book of Resolutions defines refugees as "persons outside their country of origin who are unable or unwilling to return for fear of persecution based on race, religion, ethnicity, political affiliation, or opinion" (p.547). This section goes on to affirm: "Christians do not approach the issue of migration from the perspective of tribe or nation, but from within a faith community of love and welcome, a community that teaches and expects hospitality to the poor, the homeless, and the oppressed" (p.550).

We would invite you to:

- Pray for the Afghans arriving here and those left behind
- Consider a response as a congregation that might be financial or even involve partnering with people on the ground locally to help resettle Afghans
- Consider an immediate financial gift through our Immigrant Assistance Fund #7795, which was created for such a purpose as this
- Watch our conference website and ENews for up-to-date information

You can give through your local church or through the Immigration Assistance button on the homepage at [www.wisconsinumc.org](http://www.wisconsinumc.org).

One of our lectionary texts this week (Reflection of August 23, 2021, by Tsuker Jang, above) features the letter of James and the challenge to “be doers of the word, and not merely hearers.” Please join us in prayer that seeks the healing that would make Christ known. Thank you.

In the hope that is ours in Jesus,

Hee-Soo Jung, Bishop, Wisconsin Annual Conference  
Donna Veatch, Chair, Wisconsin Conference Committee on Immigrant & Refugee Ministries

## Christian Symbol of the Month

### Alpha and Omega

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They signify the eternal nature of Jesus Christ, who is the beginning and the end of all things. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." (Revelation 22:13 NIV) "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8 NIV)



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10:30am Fellowship

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