

The First Connection

a publication of Mason First United Methodist Church

February 2018



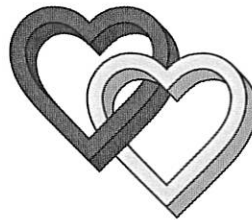
Sermon Plan for February

- February 4** **Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany**
Focus Passages: II Samuel 23:1-17;
James 1:16-27
Theme: *Close Enough to Hear*
- February 11** **Last Sunday after the Epiphany**
Focus Passages: Psalm 150;
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
Theme: *Wallflowers*
- February 14** **Ash Wednesday**
7:00 p.m. Service
- February 18** **First Sunday in Lent**
Focus Passages: Romans 5:1-8;
II Corinthians 5:17-6:10
Theme: *A Refreshing Truth*
- February 25** **Second Sunday in Lent**
Focus Passages: Ruth 1; Psalm 146
Theme: *Ancient Paths for Today:
Ruth's Path of Dedication*



“Be My Valentine”

You are invited to the Parent-Child Brunch on Saturday, February 10, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. in the Asbury Fellowship Hall sponsored by the United Methodist Women.



This wonderful Valentine Gathering is for all ages and there will be singing and special Valentine cards to make and friends to see!

There is a sign up sheet on the Caring Table. The cutoff deadline is on Friday, February 2, 2018. If you have questions, please contact Cheryl Howe at 676-4689. We are looking forward to seeing you there!



Youth Mission Fundraiser

The First United Methodist Youth need your help as they raise funds for their future community mission projects.

Currently, they are collecting pop cans and bottles. They will be accepting donations through February 11. Please leave your donations inside the barrier free entrance off of the church's parking lot. If you are unable to deliver the pop cans, call the church office (676-9449) to schedule a time when the youth can pick them up at your house.



Lenten Study

Pastor Donna will lead a Lenten Study for six weeks--from February 20/21 to March 27/28. To make this available to both those who work and those who prefer daytime studies, there will be two choices of timeslot for the study--Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. or Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. The study will be on Adam Hamilton's book *John: The Gospel of Light and Life*. Please sign up at the Caring



Table so that books may be ordered. Let's join together around the scriptures during the contemplative season of Lent.

Pastor's Notes

by Rev. Donna Minarik

January has surely shown us how capricious winter weather can be in Michigan! We've seen record cold temperatures, plenty of snow, and then it all melted away seemingly overnight. Though Lent begins very early this year, and Spring is not yet in the air, we can still see one sign of the Spring to come. The days are surely getting longer and the sun is preparing to do its work in bringing about the new life from the earth. With these lengthening of days comes the season of Lent, and so it seems fitting that the word Lent comes from an old Anglo Saxon term meaning "to lengthen."

On February 14, Ash Wednesday will begin our Lenten journey, and we will share in worship in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. We will follow a tradition that began in the 7th century AD with the imposition of ashes and the call to renewed Christian discipline and commitment. Historically, Christians who had been separated from the fellowship because of serious sins, were welcome to come back early in Lent, and show by a change of heart and life that they were ready to be restored to the Church. Lent was an earnest time of study, prayer, fasting and waiting for God's direction, beginning with ashes on one's forehead.

Ashes play an interesting role in the Old Testament as prime symbols of sorrow and a desire to repent.



Mordecai wore ashes when he heard of the plan to exterminate Persian Jews (Esther 4:1). Job wore sackcloth and ashes in his grief (Job 42:6). Daniel prayed to the Lord while fasting and wearing ashes (Daniel 9:3) and the grumpy prophet, Jonah, wore ashes and sat in the dirt (Jonah 3:5-6).

Ashes are a fitting symbol of humility, that is, having an accurate view of ourselves in the scheme of things. God is the Sovereign and we are God's people. Those things (habits, behaviors, material things) that hamper our relationship with God are best examined during Lent and then pushed out of our lives. Those things (habits, behaviors, material things) that bring us closer to God and to serving the people whom God loves, are embraced or added to our lives in new ways during Lent.

So use this upcoming Lenten season to think about your life and "holy nudges" that God has placed within you. Find a way to grow deeper in faithfulness. Use this lengthening of days to prepare yourself for the new life the Son can bring!

May your Lent be richly blessed,

Pastor Donna

Book Discussion Group

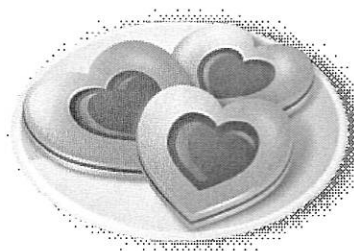
The Book Discussion Group will meet on Thursday, February 8, from 11:00-12:00 at the church and then many of us go to lunch afterward. Our book this month is

"An Invisible Thread" by Laura Schroff. *"He asked for spare change; she kept walking. But something made her turn around and go back. They met nearly*

every week for years, and built an unexpected, life-changing friendship that has today spanned almost three decades. The sign up sheet is at the Caring Table. See Kim Wolfgang for details.



Cookie Reminder



Thanks to all who provided cookies last month. Just a reminder that if your last name begins with *A* or *B*, we would appreciate it if you would provide cookies in February.

News of Our Church Family

Recovering at home following recent hospitalizations are Beverly Pierpoint, Mike Buckner, Phyllis Baisch, and Ruth Judd. Carolyn Goedert is recovering from a broken leg.

Please note: The hospitals do not notify the church when someone from our church family is admitted. Please ask a family member or a friend to let us know!

Our members or friends who are in assisted living, nursing homes, or hospice care:

Grand Haven Living Center, Lansing:

Gayle Gunns

Great Lakes Christian Home, Holt:

Doris Olsen

Green Acres, Mason:

Ruth Ann Ashley

Independence Village, East Lansing:

Carol Zanger

Ingham County Medical Care Facility, Okemos:

Char Bush

Jack Kammeraad

Vi Ramey

Medilodge of Clare:

Lula Oakley



The 2018 Flower Calendar is on the bulletin board in the east hallway. Sign up if you'd like to provide altar flowers in honor of or in memory of someone. Instructions are on the calendar.

PATH Group

The Wednesday Path Group discusses *The Upper Room Book of Daily Devotions*. Everyone is welcome to join the group any Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. in the conference room. Hope to see you there!

Mason Christian Child Care Center

We are blessed to have all our rooms full! We currently have eight infants, eight toddlers, and twelve preschoolers enrolled at the center. We have an additional two infants joining us, a cousin and a sibling, in the near future. We will move older infants into the toddler room and older toddlers into the preschool room.

Each day the toddlers and preschoolers say a prayer before snacks and lunch. The preschoolers learn a new prayer every two months to give them a chance to really learn the prayer and to be able to say it as a group. The new prayer that began in January and will go through February is *"Thank you God for food to eat, bless our meal we pray. And thank you for this special day. Amen."* The toddlers have

several prayers they can choose from and their current favorite is: *"For all food yummy, that fills our tummy, thank you God. Amen."* The rooms also have a different Bible story each week. Some of our recent stories have included: four friends help, Baby Moses, and Daniel in the Lion's Den.



Baby Moses

Finally, we hope you will take a moment to give our bulletin board in the fellowship hall a look. We are

hoping that you will make the center your Valentine this year. We have listed items that the center needs. If you would like to take a heart tag and purchase the items listed, you can turn them into the office (like White Christmas). Thank you in advance for your thoughtfulness and help.

Tami Boyic, Director

Tuesday Night Potluck

The Tuesday Night Potluck continues Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m.

Come and join us in the fellowship hall for food, fellowship, and fun. Let's make this a community outreach by inviting friends and neighbors. The more the merrier! Bring a dish to pass. The Hospitality Team provides tableware and drinks.



180 Group – “Be Our Guest”

“Be our guest, be our guest. Put our service to the test...” Many of you will recognize these lyrics from the Disney movie *Beauty and the Beast*. Lumiere, the fancy candelabra, welcomes Belle to the castle of the Beast.

You might be thinking, “Why would she be writing about a Disney song in a church newsletter?” I wanted to tell you about the inspiration I got from a session I attended at the 180 Turnaround Church Conference last spring.

A few months ago Mike Buckner wrote about the 180 group here at Mason First. This group developed after several of us attended the conference. The purpose was to further discuss and look at ideas for improving our church. Redeemer United Methodist Church in DeWitt was the host of the conference. They went from a “dying” church of about 40 members in the 1980s to a thriving church today.

We each attended various sessions to learn more about how churches can “turn around” declining attendance. We all took away different “insights” from these sessions. The one that spoke to me the most was “Be Our Guest—Customer Service the Disney Way.” Most of us would agree that the “Disney Way” is the epitome of excellence in service. If you have gone to Disney World or Disneyland, you know from experience their guests are number one and they are treated with the utmost respect and hospitality.

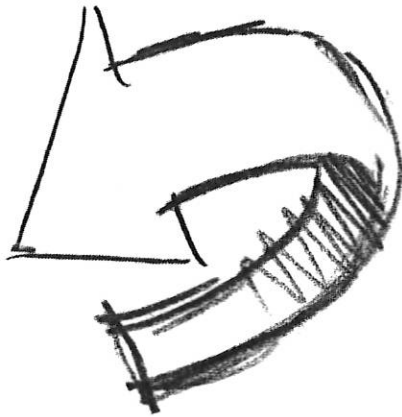
That is what I wish for Mason First. Though we don’t have roller coasters or spinning teacups, I would like visitors and members to feel excited about being here. Do we have enough “variety” in our church service to help everyone who comes through the door feel included? Are all age groups considered? Do people feel respected and welcomed?

I can tell you from personal experience that it takes a LOT for a person to walk through a church door for the first time. It is our interactions with these newcomers that can influence whether a “guest” returns. At the Disney session we were given these statistics: Only 1 of 20 first-time visitors will become integrated into a church. But if they return for a

second time, 1 in 5 will. The importance of being a “welcoming community of faith” is essential to keeping a church vital. We only get once chance to make a first impression. “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:2

Let us remember that the true purpose of welcoming people to Mason First is to help them on their spiritual journey toward faith in Jesus Christ. Not only do we want newcomers to “Be our guest,” but also to find a welcoming community to which they yearn to belong.

Respectfully submitted by Linda Carmer



Tai Chi Begins Mid-February

Medical professionals are constantly recommending Tai Chi as a safe, beneficial exercise for all ages. Tai Chi for Arthritis is just one such program that has multiple health benefits.



Returning participants will begin Monday, February 12 at 3:00 p.m. (no class on President’s Day, February 19).

Seated Tai Chi classes will start Wednesday, February 14, at 2:00 p.m. Beginning Tai Chi classes will start

Wednesday, February 14, at 3:00 p.m. Cost is donation only. If you have any questions, please call Connie Doss at 244-1080.

Inclement Weather Policy

If Mason Public Schools are closed for inclement weather, all church activities for that day will be cancelled. (The Mason Christian Child Care Center has a different schedule regarding inclement weather.)

We will conduct Sunday morning activities unless weather conditions are extremely bad. Should conditions force the cancellation of Sunday activities, appropriate announcements will be provided to local television stations.

Financial Update

Do you remember just one year ago? In January of 2017, I reported that we had reduced the principal owed on our mortgage to \$508,358. Well—in just one year (ONE YEAR!) we have reduced that amount to \$398,247.

Folks, that means that we paid off \$110,111 of our mortgage in 2017. (Woo hoo!)

We have already made one payment in January, so our balance remaining is \$393,960.88.

There is good news on the Ministry shares topic as well. These shares are recalculated each year. In 2017 our total due was \$58,276. For the year we paid \$41,656 or 71.48% of these shares. To put this in perspective, in 2015 we paid 42%. In 2016 we only managed to pay 24% of what was due.

For 2018, our ministry shares have been reduced to \$51,893. This is a reduction of \$6,383 a year or \$532 a month. I think this reduction will help us come a lot closer to paying 100% of these in the future.

Most of these ministry shares go towards mission efforts throughout the world. Here's a quick summary of where these ministry shares go:

- The World Service Fund: This is the heart of our denomination-wide presence, underwriting Christian mission and ministry around the world.
- Interdenominational Cooperation Fund.
- The Ministerial Education Fund: This fund helps thousands of men and women become pastoral leaders in The United Methodist Church.
- Africa University Fund.
- Black College Fund.
- Episcopal Fund: The Episcopal Fund provides economic support for our bishops and their ministries.
- General Administration Fund: The General Administration Fund apportionment supports general church administrative activities.

Glenn Darling,
Mason First UMC Financial Administrator/Treasurer

God Has a Positive Answer

You say: "It's impossible"

God says: All things are possible (Luke 18:27)

You say: "I'm too tired"

God says: I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28-30)

You say: "Nobody really loves me"

God says: I love you (John 3:16 and John 3:34)

You say: "I can't go on"

God says: My grace is sufficient (II Corinthians 12:9 and Psalm 91:15)

You say: "I can't figure things out"

God says: I will direct your steps (Proverbs 3:5-6)

You say: "I can't do it"

God says: You can do all things (Philippians 4:13)

You say: "I'm not able"

God says: I am able (II Corinthians 9:8)

You say: "It's not worth it"

God says: It will be worth it (Romans 8:28)

You say: "I can't forgive myself"

God says: I forgive you (I John 1:9 and Romans 8:1)

You say: "I can't manage"

God says: I will supply all your needs (Philippians 4:19)

You say: "I'm afraid"

God says: I have not given you a spirit of fear (II Timothy 1:7)

You say: "I'm always worried and frustrated"

God says: Cast all your cares on me (I Peter 5:7)

You say: "I'm not smart enough"

God says: I give you wisdom (I Corinthians 1:30)

You say: "I feel all alone"

God says: I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5)

February 2018

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

				<p>1 10:00am Arthritis Exercise 3:00pm Handchime Choir 4:00pm Carolier Choir 5:30pm Weight Watchers</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>4 9:30am Worship 11:00am Faithlink Class 2:30pm Ingham Festival Chorale</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6 1:30pm Clothing Bank 4:00pm Carol Choir 5:30pm Potluck 6:00pm Girl Scouts 6:00pm Clothing Bank</p>	<p>7 9:00am UMW Mission Team 9:15am Great Start 10:30am Great Start 1:00pm Quilters 2:00pm PATH Group 7:00pm Handbells 8:00pm Chancel Choir</p>	<p>8 11:00am Book Discussion Group 3:00pm Handchime Choir 4:00pm Carolier Choir 5:30pm Weight Watchers</p>	<p>9 1:00pm CACS Commodities</p>	<p>10 10:00am "Be My Valentine" Brunch</p>
<p>11 9:30am Worship 11:00am Faithlink Class 2:30pm Ingham Festival Chorale 3:00pm Pop Can Drive Pick Up</p>	<p>12 10:00am Arthritis Exercise 3:00pm Tai Chi</p>	<p>13 4:00pm Carol Choir 5:30pm Potluck</p>	<p>14 9:15am Great Start 10:30am Great Start 1:00pm Quilters 2:00pm Tai Chi--seated class 2:00pm PATH 3:00pm Tai Chi--beginners 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service 8:00pm Chancel Choir</p>	<p>15 Newsletter Deadline 10:00am Arthritis Exercise 3:00pm Handchime Choir 4:00pm Carolier Choir 5:30pm Weight Watchers</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18 9:30am Worship 11:00am Faithlink Class 2:30pm Ingham Festival Chorale 6:30pm Youth Group</p>	<p>19 Church office closed in observance of President's Day 5:30pm Alzheimer's Support Group</p>	<p>20 1:30pm Clothing Bank 1:30pm Clothing Bank 4:00pm Carol Choir 5:30pm Potluck 6:00pm Girl Scouts 7:00pm Lenten Study</p>	<p>21 9:15am Great Start 10:00am Lenten Study 10:30am Great Start 1:00pm Quilters 2:00pm Tai Chi--seated class 2:00pm PATH 3:00pm Tai Chi--beginners 7:00pm Handbells 8:00pm Chancel Choir</p>	<p>22 9:15am Rachel Circle 10:00am Arthritis Exercise 3:00pm Handchime Choir 4:00pm Carolier Choir 5:30pm Weight Watchers</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 10:00am Walk for Warmth</p>
<p>25 9:30am Worship 11:00am Faithlink Class 2:30pm Ingham Festival Chorale 6:30pm Youth Group</p>	<p>26 10:00am Arthritis Exercise 3:00pm Tai Chi 6:00pm Camp Meeting</p>	<p>27 9:00am Ruth Circle 4:00pm Carol Choir 5:30pm Potluck 6:30pm Naomi Circle--Bible Study room 7:00pm Lenten Study</p>	<p>28 9:15am Great Start 10:00am Lenten Study 10:30am Great Start 1:00pm Quilters 1:00pm Deborah Circle 2:00pm PATH 2:00pm Tai Chi--seated class 3:00pm Tai Chi--beginners 7:00pm Handbells 8:00pm Chancel Choir</p>			