



The First Connection

a publication of

Mason First United Methodist Church

LET THERE BE LOVE

**Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God,
and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.**

1 John 4:7



Winter has fully arrived, but it seems like there is an inkling of hope in the air; a reminder that winter is just a season, not a permanent state of being. With the election behind us and the promise of the vaccine ahead of us, there is anticipation of spring. Hope is starting to stir, getting ready to burst forth and blossom, and with it, perhaps, an inclination to be a bit more loving with each other.

While February brings with it Valentine’s Day and the appreciation of romantic love (Eros), it also brings with it Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent – a season of remembering God’s deep and sacrificial love for us (Agape). Lent is often thought of as a solemn season of repentance. Many see it as a time to give something up as an act of sacrifice. But I have always seen it as an opportunity to practice deeper and more committed love to God and to those I sometimes find difficult to love. One thing I have learned: Loving takes intentionality. As we enter this season of Lent and love in a year where we’ve given so much up already, rather than giving something up, I encourage you to take on a discipline of love. Something for God. Something for others. Think about it. Pray about it. Get creative. You’ll be surprised how good it feels to lean towards love!

Rev. Suzanne Goodwin



Ash Wednesday Prayer Walk

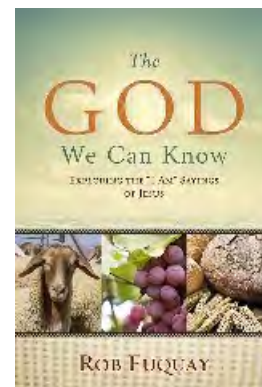
On Ash Wednesday the church will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for prayer and ashes. Fellowship Hall will be set up with multiple prayer stations for you to wander at your own pace praying and meditating on God’s love for you. The final prayer station will include individual packets of ashes for you to place the sign of the cross on your forehead. The sanctuary will also be open for quiet prayer and contemplation.

The God We Can Know

A Lenten Study Series

by United Methodist Pastor, Rob Fuquay

This study of the “I am” sayings of Jesus is a wonderfully thoughtful way to engage and encounter the Savior who asks of his disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Pastor Suzanne will be using this study as inspiration for her preaching series during Lent. A schedule for book studies will be announced during worship announcements and on our Facebook page and website.



ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION *Submitted by Deb Fennell*

Despite the many frustrating impacts of the pandemic to date, our faith calls us to pray that 2021 will finally bring us new opportunities for the re-connection that we all yearn for, perhaps together in person more frequently, as well as further optimizing our newly discovered alternative means of interaction with our Christian faith community.

With that in mind, we are planning a variety of spiritual formation and development experiences for our congregation (and others). It is difficult to find a 'one size fits all' format for presenting these amidst current gathering restrictions, so we have attempted to provide options from which to choose. Below is a listing of classes with a brief description of each, and a timeline for those classes as planned:

Note: All "In Person" classes will be masked and socially distanced until further notice.

CURRENT OFFERINGS:

FaithLink - Sundays, In Person - Weekly focused discussion from a Christian perspective on current events/topics - led by Jon Droscha.

Faith Chat - Zoom/online. Weekly focused discussion on various issues of faith.

Disciple Class - In Person. Weekly Bible study, focusing on the Old Testament - led by Dennis Howe.

UPCOMING OFFERINGS: (Late Winter through Spring)

Study Buddies - Phone-based study, via reading resource segments each week, and then having a phone discussion with a designated 'buddy'; will start with Grace: A Workbook by Dr. Mary Franzen Clark. Together, Study Buddies decide on day/time to converse.

The God We Can Know: Exploring the "I AM" Sayings of Jesus by Rob Fuquay. Zoom/online. Lenten Study. Two options offered -- during a daytime hour and an evening hour. Seven week study.

Faithful & Inclusive by Rob Fuquay - In person. Video-based class will be led by Pastor Suzanne Goodwin, with assistance from me (Deb), focusing on how United Methodists can be both obedient to God's Word and fully welcoming to LGBTQ persons in the church. Video presentation by the author, followed by group discussion each week. Six week study.

UPCOMING OFFERING: (Summer) Topic and leaders to be announced later.

UPCOMING OFFERING: (Fall)

Disciple Class - In person. Bible study resumes, focusing on New Testament. Led by Dennis Howe.

FaithLink and Faith Chat (see above)

The World is About to Turn: Mending a Nation's Broken Faith by Paul Ingram and Rick Rouse. The authors observe aspects of our divisive times, explore their implications, and discuss ideas for minimizing their impacts. Seven week study.

Advent Study - beginning in mid- to late- November. Study book to be announced later.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Christian Sympathy to:

- Thelma Hines on the deaths of her brother, Stanley Kranz on January 7, and her husband, Dick, on January 24.

Prayers & Get Well Wishes to:

- Lois Smith recovering from hip surgery.
- Gordon Karlake recovering after a hospital stay.
- Lew Tibbits recovering from COVID.
- Ken Guettler in his cancer battle.

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

Thinking of members and friends in assisted living, rehab/nursing facilities, or in hospice care:

- Brookdale, Haslett: Dick Magsig
- Green Acres, Mason: Bev Eccleston & Beth Grosshans
- Holt Senior Care, Holt: George Dunivon
- Ingham Co. Medical Care Facility, Okemos: Char Bush and John Dodge
- The Willows of Okemos: Lew Tibbits
- Vista Springs Edgewood, Lansing: Garrett and Barbara Wheaton
Vic Whipple

~ HELP NEEDED ~



We are looking for a Lead Toddler Teacher!

If you know of any qualified person who loves working with children and might be interested, please have them contact the Center at 676-6588 or email mcccc@masonfirst.org

OUR PANTRY MAY BE "TINY" BUT THE IMPACT IS NOT!

Food insecurity is a real problem in every community. Thank you to everyone who has responded to our plea for helping to keep the pantry stocked. You can put non-perishable items in it anytime. Many people have called the church to see what can/should go in the pantry. Here is a list of the best items to donate:

- ◆ Beans (Canned or Dry)
- ◆ Canned Vegetables / Fruit
- ◆ Crackers / Cookies
- ◆ Granola Bars / Nuts
- ◆ Boxed Potatoes
- ◆ Rice / Mac-n-Cheese
- ◆ Powdered Milk
- ◆ Pasta / Sauce
- ◆ Peanut Butter / Jelly
- ◆ Soup / Stews / Chili
- ◆ Whole Grain Cereal
- ◆ Canned Meat / Chicken / Tuna / Hash
- ◆ Meals in a Box (Hamburger/Tuna Helper)
- ◆ Applesauce (in plastic pkg. — not glass)



If you don't wish to shop but still want to help, you can send funds with your offering. Simply indicate the amount you want allocated to "Tiny Pantry" and we will pass it along to Tim Crandall, our designated super shopper!

**METHODIST
MYSTERY**



WHO IS THIS CUTE KID?

YOUR HINTS:
This Mr. Fix-it thinks "a party isn't a party without little weenies — they're good for ya."

He is also known in certain social circles for making caramel corn that is legendary!



SEWING SEEDS OF HOPE!

This past Christmas, the Quilting Group teamed up with UMW to donate dozens of festively wrapped quilts to residents of Porter House in Lansing. We want to do it again, only with a goal of 100 quilts this December! We know it can be done, with your help. Quilts will be lap size, 40"x70". We need quilters, and supply donations including fabric (100% cotton, please).

Call Claudia Ireland at 676-5531 if you can help as a quilter or to supply fabric. If you don't sew but would like to help defray some of the costs for fabric and other needed materials, you can send a donation to the church. Please mark it "Quilting Project" so that office staff can make sure the funds get to the quilters!

IF YOU HAVE



PLEASE JOIN US FOR an IN-PERSON MISSION TEAM MEETING



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10 at 6:30pm

Fellowship Hall * Socially Distanced * Masks Required

RSVP to the church office by Tuesday, 2/9 if you will attend so we can set up the room comfortably. Please Jean at 676-9449 or email jean@masonfirst.org

OUR CENTER & HEARTS ARE FULL

Tami Boyic, MCCCC Director

Greetings to everyone! The center currently has 27 students, serving 18 families. We were blessed to be able to do something really special for each child to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The generous women of the quilting circle gave each child their own quilt for Christmas. The stories were wonderful! One parent told us that their child carried around the quilt for days like Linus from Charlie Brown. Another family told us that the quilts have become a part of their bedtime ritual, each child waiting to be covered up by their new "special blanket." Yet another family posted a picture on their Facebook page with each of their children wrapped up in their new quilts.

As if that generosity wasn't enough, each employee of the center also received a quilt. Many had seen the children's quilts and commented on how beautiful they were and how lucky the children were to receive them. They were moved when they were also included in the quilters' thoughtful gesture.

Usually at this time of year, the center does a special board in the social hall for Valentine's Day. We would post items the center needs on paper hearts, so congregants could choose an item to donate, then bring it to the church. Due to COVID, we are unable to put up the board, but we are hoping you will still be able to get our year off to a good start. Below is a list of items the center needs. If you would like to choose an item to purchase for us, there will be a bin in the church office to put them in. Thank you in advance to those who are able to help us.

- Boxed Cereal (Cheerios, Chex, Froot Loops)
- Canned peaches/pears in natural juice
- Fruit snacks
- Laundry detergent
- Batteries/any size
- Kleenex
- Ziplock bags (any size)
- Meijer gift card



IMPACTING ONE LIFE

Mike Buckner, Missions Chair

For those who are not aware, our local mission work is sometimes shared with folks from other churches. In the majority of cases, with friends from the Community Church. I received a message from a member of their missions team that was actually meant for us — specifically for the Quilting Group and UMW who had wrapped quilts in December. I delivered these wrapped gifts to the Porter House, an apartment complex in Lansing that serves low-income and/or disabled senior citizens.



Here is the message I received: *"Just spoke with Nicole from Porter House in Lansing and she shared that a resident came down to the office and told the property manager that the gift he received at Christmas from the church, a quilt, saved his life. He was considering suicide and when Nicole knocked on his door and gave him a quilt, he knew someone cared. Thanks for saving and changing lives and giving HOPE by serving those in need. Praise God."*

This message is proof that sometimes all it takes is a little love and a little effort to change the course of a life. One must wonder how often the little things make a difference. THANK YOU to the quilters and UMW members who graced this life, and the lives of dozens of others through the gift of a quilt and caring.

On another note: Lansing has opened the park once again and I was able to go down with a couple of my grandsons to help serve during "Dinner" on January 10. It was another success — sleeping Bags, heavy coats, boots, gloves, stocking caps and socks were gone in no time.

A huge thank you to those that came and served those less fortunate. This was the largest turnout of helpers since we began serving. Thanks to Mark Page and Dawn Holland for helping me load. Marti Abbott, Karen Page, Amy, Cameron, and Noah Etzel, Eric and Ethan Rice, and Erica Jachalke for helping to serve those in need. It was great to see youth serving in this capacity and I look forward to being with them in the future. Erica has some great ideas!

The next DINNER IN THE PARK is FEBRUARY 14.

Let's Talk Discipleship

Submitted by Roger Nelson, Chair of Evangelism Team

"Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Who knows discipleship best? Is it not Jesus? His approach to discipleship was both effective and simple. He recruited disciples, trained them and unleashed the movement of the Gospel through them. He left the message in their hands. And now... ours.

Jesus spoke to the crowd: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

The Gospels demonstrate his discipleship process. In the Gospel of Luke, three distinct phases can be noted: 1) *Calling*; 2) *Building* and 3) *Sending*. First, the Calling – Jesus called the twelve, and provided them with opportunities to encounter and experience him, interacting, developing relationship, and achieving a measure of trust. Then he asked each one of them to follow him.

Once the disciples were on board, he provided opportunities to build their faith. This included "critical teaching, where they learned about an eternal view, rejoicing, loving enemies, not judging others, and bearing spiritual fruit." Then they observed him on the front line of his ministry, preaching and healing people, raising the dead, and more. They learned how to treat people. They saw his love and compassion towards all, especially people whom society shunned. He met with his disciples to clarify, discuss, counsel and encourage.

Finally, Jesus sent his disciples into the world, handing his ministry over to them. *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."* (John 15:5) Jesus provided many opportunities to grow into their newfound roles as disciples.

Authors of *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*, Rainer and Geiger observed, "After hundreds of consultations into local churches and a significant research project, we have concluded that church leaders need to simplify. Churches with a simple process for reaching and maturing people are expanding the Kingdom."



Your UMW Leadership team has been at work putting together the program booklet for 2021. Please understand that with these uncertain times, we have tentatively planned so that if and when we can meet again in person, we will have a plan.

We would like you to be thinking outside the box on possible fundraisers we might do this year, like the "Bakeless Bake Sale" that was so successful last year. Let us know your ideas, please. Even in these unusual times, we are about Mission and helping each other in whatever way we can. Sometimes a phone call is just what someone needs. A friendly voice of encouragement. You might even consider writing someone a note. You know with a pen on paper, remember those? We are all in this unprecedented time, need support and pray it never happens again.

My daily calendar for today says: Tomorrow is not promised us so let us take today, and make the very most of it the once we pass this way. Just speak aloud the kindly thought and do the kindly deed, and try to see and understand some fellow creature's need. Tomorrow is not promised us, nor any other day, so let us make the most of it the once we pass this way.

Valentine's Day is just around the corner — "what the World needs now is Love sweet love" — and plenty of it! Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with ME!

Submitted by Joyce Plumhoff, Mason First UMW President

Who does that again?...

Submitted by Glenn Darling, Financial Administrator

With Marilyn's retirement and Jean taking over as office administrator, we have had to again sort through who does certain tasks in the church office. This is especially important when it comes to handling the hard-earned money that comes in from the congregation in the form of tithes and offerings, as well as payments for books and other programs or missions.

When money is brought into the church office for any reason, it is given to Jean Bement, our Office Administrator. She receives all checks and cash, regardless of the purpose. She has a couple of people who help her count all the receipts on a weekly basis. Be sure to thank Ruth Waltz and David Gunns who donate their time to come in and help Jean perform this task.

As Jean counts all the funds received throughout the week, she records them on her computer. She uses these records to send out the quarterly and annual giving summaries. If you ever have a question about your pledge or what appears on your giving statement, Jean has the answer!

Once the receipts are counted for the week, Jeff our building manager takes them to the bank and deposits them. The deposit slips are then given to me along with a report from Jean that tells me what the deposited funds were designated for. Most of our receipts are for the weekly tithes and offerings from the congregation. However, funds

come in in a regular basis for lots of other purposes such as missions, book purchases for education classes, donations to the tiny pantry, memorials, just to name a few.

So, to summarize – all money that comes into the church goes straight to Jean. Once it is deposited in the bank, my work as Treasurer begins. I use the report from Jean to put these deposits into the categories that they were designated for. Donations designated for the Operating fund are used to pay the utility bills and salaries. Mission contributions all go directly to the designated mission. All donations for Path-to-Promise go straight into a separate fund that is used to pay down the balance of our mortgage.

This is just a small peek into what goes on in the office on a regular basis. Even though we are not holding in-person services right now due to COVID, the business of the church continues. The day care is up and operating each weekday and just like at your house, bills for the church still arrive almost every day. All the members of our congregation have been exceedingly faithful in keeping up with their tithes and offerings during these rocky COVID times. Thanks to all of you, when things start to open back up, we will be able to offer even more in the way of mission, education, and ministry to all of God's children here in the greater Mason area.



Tithes and offerings

Church Council

Submitted by Pastor Suzanne Goodwin

What is Church Council and why should I care? By dictate of the UMC Book of Discipline, the Church Council is the body of leadership that provides for visioning, goal-setting, planning and organization of the church's ministries and programs. In other words, it's the administrative body that guides the mission and ministry of the church. Our Church Council is made up of the leaders of the various committees as well as some at-large members who provide representation of the membership of the church.

The Church Council met on January 25 to approve a church budget for 2021, to review activity of the church over the past year, and to renew our efforts to define a mission statement, core values, and set some short and long-range goals for our church.

Despite the challenges of a pandemic, we were pleased to realize that the church as a whole persevered to find new ways to meet our most important goals of mission and ministry over the past year. We received new members, we learned to use technology to meet and stay connected, and we continued to be generous and missional. We have agreed that the primary goal for the foreseeable future will be to reach out and connect with families in our community. To that end, all missions and ministries will be tuning their activity to efforts inclusive of families.

Church Council has scheduled a meeting for March 15, the purpose of which is to work specifically on visioning and goal-setting.



SUNDAY SCHOOL SONG

(Here are the words — see if Mom, Dad or someone else remembers the tune!)

I'VE GOT THE JOY!

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart,
Down in my heart — down in my heart!

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart,
Down in my heart to stay!



And I'm so happy, so very happy,
I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

And I'm so happy, so very happy,
I've got the love of Jesus in my heart!



A friend in Jesus

In the Bible, Jesus shares what it means to be a true friend.

Directions: Use the heart key to fill in the missing vowels from John 15:14, 17, NIV.

“Y _ _ r _ my fr _ _ nds _ f
y _ _ d _ wh _ t _ c _ mm _ nd. ...
Th _ s _ s my c _ mm _ nd:
L _ v _ _ _ ch _ th _ r.”
JOHN 15:14, 17, NIV

Answer: “You are my friends if you do what I command... This is my command: Love each other.” John 15:14, 17, NIV

WITH LOVE FROM ABOVE

The Bible is full of special words from our loving God.

Directions: Using the messages on the candy hearts, complete the Bible verses (all NIV) below.

God is our _ _ _ _ _ and _ _ _ _ _
an ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

“Surely I am with you _ _ _ _ _.” Matthew 28:20

And the _ _ _ _ _ of God ... will guard
your hearts and your minds in
_ _ _ _ _ . Philippians 4:7

Whoever lives in _ _ _ _ _ lives in God,
and God in them. 1 John 4:16

_ _ _ _ _ love drives out fear. 1 John 4:18

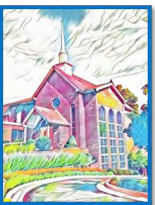
Answer: refuge, strength, Christ Jesus, peace, love, Perfect

Bible Quiz

The precise number varies depending on the Bible version, but roughly how many times does the word “love” occur in the Old and New Testaments combined?

A. 200-300
B. 400-500
C. 600-700
D. 800-900

Answer: C



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Return Service Requested



The COVID pandemic continues to hinder our ability to safely hold in-person worship services. We look forward to a time when we can join together again in our sanctuary.

Until then, we encourage you to watch the service online. You can click on the "Sunday Worship" button on the website, www.masonfirst.org or find the YouTube link on the church's official Facebook page

[Mason First United Methodist Church Connection](#)

Ash Wednesday is February 17. In place of the normal service to mark this important day as the start of the Lenten season, Pastor Suzanne would like to offer a Prayer Walk here inside the church. Please see her article inside for more details on this experience.

February 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 10:00am Faith Chat (via Zoom) 6:30pm Disciple Class in Social Hall (masks) 7:00pm Faith Chat (via Zoom)	3	4	5	6
7 9:30am Worship -- Online 11:00am Faith Link Class (via Zoom)	8	9 10:00am Faith Chat (via Zoom) 6:30pm Disciple Class in Social Hall (masks) 7:00pm Faith Chat (via Zoom)	10 6:30pm Mission Team Meeting in Social Hall (masks please)	11	12 DEADLINE to submit articles/material for March NEWSLETTER	13
14 DINNER IN THE PARK Mission Service Opportunity 9:30am Worship -- Online 11:00am Faith Link Class (via Zoom)	15	16 10:00am Faith Chat (via Zoom) 6:30pm Disciple Class in Social Hall (masks) 7:00pm Faith Chat (via Zoom)	17 10:00am Ash Wednesday -- Prayer Walk set up in Social Hall and Sanctuary Open until 8:00PM	18	19	20
21 9:30am Worship -- Online 11:00am Faith Link Class (via Zoom)	22	23 10:00am Faith Chat (via Zoom) 6:30pm Disciple Class in Social Hall (masks) 7:00pm Faith Chat (via Zoom)	24	25	26	27
28 9:30am Worship -- Online 11:00am Faith Link Class (via Zoom)						



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Lauren Colby	1	Monique Leonard	15
Shadd Barnes	2	D.J. Ireland	15
Kevin Gunns	2	Judy Marlan	15
David Tuthill	2	Jen Harnick	16
Victoria Smith	3	Mary Berneske	17
Jennifer Calhoun	4	Cilinda Stroud	17
Martha Allen	5	Robert Hundley	18
Brian Hankey	5	Erika Jachalke	18
Dick Hedglen	5	Logan Guthrie	19
Ella Bayer	6	Julia Droscha	19
Nancy Dunivon	8	Lynda Carlson	20
Dick Magsig	9	Doug Dancer	20
Suellyn Vandesande	9	Nancy Collins	22
Dwayne Bagley	10	Austin Lautzenheiser	22
Tim Crandall	10	Joe Pulver	22
Jason Darling	11	Millie Berridge	22
Jamie Whitmyer	11	Debra Darling	23
Alexis Bayer	11	Evan Raymond	27
Greg McDonald	12	Martha Hosek	28
Lynn Whipple	13	Connie Bartlett	28
Lee Heaviland	14	Sally Beebe	29
Emerson Thorburn	14	Kristin Phillips	29



Linda & Charles Simpson	12
Larry & Gail Ried	14
Jerry & Dorothy Spink	14
Mark & Kim Wolfgang	24
John & Jan Dodge	25

If your birthday or anniversary is not listed here and you would like it to be, please contact the church office so we can add it to our records and publish it.

Thank You notes received by the church are posted on the bulletin board in the hall across from the kitchen. Current notes posted are from Jeff and Marilyn Lautzenheiser and Jean Bement.