



# The First Connection

a publication of

Mason First United Methodist Church

*Growing in Faith, Serving Others, Sharing the Love of Christ*

## Living With a Useful Christianity

Although we find ourselves in the middle of another COVID shutdown, I am so very grateful that we were able to celebrate Palm Sunday and Easter together in the sanctuary. It was a joy to have the children help lead the waving of the palms during the opening hymn on Palm Sunday, and to see the colorful butterflies they created amid the beautiful and fragrant flowers on Easter morning. The trumpet fanfare heralded the good news that Christ is risen! Alleluia! He is risen indeed!

Easter is an amazing celebratory splash of color and music that reminds us that we, too, are alive. Now the question is, how do we live as Easter people every single day? Even those who are long-time Christians with deeply devoted practices of faithfulness sometimes forget how useful our faithfulness is to our everyday living. It's way too easy to relegate our relationship with God to Sunday mornings and forget that God is with us every single day, just waiting for us to tune our thoughts and actions to the good news that gives us abundant life.

Can you imagine having the best life tools available to you and not using them?

Beginning Sunday, May 2, I'll be launching a new preaching series called *Useful Christianity*, the purpose of which is to explore all the ways that a faithful relationship with God can enrich our lives and bring out the best in us! Please join us for livestreaming worship on Sunday mornings or you can access the recorded service on YouTube, our Facebook page, or our website. And don't forget to share the good news with others who may need to know that Christianity isn't just a Sunday morning thing!



*Pastor Suzanne*



## Useful Christianity

- May 2      *What makes the Good News good?*
- May 9      *Good Relationships & Healthy Perspectives (Mother's Day)*
- May 16     *Strength in Adversity*
- May 23     *Our Best Selves and a Better World (Graduation Sunday)*
- May 30     *A Legacy of Life*

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What a glorious thing to be able to worship in the sanctuary for the four weeks leading up to Easter! Special Thanks to everyone who helped to fill the space with beautiful spring flowers. It was such a wonderful way to celebrate new life, while honoring our loved ones, both living and those who live on in precious memories.



The seemingly extra number of very warm spring days had all of the flowering trees at church and around the square in full bloom very early. Pastor Suzanne took advantage of a perfectly cloudless, sunny day and took several great photos... a week later, it was snowing flakes as big as the flowers. (Jean refused to take a photo of that stuff from inside the office but Pastor took one just to prove that it happened!)



### Welcome Will Hartsock – Our New Building Manager

We are so pleased to introduce William (Will) Hartsock as our new building manager! Since Jeff Lautzenheiser announced his intent to retire back in August, we have been searching for just the right person for this important position on our staff. It was truly a pleasure to get to know Will, a retired combat veteran who served in Iraq.

Will comes to us with the benefit of his military experience, as well as experiences in groundskeeping and construction.

Will is originally from California, but his wife, Amanda grew up in Mason. They returned to the Mason area in 2019 to help care for Amanda’s family. Will and Amanda, and their brand new baby daughter, Calliope, will be residing in the apartment above CACS next door to the church. He is very excited about making Mason First his new career.

Please join SPRC in extending a warm welcome to Will and Amanda and baby Calliope!



### CHURCH DAYCARE HAS JOB OPENING



Mason Christian Child Care Center is still in need of a full-time Lead Teacher!

If you know of a qualified person who loves working with toddlers (age 18 months to 3 years) and might be interested, please have them contact

Tami at 676-6588 or email her at

[mcccc@masonfirst.org](mailto:mcccc@masonfirst.org)

Thank you!

## Join the 30-day Christianity Challenge!

In conjunction with Pastor Suzanne's May sermon series *Useful Christianity*, you are invited and encouraged to take part in this 30-day challenge. It's pretty simple — From May 1-30, you journal each day about how your faith works in your everyday life. You don't necessarily have to answer the specific questions below — they are just “starters” in case you need them.



How does faith help you meet challenges? How does faith help you make decisions? Do you pray about them? Do you feel that living your faith holds you to a higher standard? Do you find it challenging to meet that standard? Is that standard self-imposed, or does it come from thinking about how others perceive how you live up to their standards of faith?



It would seem spring has sprung in April this year — a welcome treat of new growth, and a renewed season of Hope. We are planning to have a Leadership meeting on May 5, at 9:00AM in the Chapel. However; as of this writing, the church is closed again for in-person activities. We will wait and see the if the church is reopened by then, contingent upon declining COVID infection rates.

May 9 is Mother's Day. A time to remember not only our own mother, but all of those “other” mothers in our lives. Shortly after moving to Mason, Mary Hayes, Ruth Dart and Mysie Perkins made sure that I got involved with UMW, as well as teaching elementary Sunday School. Helen Bullen and Helen Frederick taught me how to make no fail pie crust (although I never used lard). Clara Belle Burgess, Charity Bergland, Doris Austin, Phyllis Stid, Ethel Woodard and many others having guided me along my faith journey. Ina Lyon is still my mentor.

Think about Your “other” mothers that have influenced your life. As we have been blessed, by having those special women in our lives, we too can be a blessing to others. Be careful how you live. You can be the only Bible some people ever read.

*Joyce Plumhoff, UMW President*

## Weary Not!

One of my favorite choir anthems is called “Weary Not” and our own chancel choir has sung it at least once in church. You can hear a very nice version of it by the Mormon Tabernacle choir if you search on YouTube. It begins like this: “If the way be full of trial, weary not.” I think that is maybe the best encouragement we can share as we struggle through the final weeks and months of this COVID pandemic. We all can use a great big dose of inspiration and hope as we search for the end of all this upheaval.



It was such a joy to be singing with the choir and practicing handbells again, then a huge resurgence of the virus and the more contagious variant forced us to put that on hold again, along with all in-person church activities. But spring is in the air – the trees here at church are in full bloom and there is optimism that the end of the pandemic is in sight.

So, listen to this great anthem if you get the chance – we all need something uplifting from time to time. And remember the encouraging words:” There awaits a brighter day – to all those who weary not!”



## Faithful and Inclusive – The Bible, Sexuality & the United Methodist Church New Dates to be Announced When the COVID Surge is Over

Well, we had originally planned to hold this six-week program beginning April 11, but the COVID surge and the decision to suspend in-person worship and other activities has caused us to delay. When we are able to reschedule, it will be facilitated by Pastor Suzanne and Lay Leader Deb Fennell. For those who have already called or emailed the office to sign up, you don't need to do so again. The same is true for those who expressed an interest in joining us via Zoom rather than in person. We have the original lists and will contact you when we have new dates for the class. If you haven't already signed up and want to be added to either list (in-person or Zoom), please call Jean at the church office 676-9449 or send an email to [jean@masonfirst.org](mailto:jean@masonfirst.org).



*From Mike Buckner, Chairperson & Jill Bell, Vice Chair of Mission Committee*

In last month's newsletter, we outlined the steps taken each month as we go as a members of a mission team to help distribute goods at "Dinner in the Park" at Reutter Park in Lansing. This is an opportunity to help the homeless get necessities and to share in fellowship with them, simply showing that people really do care.

Many of you answered the call (THANK YOU!) for a special list of items to be collected during April, which will be distributed in special bags to women on Mother's Day, May 9 — this falls on the second Sunday of the month, which is the designated day for Dinner in the Park. We will be reaching out via email and Facebook to give you an opportunity to come to church and take part in filling 50 bags for that day, so keep an eye out for messages relating to it.

During the month of May, we will collect items for men, with a plan to fill 50 bags for distribution on June 13, a week before Father's Day: The list went out on SignUp Genius, and several items have already been reserved by folks planning to purchase and drop them off by June 6 to allow for bag assembly. For those still wishing to help us fill men's bags, here are some of the things we need:

**New Socks & Underwear \* New or gently used short sleeved or T-shirts, shorts and tennis shoes  
New toiletry items: toothpaste, combs, deodorant**

**ONE FINAL REQUEST — Mike Buckner will be out of town on June 13, unavailable with his truck to haul tables and boxes of items to Ruetter Park. He is looking for a sub to take his place — and helpers to load and unload.**



**Looking ahead ... Please put Saturday, August 7 on your calendar for a**

**BACK-TO-SCHOOL JUBILEE!**

**out in the parking lot here at Mason First**

Our goal is to provide those who need help with back-to-school necessities with those items in a fun, interactive way. We would like to provide new clothing items like socks and underwear, as well as have tables and racks full of gently used clothing and shoes. We also plan to provide backpacks filled with supplies.

In addition to this, we are interested in providing haircuts to kids, so we would love to have licensed barbers/stylists who might volunteer a couple hours of their time toward this endeavor. Finally, what is a Jubilee without food? We would like to provide simple fair like hot dogs, chips, fruit, cookies, and drinks for everyone.

What we need is for you to think about how you can utilize your gifts and graces to help make this August event a welcoming one for all. We will need LOTS OF HELP to serve our community and hope many of you will step up to the plate. While the Missions Committee is spearheading this, we are looking for folks to be in charge of different aspects of the event. So, if you get a call, please prayerfully consider our request! THANK YOU!



## MOVING FORWARD! A Note from Laurie Reed, Director of Family Ministries

As the saying goes, “my feet are getting wet!” This is a good thing, and plans are coming together for Family Ministries programming. One of my first challenges is to get connected with the kids in this congregation. Yes, the current circumstances make it a little trickier, but I am determined! I would love to include your children, so please contact me at the church anytime during regular office hours, or drop me an email with their names, ages, and anything else you would like me to know. The church office number is 517.676.9449 and my email is [laurie@masonfirst.org](mailto:laurie@masonfirst.org).

By mid-April, the Sr. High Youth were eager to resume meeting in their recently renovated space, but unfortunately, Covid numbers prevented that from happening. Plan B is to meet outside on the hill on Sunday evenings. Everyone agrees that the new fire pit is great, and we cannot wait to test it out! All Sr. High Youth are invited to join us for food, fun and fellowship, once we determine that we can meet safely (when COVID numbers go down). Masks and social distancing are required, of course. If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to give me a call at the church or email me.

And how about those awesome Middle Schoolers? We surely do not want to leave them out! We will be planning some activities especially for them. Pastor Suzanne is planning to offer a Confirmation Class for this age group a little way down the road as well. If you have a child in this age range, please let me know!

Since traditional VBS is not likely to happen this summer, we are currently looking into a fun, outdoor alternative. We will keep you posted on that.

**Mark your calendars for Wednesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>. That is the last day of school for Mason, and we are planning a “School’s Out! Drive-Thru Celebration.” This will be open to anyone in the community, and ice cream will be involved! If you are interested in helping to plan this event or in volunteering that day, please let me know as we will need lots of people to help pull off this fun event. We will also need YOU to help spread the word to the community.**

I invite anyone with young children to check the church’s You Tube channel for an introductory video of myself which should be posted in the near future. You can find the link on our Facebook Page which is *Mason first United Methodist Church Connection*.

I would love to have input from parents on what types of programming they would like to see for their children going forward. Feel free to call me at the church during office hours or drop me an email. If you feel compelled to volunteer with the Family Ministries programming in any capacity, please, please, please let me know. I am sure there is something meaningful for you to do!



## FABULOUS FUN FINANCIAL FACTS from Glenn Darling, Financial Administrator

The balance owed on our church mortgage is now down to \$141,610.38 as of our April mortgage payment. That puts us on track to pay off the mortgage sometime around June or July of 2022 as long as giving to Path-to-Promise remains steady.

We are doing great on our ministry shares. Did you know that there are District Ministry shares as well as Michigan Conference Ministry shares? Well, there are – and we have already paid our Mid-Michigan District ministry shares in full for 2021, thanks to action by the Finance Committee last month. We are also paying 1/12 of our Conference ministry shares each month so these will be paid in full by the end of the year.



Our Capital Improvement fund just surpassed the \$20,000 mark this past month. These funds will be used for the next big project – most likely the roof over the offices and chapel. The Trustees have accumulated sufficient funds to begin replacing the ancient windows in the office area. The windows are on order and will be installed sometime in May or June.

All this is thanks to you and your generous contributions that support our mission here in the heart of Mason to grow in faith, serve others, and share the love of Christ.

### SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS IN

Thank you to the graduating seniors and current college students who turned in applications and all other documentation by the April 30 deadline. The committee will meet to determine the recipients. We will announce them during the church on Sunday, May 23 when we also will honor graduating seniors from our congregation.

The scholarship program is one other way that we bless our youth, recognizing their commitment to education, and their contributions to church and community.

### METHODIST

### Y S T E R Y

### WHO IS THIS DARLING LITTLE DAME?



#### YOUR HINTS:

She's been mistaken for Jacqueline Kennedy, with her impeccable fashion sense. She is a long-time member of UMW. Just like the sweet girl pictured here in her saddle shoes, she can still work a phone like nobody's business. Finally, she and her husband were married here at Mason First, nearly 50 years ago!

(In case you wondered, March's "MM" was Dennis Howe.)

### CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

#### Deepest Sympathy is extended to:

- The family of Philip Workman, who passed away at his son's home in Traverse City on April 21. Phil and wife Sharon (who passed away in June 2020) were active in the church for many years.

#### Prayers & Healing Wishes to:

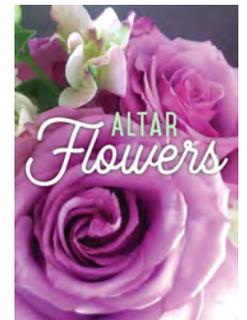
- Dorothy Spink as she recuperates after a hospital stay at her daughter Jayne's home in Charlotte, with support from husband Jerry and Jayne's family.
- Sharon Whipple who is healing from carpal tunnel surgery.
- Ruth Judd who is recovering at home after recent surgery.
- Pastor Suzanne as she is undergoing treatment for kidney stones.
- Those who have been battling COVID.

Please note: 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, and hospice care:

- 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

Do you have a special occasion you would like to recognize by providing altar flowers and having an announcement in the bulletin? If you do, there is a flower calendar posted on the hallway bulletin board (across from the kitchen) with the rest of the available dates for 2021. When we are once again back in-person at church, you are welcome to sign up yourself on Sunday morning. In the meantime, if you have a particular future Sunday in mind, you can call or email Jean at the office and she can check to see if it is available and sign you up.



### TINY PANTRY DONATIONS HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS



Some of you may be wondering how the Tiny Pantry stays stocked each day. Our church is certainly blessed by other members of the Mason community who buy and extra bag of food and stop by periodically to donate. We are equally blessed to receive donations in the offering envelopes that are put into a fund. Tim Crandall is our super shopper and will request funds from time to time so he can buy items which are stored in bins just inside the circle drive door. Tim and his wife Lynda check the pantry during the week and use these items to fill it.

Please, if you are planning to drop items off, make sure they are non-perishable (canned or boxed) and that they do not require refrigeration. Please also be mindful of food safety and "best if used by" dates. THANKS!

If you have a small odd job, a minor plumbing repair, or need a ride to an appointment, call Brian Hankey at 676-2463 or the church office, and the Helping Hands Crew will do their best to be of service to you.





# PUZZLE

## WORTHY OF RESPECT

On Mother's Day, we celebrate our moms and everything they do for us. How does God tell us to treat our moms?



Directions: Using the key below, fill in the blanks to complete Deuteronomy 5:16, NIV.

A	C	D	M	N	O
E	F	G	P	R	S
H	I	L	T	U	Y

" \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_  
 and your \_\_\_\_\_,  
 the \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ has  
 \_\_\_\_\_."  
 5:16, NIV  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## MAKE MOM A BOUQUET OF "FOREVER FRESH FLOWERS"

### What you need:

- White coffee filters (round)
- Washable markers
- Green chenille stems (pipe cleaners)
- Water in a spray bottle

### What you do:

1. Color with markers on the coffee filters – as many as you want, depending on how fluffy you want your flower(s) to be.
2. Lay them on a wire baking rack over a dark towel or across the sink so you won't stain what is underneath them. Spray them with water so the colors will "run" on the filters. Then allow them to dry completely.
3. Once they are dry, pile them together (as many layers as you want) and poke your flower stem through all the layers. Then poke it through again, kind of like you are putting thread through button holes. Twist it around in the back to secure all your flower petals.
4. You can leave your flowers just as they are, or take scissors and cut around to make layers of individual petals.



Answer: "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you." Deuteronomy 5:16, NIV

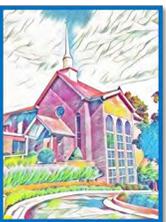


### Wonderful Mother

God made a wonderful mother,  
 A mother who never grows old;  
 He made her smile of the sunshine,  
 And He molded her heart of pure gold;  
 In her eyes He placed bright shining stars,  
 In her cheeks fair roses you see;  
 God made a wonderful mother,  
 And He gave that dear mother to me.

### And Grandma's too...

While we honor all our mothers  
 with words of love and praise.  
 While we tell about their goodness  
 and their kind and loving ways.  
 We should also think of Grandma,  
 she's a mother too, you see....  
 For she mothered my dear mother  
 as my mother mothers me.



## *Mason First United Methodist Church*

*Growing in Faith, Serving Others, Sharing the Love of Christ*

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[www.masonfirst.org](http://www.masonfirst.org)

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## **WHEN WILL WE BE ABLE TO WORSHIP IN-PERSON AGAIN (FOR GOOD)? THIS IS THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION!**

We enjoyed a four-week run of in-person worship from March 14 through Easter Sunday. It was so nice to be together again, though masked and socially distanced. Then, the COVID test rates started climbing higher and higher. Coupled with the temporary closing of several Mason businesses due to staff infections, it became clear that continuing in-person worship simply was not possible. The health and safety of our congregation and any potential guest at church is paramount.

With the consensus of Church Council, the decision was made to suspend in-person worship again. We initially thought this would be just through the month of April, but the infection numbers remain high enough that prudence dictates we should continue online only worship for the foreseeable future. Hopefully with more and more people having access to vaccines and exercising more caution in public, we will get closer to achieving something close to herd immunity.

Until then, we encourage you to watch the service online. You can click on the “Sunday Worship” button on the website, [www.masonfirst.org](http://www.masonfirst.org) or find the YouTube link on the church’s official Facebook page, Mason First United Methodist Church Connection.

Continue to pray for all those affected by this virus — those who mourn lost loved ones, those battling the illness (or the after effects of it), and everyone working in the health care field on the front lines.

# may

## BIRTHDAYS

Grant Giguere.....	1
Patricia Fackler.....	2
Henry Day .....	2
Aaron Dickinson.....	4
Margaret Talboys .....	5
Jennifer Armstrong.....	5
Allison Langschwager .....	6
Ashley Baker .....	6
Joanne Guettler .....	6
Janet Brewer.....	7
Julie Spyke .....	8
Teddy McCully .....	8
John Richard .....	9
Joan Mills .....	9
Liam Bagley .....	9
Diane McDonald.....	10
Colleen Leonard .....	10
Elaine Ferris.....	11
Andrew Bayer .....	12
Sam Calhoun .....	12
Evelyn Darling.....	16
Bob Beaune.....	17
Ann Tucker .....	18
Nick Rogers.....	19
Grace Whipple .....	19
Adrienne Moulton .....	20
Corey Reed .....	21
Payton Ball .....	22
Mark Carmer .....	23
Betsy Colburn .....	23
Jeff Lautzenheiser .....	23
Mark Wolfgang .....	23
Bob Bartlett .....	24
Alex Darling .....	24
Mackenzie Gunns .....	24

Colin Whipple .....	25
Brooke Hedglen .....	26
Mark Howe.....	26
David Gunns .....	27
Ted Rogers.....	28
Tara Ball .....	29
Nancy Nay .....	30
Connie Ireland .....	31

# MAY

## ANNIVERSARIES

Brian & Kristin Howe .....	15
Roger & Kathy Nelson .....	18
Gary & Connie Ireland.....	25
Marty & Betsy Colburn .....	26

*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.*

# May 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
<b>2</b> 9:30am Worship Service available online	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 9:00am UMW Leadership Team Meeting (Chapel)	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b> 9:30am Worship Service available online	<b>10</b> 10:00am Planning Party with Pastor Suzanne (Fellowship Hall) 6:00pm MCCCC Board Meeting (Chapel)	<b>11</b> 7:00pm Trustees Meeting (Fellowship Hall)	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> June Newsletter Deadline	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> 9:30am Worship Service available online	<b>17</b> 7:00pm Church Council Meeting (Fellowship Hall)	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> Scholarship Sunday -- Graduate Recognition and Award Presentation 9:30am Worship Service available online	<b>24</b> 7:00pm Finance Committee Meeting (Zoom)	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> 9:30am Worship Service available online	<b>31</b> Memorial Day -- Church office is closed.					