



FEBRUARY 2022

The First Connection

a publication of

Mason First United Methodist Church

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

A Valentine for God

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God. 1 John 4:7

It's time to write the cover article for the February Newsletter. The obvious theme is love, right? Often when I write this month's article, love is set in the context of the beginning of Lent. But this year, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 2nd... so back to love... and this is where I have to laugh because my inner musician kicks in and one song lyric after another winds it's way through my head... All you need is love, dat da-da-da; Is this love that I'm feeling?; I want to know what love is; What the world needs now... is love, sweet love... And there are so many others – most of which are about romantic love, but not all of them.

So, too, does the Bible speak of different kinds of love. Eros love is the passionate romantic kind of desire we feel for a life partner – Valentine's Day love. Philia is that brotherly or friend love. But Agape – that's the love that God has for us and wants for us to have for one another – cue the DJ: What the world needs now... is love sweet love.

Now, more than ever, our world needs *agape* love; a pure, willful, sacrificial love that intentionally desires another's highest good. We catch glimpses of it. One could argue that first responders, healthcare workers, and teachers are all living out a calling born out of an *agape* understanding. But for us – the community of humanity – to thrive and survive, we're going to need to all get on the *agape* train. Love that intentionally desires the best for everyone is going to be an adjustment for us... but if we accomplish that which God intended? Agape love will be our heaven on earth.

This month, let's be intentional about our love for one another as a Valentine's Day tribute to the God who loves us unconditionally!



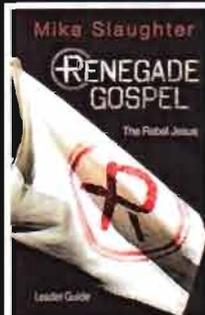
Pastor Suzanne

LET'S WORSHIP!



Sunday, February 13

A Valentine for God



Join us for our Lenten Series
Based on Mike Slaughter's book

RENEGADE GOSPEL

The Rebel Jesus

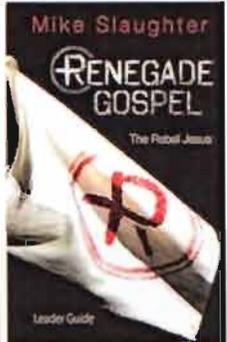
Coming March 6

Order your book at the Connection Point or by calling the Church Office.

INSIDE

this issue

Growing in Faith	2
Lenten Series — Book Orders Due * UMW News Be a Daycare Valentine * Family Ministry Update!	
Serving Others	3
Legacy of Courage — How Your Pledges Serve Our Ministry Change for Change Monthly Offerings * Mission News	
Bulletin Board	4
HELP WANTED! — Ushers, Greeters, and Slide Techs Town Hall * Easter Flower Sales * Church Family News	
Faith/Fun Times for Children/Youth	5
Worship Quest * IGNITE Youth Snow Tubing & Sub Sale	
Sharing the Love of Christ	6
New Plans for a New Year — Town Hall Opportunity Mindfulness Class * Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper	
Kids' Fun Page — Jesus Loves YOU	7
Snow Day/Cancellation Policy	8



Join us for our Lenten Series
Based on Mike Slaughter's book

RENEGADE GOSPEL The Rebel Jesus

Coming March 6

Order your book at the Connection Point or by calling the Church Office.



BE a VALENTINE for the DAYCARE

Every weekday, the children served by Mason Christian Child Care Center (MCCCC) downstairs are not only learning ABC's and 1-2-3's, but they are also learning Bible stories, songs, prayers, friendship skills, and so much more. They are growing in faith without even realizing it — "Jesus Love Me" isn't just something they sing.

Back in December, the Toddlers (age 18 mo. to 3 years) made a trip upstairs as their morning walk — to see all the Christmas décor. When asked who was lying in the manger scene, they knew it was "Baby Jesus," and one little girl even added (with no prompting) "Christmas is really a birthday for Jesus."

In February, Tami Boyic, MCCCC's Director, puts hearts on the center's bulletin board, located on the east wall in the Fellowship Hall. They list certain items which the center uses consistently: snacks, juice, detergent, etc. To be a valentine for the center, simply take the tag off the board, purchase the item, and drop it off in the church office.

Thank You for supporting —



FAMILY MINISTRIES Did you know?

Worship Quest has grown from an average of 2 children to now 7 children ranging in ages from 4-9. Can I get an AMEN?!?! We are happy to have new families attending church and are even more thrilled to see young new faces downstairs! As a result of this growth, we needed help and are very pleased to welcome Sierra Zanger to our staff. Sierra's expertise and experience with children (she works in our daycare), and her connection to this church make her a perfect fit. She will assist in the children's area on Sundays and in the nursery as needed.



IGNITE, our youth group for middle and high schoolers is going strong! We have 10-12 active, enthusiastic participants in our events and gatherings. **IGNITE** is always looking to grow our group, as well as our faith. We meet twice a month for fun and fellowship. These awesome youth do a great job serving our church, serving our community, and serving spaghetti! Next up is our Super Bowl Sunday Sub Sale. How many would you like to order? As of right now, we have 11 people going on our Mission Trip to WV this summer, so these fundraisers are very helpful in meeting our financial obligations.



MOPS is our new ministry for moms with young children. We are very excited to get this off the ground because of the great need for young moms to connect with other moms to not feel so alone on their motherhood journey. Our goal is to meet these mommas where they are and provide a safe space where they feel seen, heard, and loved. Please consider where you might be able to serve in this important ministry.



United
Methodist
Women
FAITH · HOPE · LOVE IN ACTION

Colossians 3:23 "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."

I found this verse in my Bible studies the other night. I couldn't help but think how often I see this in our meetings and when we work together in the kitchen or one of the many other projects we do for our Church and UMW.

We are planning to have circle meetings on February 22nd after our COVID hiatus in January. How good it will be to be together again! Our plans are to have all three meetings on Tuesday, February 22, with Morning Circle at 10:00AM, Afternoon Circle at 1:00PM, and Evening Circle at 6:30PM. You will hear more in the church bulletin. Having the meeting on the same day will make it easier for remembering, scheduling and for church staff as well.

Blessings from Claudia Ireland, UMW President

Looking Ahead — Our Legacy of Courage

Excerpts from a Financial Report given by Kim Wolfgang, Finance Committee Chairperson, on Sunday, January 16th

Several weeks ago, I (and others) spoke with you regarding our pledge drive campaign for 2022. Many of you asked me after that “How did we do?” And I had to say, “I don’t know.” The process of receiving pledges takes place over many weeks. And even now, the church office is still receiving pledges. In fact, if you haven’t turned yours in yet, it’s not too late! But the majority of pledges have been received and I am pleased to report on “how we did.”

I am very glad to say that the overall amount pledged for 2022 is up over \$35,000 from what was pledged in 2021. We received new pledges from 9 people and 38 of you increased your pledge over last year. Our total pledged amount was almost \$353,000.

But please don’t think I’m ignoring those of you who don’t pledge but are very faithful in your giving anyway. Or perhaps you pledge, but give extra when you can. We are also counting on you! In 2021, unpledged giving amount to \$86,000 — so you can see that you are very important!

The Finance Committee voted to recommend the 2022 budget to Church Council based on these pledges. We feel we have a good operational budget and are looking forward to planning a celebration for the completion of our mortgage sometime later this year. Your pledges are key to making the missions and ministries of 2022 happen. Thank you for your generosity. Over 185 years ago, five families had a dream of a United Methodist congregation in the wilds of mid-Michigan. Today we all continue their Legacy of Courage. May God continue to bless us in that journey.

New Mission Opportunities!

**LOOSE CHANGE
MISSION OFFERINGS**
Save up your loose coins and bring them to church to drop in our “Noisy Bucket”. At the end of the month, we will turn them into one donation for a featured mission.

We all have loose change rattling around in our pockets, purses, or sometimes deposited in the couch cushions or that jar at home. It’s amazing how it adds up! When combined with the contributions from your fellow parishioners, it’s a sizeable donation to a specific mission.

Last month, even though we had several weeks of online-only worship, people brought in their change during the week — one person even took hers to the coin machine and brought us the paper money equivalent to add to our collection. We were able to put out our “NOISY BUCKETS” on January 30th. In total we were able to bank \$201 from the Loose Change Mission Offering to send to the designated mission for the month — UMCOR Disaster Relief.

February’s Loose Change Mission is Heifer International, an organization which supports farmers and business owners in 21 countries (including the USA) by empowering them to produce more and market their products better. “Noisy buckets” will be out each week for your loose change to aid this cause!

Missions Chair Mike Buckner recently let us know about a local need and how we can fill it,

simply by picking up a few extra things the next time you are at the grocery store. Your **SURVIVAL BAG** contributions are welcome and greatly appreciated!

And, of course, other local mission work:

- Dinner in the Park — the second Sunday of the month, providing clothing and other necessary items to the homeless at Ruetter Park in Lansing.
- Clothing Bank — open the first and third Tuesdays of each month here in the church, with a dedicated group of volunteers who sort and get donated clothing ready for people to get, free of charge.
- Tiny Pantry — It is filled every day through donations to the church and by other local folks who wish to provide help to their neighbors in need.

SURVIVAL BAG FOOD MISSION



There is a program at Mason Public Schools to help students facing weekend food insecurity by providing a bag of groceries to take home, but protein is a need not being filled. So, we have a collection box at the Connection Point for 3 specific items: canned tuna or chicken (packed in water, please) and peanut butter. Donations are appreciated!

BULLETIN BOARD

WE NEED YOU!

Ushers & Greeters



With three open building entrances and three spots for ushers, we need six friendly volunteers each Sunday morning to help greet and seat our congregation. If you can help, please sign up at the Connection Point or contact the church office to see what spots we have open on the schedule.

We really appreciate Elaine Ferris and Tim Crandall who have done the majority of running the slides on normal Sundays — and thanks to Jim Goodwin who did during our latest online-only services. Our slide tech crew would love to have more folks on the team to help fill the schedule. If you can help, please contact the church office, and we will hook you up with someone who can give you a 1/2 hour tutorial on the NEW COMPUTER in the balcony. Don't be shy — Tim says it's "EASY PEASY."



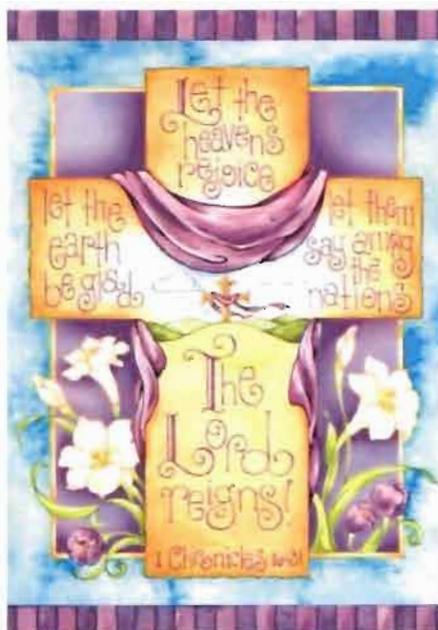
20-MINUTE TOWN HALL MEETING



First Sundays in Fellowship Hall
Immediately following worship

Be a part of the conversation!

EASTER — COMING SOON!



Although not until April 17th, we will start taking orders in March for the pots of spring flowers that will transform the darkness of the Good Friday sanctuary into a glorious garden on Easter Sunday morning. As we did last year, choices will be daffodils, hyacinths, tulips, and of course, the trumpeting Easter lily. Watch next month for forms, available at the Connection Point.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations to:

- **Jerry and Dorothy Spink**, who will celebrate their **75th Anniversary on February 14th** — amazing! If you would like to send them a card, you can either drop it off at the church office (prior to February 7) and we will mail it out with others in one big envelope, or you can call the office for their current address.
- Ashley and Brian Crackel on the birth of their son, Elijah James on January 7th. He is the first grandchild for proud grandparents Rhonda and James Crackel.

Our Sympathies are extended to:

- Jan Dodge and her family on the January 17th passing of her son Brad, who lived in Florida.
- Ruth Waltz and family, on the passing of her brother, Alfred Weber, on January 19th.
- Nancy Dunivon on the recent passing of her sister and also a niece.
- Larry Vandesande on the January 25th passing of his sister, Lynn Williams. She lived in Flint.

Prayers & Healing Wishes to:

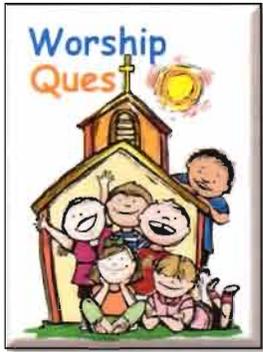
- Kathy Brown who is at home, dealing with health issues and chronic pain.
- Garrett Wheaton after a recent hospitalization. He is back at Vista Springs Edgewood, with hospice care.
- Our shut-ins and friends in assisted living/rehab.
- Those who have been battling COVID.

Please note: Hospitals do not notify us when someone from our church family is admitted. Please let us know!

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

- Green Acres, Mason: Nancy Dunivon, Dick Magsig, Beth Grosshans and Jeanette Strickland
- 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

OPPORTUNITIES for CHILDREN and YOUTH!



After our Christmas break, and then our unexpected January break, we are more than eager to get back to Sunday morning **Worship Quest!** This month, we are diving into some of our favorite Parables and of course, LOVE will be our focus around Valentine's Day. We welcome all children from preschool age 4 through 5th grade. We meet downstairs in the One-Room Sunday School classroom during 9:30 worship on Sunday mornings. Parents, please be sure to come downstairs to sign your children in when you arrive.

For those who need nursery care for children age 3 and under, it is available upon request. Sierra Zanger is the trained caregiver in charge. Please ask an usher if you have a child(ren) and the usher will come find her, as she helps with Worship Quest downstairs until her services are needed upstairs.

SUPER BOWL SUB SALE

Name _____ Pd. _____

Phone # _____

Payment is required upon ordering. Subs must be picked up at the church on Sunday, February 13th between 10:45am & 11:45am.

- ___ Six inch sub with ham or turkey, your choice of cheese, toppings, and condiments.....\$8
- ___ Sub with bag of chips and homemade cookie.....\$10

One sub per form please.

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| Ham _____ | Mayo _____ |
| Turkey _____ | Mustard _____ |
| Baby Swiss _____ | Lettuce _____ |
| Colby jack _____ | Onion _____ |

Please choose 1 meat and 1 cheese

All profits go toward our Summer 2022 Mission Trip.
Checks can be made out to Mason First UMC.

IGNITE Youth Group is gearing up for the SUPER BOWL SUB SALE!



Whether you plan to watch the entire game, just the commercials, or nothing at all, let us make your dinner! Be sure to get your order in by Wednesday, February 9th as all subs will be made to order and ready for pick up on Sunday, February 13th following the church service, from 10:45-11:45.

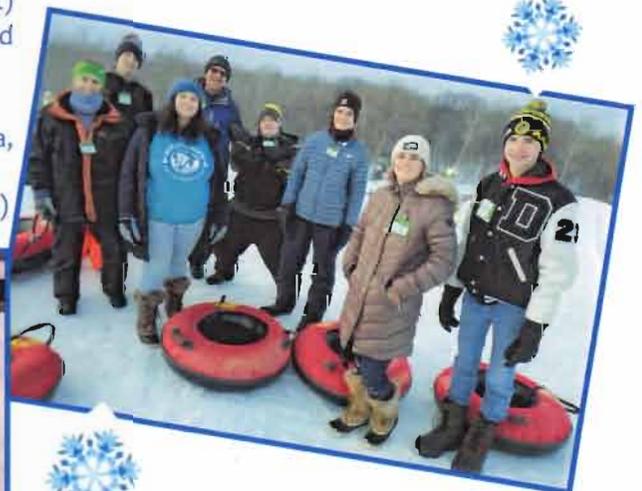
All proceeds will benefit the group's Mission Trip this summer. Thank you to everyone for your support!

IGNITE is for teens in 6th-12th grade.

If you are not currently receiving emails/texts/reminders about upcoming events from Laurie Reed, our Director of Family Ministries, please call her at the church office 676-9449 or send her an email request at laurie@masonfirst.org so she can make sure you are on her contact list!

On Sunday, Jan. 30th, twelve of us braved the cold and headed to Hawk Island Park for some winter fun. The conditions were perfect for snowtubing — we had a BLAST!

Left: Sibling rivalry — Max (forefront) and Ella (red tube — you can see her head above Max's hat) ready to race!
Below: Max flying down the hill!
The rest of the gang: Dawn, Ethan, Lara, Mike, Colin, Alec, Erika, and Dylan.
(Laurie was behind the camera of course!)



A New Year for Mason First UMC!

A new year begins for Mason First as we look ahead and try to sort out the strategies for growing in faith, serving others, and sharing the love of Christ in these times and with these challenges. One thing is sure: God has a plan for us, and it's a good one! We just need to be ready roll!

The 2022 pledge report and the proposed budgets were analyzed by the Finance Committee and reviewed by Church Council, and a budget has been approved. Through your faithfulness and God's blessing, we are ready to move into this new year! And the extra good news is that we are on target to pay off our mortgage likely sometime this summer. Stay tuned!

What's next? As a family of faith, we have had many conversations about our hopes to grow as a church as we broaden our appeal to younger generations. We have had many "open discussions" and we will have more of them as we develop a plan and work together to bring it to fruition. Here are a few of the items that are being discussed and researched. It's important that you know that no plans will be finalized without opportunities for all voices to be heard. We are in this together!

New Signage – We need better signage around and throughout the building to help newcomers find their way. We would also like to add signage to the outside of the building to help promote and communicate offerings to the community.

An updated look for the Connection Point and Fellowship Hall – These two areas are important centers of hospitality and connection, and they need a little facelift to give them a fresh and inviting appearance.

Updated Worship Space – Our worship space needs to be modernized with sound and lighting and the chancel area redesigned to accommodate a more flexible and useable space for the choir and musicians.

We are currently assembling exploratory teams to gather ideas and information. If any of these new endeavors sound exciting to you, we'd love to have you serve on one of these exploratory teams! Please sign up at the connection point or see Peggy Gunns (Trustee Chair) to express your interest.

Town Hall Meetings – Be a part of the discussion as we envision a new day dawning! On the **first Sunday of every month, there will be a 20 minute Town Hall style Q & A session with Pastor Suzanne** in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship. You can get your coffee and goodies and be a part of an open conversation about the plans for our future missions and ministries. We will strictly adhere to the 20 minute time limit so as to not interfere with Sunday School class offerings.

A message from Pastor Suzanne

Vignettes on Coping and Strengthening the Mind by Mindfulness and Meditation

The Evangelism Committee is once again offering a series of faith-sharing opportunities on Sunday mornings, starting at 10:45 in the upstairs conference room, across from the Fellowship Hall. This will allow participants time to speak with Pastor Suzanne after the service, and/or grab a cup of coffee/other refreshment to bring with you.

These are designed to last 30 minutes — to give us an expanded opportunity to reach out and connect, and to be tuned-in to ways we could be of help to others. The new session offerings will begin February 13th and run, in the sequence listed below, through April 8th (not meeting on Easter). They are:

- Understanding and dealing with stress (2/13)
- Helpful ways to cope with COVID threat (2/20)
- Stress, coping, happiness and well-being (2/27)
- Marital stressors, roles, and expectations (3/6)
- Emotional "triggers" and gaining self-control (3/13)
- Why don't zebras get ulcers? Why do we? (3/20)
- How the brain and memory works (3/27)
- Keeping your brain keen and vibrant (4/3)
- Both sources and hatching of "negative bias" (4/10)
- "Reframing" negative thinking to "I see now." (4/24)
- A nature walk — a "calming balm" for most (5/1)
- Comforting thoughts from St. Paul (5/8)

We invite you to join us for any/all of the above sessions that appeal to you.

*Submitted by Roger Nelson,
Evangelism Committee Chair*

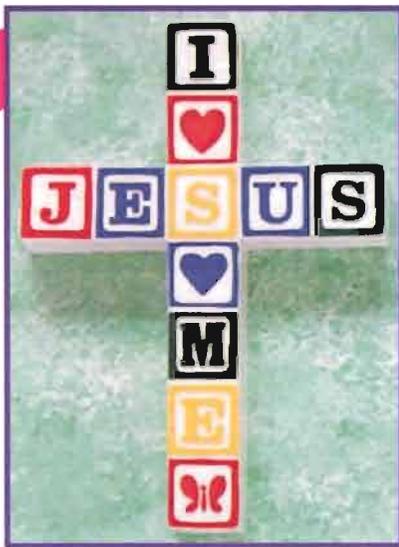
SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER



You are cordially invited to a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper hosted by IGNITE Youth! Free will offering — Proceeds will benefit our Mission Trip to Logan, WV this summer.

Tuesday, March 1st from 5pm-7pm

Please sign up at the Connection Point table so we can plan for you!



A FAVORITE SONG to SING!

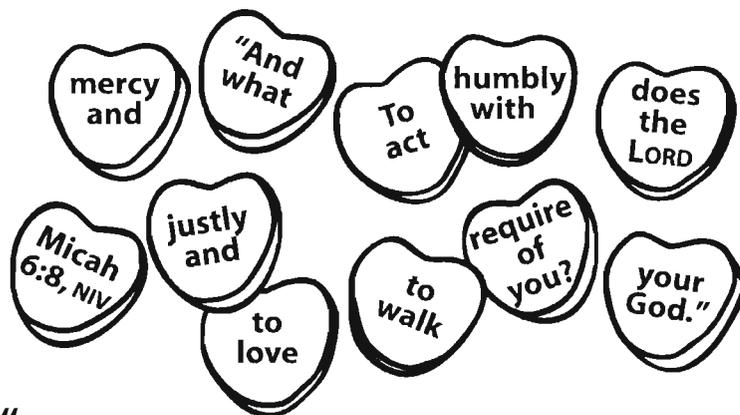
Jesus loves me, this I know,
 For the Bible tells me so.
 Little ones to him belong;
 They are weak, but he is strong.
 Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
 Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.



Conversation hearts

The world encourages people to look out for themselves and seek success, but in Micah 6:8, God tells us to live differently.

Directions: Put the conversation hearts in the correct order by writing the words on the lines below. Hint: Capitalization and quotation marks are included.



“ _____
 _____ ? _____

 _____ ” _____ 6:8 _____

**Jesus is my Valentine;
 I talk to Him each day.
 He never, never leaves me;
 and always listens when I pray.
 Yes He is my Valentine;
 there is no love like His.
 He is the heart of all that is;
 for Him I breathe and live.
 He's a Valentine that never lies;
 never hurts or breaks.
 He always has forgiven me;
 for all my past mistakes.
 If you only knew my Valentine;
 You would love Him too.
 For His love is always perfect;
 His love is always true.
 So if your heart is longing;
 for a love that never ends.
 for someone that is faithful;
 you know you can depend.
 call upon my Valentine;
 He'll wash away your sin.
 He will be your Valentine;
 and your dearest, dearest friend.**

by: Susan Y Nikitenko

Answer: "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8, NIV



Mason First United Methodist Church

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

201 E. Ash Street * Mason MI 48854

Phone: (517) 676 9449

www.masonfirst.org

NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #47
MASON MI 48854 1775

Return Service Requested

With ever-changing wintry weather, snow days are a possibility...

Just a reminder —
If Mason Public Schools
are closed, the church
daycare is also closed.
For safety reasons,
the church office is closed
as well, and any scheduled
activities/meetings
are cancelled.

This allows everyone to
stay safe at home, off of
the bad roads, and for our
snowplower to clear the lot
easily without cars in the way.
Building Manager Will Hartsock
needs time to clear walks, too.



In the case of Sunday church service being cancelled, we will try to change the message on the church answering machine by Saturday night at 6PM, but will absolutely do it no later than 7AM on Sunday. Please call 676-9449 and listen to the message to see if church is cancelled — we will also post on our church Facebook page, **Mason First United Methodist Church Connection**.

THANK YOU for your understanding
as we navigate through the season.

And please, If you know someone in the congregation who may not be online to get notifications, help us get the word out about cancellations by simply giving him/her a call. **THANKS!**



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
Jennifer Calhoun	4	Mary Berneske.....	17
Martha Allen	5	Robert Hundley	18
Brian Hankey	5	Erika Jachalke.....	18
Ella Bayer.....	6	Logan Guthrie	19
Nancy Dunivon	8	Julia Droscha	19
Dick Magsig	9	Lynda Carlson	20
Suellyn Vandesande	9	Doug Dancer	20
Dwayne Bagley.....	10	Nancy Collins.....	22
Tim Crandall	10	Austin Lautzenheiser.....	22
Jason Darling.....	11	Joe Pulver	22
Jamie Whitmyer	11	Millie Berridge	22
Alexis Bayer	11	Debra Darling.....	23
Greg McDonald.....	12	Martha Hosek.....	28
Lynn Whipple	13	Connie Bartlett	28
Lee Heaviland.....	14		



FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Linda & Charles Simpson	12
Larry & Gail Ried	14
Jerry & Dorothy Spink.....	14
<i>Celebrating their 75th Anniversary this year!</i>	
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.

February 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 10:00am Faith Chat ZOOM 1:30pm Clothing Bank open until 3:30PM 6:00pm Clothing Bank open until 8:00PM 7:00pm Faith Chat ZOOM	2 10:30am Bible Study in Conference Room	3 4:00pm Carolier Choir	4 MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) Meet & Greet Event in LL Youth & Sunday School Rooms	5
6 9:30am Worship 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	7 6:30pm Toward Healing Group meets in LL classroom	8 10:00am Faith Chat ZOOM 7:00pm Faith Chat ZOOM	9 10:30am Bible Study in Conference Room 7:00pm Chancel Bell Choir 8:00pm Chancel Choir	10 4:00pm Carolier Choir	11	12 3:00pm IGNITE Youth Group meets at church to make SUPER BOWL SUBS for Sale
13 9:30am Worship 10:45am Super Bowl SUB Pick-Up after church 10:45am Mindfulness Class in Conference Room 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	14 6:30pm Toward Healing Group meets in LL classroom	15 10:00am Faith Chat ZOOM 1:30pm Clothing Bank open until 3:30PM 6:00pm Clothing Bank open until 8:00PM 7:00pm Faith Chat ZOOM	16 10:30am Bible Study in Conference Room 7:00pm Chancel Bell Choir 8:00pm Chancel Choir	17 4:00pm Carolier Choir	18 9:30am MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) in LL Youth & Sunday School Rooms	19
20 9:30am Worship 10:45am Mindfulness Class in Conference Room 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	21 6:30pm Toward Healing Group meets in LL classroom	22 UMW Circles Meet (Chapel) Morning 10:00AM Afternoon 1:00PM Evening 6:30PM 10:00am Faith Chat ZOOM 7:00pm Faith Chat ZOOM	23 10:30am Bible Study in Conference Room 7:00pm Chancel Bell Choir 8:00pm Chancel Choir	24 4:00pm Carolier Choir	25	26
27 9:30am Worship 10:45am Mindfulness Class in Conference Room 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	28 6:30pm Toward Healing Group meets in LL classroom					