



The First Connection

a publication of
Mason First United Methodist Church

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

It's All About Love

WHAT'S NEW...

New Every Morning
 The Series Continues!

Shrove Tuesday Pancake
Supper February 21

Ash Wednesday Service
 February 22

Two new Lenten Studies
 begin

Super Bowl Sub Sale

Euchre becomes a monthly
 event!

Church Council and a Vision
 for 2023

Celebrating Us
A Romantic Evening for Couples

Get Involved!
 Volunteer Opportunities

Bright Future
 A New Connection Point

The Historical Report is ready

Mason First UMC to become
 part of the Heritage District

Freely Given Clothing Bank
 opens in its new location!

Snow Tubing at Hawk Island

It's the season of love—and valentines and romance... all of which brings us a little cheer in the midst of the bleak mid-winter. And before we know it, we've reached Ash Wednesday and Lent begins, and we enter into a season that is also all about love... but in a different way.

The Bible makes reference to at least four different kinds of love - *Eros* (romantic), *Storge* (familial), *Philia* (brotherly), and *Agape* (God's love for humankind.) The Greek language has all of these different words to describe love because love is just *that* important. As humans, we crave love. We need love just like we need food and water and light and air. Who doesn't want to be loved?

Of course, love isn't a disembodied commodity. Love emanates from people. It therefore stands to reason, that if people aren't generous with the love they share, then we all suffer from love deficiency. And sometimes, lately, it seems like we're all a little love starved... and a little love challenged. But it's a fairly easy fix. It begins with the realization that even on our worst no-good day, God looks at us and sees us as worthy of love and packed with potential. And knowing that we're the recipients of that kind of loving grace, all we have to do is turn around and dole it back out again.

This month, as we celebrate the gift of romantic love, and we turn towards the liturgical season of sacrificial love, let's all remember that love is really where it's at. You were made for it. So share it, because everybody needs some.

Love in Christ,

Pastor Suzanne



NEW EVERY MORNING SERIES

Sunday, February 5
A New Faith

Sunday, February 12
A New You

Sunday February 19
A New Church

Ash Wednesday
 Service of Worship

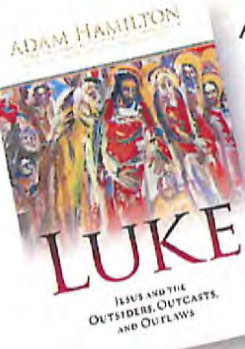
February 22 7:00 p.m.

Holy Communion &
 Dispensation of Ashes



GROWING IN FAITH...

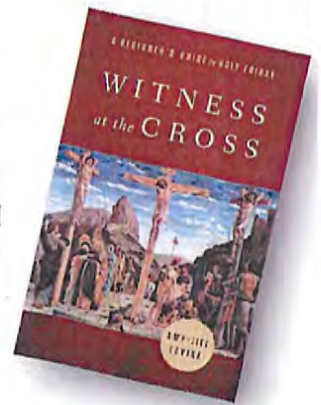
Two new book studies to help you to be Growing in Faith during Lent!



Adam Hamilton's *Luke; Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws* reminds us that Jesus came for all. Jesus came to lift up the lowly. In the Gospel of Luke, a first-century portrait of Jesus, we find stories of Jesus' ministry with ordinary and unexpected people. They weren't perfect. Many of them were struggling just as we do today. Some were even outsiders and outlaws. But whoever they were, Jesus brought the good news of God's kingdom to those who most needed to hear it. Join Dennis Howe on this six-week study which explores the care and compassion of Jesus as he ministered and taught and moved toward Jerusalem and the events that would stun the world and offer redemption to all who have need. **This class meets Tuesdays at 4:00 in the Chapel beginning February 28.** Books are \$12.00 (\$15.50 for Large Print)

Witness at the Cross by Amy-Jill Levine is a six-week study which helps us to experience Holy Friday from the perspective of those who were there: Mary, his mother; the Beloved Disciple from the Gospel of John; Mary Magdalene and the other women from Galilee; the two men usually identified as thieves, friends, and strangers, the powerful and the powerless—all who were impacted in and who had distinct roles to play. In studying each perspective, we too, will wrestle with the messages that cross centuries to transform lives. And from these stories, we may learn how our lives serve as witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Co-facilitated by Marti Abbott and Mike Buckner, **this class meets Wednesdays at 6:30 in the Chapel beginning March 1.** Books are \$13.50



Please make your reservation for these classes at the *Connection Point!*

Mason First UMC's Music Ministry Presents:

A Mid-Winter Concert

Sunday, February 26, 6:30 p.m.

featuring

The Chancel Ringers & Chancel Choir, Organ Solos & Vocal Soloists

Join us for a dessert reception to follow!

The bell choir and vocal choir are always looking for new friends to be a part of this musical ministry. If you enjoy making music, join us on Wednesday evenings, or ask any one of our dedicated volunteer musicians for more information.



FOOD, FELLOWSHIP & FUN

SUPER BOWL SUB SALE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Pre-Orders taken up to Feb. 8

It's not too late to place your order for a delicious hand-made Super Bowl Sub to be enjoyed as you cheer your favorite team to victory! IGNITE Youth will once again be selling super subs as a fundraiser for their upcoming Mission Trip! Whether you watch the game or not, you can make it a WIN-WIN day by not having to cook and supporting a worthy cause! You have the option of ordering just a sandwich or a bonus bag with chips and a cookie. Pick up your order form at the new Connection Point!



Enjoy a Family Fun Winter Blast

Snow Tubing

At Hawk Island Park

February 26 2:45—4:45 p.m.

\$11/person

Limited tickets available so make your reservation now!

Contact Laurie Reed to reserve your tickets

Laurie@masonfirst.org



Celebrating Us

A Romantic Evening of Dinner & Conversation

Enjoy gourmet appetizers, dinner, and dessert accompanied by a fine sparkling cider, served at an intimate table for two in a romantic setting. As you dine, Rev. Suzanne will guide you through a fun evening of conversation-starters celebrating the best of your relationship, and helping you to anticipate all the good yet to come!

Friday, February 10 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Reservations Required

\$25/Couple

Reservations are full, but we have opened a waiting list.



COMING IN MARCH Adventures from the Appalachian Trail Thursday evening, March 16

Last year, Joe and Linda Pulver undertook the challenge of hiking the entire Appalachian Trail. We've invited them to come and share the stories and pictures from this amazing adventure. Mark your calendar—you won't want to miss this!



Euchre Night to become a monthly event!

Mason First held its first Euchre Night on Friday, January 27.

Despite the snowstorm, we had eight tables of Euchre

players vying for the big prize at the end of the night. The snack table was loaded, and the laughter was abundant among the diverse crowd of players. A good time was had by all, but it was **Gary Ireland** who took the Grand Prize Trophy and the \$100 Grand (chocolate bar) for most points, and **John Smith** who took the Loner Trophy and the Skor bar that went with it. The group of Euchre-ists had so much fun that they have decided to make it a monthly event! So...

Join us every third Friday (February 17 this month) at 6:30 p.m. for an evening of fun. No partner is required – just be sure to sign up at the Connection Point so that we can arrange to have full tables. Bring a snack to share and your own beverages. (If you need to cancel, please be sure to let Pastor Suzanne know so that we can arrange to have your spot filled.)



IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH...

TOWN HALL MEETING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12



Second Sundays in Fellowship Hall
Immediately following worship

Be a part of the conversation!



Who knew that loose change could make such a difference? Last year we started our Noisy Bucket offerings to provide support of a new mission each month, and over the course of 2022, we raised thousands of dollars that we used to support a variety of missional needs all over the world!

This year the Noisy Bucket tradition continues with a January collection that yielded \$337.88 for local missions. February's Noisy Bucket donations will go to support Heifer International's efforts to address poverty by supplying livestock to farmers in poverty-stricken communities. So, make a joyful noise, and drop your noisy change in the bucket! (*Paper currency and checks are always welcome too!*)

Church Family News

Our sympathies are extended to:

- Margaret Deeds's family on her passing December 31, 2022
- The family of Bob and Leslie Wessman; Bob passed away December 31, 2022, and Leslie passed away January 24, 2023

Prayers & Healing Wishes to:

- Wayne Rice, who is now at Sparrow Hospital
- Bill Campbell, recovering from back surgery
- Bill Husband, recovering from knee surgery
- Phyllis Baisch, rehabbing at The Willows
- Linda Carmer, recovering from a broken wrist
- 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. We appreciate you keeping us informed.

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

- Dansville Country Care Assisted Living: Dick Magsig
- Divine Nest, Leslie: Joyce Darling
- Grand Haven Living Center, Lansing: Marilyn Murthum
- Green Acres, Mason: Beth Grosshans and Jeanette Strickland
- Ingham Co. Medical Care Facility, Okemos: Char Bush and John Dodge
- The Willows of Okemos: Phyllis Baisch, Don Dickinson, Lew Tibbits

2022 - A Year in Review

Get your copy of the 2022 Historical Report

Many thanks to Kim Wolfgang who, in addition to being the chair of our Finance Committee, is also our Church Historian. Each year, Kim prepares a report for the annual Church Conference that summarizes the activity and major events of our church over the year. You can find a copy of this report at the new Connection Point. You'll be amazed at what an active church we have been over the past year!

Seasons may change... but God's love for us is new every morning, stirring up in us a passion to grow and serve and share. May 2023 be another great year of mission and ministry at Mason First!



Bright Future Update

The newest addition to our Bright Future Project is the installation of our brand new Connection Point. This beautiful custom-made piece of furniture was designed to be the place where people can get information about our church, sign up for activities and events, and drop off items for various missional collections. The piece was made by David Gunns and Kim Sperry, and was constructed in three moveable pieces which are on hidden casters for easy relocation and flexible use. Five open cupboards contain collection baskets and the drawers and cabinets are for storage of the various items used to equip the Connection Point.



In other news, we are currently awaiting a second bid on the carpeting, as well as a new submission of design recommendations which will be reviewed by the Design Committee and presented to the Trustees. We are also in the process of developing a design for the new Coffee Connection piece for the Fellowship Hall, as well as two coordinating serving pieces. Meanwhile, we've had a small setback on our plans for the new sound system, as the company we were working with has changed its scope of business, but we're currently looking at a couple of new companies and hope to move that project along shortly.

Thank you for your faithful generosity to Bright Future and the improvements it will bring to our aesthetics and hospitality!

What's New in the Michigan Conference

In 2021, Bishop Bard commissioned a task force to make recommendations for a reduction in the number of districts that make up the Michigan Conference. The impetus for this change was, in part, one of financial reality, particularly as the number of churches is being reduced by closures and disaffiliation. In 2022, a plan was accepted and modified, and effective July 1 of 2023, the Michigan Conference will make the change to a seven-district plan.

In this new organization, the Midwest District and the Mid-Michigan District will both be dissolved and its churches assigned to surrounding districts. Therefore, as of July 1, Mason First (and most of the Lansing area churches) will become a part of the Heritage District (centered on the Ann Arbor area), under the leadership of District Superintendent Rev. LuAnn Rourke.

You may know that Pastor Suzanne is the Chair of the District Leadership Team and has approved a plan under which a fair and proportionate distribution of the District's considerable financial assets. Between now and the end of June, however, any churches currently in the District may apply for grants which would come from those funds before they are dispersed to their new districts.

Our District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Jerry DeVine, who has served this area on a Conference level for most of his 42-year career, and who has most recently served as Mid-Michigan's D.S. will be retiring at the end of June. The District Leadership and Superintendency Committees will be hosting a retirement party for Jerry on June 11 at DeWitt Redeemer UMC. If you would like to make a contribution to Jerry's retirement gift, please submit your check with a designation stating, "DS Retirement Gift."



CHURCH COUNCIL MEETS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2023

Church Council will hold its first meeting of the year on February 6 at 7:00 p.m. under the leadership of new Chair, Dennis Howe. The primary purpose of this meeting will be to approve a budget for 2023, and to shape the goals and visions for the upcoming year.

This year presents the challenges of continued growth as we seek to extend hospitality, meet new friends, and welcome new members, all while keeping a watchful eye on a conservative budget!

We welcome to the table this year, Deb Shoemaker, Chair of Hospitality; Lynn Goedert, Chair of Missions; Wyl McCully, lay delegate to Annual Conference; and Mike Buckner who has recently agreed to serve as our new Lay Leader. (Look for a brief Charge Conference to convene to accept Mike's new appointment in the near future!)

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Serving others is one of the most basic principles of the Christian faith. Jesus taught it. Jesus modeled it. And Jesus invited us to do the same. As followers of Jesus we are called to help one another, and to serve the church with a joyful spirit. We're to love and pray for one another, but also to share the unique gifts and talents that God has put in us so that we are able to serve where we are needed and make a tangible difference in people's lives. We know that our salvation does not rest on our good works, but James wrote this to make us think: "Show me your faith apart from works, and I by my works will show you my faith." In other words, the way we live and serve are the real witness to what we believe and how we love God.

The best valentine we can give to God is to love and serve—not as a duty, but as joyful witness to our faith. "How can I serve?" you might ask. Here are some real and tangible ways for you to serve right now in our church and community:

Hospitality

So much of what we do is about hospitality—extending welcome, making people comfortable, and easing their way into connection with this community of faith. Here are some ways you can help with this important expression of love for our neighbors:

- Serve as a greeter or usher. Both jobs are really important and no more challenging than offering a smile and a greeting.
- Serve as a newcomer companion. On days when we have guests, Deb Shoemaker or one of the other hospitality team might invite a new person to sit with you, or you might invite a newcomer to coffee hour and introduce them around. Maybe you could give a newcomer a tour of the building and talk about the things we do here.
- Serve on the Coffee Connection team—everyone loves a warm smile and a hot cup of coffee!
- Help us to track attendance pads (yes, they're about to make a come-back!) and make sure we're sending appropriate follow-up information to new visitors.
- Help compile a Visitor's welcome packet, and New Member's packet.
- Serve as an Event Coordinator by helping to manage all the details that make an event special.
- Volunteer to be a host when we open our facility to the community during power outages and extreme weather events. (More on this later!)
- Serve on the Hospitality Team—there are literally hundreds of little details that go into creating really great hospitality and care for our friends and members!

Organization & Administrative Tasks

Although some of these tasks have not been covered by volunteers before, it would be so incredibly helpful to the staff to have folks assist with these jobs, and would free the staff to do more work toward inviting people into our church.

- Be a Sanctuary tidier—help to re-stock the pew pockets and make sure the sanctuary is all ready for worship.
- Be a Connection Point Steward—keep the Connection Point stocked, organized, and tidy.
- Be a newsletter collator and help prepare it for mailing.
- Serve on the worship tech team—learn to do sound, video, or run the screens.
- Serve on the Marketing Team with Pastor Suzanne—help to make sure we're not the best kept secret in town!
- Be a part of completing and maintaining our website.

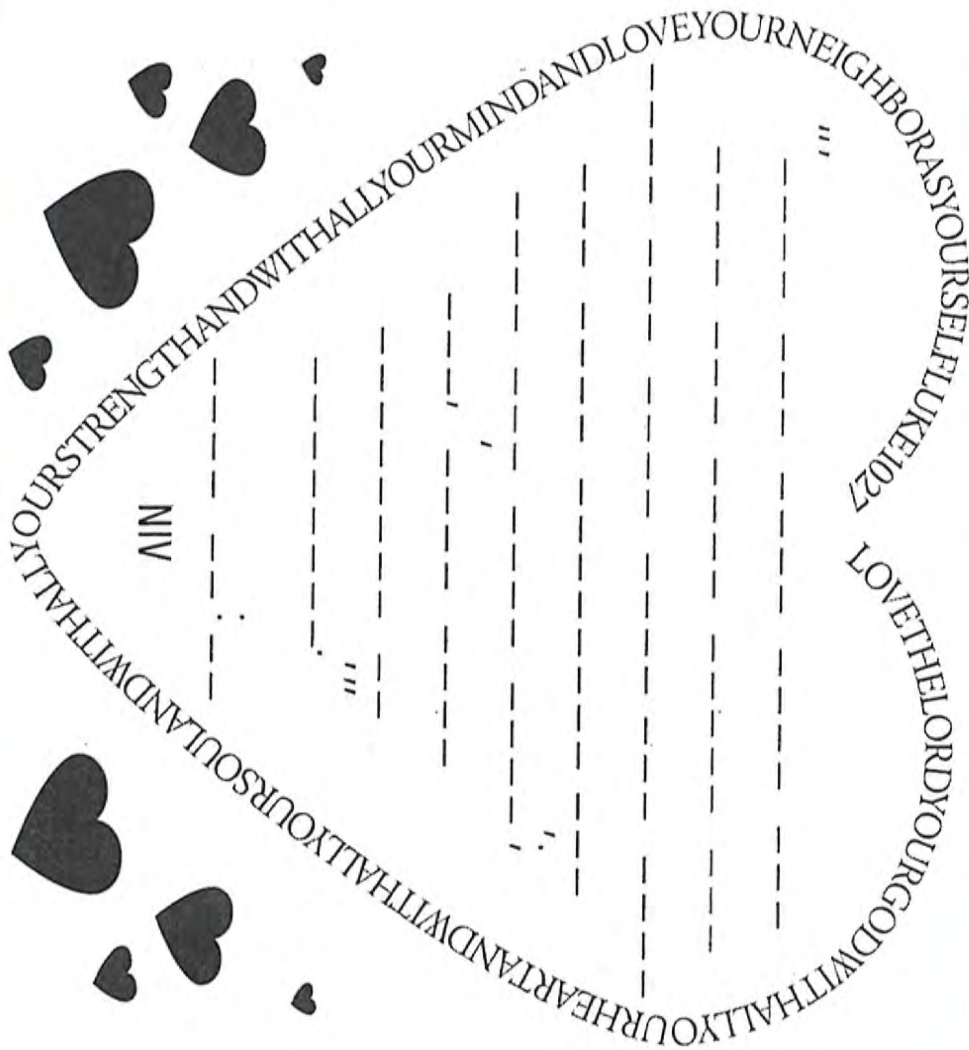
In the Community

There are always ways to help serve in the community and we hope to bring you regular updates on these opportunities from now on. Here are just a few:

- Volunteer to serve at Freely Given—our clothing bank now located in the new Mason Community Services Building.
- Volunteer with MCS to be a driver (as needed).
- Donate blood or platelets.
- Join us at our 2nd Thursdays 'bring your lunch' meeting here at the church. You'll find out where there's need and what all the local service organizations are doing to try to meet it.

Puzzle!

Draw lines to separate the words in the heart outline. Then, starting with "Love," write the words in order inside the heart to complete the two greatest commandments.



Answer: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27, NIV



Mason First United Methodist Church

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

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Phone: (517) 676 9449

www.masonfirst.org

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Return Service Requested

Lent Begins February 22

Join us for a Holy Season of Growing in Faith, Serving Others, and Sharing the Love of Christ!

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER



Please join us...

Tuesday, February 21st from 5:00pm-6:30pm

Mason First United Methodist Church 201 E. Ash St.

Reservation requested, but not required. (517) 676-9449

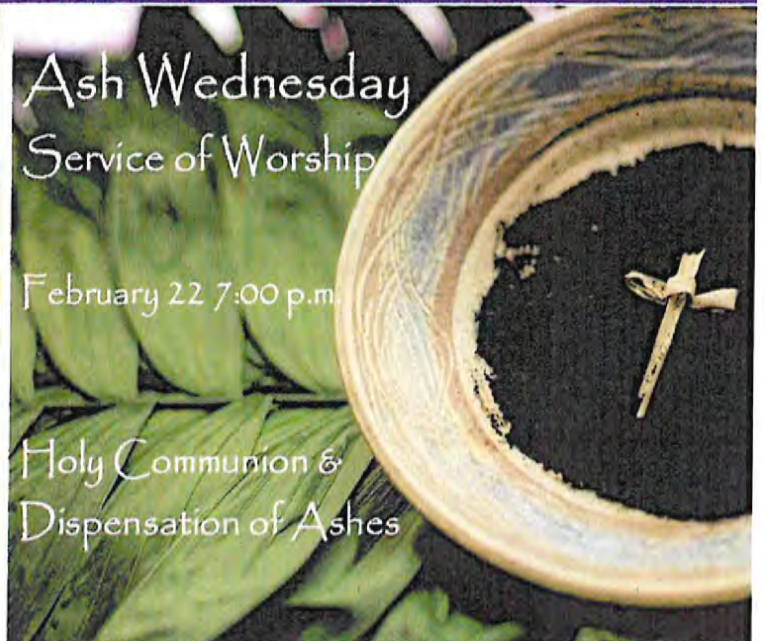
Presented by IGNITE Youth

Free will offering with proceeds benefitting our
Summer 2023 Mission Trip to Niagara Falls, NY


Ash Wednesday
Service of Worship

February 22 7:00 p.m.

Holy Communion &
Dispensation of Ashes



February 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30am UWF Leadership Team Meeting 10:30am Bible Study Group meets in Library 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir Practice in LL Choir Room	2	3 9:30am MOPS meets in LL Youth Room	4
5 9:30am WORSHIP 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	6 7:00pm Church Council in the Fellowship Hall	7 5:30pm Potluck in Fellowship Hall 6:30pm Disciple class meets in the Chapel 7:00pm SPRC meeting	8 10:30am Bible Study Group meets in Library 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir Practice in LL Choir Room	9 10:00am Endowment Committee 12:00pm Mason Community Leaders Network meets in the Fellowship Hall	10 6:00pm Celebrating Us	11 4:00pm Youth making sub sandwiches
12 9:30am WORSHIP 10:30am Super Bowl Sub Sale Pick Up 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel 12:30pm Dinner in the Park	13	14 5:30pm Potluck in Fellowship Hall 6:30pm Disciple class meets in the Chapel	15 10:30am Bible Study Group meets in Library 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir Practice in LL Choir Room	16	17 9:30am MOPS meets in LL Youth Room 6:30pm Euchre Night	18
19 9:30am WORSHIP 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	20 7:00pm Finance Meeting	21 5:00pm Pancake Dinner	22 10:30am Bible Study Group 7:00pm Ash Wed. Service 8:00pm Chancel Choir <div style="text-align: center;"></div>	23	24	25
26 9:30am WORSHIP 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel 2:45pm Snow Tubing Family Event 6:30pm Mid-Winter Concert in the Sanctuary	27 7:00pm Trustees meet in the Chapel	28 10:00am Mary Martha Circle--Chapel 1:00pm Rebekah Circle--Chapel 4:00pm Lenten Study "Luke"--Chapel 5:30pm Potluck in Fellowship Hall 6:30pm Miriam Circle--Conference Rm.				



FEBRUARY

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays

Anniversaries

Shadd Barnes.....	2
Victoria Smith	3
Jennifer Calhoun.....	4
Martha Allen.....	5
Brian Hankey	5
Ella Bayer	6
Kevin Gunns.....	8
Suellyn Vandesande	9
Dick Magsig.....	9
Tim Crandall.....	10
Jason Darling.....	11
Alexis Bayer	11
Greg McDonald.....	12
Lynn Whipple.....	13
Emerson Thorburn.....	14
Judie Marlan	15
Monique Leonard	15
Paul Kirk	15
Jen Harnick	16
Mary Berneske.....	17
Erika Jachalke.....	18
Julia Droscha	19
Lynda Carlson	20
Doug Dancer	20
Nancy Collins	22
Joe Pulver	22
Andy Brouillette.....	22
Austin Lautzenheiser	22
Millie Berridge	22
Debra Darling.....	23
Martha Hosek	28
Connie Bartlett.....	28

Linda and Charles Simpson	12
Larry and Gail Ried	14
Jerry and Dorothy Spink.....	14
Celebrating 75 years!	
Howard and Connie Doss	17
Celebrating 45 years!	
Mark and Kim Wolfgang.....	24

Thank You Notes

Thank you notes have been received from Dick and Jan Magsig and from Abbi Garrison of the New Hope Pet Rescue Staff.