



The First Connection

a publication of
Mason First United Methodist Church

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

WHAT'S NEW...

Who's Theophilus?

*Not to late to be a part of a
Lenten study!*

United Women in Faith
prepare for events ahead!

**March 12 Daylight Saving
SPRING FORWARD**

Joe & Linda Pulver present:
Adventures from the
Appalachian Trail March 16

Euchre Night March 17

Scholarship Applications
Available Now!

Noisy Change Collection for
Earthquake Victims

Bright Future Update:
When is that Sound System
getting updated?

Ignite is collecting items for
March Dinner in the Park

Freely Given Clothing Bank
adds new hours!

February Review

Community Good Friday
Service of Worship
April 7 @ The ROC

My Dear Theophilus.

Adam Hamilton, in his introduction to his book *Luke*, offers some insight into the authorship of this beautifully written gospel. Experts believe that both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written by the same person, who addressed these works to someone named Theophilus.



Who was Theophilus? We don't know. But the word Theophilus is made up of the Greek words Theo—meaning *God*; and Philus—meaning *loving friend*. So, Theophilus actually means "loving friend of God." Is it possible that Luke's address to "Theophilus" is actually his way of addressing these letters to you?

Whether there was an actual person named Theophilus, or whether the writing was meant to be for all loving friends of God, this journey through the season of Lent is a really special time when we reclaim our identity of being loving friends of God as we dedicate ourselves to more intentional prayer, reading of scripture, acts of self-discipline, and generosity. For six weeks... forty days... we sharpen our focus on all that God has done for us through the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. And this dedicated time calls us to renew our commitment to be *active* in our discipleship—a practice which is not meant to melt away at Easter like the chocolate eggs.

I think of you often Theophilus, and I pray that this season of Lent brings you into a deeper and more meaningful connection with God, with our faith community, and with the best parts of yourself. And may God continue to bless you and give you peace in this Lenten season.

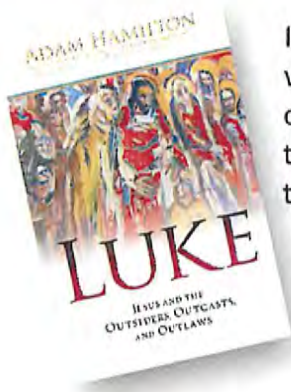
Pastor Suzanne



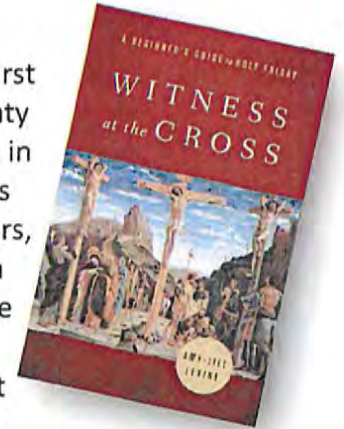
Join us Sundays
for worship

*Following Jesus
Messages of Lent*

Not too late to Grow in Faith!



It's not too late to join one of our Lenten studies! Yes they began the first week of the month, but if you make the decision soon, you'll have plenty of time to catch up and be a part of meaningful discussion taking place in these two deep dives into God's word. Adam Hamilton's *Luke* moves us through the gospel of Luke focusing on Jesus's attention to the outsiders, outcasts, and outlaws, while Amy-Jill Levine's *Witness at the Cross* is a more intense view of Christ's sacrifice through the perspectives of the different characters who were present, lead us to ask ourselves, "What is our witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ?" Sign up at the Connection Point and see Marilyn to obtain a book.



United Women in Faith

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.
~Colossians 3:12

I found this verse in my Upper Room and wanted to share it with you. Take a minute and read the rest of the verse. It seems so very appropriate for our world today!

Our first UWF program will be a presentation by Joe and Linda Pulver on their hike of the entire Appalachian Trail. After following them on Facebook, seeing their pictures, and hearing them talk about what they were going through, I know that everyone will enjoy hearing their presentation. Please feel free to invite your friends to this presentation! It's an event that is open to everyone in our church and community.

The Rummage Sale is coming! The dates for the Spring Rummage Sale will be April 29 and 30. It's not too early to start setting aside your most prime rummage as you prepare to do your spring cleaning! We will begin accepting your donations as early as April 16!

The United Women in Faith are pleased to focus our efforts on good works, but the best part is that we have fun and enjoy warm companionship. Many good things come from serving as United Women in Faith!

Claudia Ireland, UWF President

Holy Thursday Prayer Walk

Thursday, April 6 10:00 a.m.—7:00 p.m.

Come at your convenience and spend as much time as you would like, visiting prayer stations located throughout the main floor of the church, concluding with Holy Communion in the Sanctuary.

Mason First United Methodist Church
201 E Ash Street, Mason, MI 48854
(517) 676-9449



Good Friday

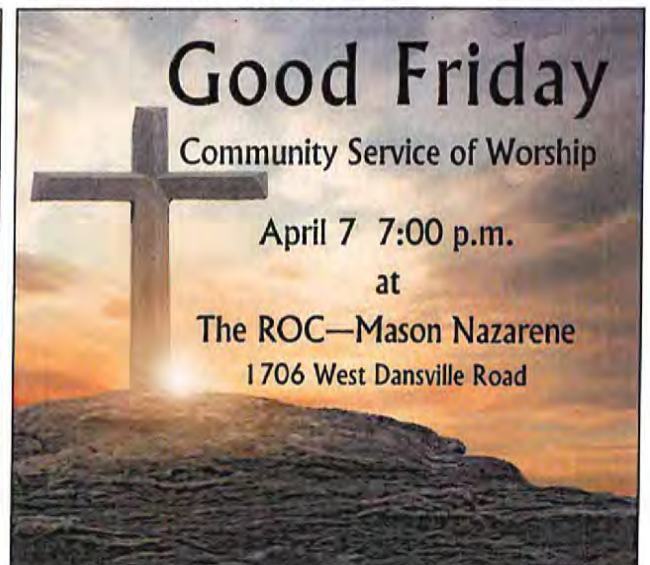
Community Service of Worship

April 7 7:00 p.m.

at

The ROC—Mason Nazarene

1706 West Dansville Road



FELLOWSHIP, FOOD & FUN

Adventures from the Appalachian Trail

Presented by Joe and Linda Pulver

Thursday March 16, 7:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

One of the most exciting things to be found on Facebook last year was the regular posts detailing the adventures that Joe and Linda Pulver were having as they hiked the Appalachian Trail. Each post brought new stories and breathtaking pictures. We're so happy to welcome Joe and Linda to share their pictures and stories from the trail. Hope you can join us on Thursday, March 16!



Tuesday Night Potluck

There's nothing better than Methodist Potluck!

Anyone can tell you that there's nothing quite as tasty and fulfilling as a Methodist Potluck. The food is good and the fellowship is friendly. Take a night off—bring a dish to share and consider yourself among friends! **Tuesdays at 5:30**



Euchre Night every 3rd Friday!

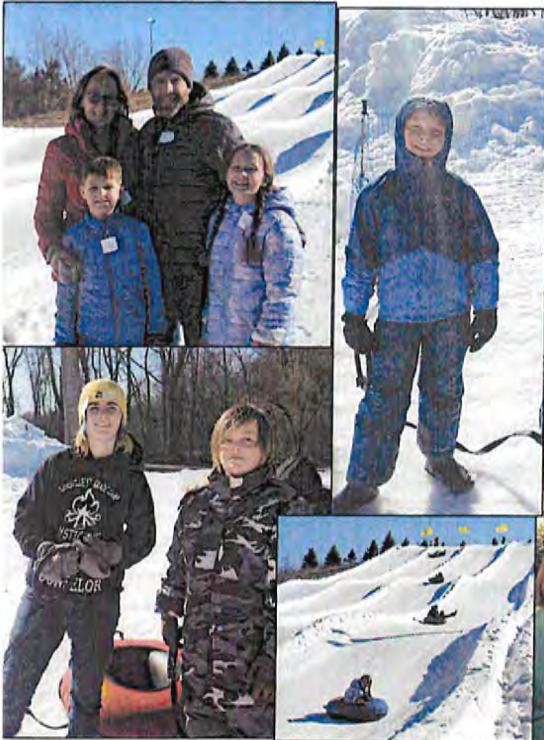
Join us every third Friday (March 17 this month) at 6:30 p.m. for an evening of Euchre fun. No partner is required – just be sure to sign up at the Connection Point so that we can arrange to have full tables. Bring a snack to share and your own beverage. (If you need to cancel, please be sure to let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

February was an exciting month of Fun, Fundraising, and Fellowship for the Ignite Youth!

It began with making more than 100 Super Bowl Subs. Then we gloved up and moved on to flipping pancakes for our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper where we served over 60 people. Together we raised over \$1200 toward our summer Mission Trip!



Then we wrapped up the month with a sunny afternoon racing down the hills at Hawk Island Park!



Youth Prepare for Dinner in the Park Here's how you can help!

Ignite Youth are planning on serving at Dinner in the Park on Sunday, March 12. In preparation, they are collecting

- ◆ Travel-size Toiletries
- ◆ Toothbrushes & Toothpaste
- ◆ Deodorant
- ◆ New Underwear
- ◆ Ziplock bags of any size

Please leave your donations in the bins at the Collection Point before Sunday, March 12. Thank you for your help!



March Financial Update

Glenn Darling, Treasurer

Wow! Two months of the new year are already behind us, and much has changed for the church financially. As the year began, we received quite a few one-time donations from people who take their required minimum IRA distributions and give their entire annual gift in a lump sum. We thank these folks for their generosity!

The good news is that this gave us about a \$20,000 bump in January. The bad news is that only about \$6,100 of that bump remains as of the end of February. In January we had a large bill for the broken water heater, and a Consumers Energy bill for over \$5,100, and of course, we're still feeling the impact of inflation. The biggest expense on our budget is payroll and benefits. Our payroll and benefits total nearly \$16,675 per month.

We began 2023 with about a \$10,000 "cushion" in our Operating Fund. However, we currently forecast that the cushion will be gone by about May at our current income/expense rate. The reality is, that we need to figure out additional ways to reduce expenses, or to increase giving.

In the meantime, EFT giving has increased and is helping to even out our cash flow, so we thank all those who have chosen this easy and efficient method of contributing. We're also figuring out ways to make casual/mobile giving easier to do since this is the wave of the future. And of course, the good news is that we continue to see new faces in our congregation every week, so we know we're continuing to do God's work of inviting friends and neighbors into active discipleship.

In this new year, we will be challenged to do all we can, and to always remain faithful and generous!

Clothing Bank Opens in New Location ...and immediately expands hours!

On a cold and bright February morning, Jill Bell and Linda Hughson cut the ribbon on opening our new clothing bank location, now located in the same building with Mason Community Services, the Ingham County Diaper Bank, the Food Bank, and VITA (income tax preparation assistance). The building, located directly behind Bad Brewing, makes for a great centrally located resource for people to get the help they need.

Freely Given (the clothing bank) is now able to have the clothing set up and merchandised so that people can find what they're looking for.

New hours: Mondays 11am-1pm;
Thursdays 11am-1pm & 4pm-6pm

To volunteer: <https://www.masoncommunityservices.org/>

A Midwinter Concert, Euchre Night, and Celebrating Us...
 Alec Jachalke played his bassoon in worship and at the concert, the Ringers rang and the singers sang, Brian Hankey turns out to be a card shark, but Colleen Sutberry's not having it! (Gary Ireland took the prize - again!) Lynn & Trevor Goedert and Gerry & Lew Tibbits were just a few of the 19 couples who enjoyed a romantic candle-lit dinner in our Fellowship Hall!



Bright Future Update

What's happening with Bright Future and when are we going to get that new sound system? We have a LOT of irons in the fire with the Bright Future updates underway! But it's important for us all to remember that to do a thing well, we need to take careful steps and do all of our due diligence. Plus, for each of the items on our Bright Future wish list, we need to accrue the funds before we spend! This month we're devoting some serious time pursuing grant monies from three different sources to help with the funding.

We're still in Phase I of our plan. We're meeting with a carpet firm this week to hear a new design presentation and receive a quote. If we like the ideas and corresponding price tag, we'll start looking at a timetable for installation. If we need to go back to the drawing board, it'll be a little longer.

We'll be meeting with David Gunns and Kim Sperry soon to discuss the design of the new Coffee Connection so that they can begin building that furniture.

What about that new sound system? Our sanctuary sound system isn't getting any younger, and we've heard from many of you about how difficult it is to hear! We *hear* you! Two realities are holding this necessary project up. First, the company that we were working with on this plan has changed their business model and has decided that our project is no longer in line with the scope of their work. Second, we do not yet have sufficient funds for this. Phase I of a new sound system will run close to \$40,000. We're hoping that the grant awards will get us closer to being able to get this work done. And we're in the process of looking for a new vendor for this work.

If organization is your gift and you would like to serve as a project coordinator for any of our Bright Future projects, please see Peggy Gunns! We would welcome your assistance.

Finally, the Trustees agreed to begin looking for an architect to help us begin to envision sanctuary updates for the future.



IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH...

New in the Church Office...

You may have noticed a familiar face back in the church office and wondered why the retired Marilyn Lautzenheiser has made a come-back. (Hint: It's just temporary!)

After more than two years of fruitless searching for a qualified lead teacher for the toddler room in the daycare, Jean Bement graciously agreed to make the transition and fill that much needed position. Jean is a gifted teacher and the children and parents love her. And Tami is delighted to have her back!

So... Marilyn has (also graciously) agreed to come out of retirement (temporarily) while we conduct a search for a new office administrator. If you know of someone who may be interested, please refer them to Rev. Suzanne.

Church Family News

Our sympathies are extended to:

- Wayne Rice's family on his passing February 11, 2022.
- Jo Reece on the loss of her husband, Wayne Reece, on February 12.

Prayers & Healing Wishes to:

- Rebecca McKimmy, who is hospitalized for pneumonia
- Chris Bement, who is completing radiation and chemo treatments
- 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
- Island City Assisted Living, Eaton Rapids: Don Dickinson
- The Willows of Okemos: Lew Tibbits



Your generous noisy offerings have made a very real difference to the missions we serve. In February, we designated our noisy collection to raising funds for Heifer International. But when news of the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria hit, we decided to pivot and dedicate the remainder of February and all of March to support UMCOR's efforts to provide tent shelters for the people of Turkey and Syria who have lost everything.

By the way, one interesting way you can share news about our church is when you see someone juggling their coinage—tell them what our church does with noisy change. They may want to be a part of it!

Scholarship Applications Available

Our church is blessed with the opportunity each year to provide scholarship funds to qualified students, helping our youth with the tuition, books, room and board, and specific fees associated with pursuing a college education.

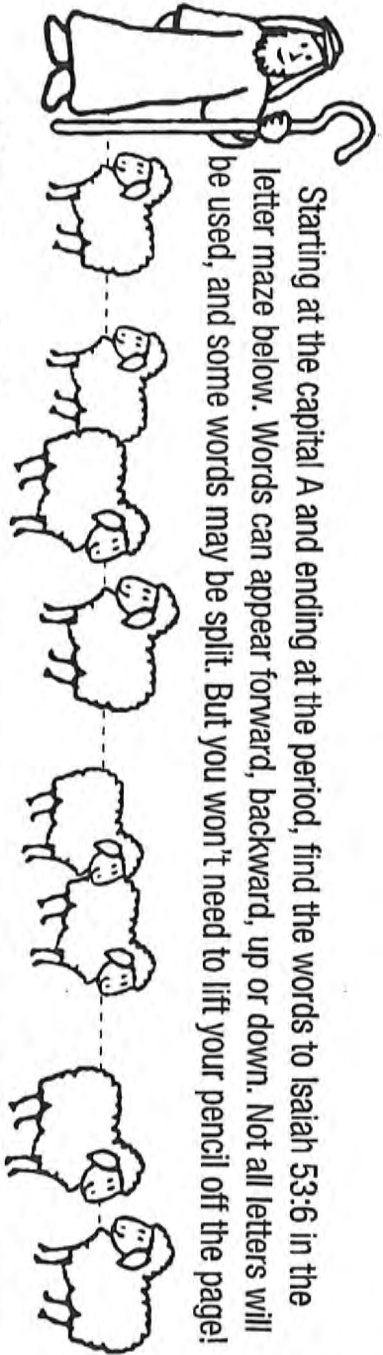


Scholarship applications are available from the church office. You may pick one up in person or receive it via email—just send your request to info@masonfirst.org and a copy will be forwarded to you.

The deadline to return applications is Friday, May 5, no later than 3:00 p.m. The church office must receive all applications by this date and time—please be advised that late and/or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Consideration will be given to students who have demonstrated faith and faithfulness within Mason First UMC and the community. The committee will also consider educational and vocations goals, financial need, and academic history. Graduating high school seniors, as well as college students, are eligible to apply.

Puzzle!



Starting at the capital A and ending at the period, find the words to Isaiah 53:6 in the letter maze below. Words can appear forward, backward, up or down. Not all letters will be used, and some words may be split. But you won't need to lift your pencil off the page!

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned
 away from the LORD, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
 Isaiah 53:6, NRSV

Answer: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6, NRSV



MARCH

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Kim Wolfgang	3
Kathy Nelson.....	3
Kyle Guthrie.....	4
Andrew Schmidt	4
Forrest Akers	7
Jeanna Droscha	7
Evan Snoeyink.....	7
Ruben Droscha	8
Brittany Armstrong.....	11
Brayden Bayer	12
Liam Aldrich.....	12
Judy Forester	14
Megan Kolberg	15
Judy Campbell	17
Diana Baker	17
Kelly Treiber.....	18
Gary Ireland.....	18
Deb Fennell.....	18
Jackie Judson	18
Sierra Zanger	20
Adriana Smith	20
Nancy Fox	21
Erica Bartlett.....	21
Kendra Sabbadin	21
Beth Grosshans.....	22
Larry Howe	22
Danielle Raiche	23
Dan Schlattman	23
Bill Husband.....	24
Alec Jachalke	25
Jack Calhoun	28
Pat Hogarth	28
Charles Simpson	30
Liam Adolphson	30

Anniversaries

Chuck and Roxie Stark	17
Ralph and Sally Beebe	21
Tom and Joyce Plumhoff	23
Chuck and Laurie Reed	30

Daylight Saving Time Begins

March 12, 2023



March 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30am UWF Leadership Team 10:30am Lenten Study meets in Library 6:30pm "Witness at the Cross" study in chapel 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir	2	3 9:30am Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) meets in youth room	4
5 9:30am WORSHIP 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	6	7 4:00pm Lenten Study "Luke"--Chapel 5:30pm Potluck in Fellowship Hall	8 10:30am Lenten Study meets in Library 6:30pm "Witness at the Cross" study in chapel 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir	9 12:00pm Mason Community Leaders in chapel	10	11
12 Daylight Savings Begins 9:30am WORSHIP 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	13 6:30pm MCCCC Board meeting in chapel	14 4:00pm Lenten Study "Luke"--Chapel 5:30pm Potluck in Fellowship Hall	15 10:30am Lenten Study meets in Library 6:30pm "Witness at the Cross" study in chapel 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir	16 7:00pm Joe & Linda Pulver's Appalachian Trip presentation in fellowship hall	17 9:30am MOPS meets in youth room 6:30pm Euchre Night	18
19 9:30am WORSHIP 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	20 7:00pm Finance meeting	21 4:00pm Lenten Study "Luke"--Chapel 5:30pm Potluck in Fellowship Hall	22 10:30am Lenten Study meets in Library 6:30pm "Witness at the Cross" study in chapel 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir	23	24	25
26 9:30am WORSHIP 11:00am Wired Word Class in Chapel	27 7:00pm Trustees meeting in 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--Chapel	29 10:30am Lenten Study meets in Library 6:30pm "Witness at the Cross" study in chapel 7:00pm Chancel Bells 8:00pm Chancel Choir	30	31	



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201 E. Ash Street * Mason MI 48854

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SPRING FORWARD
Change Your Clocks

Easter is Coming!

Order your flowers today!



You are the light of the
world. A city on a hill
cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:14

Go shine your light!