

Methodist the messenger

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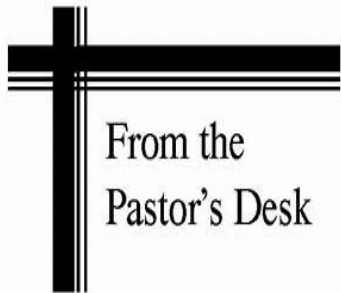
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God cares about you



and so do we

MARCH 2024



"The Way"

John 14:6a quotes Jesus to say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And, in the Book of Acts, Luke describes the Christian movement as "The Way". If you stop to think about it, Christianity should be a "way". A way to look at the world, a way to think about our lives, and a way to live. We are, indeed, *people of the Way*.

The dictionary defines "way" as a "method, style, or manner of doing something". That should ring true to us as Methodists - people with a method. "Way" also means "a road, track, path, or street for traveling along". *Both* definitions apply during the season of Lent

In the early church, Lent was a period for new converts to learn about the method, style, or manner of being a Christian. As they prepared for Baptism, usually a seasoned Christian would "walk with" a seeker to show them the ropes, teach them basics and start them off on the "Way". We can use Lent to take the time to get back to the basics of worship, prayer, study, and service as well.

One of the disciplines which carried over from our Hebrew roots was pilgrimage - walking, to holy sites. Not everyone could take the time or had the resources to actually walk great distances to a holy place so an alternative was designed - the Labyrinth.

Similar to a maze, a Labyrinth is a path drawn on the floor where you walk from the outer edge to the center. You walk in and then walk out following a curving spiral sort of path. But, unlike a maze, there's no getting lost in a labyrinth. Labyrinths have been designed to serve as a model for life where nothing seems to go directly where you plan to go. A labyrinth makes you take your time, slow down, and follow - not lead - the way. A powerful lesson and antidote for today's frenetic pace.

With its twists and turns, this activity is mildly disorienting, allowing your mind to be receptive to the presence of God. It takes just enough effort that you have to concentrate, but not so much that you can't meditate. It truly creates a pilgrimage experience in a small space over a short time.

FUMCWA is blessed to have its own labyrinth which will be available for all to experience during Holy Week. On Wednesday, March 27th, the labyrinth will be open at 6:30 pm for all kids (including AWANA and Sunday School) and their families to come, learn about it, participate in activities, and walk the labyrinth. On Holy Thursday, the labyrinth will be open from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm for anyone to take part in the experience of walking with Christ.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Ron

A NOTE FROM OUR LAY LEADER

Lenten Greetings dear cohorts. As I read my Lenten devotionals and prepare myself for Easter, I am focused again this year on the fundamentals of our faith, and anticipating the second coming of our Lord Jesus. I hope this is a time of great reflection and anticipation for each of you too.

I am also spending some time reflecting on the goals for our congregation that we discerned in 2022, under the leadership of Pastor Sam and Dave Affeldt and especially John Harrits. It was a fantastic process, and goals were established by each committee and for the church as a whole. These goals will help us fulfill our ministry to the world and for each of us. This is a good time to review and to re-engage. I am encouraging each committee at their next meetings to review their goals, progress, and next steps needed. Also, explore if there are any updates or revisions needed. Plan to report at the next Church Council meeting. Also, this is a good time to review your giving: Are you up to date, and giving at an appropriate level? Our ministries are many, and we serve best when we have plenty of servants.

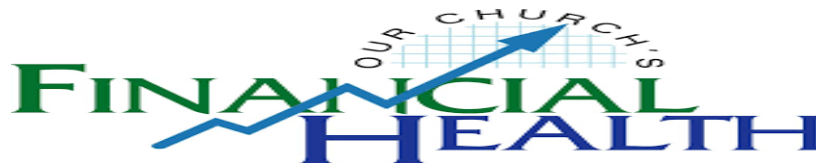
Last month, I brought forward a list of rhythms from Tom Rainer based on the book of ACTS; these are seven important activities for the corporate church, but today I want to remind us that they are important for each of us individually in discipleship.

Grounded in Acts 2, the 7 rhythms are foundational to Rooted Network discipleship resources. When churches commit to practicing these disciplines together, they see growth and transformation in both individuals and their communities.

- Daily Devotion (Acts 2:42, 46)
- Prayer (Acts 2:42)
- Repentance (Acts 2:37-39)
- Sacrificial Generosity (Acts 2:44-45)
- Serve the Community (Acts 2:44-45)
- Share Your Story (Acts 2:14-36)
- Worship (Acts 2:26-28, 46-47)

Some of these are harder than others for each of us. For Lent, please select one or two of them to personally focus on throughout this Holy Time.

Blessings to each of you. Thomas Bolton 414-704-5478



The financial statement of activities ending January 31, 2024, was unavailable at the time of printing.

Stewardship Message: Jesus talked about money and possessions twice as much as he did about heaven and hell, five times as much as he talked about prayer, and nearly half of Jesus' parables deal with how we manage money and possessions. John Wesley's goal was not to raise money for the church but to lead people into a healthier, more productive, more positive life by providing practical wisdom on the relationship between their faith and their finances. Wesley's rules are not about fundraising for the church. They are about becoming more like Christ. They are about practicing the spiritual discipline of generosity so that we become generous people whose lives are shaped in the likeness of an extravagantly generous God. How will we continue striving for Wesley's goal?



LECTIONARY READINGS & SERMON THEMES - MARCH 2024

March 3, 2024 Third Sunday in Lent

The Lord's Prayer Series: Exodus 16:11-18,21 & John 4:31-34 *Our Daily Bread*

Prayer so often is limited to simply asking - often for good and necessary things - but can it be more than that?

March 10, 2024 Fourth Sunday in Lent

The Lord's Prayer Series: Matthew 18: 21-35 *Forgiveness*

Forgiveness, forgiving others, is deeper than just saying the words. What is the true power in this act?

March 17, 2024 Fifth Sunday in Lent

The Lord's Prayer Series: 1 Peter 5: 8-9 and James 1: 12-15 *The Time of Trial*

It's not God who "tempts" us; more often than not, temptation comes from inside us. We pray that God remains with us even when we give up on ourselves.

March 24, 2024 Palm/ Passion Sunday

The Lord's Prayer Series: 1 Chronicles 29: 10-11 *"The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory"*

The Lord's prayer ends with this quote from the Old Testament, and each element of these verses reflects and reiterates elements of prayer.

March 28, 2024 Holy Thursday

John 13: 1-17, 31b-35 *"You Are Blessed If You Do This"*

John's account of the Last Supper stands out from those we read in the other three Gospels. There is no talk of bread and the cup or body and blood, just a demonstration of selfless service. There is a message here for us.

March 31, 2024 Easter Sunday

Acts 10: 34-43 *Good News!*

The words of Peter found here in Acts serve as a concise summary of Jesus' life, ministry, and legacy. This is "Good News" to be examined on Easter.

Holy Week 2024

Palm Sunday: March 24 - 10:30 am Worship-Sanctuary/YouTube; 11:30 am Palm Sunday Brunch in Fellowship Hall

Holy Thursday: March 28 - Prayer walk the Labyrinth (9:00 am-9:00 pm) in Fellowship Hall; 7:00 pm Worship - Sanctuary/YouTube

Easter Sunday: March 31 - 8:30 am Easter Sunrise Service - Fellowship Hall (Youth-Led) followed by Light Breakfast and Fellowship; 10:30 am Worship- Sanctuary/YouTube



The **Labyrinth** will be open for walking on Thursday, March 28th from 9 am to 9 pm. The Labyrinth will be in the Fellowship Hall along with multiple places to sit and meditate, a finger labyrinth, and a table for journaling, drawing, and coloring.



There is no right way to walk a labyrinth. There is just one path that leads to and from the center, you only have to enter and follow the path. Your walk can encompass a variety of attitudes. It may be joyous or somber, filled with gratitude, thoughtful or prayerful. It can be a walking meditation.

Please take time out of your busy schedules to find a quiet center by walking the Labyrinth.

If you are interested in walking the labyrinth and have questions, please see Alyssa Roberts.

The Church Library has set up a book cart of Lenten Book Resources in the Gathering Room. It will be there throughout the Lenten season. You can borrow a book from the cart to help you deepen your faith as we move through the 40 days of Lent.



FUMCWA MINISTRIES

THE FOOD PANTRY'S FUTURE



As many of you know, our food pantry has been in existence for many years. In 2006, the food pantry as we know it today began with regular hours on specific days. It has relied on funding from the congregation as well as from donations from anonymous giving. The food pantry serves the West Allis area and operates out of our Fellowship Hall. It is a mission of our church and not connected with any other outside organization. Our families enter using the elevator entrance. About 14 years ago, an anonymous giver donated a large sum of money which has sustained us for many years. We are now concerned that we may not be able to continue this mission after the next year unless we get some much-needed funds.

We have an average of about 42 families each food pantry. The need of so many struggling families and single people needing that extra assistance to get them through the month is concerning. Our families are allowed to come on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays each month. They receive 2 bags of pre-packaged food, and also select 2 food items of their choosing, 2 personal care items, hot dogs, cheese, and bread. They are so appreciative of the many items of food and personal care products that they can select from. Our food pantry team not only helps these people with food and personal care items, but they listen to their stories and concerns and give encouragement, and also include them in their prayers. After the food pantry, we feel blessed by those we have met and feel as though they enrich our lives as well. We have been so grateful for the donations of personal care products that the Ilseman's daughter, Joan Lee, graciously gives to the food pantry through couponing. Karen Bolton has also been helping us by picking up bread which is donated to food pantries in need.

A letter will be going home with our families explaining that there may be changes coming in the weeks ahead. With the influx of the number of families using our food pantry, the cost for the year to supply food runs about \$12,000.00. If you can help our food pantry in any way, either by donating money or food items, we can continue helping our local West Allis families for many years to come. All non-perishable food items are accepted. Please note the expiration date on food items. If you wish to support us through your monetary giving, please mark your check or envelope with Food Pantry. You can also call the church office to find out how you can give online. Thank you to all who have been helping support us. We are truly blessed by such a loving church community. If you have any questions about our food pantry, please contact Annette Intravaia (414-257-4166), coordinator.



United Women in Faith (UWIF): On Monday, February 12th, Unity Circle was very pleased to have our former Parish Nurse, Pat Shapiro, present a very informative program. Our group's questions about health concerns were sent to Pat beforehand. She answered those questions and used illustrations and materials that were related to the question. It was so nice to have her back with us, and we look forward to having her back in the fall. On **Monday, March 11th**, we will have a fun afternoon with a special treasure swap! Bring an item in good condition that you would like to give to a loving home. In return, you can select one that you would like. We will also talk about decluttering your home. On **Monday, April 8th**, Sojourner Truth House will present a program about their organization. We welcome all ladies to our group. We hope you will join us for these programs and decide to continue coming.

We meet on the second Monday of each month at 1:00 pm in the Fireside Room except for July, August, and January when we do not meet. We look forward to seeing some new faces. Come and enjoy fellowship, devotions, sharing, learning new things, and of course, refreshments! We DO have a good time! If you have any questions about our group, please call Annette Intravaia at 414-257-4166.

Laurie Halvorsen, Senior Ministries Coordinator: March is the month of our first coach trip of the year to the Fireside to see "Fiddler on the Roof" on Thursday, March 21st. We are all looking forward to this outing for the day. Reservations have been called in for this event, but if you are interested, please call the church office, and you will be put on a waiting list. The cost is \$106.00. We leave Franklin at 9:00 am and FUMC at 9:30 am.

Join us for Fun, Food, and Fellowship in 2024 in our 49th Year with Senior League!

Meetings in March 2024:

March 6 12 Noon Oven Baked Chicken, Potato Wedges, Broccoli Salad, Brownies
Program: Mary Zarse Presents Abigail Adams
Devotions: Jean Molitor



March 20 12 Noon Chili, Cornbread, Veggie Tray, Cookies
Program: Falls Prevention; Presentation by Aurora Health Care West Allis
Devotions: Laurie Halvorsen

Sign up now for Fireside Coach Trip "Nunsense" on Friday, June 7th. The cost is \$106.00, including gratuity. Leave Franklin 9:00 am, FUMC 9:30 am. Reservations Required. Everyone is welcome! Sign up at Senior League meetings or in the church office.

FUMCWA LOCAL MISSIONS



Second Saturday Servants: On March 9th we will serve hot casseroles. Please remember to bring your hot casseroles to the church kitchen by 7:45 am. We kindly ask that you heavily spray/grease the casserole pans to make serving easier. In January, we delivered 150 hot breakfasts to our grateful neighbors.

Coins of Love in March will support the Sunday School Lenten Mission Project. The money collected will be sent to Heifer International, an organization that works with communities to end world hunger and poverty and care for the Earth. **The Basket of Hope** includes rabbits, a starter flock of chickens, and training and education on their care. This livestock donation provides hope for struggling farmers seeking a way out of poverty.



January Coins of Love - Repairers of the Breach \$283.00

February Coins of Love - Divine Intervention \$242.66

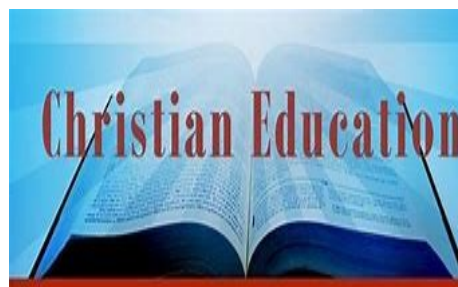


You have heard the words, 'God cares about you and so do we'. This statement is true for our congregation and especially relevant for your **Wesleyan Congregational Care Team**. Our team is here to help you navigate through any difficult circumstance. Our aim is to walk alongside you, listen to you, and support you with the love of Christ our Lord. If you need someone to talk to and seek support, please contact any member of our team on Sunday. You can identify us by our WCCT Listener badge or speak to Pastor Ron. You can leave a message with the office also. Laura Molleson, Chairperson

FUMCWA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Adult Christian Education Message from Tom Bolton, Lay leader:

Bible Study in Lent is Important. We are blessed at First Church to have many offerings for Christian education. We have classes at 9:00 am on Sunday mornings, monthly studies with Michael Odle, and special classes throughout the year. If you are still feeling left out, please talk to me or any member of our Adult Christian Education Committee about what you need. More basics? More advanced classes? Theology? Discipleship? Social Action? We want to meet your needs.



Please join us in our Lenten study of Luke on Sundays at 9:00 am or Tuesday nights at 7:00 pm on Zoom. With or without the book, you will still learn from the videos with Pastor Adam Hamilton and the discussion. There are also free online studies you may join.

Academic dean and professor of New Testament at United Theological Seminary, the Rev. David F. Watson, recently shared his insights on how John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) read the Bible. In "Reading the Bible like Wesley (sort of)," Watson argues that while Wesley often read the Bible plainly and looked for the simple truth contained in the verses without too much speculation, he always read it with what Watson calls "the analogy of faith". The analogy was a basic summation of key doctrines such as the Trinity and salvation by faith that Wesley allowed to always frame his reading. Wesley also always read the scripture with a goal of recapturing the witness and vigor of the early or "primitive" church as it appears in the New Testament.

New converts studied intensely during Lent. It is a good model for today.

Book Discussion Group: On Monday, March 18th, at 1:30 pm the group will discuss ***Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival, and Hope in an American City*** by Andrea Elliott (Education for Mission). The J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize winner and a finalist for the Bernstein Award, this book follows eight dramatic years in the life of Dasani, a precocious and imaginative girl living in a homeless shelter in Brooklyn. Elliott weaves the story of Dasani's childhood with the history of her ancestors, tracing their passage from slavery to the Great Migration north. As Dasani comes of age, New York City's homeless crisis has exploded, deepening the chasm between rich and poor. She must guide her siblings through a world riddled with hunger, violence, racism, drug addiction, and the threat of foster care. The group meets in the Bernice Nailen Memorial Library. All are welcome.

FUMCWA EVENTS

Lance Lambert / Events Coordinator: We had a very successful **Souper Bowl of Caring** event last month. Through your generosity we were able to send \$440.00 to St. Ben's Feeding program and donated 124 cans of soup to our own Food Pantry. *Thank You First Church!* Congratulations to Raymond Roberts for his winning soup at our tasting event.

Methodist Movie Matinee & Discussion - Sunday, March 17th Following Worship.

We'll be seeing (finally) "Evan, Almighty", the comedy sequel to "Bruce, Almighty" where Evan Baxter (Steve Carell) leaves the newsroom to become a Congressman who seems to have it made until God (Morgan Freeman) throws a crisis of Biblical proportions at his feet. The Lord wants Evan to build an ark and fill it with animals in preparation for a flood. Movie, popcorn & beverages are **FREE**. Stay after the movie for a brief discussion & pizza. A free will offering will be taken to help defray the cost of the pizzas. *Please come and BRING A FRIEND!*



Palm Sunday Brunch - Sunday, March 24th Following Worship.

Join your church family in Fellowship Hall for this First Church tradition. Fun activities, crafts, and fellowship along with a brunch prepared by Cheryl Spaude. Hope to see you there. This is another great opportunity to bring friends and neighbors to show them our welcoming church.

Join us for Easter Sunday services on March 31st! Our Sunrise Service will be led by our youth in Fellowship Hall at 8:30 am, followed by a light breakfast and fellowship. Our Easter Celebration Worship Service will take place at 10:30 am in the Sanctuary/YouTube and will feature special music.

Christ Is Risen!
CHRIST
IS RISEN
INDEED *Alleluia*

FUMCWA FAITH COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The United Methodist General Conference is Coming Up: Every four years, United Methodists from around the world come together to do the business of the global church. Here representatives from every Annual Conference and delegates, including those from our Wisconsin Annual Conference, meet to pray, discuss legislation, and add to or update the rules of the Church found in the United Methodist Book of Discipline. The last *Discipline* came out following the 2016 General Conference, and it doesn't take a mathematician to realize that was more than 4 years ago! But, COVID intervened, and the scheduled 2020 Conference was postponed.

This year, however, we will be conferencing as a global church from April 23 to May 3, 2024, in Charlotte, North Carolina. All General Conferences have been interesting and important, and this one will be no different. So, to help us stay informed, here is a website where you can find out more information, including a "Beginner's Guide" to the General Conference as well as summaries of the legislation that will be considered.

Go to: <https://www.wisconsinumc.org/about-general-conference>



Whether or not you check out the detailed information, please keep our denomination, our conference, our delegates, and our congregation in your prayers during this important time.