

Methodist the messenger

Rev. Ron Kral, Interim Pastor

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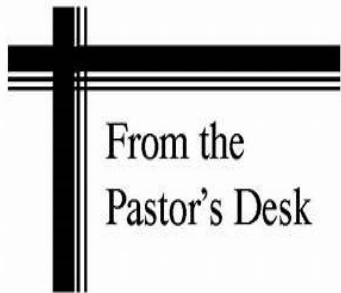
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God cares about you



and so do we

APRIL 2024



Members and Friends of FUMCWA,

As I sat down to write this, I heard sounds from the organ in the sanctuary. No, I was not enjoying Alyssa's mastery at the keyboard. Someone was here to service the pipe organ. While not as melodic as the selections that Alyssa gifts us every Sunday, I did think about music in the church, and I wondered what Jesus thought about music.

It didn't take much searching on Google to discover that there are two references to Jesus singing in the Gospels. Both Matthew and Mark recorded that Jesus "sung the hymn" with his disciples at the Last Supper before leaving to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. I had never noticed that *Jesus sang* before now. I'm sure that the Wesley brothers knew this as they were biblical scholars and promoted hymn singing. Music in the church is central to worshipping God

One of the first things I discovered upon arriving at First Church was its amazing and extensive music program. Not only is there a rich history of music, but there is also an outstanding current expression of vocal and instrumental artistry. And while it sounds excellent, there is actually something much deeper going on.

You see, religion - Christianity - when done right and well, is not meant to be an individual or spectator sport. It is participatory and communal. We are "the *body* of Christ" - not the big toe or the elbow. The Church is a composite of individuals all working together. A bell choir, choral group, or string quartet needs multiple parts to sound right. Solos on the pipe organ require more than one finger. All ten digits (and sometimes two feet) are necessary to produce what we've all come to appreciate and love. Music is a group effort.

Doing church well is also a group endeavor. Many people with many differing and unique skills, abilities, passions and dreams are what makes a congregation a ministry rather than a social club. Like a choir with a director who guides and encourages each singer to excel at their part, a church, which really is a church, needs to come together around a single focus in order to harmoniously touch the lives of others. Here, that focus is simply and clearly expressed as God Cares About You, *and So Do We!*

My experience so far has been that this is the reality of First Church West Allis. People here understand God to be caring and present for all. So, as followers of Christ, folks here strive to do the same. And it is working. Together, you are answering the Psalmist who asked, "How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Easy! Just join in and be part of the choir, missions, a bible study, a committee or help with an event, with worship, or just encourage your neighbors to get to know us. Our faith is a song which wants to be sung and there are so many ways to do it.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Ron

A NOTE FROM OUR LAY LEADER

He is risen Indeed!

It's been said that *Jesus didn't come to fix us; he came to transform us*. We are saved eternally by Jesus. This especially impacts me at Easter time! I love the reminder that I often hear from Pastor Adam Hamilton at Easter time, "The worst thing is never the last thing." It always gives me great hope.

What God has done through the life, death, and resurrection of our dear savior is SO MUCH MORE than a quick fix. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we all have the hope of new life. No more are broken souls defined by guilt and mistakes of past days. He transforms lives! I see this new life all around me. God has blessed us with the beauty of nature and new life throughout our neighborhoods this Spring. And God has blessed us with new and transformed lives all throughout our communities. Easter blessings to you all!

I am excited to share with you all at worship. We are blessed with such great worship--messages, moving litany, music, and the fellowship of community. I am thankful for the powerful pastors we have had in our midst these past years. We have been much blessed at First Church. My first goal this month is to share our worship fellowship with more people. I dream of a day with full pews again, and many services each week.

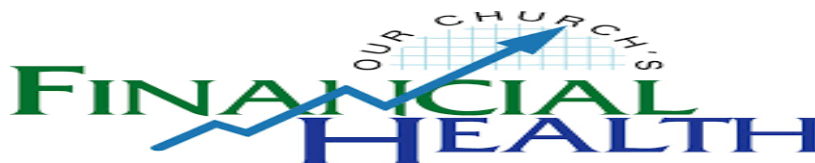
My second dream is to give everyone at First Church an opportunity to share their feelings about pastoral changes and how it impacts us. We have had pastoral changes in 2019, 2023 with an interim shepherd, and anticipate a new change this summer--three new pastors in five years.

Eight or nine of us began a program with Marquette University two years ago to learn the Ignatian process of the "Examen(ed) Church"--I think of this as Christian Meditation. These are steps to identify ministry opportunities and deepen congregational opportunities. One area where we saw an opportunity to share this was based on input from many Congregation Members who desire an opportunity to share feelings and contemplation about pastoral transitions. Our team worked with staff at Marquette to develop for us and other churches an "Examen" on pastoral transition. Pastoral transitions raise many emotions and feelings that can impact the church going forward. These feelings may impact our welcoming and connection with a new pastor.

Our team plans to offer sessions this spring for small or large groups to work through this personal and group process of examining our feelings. The goal is to listen and receive from each other and from the Holy Spirit more than to react. We will pray for light, give thanks to God, review our feelings alone and in the group, focus on a feeling or two, and turn our gaze toward the future. Watch for more information on these sessions in the near future.

Enjoy the Spring. God cares about you, and so do I. He is risen! This is a time for hope!

Tom Bolton, Lay Leader, 414-704-5478



The Church Financial Statement of Activities ending February 29, 2024:

	Year To Date Actual	Year To date Budget	Difference
Giving & Other Income	\$90,767.78	\$46,246.68	\$44,521.10
Expenses	\$65,601.45	\$76,442.70	\$10,841.25
Operating Income/ (Deficit)	\$25,166.33	\$(30,196.02)	

Our hope with prayers is that members will continue to give generously as we envision a better and brighter future with goals and strategies to keep FUMCWA healthy, growing, and vital. God cares about you and so do we. Thank you for your financial support to the life and the mission of FUMCWA.

Worship TOGETHER

LECTIONARY READINGS & SERMON SERIES - APRIL 2024

“The Way”

April 7 Second Sunday of Easter

Psalm 1, Acts 2:37-42; “Do We Need Rules?”

Is it enough to just love God? What is the framework we need to guide our lives?

April 14 Third Sunday of Easter

Matthew 18:6-9; “Care-Less Living”

No one typically chooses to be harmful, but we can often live “care-lessly” without intention.

April 21 Fourth Sunday of Easter

1 John 1:16-22; “Care-Full Living”

What does it look like to be caring? Is just being ‘nice’ enough?

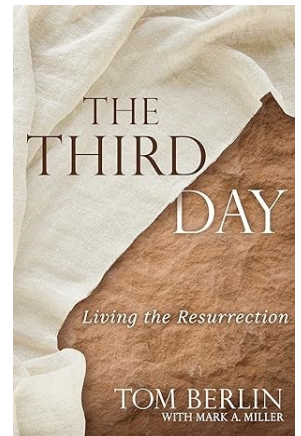
April 28 Fifth Sunday of Easter

Micah 6:6-8; Col 2:6,7; “Living in the ‘Box’”

Interpretations of Wesley’s thought point to a grid of Piety / Mercy X Public / Private. What does that mean for us moving forward as 21st-century disciples?

NEW ADULT EDUCATION CLASS: In *The Third Day: Living the Resurrection*, UMC Bishop Tom Berlin uses his gifts of storytelling and understanding the Scriptures to connect the reader to the experiences of several individuals around Jesus in his final days, focusing on new life and redemption rather than loss. Join Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas as they feel the despair of losing Jesus and the surprise and joy that awaits them in the resurrection. This study traces events around these characters, along with Paul and the disciples at Emmaus, and how the resurrection transforms their lives. This six-week study includes video teaching sessions that enhance learning and discussion.

Pastor Ron will lead the class on Sunday mornings from 9:00-10:00 am in the Lighthouse Room and on Tuesdays from 7:00-8:00 pm via Zoom.



Sunday School Class: Sunday (April 7 to May 12) 9:00-10:00 AM

Zoom Class: Tuesday (4/9, 4/16, 4/23, 4/30, 5/7, 5/14) 7:00-8:00 PM

Please contact the church office to register for the Zoom class. Copies of the book are available for sale in the church office. If possible, please read the first chapter before the class begins.

From Mark Hannah, Head Usher:



Beginning Sunday, April 7, 2024

All doors and elevator will be locked at 10:40 am (10 minutes after the service begins)

An usher will monitor the alley door until 10:45 am

FUMCWA MINISTRIES

CHURCH LIBRARY MINISTRY: Church libraries play a significant role in enriching our lives and supporting us at every stage of our life's journey. We invite you to celebrate National Library Week, which is observed from April 7th to April 13th, 2024. The primary goal of our church library ministry is to gather and provide Christian-oriented books and materials for the adults and children in our congregation to help them seek inspiration and comfort and strengthen their faith. This year's theme is "Ready, Set, Library!" We encourage you to visit **the Bernice Nailen Memorial Library** any time during the week during church hours. Library Volunteers are available to assist on Sundays from 11:30 to 11:50 am.



THE FOOD PANTRY MINISTRY: The food pantry volunteers would like to thank all of those who are contributing to the Good Samaritan Fund, which is for the food pantry. This money will help us continue providing food and personal care items for those struggling to make ends meet. We continue to have an average of about 43 families each time. Each month we will be suggesting a food item and a personal care or household cleaning item. You can bring one or both of the items. Sometimes a person doesn't know what to bring so these are only suggestions. However, we accept any nonperishable food item and any personal care or household cleaning product that you would like to bring. For the month of April, we are suggesting catsup as the food item

and dish detergent as the household item. Many of the items we suggest are available at the Dollar Stores. We serve the West Allis families who are in need. We are open the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month from 2:30-4:30 pm. Entrance is through the elevator door and down to Fellowship Hall. We have a wonderful group of volunteers and we hope that we can continue doing this for many years to come. Thank you to this great congregation for all your love and support. You are a real blessing!!

Pantry Items for April: Catsup and Dish Detergent

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH (UWIF): On Monday, March 11th, Unity Circle had a treasure swap, and we talked about decluttering our home. We had a great time talking about the items we brought and then selecting an item to take home. It was lots of fun along with some good tips on decluttering. We probably will do this again next year. Our **April 8th** meeting at 1:00 pm in the Fireside Room will be presented by Sojourner Truth House. We will learn more about what this wonderful organization does. We invite anyone who would like to come. Our **May 13th** meeting will take place in the Fireside Room at 1:00 pm. Jane Henderson will be showing us how to arrange potted plants and presenting other tips on planting. All are invited! We hope that you will join us for any or all of our meetings. We provide Christian fellowship, devotions, learning about ourselves and our community, support for one another, and end with refreshments. It is a great group, and we would love to have you join us. If you have any questions, please call Annette at 414 -257-4166.



This QR Code will take you directly to the church website.



Laurie Halvorsen, Senior Ministries Coordinator: Spring has arrived, and what better place to be twice a month at noon than Senior League. A fantastic lunch for \$10.00 and a different program each week at 1:00 pm. No membership dues, so come and join us and bring a friend.
Join us for Fun, Food, and Fellowship in 2024 in our 49th Year with Senior League!

Meetings in April 2024:

- April 3 12 Noon** Chicken Carbonara, Salad, Breadsticks, and Spumoni Ice Cream
 Program: "Keep a Song in Your Heart"; Julie Thompson Vocalist
 Devotions: Ruth Ann Werner
- April 17 12 Noon** Sloppy Joes, Chips, Veggie Tray, and Texas Sheet Cake
 Program: Utility Boxes Art Program; Presentation by Carson Coffield of West Allis
 Devotions: Lilian Guansing



Fireside Coach Trip "Nonsense" Friday, June 7th: \$106.00, including gratuity. Sign up now at the Senior League meetings or in the church office through early May. Leave Franklin 9:00 am, FUMC 9:30 am. Reservations are required. Everyone is welcome!

FUMCWA LOCAL MISSIONS



Second Saturday Servants: More hot breakfast casseroles are needed on Saturday, April 13th. Please bring your hot casseroles to the church kitchen by 7:45 am. The guests at the 8th and Dakota site appreciate your generosity. Clothes and grooming supplies are always put to good use. Thank you!



Jesus directed us to serve the least, the lost, and the lonely. We are blessed to be able to give to global and local missions. The Missions Committee met and selected the following missions to receive a gift from the interest of the Lorraine Harsh Fund:

- MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary Milwaukee \$5,000.00
- Medical Associates of the Philippines \$5,000.00
- Goodness Foundation in India \$2,000.00
- Stains in India college fund \$2,000.00
- Community Projects for Seniors of Milwaukee \$3,000.00
- AWANA at FUMCWA \$2,000.00
- Food Pantry at FUMCWA \$1,000.00

Our Scholarship and Endowment committee will release these amounts this Spring. Please keep these missions in your prayers.

Coins of Love in April will support the WIUM Pine Lake Church Camp. Pine Lake Camp is a summer camp with a range of facilities for every kind of camp and retreat experience. Bible study and campfire worship serve as a foundation for the Christian love and grace that Pine Lake strives to show all who come to this place.



- February Coins of Love - Divine Intervention \$754.11
- March Coins of Love - Baskets of Hope (Heifer) \$377.31



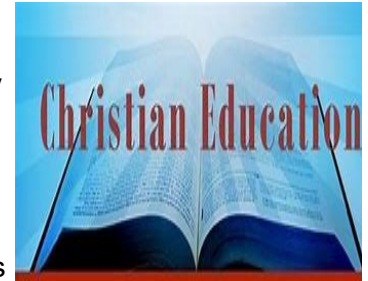
March Food Pantry - \$1712.28

Easter Offering - \$700.00

FUMCWA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Adult Christian Education Message from Bonnie Chesky, ACE Chair:

The Adult Christian Education Committee (ACE) wants to make sure you are aware of the wonderful opportunity we have to study with Pastor Ron on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 10:00 for 6 weeks, beginning the week after Easter, April 7 through May 12. The book he will be leading is called "The Third Day- Living the Resurrection" by Tom Berlin and covers the Resurrection experiences of Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Peter, and the men on the road to Emmaus, Paul, and Jesus. We hope many people in our congregation will take advantage of this chance to grow in faith and find a way to keep the joyful experience of Easter alive. The class will also be offered on Tuesday evenings on Zoom from 7:00 to 8:00 pm. Books are available for sale in the office, but one could just come to the class to listen and learn from the discussion and the sharing of fellow Christians.



Book Discussion Group: On Monday, April 15th, at 1:30 pm the group will discuss two books. ***Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival, and Hope in an American City*** by Andrea Elliott (Education for Mission). This book follows Dasani, a young and imaginative girl who lives in a Brooklyn homeless shelter. As she grows up, New York City's homeless crisis worsens, and Dasani must protect her siblings from hunger, violence, and the threat of foster care. The author weaves in the history of Dasani's ancestors, tracing their journey from slavery to the Great Migration North. And ***The Four Winds*** by Kristin Hannah (Social Action). This novel is a powerful epic set during the Great Depression. Elsa Wolcott, a Great Plains farmer's wife, battles against nature and fights to keep her children alive. Elsa must make a difficult choice: fight for the land she loves or leave it behind for a better life. The book brings to life the harsh realities of the Great Depression and the enduring battle between the haves and have-nots. The group meets in the Bernice Nailen Memorial Library. All are welcome.

FUMCWA EVENTS

Lance Lambert / Events Coordinator:



Methodist Movie Matinee & Discussion - Sunday, April 21st – 11:30 am.

Hey, why don't you join us in the sanctuary as we watch "*Secondhand Lions*" on the big screen? This heart-warming PG-rated comedy stars Michael Caine, Robert Duvall, Haley Joe Osment, Nicky Katt and Kyra Sedgwick. In early 1960s Texas, 14-year-old Walter's mother drops him off at his eccentric and gruff uncles Hub and Garth's remote farm. Rumors abound about their past: were they bank robbers, mafia hit men, or war criminals in their earlier days? Living with his uncles and seeing firsthand their odd behaviors, Walter imagines an amazing tale as he hears their stories about an exotic and mysterious place long ago. Everything changes in the lives of this family of strangers over their time together.

The usual drill: Movie - FREE, Popcorn - FREE, Beverages - FREE. Plan to stay after the film for pizza and a brief discussion (a free-will offering will be taken to defray the cost of the pizzas).

What a great opportunity for fun, fellowship, and food! Please join us - ***and bring a friend!!***

With an eye to the future... Events is working with Raymond Roberts and the Men's Group to try to organize a Brewer's outing this summer. More details will be coming.

Definitely plan to attend the Annual All-Church Picnic & Swim on Sunday, July 21st, at Hoyt Park. By popular demand, we are planning to return to our "bring a dish to pass" potluck format of years past. Tell your friends and neighbors about it, too!

FUMCWA FAITH COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Finance Update from Richard Rinka, Finance Chair: During a recent Finance Committee meeting we discussed the current financial situation of the church. The feeling is that while information has been made available, it may be challenging to understand without additional context or analysis.

Before jumping into any numbers, we, as the Finance Committee, want to assure the congregation that our committee, like First Church's members, guests, and visitors, understand the importance of the ministries that make this church who we are. We want this congregation to remain a beacon in the community in every way, whether it be vibrant worship services, building us individually, outreach into the local community, or outreach to the world. If there are areas where money needs to be spent, we are committed to finding a way to make the funding available.

Each fall, our church creates a budget for the upcoming year. Over the last three years, the budget, in rough numbers, has decreased annually from \$495,700 in 2022 to \$488,300 in 2023 to \$458,600 for this year. These decreases have been made by looking at our real expenses and how we can better control them. The focus of the leaders of different ministry areas has been not to reduce programs or ministries.

Over that same period, our actual spending was \$422,000 in 2022 and \$402,300 in 2023. Our guess is that if you were asked without these numbers, you would say that we may have spent more in 2023 than we did in 2022, but we actually saw about a 5% drop in expenses. So, we are doing more with less.

Being aware of our budget and expenses provides only half of the information. The other portion is income which in 2022 was roughly \$339,300 and in 2023 income was roughly \$342,000. If we look at this in the most positive light, we had a greater income in 2023, and we spent less. Even with that improved position, we ran a deficit of about \$60,000 last year and \$82,700 in 2022.

Looking at it in a different, hopefully simpler manner, in 2022 for every dollar we spent, we brought in 80 cents. In 2023, for every dollar we spent, we brought in 85 cents. That is good, and all of us should be thankful we are doing better. There aren't too many families or churches that can successfully survive overspending their income for a long time. First Church has been very blessed that previous congregations and leaders, instead of spending budget surpluses, put money away for a rainy day, and, for the last couple of years, we have seen a lot of rainy days. We do continue to have funds in reserves. By not only monitoring our situation but acting on it, we can continue to be a beacon in our community for a long time to come. Currently, the Stewardship Committee is working on ways to highlight some of our budget areas.

Keep in mind that the trends that we are seeing aren't any different from a great number of other congregations. The difference is going to be how we react to them. The goal of this is not to be doom and gloom. Instead, we are attempting to be as transparent as possible regarding the financial condition of First Church. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk with me at any time.

The United Methodist General Conference: Every four years, the United Methodist General Conference brings together representatives from every Annual Conference around the world to discuss legislation, pray, and update the rules of the Church. Unfortunately, the 2020 Conference was postponed due to COVID, but this year we will be conferencing globally from April 23 to May 3, 2024, in Charlotte, North Carolina. To stay informed, visit <https://www.wisconsinumc.org/about-general-conference> for more information, including a "Beginner's Guide" and summaries of the legislation. Please keep our denomination, conference, delegates, and congregation in your prayers during this important time.

