

The Witness

ISSUE XI

NOVEMBER 2020

Portage First United Methodist Church
Pastor Michael Lawson

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER



Our Mission and Vision

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. At Portage First United Methodist Church, we live out that mission when we love God, love others, and offer Jesus.



When the Frost is on the Punkin

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock,
And you hear the kyouck and gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock,
And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the hens,
And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence;
O, it's then's the times a feller is a-feelin' at his best,
With the risin' sun to greet him from a night of peaceful rest,
As he leaves the house, bareheaded, and goes out to feed the stock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.



They's something kindo' harty-like about the atmusfere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is here—
Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossums on the trees,
And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the bees;
But the air's so appetizin'; and the landscape through the haze
Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airly autumn days
Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.



The husky, rusty russel of the tossels of the corn,
And the raspin' of the tangled leaves, as golden as the morn;
The stubble in the furries—kindo' lonesome-like, but still
A-preachin' sermons to us of the barns they grewed to fill;
The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed;
The hosses in theyr stalls below—the clover over-head!—
O, it sets my hart a-clickin' like the tickin' of a clock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock!

**Don't forget to FALL
BACK on Sunday!**



Then your apples all is gethered, and the ones a feller keeps
Is poured around the celler-floor in red and yeller heaps;
And your cider-makin' 's over, and your wimmern-folks is through
With their mince and apple-butter, and theyr souse and sausage, too! ...
I don't know how to tell it—but ef sich a thing could be
As the Angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on me—
I'd want to 'commodate 'em—all the whole-indurin' flock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock!

Shared with you from Pastor Michael

Portage First United Methodist Church Finance Update – Andrew Brown

September 2020	
Non Designated Giving	\$21,712.44
Operating Expenses	\$22,501.39
Debt Reduction Giving	\$1,969.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$2,140.43

Apportionment Paid	\$3,048.43
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What is “Apportionment?”

From www.umc.org:

The main way we support the ministries of the church is through our apportioned funds, a method of giving that proportionally allocates the church-wide budget to conferences and local churches. For United Methodists this method of giving has become a strong, generous tradition. Together, through our connected congregations, we accomplish what no single church, district or annual conference ever could hope to do alone. In this way, each individual, each family, each congregation gives a fair share for the church's

Year to Date 2020	
Non Designated Giving	\$225,369.70
Operating Expenses	\$219,797.74
Net Year To Date	\$5,571.96

Debt Reduction Giving	\$22,195.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$20,044.87
Net Debt Reduction	\$2,150.13

Overall Net Current & Debt	\$7,722.09
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Apportionment Paid	\$22,628.37
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work. We combine our prayers, presence, gifts and service to make a significant difference in the lives of God's people.

The Indiana Annual Conference asks that each church provide 11% of the prior month's income as their apportionment, 10% to the conference and 1% to the district.

Prison Ministry News – Steve Massow

Westville Correctional Facility is still in a holding pattern for volunteers and visitors. All events have been canceled through 2020.

Donations still needed:

Shoes 9-12

Pants 32-38

Coats-2EL-3EL

Sweatshirts-2-4EL

Yarn

Cardstock, plastic grocery bags and material

The plastic bags are bring used in correctional facilities across the country, woven into “Plarn”-plastic yarn– then transformed into portable light-

weight, water resistant mats that provide an extra layer of protection between homeless individuals and the cold hard ground.

So now there is a great use for these bags that seem to accumulate in everyone's kitch-en!

Any or all of these items donated can be dropped off in rummage drop off area. But, please put into bags clearly marked to indicate they are for Prison Ministry, so Marcie, Sue or anyone working the rummage sale items, will know what to do with them.

Thank You in advanced for your generosity.

PFUMC Prison Ministry Team (PF Hope)

Operation Christmas Child (Stuff the Box) Event

The time is nearing for the annual “stuff the Christmas box” for Operation Christmas Child. This mission project celebration will be held this year in the fellowship hall on Saturday, November 14 at 10 a.m. We will have 500 shoe boxes that will need your personalized touch in stuffing them with items that have been collected year long for children ages 2 to 14. Many hands are necessary to complete this project. All ages and abilities are encouraged to come. You will be able to select age appropriate items and a Christmas card that you can write an uplifting message to the child. Masks will be required and snacks and drinks will be available. This international mission project gives all of us the opportunity to offer the love of Jesus to a child we will never meet. Each box will include a washcloth, soap, toothbrush, and some school supplies and then the fun begins with your selection of additional “WOW” items to personalize the box.

For some children, this will be the first time they will have seen a toothbrush, soap or have received school supplies. For some children, this will be the first gift they have ever received. So here at Portage First, we will stuff shoe boxes with toys, school supplies, clothing and a whole lot more to be delivered to children in need around the world. The shoe box is a tangible way to demonstrate God’s love.

One Box, One Child, One soul.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, COME AND BE PART OF THIS WONDERFUL OUTREACH MINISTRY. SO MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NOVEMBER 14TH.

Direct any questions you may have to Connie Ellefson, 219-771-4025.



Endowment Fund, Operation Christmas Child

Operation Christmas Child is a mission through Samaritan Purse. It was founded by Robert Pierce who was a missionary in Korea and after visiting suffering children wanted to provide emergency help. He along with Franklin Graham traveled together to the world’s neediest people who were victims of war, poverty, natural disasters, disease and famine. Then in 1993 Operation Christmas Child was formed to show children the love of God by providing some Christmas gifts. Since 1993 146 million boxes have been delivered to more than 150 countries and territories. In 2019 alone, more than 10.5 million shoebox gifts were collected throughout Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. With that being said, I’m so excited to announce the upcoming

“stuff the box” mission project for Portage First on Saturday, November 14 beginning at 10 a.m. From the generous donation of \$500.00 from the endowment fund, we were able to purchase 500 shoe boxes along with needed items such as wash cloths, bars of soap and toothbrushes and some school supplies. This international mission project has been a work in process since the beginning of the year. Through the generous donations of child appropriate items from our church members and community groups, we have enough items to stuff 500 boxes for children ages 2 to 14.

My sincere thank you for allowing this ministry to be supported through funds from the Endowment Fund this year.

– *Connie Ellefson*

Endowment Committee Update

Dear Church Family,

This is the first of a series of messages which the Endowment Committee will be presenting on a regular basis. The committee will endeavor to inform and educate our church family on the purpose and workings of the Portage United Methodist Church Endowment fund, (PUMCEF). Over the course of the next year, we will offer information on how the Fund was created, how it manages the monies in its corpus, and how and when grants are awarded. We are also working on a brief, informative seminar on ways you can contribute to this fund in order to further the ministries of God's Kingdom.

Testimonials will be given from past grant recipients on how this grant benefitted and furthered their ministries. Our bell choir director, Kris Bailey, submitted our first testimonial, which is included here.

“Three years ago, our Endowment Committee awarded our music department with a grant to purchase a third octave of hand chimes. Music is an integral part of worship and helps deepen the worship experience for many people. Since there is a limited amount and variety of music written for just two octaves of chimes, this purchase has enabled us to be able to play a greater selection of music and involve more people to play the chimes.

We are very blessed that our endowment committee is able to provide funds to enhance worship, to support the ministries of our church, and to share God's love in so many different ways.”

Thank you, Kris! PUMC is definitely blessed with the Bell Choir Ministry.

We are also aware that when COVID struck and it was necessary to shut down the church, we had just installed our live-streaming technology. The cameras, the software, the updated computers and hardware had all been purchased through endowment grants. Because of this, we were able to continue worship and our church is making it through the quarantine.

Because of your endowment giving, we were able to complete the kitchen and continue to minister to the people in our church community, as well as our local community. Presently, we are providing meals to our community every Wednesday. The hungry are being fed and people are interested in joining our church. This is all because of the gifts from our endowment fund. The **ENDOWMENT BUILDS OUR CHURCH'S FAITHFUL FUTURE.**

If you would like further information on the PUMCEF, please reach out to:

Steve Davenport (219) 763-6583, or
spdaven@frontier.com or,

Mike King (219) 771-7187,
mjking121876@gmail.com

Thank you and may God continue to bless you, your family, and PUMC!

Endowment Fund, Trustees Update – Connie Ellefson

It is with the guidance of the UMW that the trustees are helping coordinate the upgrading of our kitchen with new appliances, flooring, tile, paint, ceiling lights and countertops. Steps were put in place over three years ago to begin fundraising and planning for the kitchen facelift. The most basic reason for this upgrade is that our kitchen is outdated with appliances that are more than 40 years old and not energy efficient and flooring that is an eyesore and becoming a hazard to work on. Thankfully, many of our church members, family and friends have been sacrificially giving over time and the endowment fund granted a sizable amount in 2020 to help reach the funds needed to proceed with the project. Making some enhancements to our kitchen will bring a sense of pride to our church members and especially those who directly use the kitchen for outreach events such as funeral

dinners. At the present time, cabinets have been painted, ceiling painted and lights installed along with new exhaust covers, measurements have been completed for new countertops, flooring tiles have been ordered and a new 6 burner stove with 2 conventional ovens and grill and a double commercial convection oven on castors has been ordered. Installation of the flooring will be around the third week of October, followed by installation of the appliances and hopefully in November new countertops will be installed along with freshly painted walls and some additional wall tile put in. When you think of kitchen, we identify the importance of food and beverages as some sort of gathering and fellowship binding the church together. Our kitchen facelift can be viewed as our church's way of being the hands and feet of Christ to our community through the service of food and fellowship.

A Message From Your Missions and Outreach Team – Wendy Smith

Hello Church!

Lots of good news to share this month!

First and foremost: Thank you, thank you, thank you! Remember the little banks we distributed last year at the beginning of Lent? Altogether, and in spite of COVID, you raised \$631.30 to purchase **audio Bibles** for people in countries where printed Bibles are not readily available. Way to go, Church!

We also want to thank you for your very generous donations of both candy and time last month in support of the **Halo-ween** outreach event. Lisa Hoover reports that we had 8 cars and a couple people sitting on chairs giving out candy. She estimates that we had between 150 – 200 people come through. Everyone seemed to have a good time, and each person received an invitation to come to church!

Wednesday Friendship Dinners - Deb Rousselle and her many volunteers have been doing a terrific job providing free meals to folks in the community on Wednesdays from 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. Many thanks to Deb for organizing this much needed mission, and to all those individuals who have prepared and donated food, who have helped set up, helped package and distribute the food, and who have cleaned up afterward. Thanks also to the Scouts for their help and the church's Emmaus group for purchasing the paper products and environmentally friendly packaging. Our goal is to continue this mission through the end of the year.

Silent Auction - Watch for information about November's Silent Auction to support the **Upper Room Recovery Community**. This facility is housed in one of our sister churches, the First

United Methodist Church of South Bend. It provides safe and stable transitional housing to adults in recovery from addiction to drugs and alcohol and assists them in moving toward a productive and independent life. The Upper Room has helped hundreds of people from across Indiana, including folks from Portage, Valparaiso, and Chesterton. Your donations to the auction can help this worthy cause, and who knows, you might also be able to check off some of those items on your Christmas gift list!

The Angel Tree will be going up toward the end of this month and will be lovingly decorated by Connie King! By taking a paper angel from the tree, and purchasing a gift for the boy or girl described on the angel, you can bring cheer to young people in our community who might otherwise not receive a Christmas gift. Robin Wilkening has shared that there is likely a greater than normal need this year (with COVID especially now that the stimulus money has ended). We have committed to sponsor 70 Angels, and hope that you will join us in this mission.

On **Christ the King Sunday** (November 22) your Missions and Outreach Team will be selling **FUN**

PASTA before and after services. Since COVID precautions will not allow for the in-person spaghetti dinner we have come to enjoy, this can still be a fun way to celebrate! The funds raised will go to help Family Promise!

Speaking of **Family Promise**, we wanted to share some good news from **Family Promise of Porter County Indiana**. Robin Wilkening reported that Family Promise now has 10 members on their board and 12 out of the 13 churches they need to start providing shelter for homeless people! They just changed their status from “developing” to “active” as they are now taking action to prevent homelessness. They do this by helping people out with emergency bills which would otherwise prevent a family from being able to pay their rent causing them to lose their home. Way to go Family Promise!

Lastly, please know that we feel so blessed by YOU and your willingness to reach out. It is exciting to be part of a church that is so full of love and enthusiasm! Thank you again for all you do!

In Christian love,

Wendy Smith for the Missions and Outreach Team

United Methodist Men Update

Greetings United Methodist Men and church family. Wanting to send words of hope and encouragement to all, and hoping this finds everyone safe and in good health.

We finally met as a men's group on Sat-10/03, not meeting last since Sat-03/07. We had (9) present at our 10/03 meeting. We were grateful to be able to meet again and had great fellowship. We took time to share with one-other what had transpired since we last met. We are grateful for our health and continue to pray for the virus to go away all together. We are being very careful and continue to follow

the safety guidelines (masks, social distancing, hand washing, etc.).

Another policy change we are temporarily following is: “BYOB &D”. Everyone is asked to bring their own breakfast and drink (no sharing). As normally we are meeting in our church's fellowship hall. We will be following all the safety requirements (masks, social distancing, hand washing, etc.). The tables are set-up in the fellowship hall per the social distancing criteria. Temporarily in order to be compliant – Everyone should bring their own breakfast and drink “BYOB”. This way we will not be breaking any of the covid19 safety rules.

We as a men's group usually always meet the first Saturday of the month at 8AM in the fellowship hall. Our meetings have consisted of opening and closing prayer, breakfast, bible study, and short business meeting sharing about our ministries that we support (Scouting program – Cubs, Boys, Girls, Prison Offenders, UMW Rummage Sales, Missions Outreach, Rail Cats Ball Game, etc.).

Tentative Scheduled Meeting Dates (Saturdays):

10/03/20	02/06/21	06/05/21
11/07/20	03/06/21	(Summer Break)
12/05/20	04/03/21	09/11/21 (1st back)
01/09/21	05/01/21	

We are in the process of presenting an (8+) week evening men's bible study from the Methodist

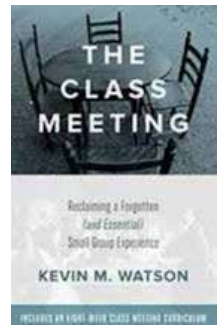
church entitled “The Class Meeting” by Kevin Watson. It is based off our Methodist founder John Wesley's small group meetings. Along with a brief history of our Methodist faith much more will be shared in this study. The evening meetings should be approximately 1-hour in length. I believe there will be much to be gained for those who invest of their time committed.

Start Date: ??? (Uncertain at present.)

Day & Time: Sunday, probably 6:00pm – 7:30pm

Meeting Place: Church's fellowship hall

Once we the have the scheduled start date – we will announce it – AND - have a sign-up sheet at the connection center in our narthex entryway.



I'd like to share with you a devotional from the “TODAY” devotional magazine entitled “DESIRING THE KINGDOM”.

Scripture: Matthew 5:6-12

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” Matthew 5:6

How many desires have you had in the past 24 hours? Here's a handful of mine: I've desired a delicious meal, a restful sleep, a win for my favorite hockey team (and they won!), a kind response to an email I sent about a stressful situation, a safe trip for a loved one. And there are more – in fact, I've probably had hundreds of desires in the past 24 hours.

In the “blessed are . . .” statement we are looking at today, Jesus invites us to examine our desires and hold them up to His standard. Do our desires align with hungering and thirsting for righteousness?

Years ago, I was with some people at church discussing the second coming of Jesus. And they were surprised when I blurted out, “I don't know if I want Jesus to come back yet. I want to see my infant daughter grow up. I want to fix up the 100-year old

house we bought. I have so many plans I want to carry out.” The room became very quiet. Then our pastor said gently, “Syd, do you want to see a world where there is no more cancer, or hunger, or crime, or war?” “Yes, I do.” I said sheepishly. “Then,” he replied, “you want Jesus to come back. Your desires are what he also desires.”

God can help us sort out our desires that might not fit with seeking righteousness, and He can give us a deep passion for the desires that align with His heart. His wisdom is available to us always (James 1: 5), and He is always with us to guide us.

PRAYER: Lord, by your wisdom and power, help us align our desires to match the longings of your heart. Amen.

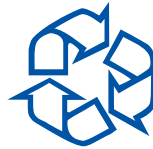
We would be honored to have you come to our men's fellowship and hope that God would bless your commitment in joining us.

Because of Him - Prayers and blessings,
Mike Matthew

Recycling during the Holidays!!

Hard to believe that the holidays will soon be upon us. While we all look forward to family, food, and fun during the holidays, don't forget that one of the best gifts we can share with everyone is taking care of our environment. If everyone would try one or two things, we can help care for our earth now and for our future generations. Below are some simple suggestions to think about to help keep our holidays a bit more "green".

1. **Shopping for food** Try buying local and not only can you enjoy fresh food, but you can also support our local economy. Check out local farms or farmers' markets.
2. **Portion Control** Can you believe that 28 billion pounds of edible food is wasted each year - more than 100 pounds per person?? One of the best ways to reduce food waste is to plan ahead and practice portion control (it helps the waistline too!). Here is a handy list of approximate per person food amounts.
 - *Turkey: 1 pound
 - *Stuffing: 1/2 pound
 - *Sweet potato casserole: 1/4 pound
 - *Green beans: 1/4 pound
 - *Cranberry relish: 3 Tablespoons
 - *Pumpkin pie: 1/8 of a 9 inch pie
3. **Setting the Table** Consider using the nice dishes and silverware! Cloth napkins also on waste. The average dishwasher uses between 7 and 15 gallons water per cycle, so be sure to fill it to capacity to save water and energy.
4. **Gift Wrapping** Use eco-friendly wrapping materials. Most wrapping papers contain dyes or glitter which are non-recyclable. Reuse gift bags. Or wrap gifts with newspapers, paper bags or make the wrapping part of the gift! You can use scarves, blankets, or even reusable shopping bags. Do you have left over tissue paper? Bring it to the church! Tissue paper is needed in large quantities to wrap rummage items as they are stored for the next sale!
5. **Use LED lights for your home** LED lights are up to 80% more efficient and last up to 10 times longer than traditional incandescent and florescent bulbs.
6. **Thinking about gift giving?** Instead of buying more "stuff", how about a non-traditional gift of the "memory of an experience". Consider an admission ticket to a museum, a theme park, or even a relaxing day at a spa. Or you can be creative and put dessert ingredients in a mason jar with the instructions attached.



Please Recycle

The holidays are a time to gather with family and friends and give thanks for all of our blessings. Be a blessing to others and think of some new and creative ways to care for the beautiful earth God has given us.

Youth Group News!

Thank you to all of you who joined me for our Youth planning meeting on Zoom! Based on our conversation, we have a plan to start youth group for all middle school and senior high students. We will begin meeting two Mondays a month starting on Monday, November 16. The plan for now is for the first meeting of each month to be in- person, in the church fellowship hall. We will enjoy a meal together and have a traditional Youth night. The second meeting of the month will take place virtually. This way, we are ready for whichever direction we need to take as Covid- 19 rates change through the coming months. Please wear a mask (except when you're eating!) and remember to social distance. The schedule will be as follows:

In person from 6:00–7:30 PM

November 16
December 14
January 11
February 8
March 8

Virtual from 6:00–7:00 PM

November 30
December 28 * Holiday Break
January 25
February 22
March 22

I have enjoyed meeting some of you already and am really looking forward to meeting all of you soon! My virtual door is always open and you can call or text me at 765-490-1994 or email me at trishatchurch@gmail.com. I do have an office in the church building, feel free to drop me a note! My biggest project right now is gathering all of the correct contact information, so if you can drop me a line with the best way to contact your youth and family, I would greatly appreciate it! Thank you all so much for the wonderful welcome I have already received. I am so excited to see how God is getting ready to work in the Portage Youth Group!

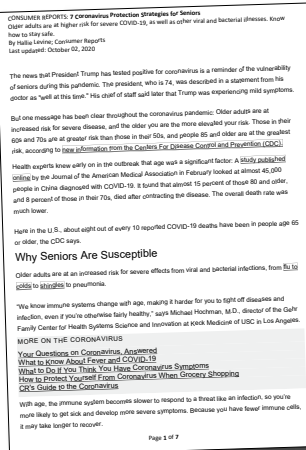
Trish Johnsen

Youth Director, Portage 1st UMC

Family Ministries Director, Michigan City 1st UMC

Safety Committee Update

Dan McCoy has provided a very informative, 7-page pamphlet for your perusal from Consumer Reports entitled, “7 Coronavirus Protection Strategies for Seniors.” You can get a copy of this pamphlet at the Connection Center at the church.





BE THE LIFELINE PATIENTS NEED.

Give blood.



**Blood Drive
First United Methodist Church
of Portage**

**Fellowship Hall
2637 McCool Road
Portage**

**Friday, November 20
1:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.**

Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: PortageUMC to schedule an appointment.



Scan to be directed to
RapidPass®



Scan to schedule
an appointment.

Give Something that Means Something® | RedCrossBlood.org | 1-800-RED CROSS



Happy November Anniversary to . . .

November 02	Mike and Cathy Koller
November 03	David and Annie Alvarado
November 21	Frank and Julie Ford

Happy November Birthday to . . .

November 03	Mike Rousselle
November 03	Jim Nickerson
November 03	Eric Knowles
November 06	Kathy Cunningham
November 06	Robin Wilkening
November 07	Wanda Samuelson
November 08	Rich Graham
November 09	Greg Keehn
November 10	Glenn Yerby
November 13	Marcia Guth
November 15	Donald Cooper
November 19	George Stewart
November 19	Joe Medina
November 19	Denisa Riley
November 20	Cathy Koller
November 20	Bill Kramer
November 21	Bryan Burns
November 22	Betty Kerns
November 22	Tom Ellefson
November 23	Janice Stewart
November 24	Phyllis Price
November 25	Barb Piazza
November 25	Kortni Centracchio
November 26	Norm Hamstrom
November 27	Karin Manteuffel

First Friday Fellowship – November 6th!

First Friday Fellowship will meet on Friday, November 6th, at 5:00 p.m. at Martini's Steak & Seafood, 1004 Calumet Avenue, Valparaiso, Indiana.

Contact Sandra Robinson at 764-8433 if you have any questions or to make your reservation.

Please note: YOU MUST BE 21 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER TO ATTEND THIS OUTING.



Here is a convenient way to tithe!
Try PushPay with your mobile device or online!

Have you ever come to worship and realized you left your offering envelope at home or learned of a worthwhile mission you want to support only to realize you did not bring your checkbook? Wouldn't it be a blessing to be able to give back to God in a matter of seconds using your smartphone or tablet, laptop or desktop?

We have partnered with a company named Pushpay to help us move into the 21st Century with our financial stewardship. Fewer people write checks much less use cash, especially younger adults.

Pushpay will allow us to give one-time gifts, recurring gifts or special gifts using debit or credit cards or ACH transactions from our bank accounts. It is quite easy to get started. Simply text 'pfumc' to 77977 and follow the instructions on your screen. As part of the process you will be able to download the Pushpay app for either iPhone or Android.