

The Witness

ISSUE IV

APRIL 2020

Portage First United Methodist Church
Pastors Michael Lawson & Tara Keehn

APRIL NEWSLETTER





From Pastor Michael...

Easter Cookie Story

Hey Folks! I highly recommend this Easter Activity for your children! I recommend you make these cookies with your children on Holy Saturday, April 11, 2020. This recipe is also gluten free!

You will need:

1c. whole pecans	1 c. sugar	zipper baggie	tape
1 tsp. vinegar	a pinch of salt	wooden spoon	Bible
3 egg whites			

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees – VERY IMPORTANT! DO NOT MISS THIS STEP!
2. Place pecans in zipper baggie and let children beat them with the wooden spoon to break into small pieces. Explain that after Jesus was arrested, the Roman soldiers beat him. Read John 19:1-3.
3. Let each child smell the vinegar. Put 1 tsp. vinegar into mixing bowl. Explain that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross he was given vinegar to drink. Read John 19:28-30.
4. Add egg whites to vinegar. Eggs represent life. Explain that Jesus gave His life to give us life. Read John 10:10-11.
5. Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it and brush the rest into the bowl. Explain that this represents the salty tears shed by Jesus' followers, and the bitterness of our own sin. Read Luke 23:27.
6. So far the ingredients are not very appetizing. Add 1c. sugar. Explain that the sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because He loves us. He wants us to know and belong to Him. Read Ps. 34:8 and John 3:16.
7. Beat with a mixer on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks are formed. Explain that the color white represents the purity in God's eyes of those whose sins have been cleansed by Jesus. Read Isaiah. 1:18 and John 3:1-3.
8. Fold in broken nuts. Drop by teaspoons onto wax paper covered cookie sheet. Explain that each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid. Read Matt. 27:57-60.
9. Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door and turn the oven OFF. Give each child a piece of tape and seal the oven door. Explain that Jesus' tomb was sealed. Read Matt.27:65-66.
10. GO TO BED! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies in the oven overnight. Jesus' followers were in despair when the tomb was sealed. Read John 16:20 and 22.
11. On Easter morning, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow! On the first Easter Jesus' followers were amazed to find the tomb open and empty.

Michael



Note from Pastor Tara...

God made me busy person with impeccable timing. I have a very dear friend whom I love, and we usually celebrate each other's birthdays by buying each other lunch. Her birthday is November 1st, All Saint's Day. Well, with the Holidays, school, and each of us running our kids around, we weren't able to find a day we could get together for lunch until Friday March 13th! Four months late, we had a girls afternoon of pedicures and a nice leisurely lunch at Wagner's Ribs... a place that had significance for our friendship because she used to live just a block away from there. Before the end of our lunch we were receiving texts that our kids would be off of school for the next 4 weeks. On my way home I received a call from my husband, who was shopping at Aldi's about how crazy the stores were and telling me to get home because people were acting crazy. Just a few days later, restaurants were shut down to indoor dining. I have never been so glad to busy in my life. I'm glad I got to have a nice long lunch with one of my best friends the day the what I have started calling the "COVID-pocalypse" (not because I think it's the end of the world, but because people have been acting like it is!).

I have a few things to say about the seriousness and the reactions of people. I do think it is a serious threat. I do not take it lightly. I think it is important to take it seriously and take precautions. I do not think it warrants hoarding and causing shortages so that others cannot have products others need. This is causing problems for everyone. A co-worker of my husbands put it very well. He said "Those people who are loading up with carts and carts of supplies have one difference between you and I, they don't believe in anything." He has a point. The opposite of faith is fear. God is still in control. God is still God. We may get sick. We may loose money. We may suffer loses. These things happen. It is not because we personally did anything. It is because throughout history, there have been plagues. Things may get worse before they get better. A few years ago, our church did a study by Rob Renfro called "A Way through the Wilderness." It may be a good time for us to revisit this study. In this study he reminds us that the Wilderness times are to be expected, and not to be taken personally. In this way, we can remain resilient and work our way through these times. God is the great provider. He will take care of us. He will provide.

Pastor Michael and I will both be continually working on ways to keep our church in contact with each other through phone and technology methods as much as possible. This is a first for many of us a church, to not be able to meet as a body. We will persevere in as many ways as we can think to remain a body.



NOTE FROM PASTOR TARA (CONTINUED)

Summer Camp

Impact acknowledges that it may be difficult to plan for summer camp with the COVID-19 pandemic going on. We have a limited number of scholarships available for partial cost available on a first come, first serve basis. Forms are available now at the Connection Center. Early Bird registration prices are good until April 20th. For those concerned about registering due to the current pandemic, the current cancellation policy is as follows:

There is a non-refundable deposit of \$35/person for events less than \$150 and \$75 for events that cost \$150 or more. The remainder of the registration fee will be refunded as long as notification of cancellation is received by the Camp Registrar two weeks prior to the start date of the event. Within two weeks of the start of the event, per a family emergency, illness, or accident outside of the family's control (excludes sports, tournaments, and social activities), a refund may be granted at the discretion of Impact 2818 Senior Leadership. No refunds or fee transfers will be made for those who fail to show up on Check-In Day without notice.



Volunteers for Shopping

All healthy people willing to help elderly, ill, or high-risk members with shopping please contact Pastor Tara via cell phone by call or text at 219-608-6150. Most are healthy so far, but may need assistance in the future. We may need to do a drop off at the door and leave if people become ill. I understand the grocery stores are not well-stocked at the moment, but any supplies may be appreciated in the future. This will be an ongoing project. So far I have three names of willing volunteers to shop. I would like to have at least three more.

Planning for Summer Amid COVID-19

SOS

SOS has not been cancelled yet. For now, we are still planning on taking a group. Both Tina Colby and Greg Keehn plan on taking the kids. If you are a youth or adult volunteer interested in attending, please contact Tina Colby and let her know your interest in attending. The dates are June 11th-14th currently. We will keep you updated if things change.



Higher Education Scholarships

Our church sets aside certain Gold Can Offerings and donations for our scholarship fund which is used to help reduce the cost for higher education for members and active attendees.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2020-2021 school year. Anyone seeking a higher education may qualify for a scholarship. The application process is very straightforward and may be obtained at the church office or requested by email at pfumc2000@yahoo.com. All eligible persons are encouraged to apply and past or current recipients of scholarships remain eligible to apply for the new school year. Applications are due by April 30, 2020 and can be dropped off at the church office or placed in the Finance Committee folder in the Narthex. Please pass this information along to anyone that may be eligible for this scholarship.



Trustees Corner...

. Operation Christmas Child

We are well on our way to our goal of 600 boxes this year. Thank you to everyone who fill the Christmas box in the narthex with items for our shoe box ministry. We have been able to match up almost 200 outfits (short sets or dresses with underwear and socks) already. The most needed items right now are socks, underwear and school supplies, wash cloths, bars of soap, and toothbrushes. Every little bit helps. Whether it is one or ten or more items, doesn't matter. Every box will be personally "stuffed" by someone who will have a large variety of items to choose from. That is what makes it so much fun. If you have any questions about this outreach ministry, please contact Connie Ellefson, 771-4025.

Royal Family Kids Camp

Our annual fundraiser breakfast held on Sunday, March 8, was huge success. Tables were adopted and decorated for each month of the year. It was truly a rainbow of colors and holiday themes. Breakfast included a variety of breakfast casseroles made by members of the church, Danish, yogurt, fresh fruit, birthday cake and, of course, biscuits and gravy. Monetary donations totaled \$748.00 and a full table of needed items to stuff the backpacks were given. A great big THANK YOU to everyone who brought camp items in, who helped set up and take down all the table decorations, made a cash donation and to the "fabulous" kitchen crew. We are truly blessed with exceptional church members who exemplify the "servant" role. This year the camp will be held the last full week of July. There are 6 from the church who will be the hands and feet of Jesus at camp this year and will embrace 80+ children with the love of Christ and a whole bunch of camp stuff from Portage First. Thank you!



SPRC NEWS

Times of transitions...The staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee has been working hard on the ongoing transitional changes.

Our church has experienced many changes over the past several months. I give much Kudos to our Pastor's and our committee for all their commitment and discernment through it all.

Through much prayer, I believe as chair of this committee God has indeed helped us make the important decisions that seem to continually present themselves over these past several months.

As you know, many of the positions within our church have been filed. There will be even more changes and rearranging to come in the immediate future.

With good communication and YOU (our church), praying along with God's guidance and provision, I'm excited what our Lord has in store for Portage First!

Stay tuned, stay healthy and pray continually!

May the peace of God be with you, With our faith lets go through these uncertain times with the confidence and love we're all called to do.



Trustees

We are in the preliminary stages of obtaining financing for a new roof over the fellowship hall and education wing. Our finance committee has already shared some information about this major undertaking with our congregation. Additional information will be made available as we move forward with the financial aspect, as well as, with scheduling the job for late April/early May. This will be a huge financial commitment for our church, and we are praying that our congregation will participate in the capital campaign to help pay off the loan as soon as possible. Also, on our radar is the spring "all church" clean up. There will be many opportunities for our members to help spruce up the church properties, inside and out. A list of tasks will be available in April. The date for the church cleanup will be Saturday, May 2, with a rain date of May 16. Food will be provided. The trustees also welcome input in identifying opportunities to enhance our church buildings so we can continue to be a welcoming place to worship and fellowship. So if you have any ideas or see something that needs attention, please do not hesitate to leave a note in the trustees' box.

Connie Ellefson, Trustee chairperson

 **United Methodist Women...**

It's that time of year again! RUMMAGE SALE!

TENTATIVE

Set-up dates:

- Sunday, **April 17 & 18th** – Table setup, bring in all the goodies from the shed.
- Monday, **April 20th** thru Wednesday, **April 22nd** – empty boxes, pricing, sorting, move over large items from the barns, etc. And, TWEAK, TWEAK, TWEAK!

Sale dates:

- Thursday, **April 23rd** (9:00 AM - 6:00 PM)
- Friday, **April 23rd** (9:00 AM - 2:00 PM “Fill a Bag Day”)

We can use as much help as possible! Helpers that donate 8 (combined) hours of time **M-F** will receive a **FREE** dinner during sale hours. YUM! **M-W** are also **helper preview days!** That's right! If you want first pick, come lend a hand emptying boxes, sorting, and having an all-around good time! And as always, we'll be serving our famous Chicken & Noodles! Take out available.

There are other jobs available if the “rummage” part isn't your thing! Sign-up sheets will be at the Welcome Center for a variety of ways to help. We will especially need “**homemade**” desserts to accompany the dinners **AND** for the bake sale.



First Friday Fellowship

FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2020

5:00 PM

T'S PIZZA & FAMILY RESTURANT

840 E. 3rd Street
Hobart, Indiana

Please RSVP to:

Sandra Robinson at (219) 764-8433 by April 2nd.

United Methodist Women

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2019 • 9:30 AM



***It's Here! It's Here!
Spring Has Sprung!***

Come join us for a morning of fellowship, conversation, breakfast snacks, and our speaker Karen Ruiz from Caring Hearts Adult Day Services.

— ALL WOMEN OF ALL AGES ARE WELCOME! —

We hope to see you there!!



From the Finance Committee...

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 churchwide 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 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.

The Finance Committee and Trustees are excited to report that we have already raised \$2,500 through the end of February towards the capital campaign to replace the Education wing's roof. Thank you for faithfully supporting this important campaign. Please consider what you can do to aid this effort, perhaps through a weekly recurring gift, a one time contribution, or even a portion of an income tax refund. Every several small contribution will help maintain the ministries which rely on the use of that portion of the church.

February 2020		Year to Date 2020	
Non Designated Giving	\$23,056.96	Non Designated Giving	\$46,452.71
Operating Expenses	\$31,238.29	Operating Expenses	\$52,627.79
Debt Reduction Giving	\$3,209.00	Net Year To Date	(\$6,175.08)
Debt Reduction Expense	\$3,127.00		
Apportionment Paid	\$2,439.89	Debt Reduction Giving	\$4,888.00
		Debt Reduction Expense	\$4,161.84
		Net Debt Reduction	\$726.16
		Overall Net Current & Debt	(\$5,448.92)
		Apportionment Paid	\$2,641.30

United Methodist Men – April Newsletter

Greetings dear brothers in Christ – hoping this finds you doing well in the Lord, especially in the midst of this chaos and confusion surrounding the current corona virus epidemic. I say this because “Men of God” are much better prepared to do battle with and handle these things of the world that chaos and confusion are especially a big part of. As pastor shared with me yesterday the church has always been a place where we as members want to go to in times of turmoil and need. But due to this current epidemic even the church has had to close it's church doors until this contagious deadly virus has been stabilized and brought more under control. It's hard for us to imagine, as nothing like this has ever happened in our life time. More than ever we as “Men of God” need to be available and present through our actions, our words, and our prayers. We are still in the Lenten season leading up to Good Friday and Easter on Sunday-April 12th. Spring began Saturday-March 21st bringing with it the rebirth of God's glorious outdoor landscape. Our church doors may be currently closed, but we as the church are as much as ever present and prepared to love, pray for, and serve God's people.

Our UMM men's group continues to be involved in the following activities and ministries:

- Prison Ministry – UMM sends letters of support and encouragement to offenders whom our church's Wednesday night Prison Ministry team visit and to family members who may be incarcerated. We lift them all up in our prayers each week.
- Scouting Program: Cub Scout Pack #487, Boy Scout Troop #452, and our potential Girl Scout Pack #488. Our UMM, and church, support these scouting units and their on-going programs.
- Combined Mother's Day and Father's Day breakfast is scheduled for Sunday-05/31/20.
- UMM sponsored “Rail Cats Baseball Game”, as in past years. We will be securing a summer time date for this and getting the word out to everyone soon, so that you can sign up for.
- UMM will be sponsoring and hosting a men's bible study. It is a weekly, hour long, study running for 8 weeks starting sometime in the fall of 2020. A study book “The Class Meeting” by Kevin Watson is based off our Methodist founder John Wesley small group meetings. Along with a brief history of our Methodist faith history, much will be learned from participants.

I would like to share with you a men's devotional prayer from “Everyday Prayers for Men”

TO BE THANKFUL

Each day I see before me, Lord God, good reason for thanksgiving.
Thank you for helping me find the happiness of quiet, simple things;
for the contentment that comes from looking at a pot of flowers on a window ledge, at the light of an open fire on the hearth, or at the color splashed across the evening sky. I pray for happiness and harmony within my home and with everyone I meet today. I pray for the happiness of being as nearly as I can at all times honest and sincere. I pray for inner joy that Jesus knew. In His precious name. AMEN

Unless things would change, our scheduled April UMM meeting for Saturday-April 4th I believe will have to be postponed in leu of what is going on. We may not be able to meet until our Saturday-May 2nd meeting. And we hope and pray that most all will be back to a normal schedule by this time. At our next UMM bible study our leader Ed Piontek will lead us in “The Story of an Unsuspecting Disciple” - Lesson #9 – Scripture John 4 verses 7 -30 and 39 - 42. I'm sure you will enjoy this study.

Hope to see you for our meeting.
Sincerely – Mike Matthew



***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.

Please note — When filling out envelopes for offering, altar flowers, etc., please write clearly both first and last names . Thank you.



Happy April Anniversary to...

19	Christy & Skyler Cawthra	26	Jim & Karen Helmecky
26	Art & Alice Kurth		

Happy April Birthday to...

01	Lisa Hoover	10	Lily Hamilton	16	Lorri Davenport
02	Melissa Medina	11	Jeff Kaiser	18	
03		11	Vicki Mason	19	Aaron Cawthra
03	Kyle Adkins	12	Mike Liesch		
07	Carlella Rogers	12	Laura Piontek	26	
07	Mark Long	13	Sherry Pinarski	27	Kris Bailey
07	Ann Packard			27	Judy Kirkman
08	Ron Hall			28	Amber Welch
09	Virginia Lockenvitz	15	Kathy Manteuffel	30	Chuck Mason
09		15		30	Wendy Smith
10	Erica Bush	16	Danah Peterson	30	Gabrielle Sullivan