

*Happy January Anniversary to...*



16	Nick & Sue Andryuk	21	Bill & Sue Miller
16	Chuck & Patti Coppess	24	Mike & Debbie Rousselle
19	Gregory & Shellie DePerio		

*Happy January Birthday to...*

06	Jamieson Colby-Gaskins	14	Avaya Massow	25	Kathy Matthew
06	Michael Lawson	14	Dan McCoy	26	Sarah Nadolski
07	Natalie Cawthra	14	Avaya Massow	30	Clara Harbart
09	Teagan Jordan	22	Victoria Pollacheck	30	Dawn Harbart
09	Randy Wilkening	23	Christopher Messer	31	Randy Wilkening Jr.
11	Nora Brown	24	Bridget Nadolski		

*If you have a change of address, phone number, etc., don't forget to let the office know so that we can update your information in the church directory. Thank you!*



***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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 'pfume' 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.



# The Witness

ISSUE I

JANUARY 2020

**Portage First United Methodist Church**  
*Pastors Michael Lawson & Tara Keehn*

## JANUARY 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.*

❄️ *Note from Pastor Michael ...*

As we embark on the year 2020, I would like to give you a clear 20/20 vision of the special people who make PFUMC run day to day, week to week. We have just arrived on the other side of the Christmas Vigils and special worship services, and though the season of Christmas continues for a few more days, the last few weeks have seen our staff complete an incredible amount of work and planning. So I want you to know a bit more about these wonderful people.

Betty Sergent, Office Administrator – In a few months Betty will have been with us one year and at this point I simply cannot imagine life without her. She is highly organized, professional, and she can find the best price on anything! While I sit here with my desk covered in books and papers her desk is so clean an organized you could perform surgery on it. She is also dazzlingly witty and has the perfect comeback for all my jokes.

Vicki Evanatz, Business Manager – Vicki is the one who spends the money and pays the bills. She puts together our financial reports and makes sure that all the disbursements go to their various charities. On top of that she is one of the most delightful people I know. Her kindness and good attitude make her a joy to work with. Further, she is strong in herself and is not afraid to speak her mind with honesty and candor. Vicki has a large family, is a fantastic cook, used to run a restaurant and catering business, and has competed in several gingerbread competitions.

Zach Rudd, Worship Leader/Youth Minister – He hasn't been here long but the impact has been incredible. Our youth groups are filled with students wanting to learn and the collaboration between our traditional and contemporary musicians has brought forth beautiful and creative music. I have never seen a praise band and a bell choir play music together until I met Zach. This should not surprise us though, Zach has been a musician since he was a child traveling with his family “The Singing Rudds”. He may seem like a quiet soul, but in reality he is terribly funny and his sense of humor is formidable.

Heather Schulz, Director of Music – Heather has a deep love for this church as it is her home church. When she moved into leadership and became the choir director she stepped into Wanda Samuelson's formidable shoes. In this position both in terms of planning and creativity Heather has continually delighted and surprised us. I think my favorite thing she has done is the collaboration with our educational ministry and created an beautiful and sweet children's Easter Cantata. Heather and her husband Steven are also big into gaming and have hosted several staff bonding game nights. Her resolution for 2020 is to beat Zach in a game.

Shannon Liesch and Nicole Lawrence, Nursery Attendants – Shannon and Nicole each attend our nursery during our worship services. They each serve during a different service so that they are able to attend worship. Shannon works with children each day and Nicole's family often foster children. The compassion and love Shannon and Nicole have for children is a large part of what make them such valuable members of the team.

Next month, for my newsletter article, both Pastor Tara and I will be sharing our call into ministry with you. Therefore I will simply say that Tara is a marvelous colleague in ministry. She is continually growing her skills and her love for this congregation is only matched by her ability to think strategically and anticipate the future needs of the congregation. I love working with her.



## ❄️ 2020 Endowment Grants...

Watch for information in the Sunday bulletins regarding the Endowment Grants later this month. Any questions, please see Steve Davenport.

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## ❄️ Youth Group ...

The youth group will meet Sunday, January 12 and 26 at 6:30 PM.

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## ❄️ Missions and Outreach Committee ...

Wow! Check out this list of the many ways your church family has reached out to help people in need throughout the past year. (Please note, it is in random order, and may not include everything!)

We have supported:

- |                                |                                    |                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Portage Township Food Pantry | • Community Meals                  | • Bully Prevention |
| • Prayer Team/Card ministry    | • Angel Tree                       | • Red Bird Mission |
| • Prison ministry              | • Blood Drives                     | • Cancer Research  |
| • Portage Backpack Program     | • Summer of Service                | • Emergency Fund   |
| • Royal Family Kid's Camp      | • Trustees Office Emergency Pantry | and more ...       |
| • Family Promise               | Hats and Mittens for Kids          |                    |

In addition to these missions, you have also extended hospitality to guests through the pie ministry; encouraged people to take care of the Earth by reducing, reusing, recycling and rethinking; and baked and delivered cookies to folks working on Christmas Eve. You've reached into the community through the Portage Parade, Fish-On, and community tabling events. You have even shared business card invitations.

We are now looking forward to an exciting new year. I hope it makes your hearts joyful to think about the many ways we as a church have shared, and will continue to share God's love. I know it does mine!

*-Wendy Smith, for the Missions and Outreach Team*

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## ❄️ Green Tip of the Month ...

Turn off the tap water while you brush your teeth. Leaving the water running can waste 35,000 liters of water per family per year!



These are the people who make PFUMC such a special place. Walking hand in hand with our many brave and committed volunteers all these staff members work hard to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As we face the year ahead, let us continue to love God, love others, and offer Jesus Christ!

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## ❄️ Note from Pastor Tara...

"In the past, God spoke to our ancestors in many times and many ways. But in these final days, he spoke to us through a Son. God made his Son the heir of everything and created the world through him. The Son is the light of God's glory and the imprint of God's being. He maintains everything with his powerful message." (Hebrews 1:1-3a)

Through Advent and Christmas, we have spent time anticipating and celebrating the birth of Jesus. This month, inspired by the book titled "Three Simple Questions" by Rueben P. Job, I'd like to ask the question, "who is God?"

Your image or concept of God may have changed since you were small and may continue to change and evolve as you continue to grow and evolve in your Christian journey. You may have seen God as a figure to be feared, a deity you were or maybe still are unsure of, a powerful creator that you rely on for strength and sanity, and many other possibilities.

Whatever your personal image of God, Rueben P. Job reminds us in his book (and in recalling the verse from Hebrews above) that Jesus IS the true image of God. He is loving and concerned with justice. We see through Jesus that God is unexpected and unpredictable. He is not swayed by popular opinion, controlled by man's ideology, is completely beyond our comprehension, and yet chose to come and dwell with us. He is a God of Love.

I'd like to share a prayer from this book:

Creator God, author of all that is and lover of all that you have made, deepen our awareness of your mighty acts past and present and your constant presence with us every moment of our existence. Invade our minds, senses, and hearts like a quiet sunrise, a refreshing rain, a beautiful bouquet, a commanding voice, a trusted companion, and a loving touch—because we want to know you and remember who you are with every breath we take. By the power of your grace, transform us more and more until we become beautiful reflections of your presence and likeness in all that we do and are, as we offer all that we are and have to you in the name and spirit of Christ. Amen. (Job, 32).

Job, Rueben P. Three Simple Questions: Knowing the God of Love, Hope, and Purpose. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011. (13-32)

