

The Witness

ISSUE III

MARCH 2020

Portage First United Methodist Church

Pastors Michael Lawson & Tara Keehn

MARCH NEWSLETTER



*Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, March 8th at 2:00 AM.
Don't forget to set your clocks forward one hour Saturday night!*



From Pastor Michael...

*"Ministry is the work of God by the people of God." --
From "Recognition of our Common Ministry", Rite of Ordination*

When United Methodist pastors are ordained, the rite begins with a service of Baptism and the recognition that baptism brings with it a call to service. When I was ordained a pastor at Annual Conference in 2011, they placed a baptismal right at the center of the stage. As we processed in, we were asked to dip our hands into the water to remember: our vocation is to be an Elder or a Deacon but our call to do the work of God began at our Baptism. Ministry, we were reminded, is the work of God done by the people of God. This doctrine is called the "Ministry of all Believers" and is the reason that when you are sick or infirm, when you need help, it is not only the pastor or pastors that are called to your side. The entire church is called to minister to you.

Toward that end, for many years, we have been blessed by our Congregational Care Ministry in which both clergy and laity participate. Our Congregational Care ministers have been excellent at caring for members of the congregation and keeping the pastors apprised of needs within our church community. The program has been so successful through the years that we are now ready to innovate, to widen our reach, and seek more "people of God" to do the "work of God". As such we are renaming our Congregational Care Ministry. We recognize that the reach of the church should not just be inward toward members of the congregation, but outwards as well. Therefore, we introduce our COMMUNITY CARE MINISTRY!

It is our hope to use every technology and resource we have to share the love and concern of Jesus Christ not only to our congregants but those in our community. However, in order to be as far reaching as we can we need your help.

First of all, within the next few weeks we are going to introduce new pew cards onto which you can write requests for one of our pastors and/or community care ministers to visit, call, or check on folks in our community. These will be different than the prayer cards because they are requests for person to person contact between the church and the community.

We also wish to remind you that you can and should contact the church office if we need to be made aware of any illness or need that requires the Pastor of the Community Care Minister's Attention. Also, when you call the church office remember to always leave a message! The office number is (219) 762-3846.

Since we live in a digital age, we have also created a new email address where can email prayer and contact requests to our pastors and community care ministers. If you have a care need simply email us at: pfumccares@gmail.com

Since we are innovating and expanding the reach of this ministry, we also need some folks to volunteer to join the ranks of our Community Care Ministry! We will provide the training that you need and you will be supported by the entire church staff. We will teach you listening skills, keeping confidences, sharing compassion, and much much more. Let us know if you are interested in becoming a Community Care Minister.

Please know that we always do our best to attend to the needs of our community. The best way to receive pastoral care is simply to ask. A phone call to the office, an email, is all it takes to set that in motion. When you are in the hospital, remember that we will not be contacted unless you specifically ask them to. Know that your pastors and community care ministers are praying for you and care about you. God bless you!



Note from Pastor Tara...

As I write this, entering into March we have just finished up the Spaghetti Dinner. First, I would like to say an emphatic thank you to all of the volunteers who helped make it possible! Secondly, I would like to say and equally emphatic thank you to all who came out in support of the dinner by attending! Our kids thank you!

This dinner is one of our largest fundraises for Camp Scholarships. Every year, it's wonderful to see what transformations take place when our kids go and encounter Christ during camp. Camp applications and scholarship applications will be available soon. They will be available on the Connection Center for children planning on attending camp. Here is a poem I thought I'd share from the Christian Century:

(Luke 12:32)

This morning—outdoors, walking—
I count the birds I see:
Clouded late winter sunlight
Discloses only three—
Small, half a block behind me,
Ascending the mid-sky,
Diving, but upward, urgent—
As if to rise or die
In ecstasy, in answer
To what they are and know
Of seasonal transitions
That come too slow, too slow—
As if plummeting toward heaven
Might really hurry spring—
As if the times and seasons
Have been encouraging.
Who wouldn't turn to watch them
On hearing reckless cries
Above the traffic's clamor,
Perhaps even recognize,
As Christ-hued, the exertions
By three bird-specks of brown,
Etching on pale-lit grayness
That up can look like down?



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.



United Methodist Men

Friends in Christ – hoping this finds you well in the Lord. As we enter into March many things are happening. Our 40 days of Lent began Wednesday-February 26th. Daylight Savings starts Sunday-March 8th. The season of Spring begins Saturday-March 21st. Spring Training is underway for our Chicago baseball teams. And Easter is Sunday-April 12th. Also many of us are probably ready for the longer and warmer days that are coming. I know it doesn't make sense, but I share all this with you to say I believe God wants us all to slow down some, to take time for reflection, rest the body and mind, pray more and read the Bible God's word. As you give yourself to this much needed restoration He will bless and reward you in bringing you closer to Him and in fulfilling His purpose.

I would like to share with you a men's devotion from 2019 by Larry Coppock entitled “Seventy Eight Points”. The scripture is **Colossians 3: 23 – 24**. *Whatever you do, do it from the heart for the Lord and not for people. You know that you will receive an inheritance as a reward. You serve the Lord Christ.*

This year I attained the magic 78 points which represents a formula developed by my employer: the combination of age and years worked which “qualifies” and employee for retirement. No one rang bells and no parties were held in my honor. Seriously, I had been wondering for years that if and when I achieved such a plateau, would I give up the ministry I feel I have been called to do. Such important decisions obviously affect many people: family, people involved in your ministry, co-workers and, of course, yourself.

Society norms seem to dictate retirement be strongly considered through arbitrary numbers like age 65, 66, 70, etc. In the U.S. These numbers commonly represent some type of “reward” you receive like Social Security, Medicare, or status like “full” retirement age.

These figures also exist in laws in countries around the world. In Australia they call it a “preservation age”. It begins at age 55. The legal retirement age in Russia is 60 for men and 55 for women. Genesis 2: 15 says “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” It is obvious that from the beginning of time God wanted us to work. He did not set time parameters.

The Bible is full of stories of men of old age being called by God to do ministry and be servant leaders. Moses was 80 years old when God called him to go back to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Paul was over 60 and still organizing churches and writings.

Do the necessary research about retirement; however, don't confuse retirement from employment with retirement from His kingdom. God communicates a clear message for us to labor in His fields. Paul wrote to the Philippians, “If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me.”

Let our passion for good works and ministry not be driven by 78 point or some other societal directive. Let us be guided by the servant leaders so powerfully described to us in the Holy Bible. Let their examples be the standard in which we discover our “second wind.”

Prayer: *Lord, we look forward to the days of retirement and the arbitrary numbers that guide us to that end. May such decisions not put an end to our ministry; may we always be guided by the examples you put before us and may we always toil in the vineyard of the living Christ. Amen.*

Our March UMM meeting is Saturday-March 7th at 8:00AM. We will be meeting in the 1st classroom to the right going into the education wing from the fellowship hall. The Cub Scouts are using the fellowship hall and kitchen sponsoring a “Pancake Breakfast” fundraiser to help them with their ongoing expenses. We as the men's group will be having our breakfast in the fellowship hall at 8:00AM prior to our classroom meeting. It is a free will offering and so we are asking everyone to give generously please. We will plan to finish our breakfast and move back into the classroom for a 8:30AM start time. Our Bible Study is led by Ed Piontek entitled “The Cost Of Discipleship” - Lesson #8 – Scripture John 15 verses 9 – 25. I'm sure you will enjoy this study.

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

First Friday Fellowship
will meet on Friday, March 6th, at
5:00 p.m. at the VFW, 1290 Wagner
Road, in Porter. Anyone interested
in attending please RSVP to Sandra
Robinson, 764-8433, by Thursday,
March 5th.

United Methodist Women

FRIDAY, MARCH 6th @ 9:30 a.m.

☘ **HAPPY ST. PATRICKS** ☘

Your're in LUCK because we will have a morning of conversation, fellowship and breakfast snacks. Come join us! Our speaker this month will be Deb Rousselle.

Hope to see you there!

Trustees Corner...



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.

Royal Family Kids Camp



Our annual fundraiser breakfast is scheduled for March 8 between services. We will be celebrating an all church birthday party with tables decorated for each month. There are only 4 tables left to be adopted so if you would like to help, please sign in at the connection center. We will be serving breakfast casseroles, fresh fruit, sausage links and biscuits and gravy. You can help with this worthy mission project by bringing a washcloth and towel, or toothbrush and toothpaste or 3 in 1 kids shampoo/rinse/body wash or a pillow or by making a free will offering at the breakfast. There are approximately 80 foster children, ages 7 to 12, who will attend camp the last week of July. Hope to see you on the 8th.

Psalms for Lent and Life Class - Pastor Michael will be hosting a class on the prayer book and songs of the Bible, the Psalms. It's a book of the Bible that demands we approach it creatively. Come encounter the Psalms as if you were part of the ancient world and you will find that you have more in common with the ancients than you thought! Begins March 9th at 6:30 in the Suzannah Wesley Fellowship Hall.

Membership Class - Pastor Michael will be hosting a new member class for those seeking membership in our local church. The classes will be held at 12:15PM on the following dates: March 15, 22, 29, and April 5. Inquiring members must attend three out of the four classes or make personal arrangements with the Pastor. Please sign up in the Narthex.

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

A reminder that the Endowment Committee is accepting grant requests for 2020. The amount of the total grant amounts set aside for 2020 is \$13,312. The deadline to submit applications is April 30, 2020. Copies of the application are available at the Connections Center or may be obtained through the church office. A copy of the Endowment Fund Grant Request Process is attached to the application and explains the steps necessary to complete the application.



Happy March Anniversary to...

04	Scott & Sandy Holtzman	17	James & Marcie Jordan
08	Steve & Deb Massow	27	Paul & Denise Pollacheck

Happy March Birthday to...

03	Lori Seberger	16	Virginia Spurlock	25	Alexandra Medina
03	Mia Lopez	16	Elizabeth Seberger	25	Jason Bush
04	Conner Welch	20	Shari Warne	26	Helen Wright
04	Scott Holtzman II	20	Rich Coates	27	Robert Liesch Jr.
09	Larry Darnell	20	Joselynn Medina	28	Kirk Harbart
09	Ethan Warne	21	Amy Kegley	29	Mitch Gale
09	Katy Lawrence	23	Rob Hoover	31	Katie Tarnow
11	Heather Shebel	23	Dave Mantz	31	Melissa Sullivan
		24	Gloria Bowen	31	Margaret Brutout
15	Jamie Whitfield	24	Zachary Smith		