

# The Witness

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ISSUE V

MAY 2020

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**Portage First United Methodist Church**

*Pastors Michael Lawson & Tara Keehn*

## MAY NEWSLETTER





*From Pastor Michael...*

# Congratulations Class

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When the Class of 2020 were born 18 years ago, we were a nation in the midst of an escalating crisis. The embers of the 9/11 terrorist attacks were still smoldering, we were headed into war, and we were rethinking who we were as a people on the world stage. Now as they approach graduation, we find ourselves in the midst of an international health crisis. As a result, no prom, no graduation ceremonies, no open houses, just another clarion call to be strong and very courageous.

This leads me to reflect on my grandfather and grandmother. They emerged into adulthood from the Great Depression and straight into the fires of WWII. Papa Cavender graduated high school and was immediately handed his summons to go to the recruiting office. He joined the army and went off to fight in Europe. This fallen world demands so much of us.

If we know our history, it helps us to put into perspective our current crisis. I am not trying to say that something so cold and callous as “Hey, you think no prom is bad? Try fighting a war.” (I will pause here so that we can all roll our eyes.) This doesn’t get to the truth. Every generation will have its conflicts and difficulties to endure and it is not worthwhile to compare one to another. Today’s young people have to face what they are presented with. They haven’t been presented a world war, they are presented with a medical crisis, environmental damage, and a country so disunited it threatens to shake us apart.

No. in view of history, my message for the Class of 2020 is to remember that we have been here before. Humanity has faced plague and disease before. We have had to put regular life on hold and suspend celebration. We have had to ignore holidays and holy days alike in favor of enduring calamity. In those moments, it is our virtue that pulls us through.

Virtue is not a fashionable concept in the new millennium. My hope is that it makes a resurgence. I would like to see the words duty, community, and responsibility enshrined in our minds again. These highly unromantic ideals call us to practical application of our hands and strength. Virtue calls us to get our hands into life’s burdens and obstacles and lift. Duty reminds us that we can only survive if we think of those around us as much and as often as we think of ourselves, that their welfare is our welfare. We are a world community, and that carries with it the practical necessity of caring for other people.

Class of 2020, grow in virtue and happier days will return again. Remember your duty and responsibility to those around you. This world is your home.

Finally, if we had the facility, our church would throw you a prom. However, what we will offer instead is a graduation celebration as soon as we can. When the time comes that we can meet together again, we as a church will celebrate you and your accomplishment. We will throw a party, we will create a ceremony, we will not let this moment pass without some pomp and circumstance.

I already know Class of 2020, that you are more than capable of rising to meet your moment in history.



## *Note from Pastor Tara...*

As I write this article preparing to enter into May, we are still currently social distancing and states are preparing to gradually start opening. It has just been announced that I have been reappointed by Bishop Julius Trimble to serve as head pastor of Wheeler UMC effective July 1, 2020. I am preparing to write my sermon for the second Sunday of Easter and finishing up my coursework for Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary as my semester now ends at the end of April instead of May. I am trying my best to assist my children with learning from home and increased meal demands. I find myself with a lot to do despite this period of slowing down. I have been a part of a Bible study group called the "Millennial Ladies" Bible study on Monday nights lead by Heather Schulz. Right now we are beginning a study called "Get Out of Your Head" about dealing with anxiety. I have to say this is a great study for this this time! Many of you know the joys of being part of a small group. If you have ever thought of being a part of a small group but have not joined one, I encourage you to join one or start one. Especially in this time of social distancing, we need to check in on one another and be intentional with (socially distanced) interaction. If someone is on your mind, please call them and check in.

Our next blood drive is scheduled for May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 from 1:30 to 6:30 pm. This will still not require any volunteers from our church. The drive will be operated exclusively by volunteers from the American Red Cross in order to ensure the safety of our congregation. However, the need for blood is still there. If you would like to donate, they will most likely only take appointments at first. They may open up to walk-ins if there are many no-shows, but the best bet to donate is to make an appointment. To make an appointment, visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org).

Although we have no firm date for opening back to regular worship, I do have several volunteer positions I am looking to fill. One is that of Welcome Center Coordinator. What it would be is someone to make sure that the cups for visitors are filled, and that the schedule for door greeters is filled. There will be a list of names of people who already are usual volunteers to ask to fill in those spots. If you are willing, please contact Tara Keehn 219-608-6150 or [tara.keehn@inumc.org](mailto:tara.keehn@inumc.org).

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## For May Newsletter from Missions and Outreach:

Hello Church!

We sure miss seeing everyone, and hope you are doing well. Can't wait to see you in person when the current social distancing is a thing of the past. We hope you have been seeing our God working through many, many people in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. Whether in person, or through the media, we've been witnessing so many people going out of their way to help those in need, and to bring hope and love to our neighbors right here in Portage and the world.

Hat's off to Heather and Steve Schultz and all the others who joined them in sewing masks during the pandemic. Great way to be the hands and feet of Jesus!

The Portage Township Food Pantry has doubled the number of days they are open in order to accommodate the high number of people now needing assistance with food. Thanks to your generosity, the Missions and Outreach Team was recently able to make a \$400 donation to the Food Pantry (in addition to what our individual church members have donated to the cause). According to Joe Casper, the director of the pantry, when money is donated, the pantry can purchase food whose value is approximately 3 x the amount of the monetary donation! (That makes a \$400 donation into approximately \$1200 worth of food!) If you are able, please consider making a monetary donation, too. You can write a check to the church and earmark a portion for the food pantry, earmark a donation through Pushpay, or donate directly to the pantry itself. If you would prefer to donate non-perishable food items, we will leave the shopping cart outside the front door of the church. If you are doing your own shopping, you might stop off on your way home to make the donation. Connie King has volunteered to get that food to the pantry periodically. The food pantry is now in its new location at 3590 Willowcreek Road. They also will be collecting donated food items there Tuesday – Saturday between 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. If you need assistance with food yourself, please contact the church at [pfumccares@gmail.com](mailto:pfumccares@gmail.com) or (219)762-3846.



In case anyone wants to make a monetary donation directly to the pantry? Both their addresses are below:

Mailing address is: P.O. Box 1582 Portage, IN 46368

Physical address: 3560 Willowcreek Road Portage, IN 46368

On April 21, Pastor Michael and Kim Adkins were able to deliver \$300 worth of Subway sandwiches and cookies to show our support for the health care staff at Portage Hospital. Thanks to everyone for sending their messages of thanks and hope to go on the poster that accompanied the food!

We pray that you are experiencing God's love each and every day.

For Missions and Outreach,

Wendy Smith

## United Methodist Men – May Newsletter

Hello friends and brothers in Christ. I am glad to have the opportunity to share with you a message from our men's ministry. I, as likely many of you, are practicing social distancing while staying at home for the most part, and taking many precautions when and if I do have to go out being near other people (ie: grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurant food pick-up, etc). But for the most part I am staying indoors - with the exception of some yard work, some walks, and hoping to maybe get on our bicycles maybe soon. The key major “DO's” for us all here is doing social distancing, wearing masks and gloves, washing our hands and not touching our faces. This corona virus pandemic has rightly so put a major scare and crunch into our everyday life's and into the life's of just about everyone. All of us need to be a part of the solution in Not spreading the virus, but instead helping to eliminate it.

Our monthly men's meetings and supportive ministry's (ie: Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Prison Ministry, and other upcoming events – Church Rummage Sale helpers, and the Combined Mother's and Father's Day breakfast) have all been temporarily put on hold.

Thus our scheduled men's meeting for Saturday-05/02/20 has also been canceled at this time. And, unless things change, we probably won't have our last meeting before summer which is scheduled for Saturday-06/06/20. **IF** this virus should clear up by July we may plan our UMM sponsored family **Rail Cats baseball game** outing. But at this time, without knowing, this is just a BIG “IF”. Just a slim possibility at this time.

One of the things our UMM is planning to do this fall is to sponsor a **men's bible study** here in the evening at church. One night a week for eight weeks. It is a United Methodist church study 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. More will be announced as this fall start date approaches. We will have a sign-up sheet on the connection center.



I feel one of the great gifts God has given me at this time (and maybe many of you too) is this extra time to read more of His word, to pray more, to give of myself to immediate family, sharing phone calls, texts, letters, and cards. I believe He wants us to focus more on Him and His plans (and less on our plans) – that we can grow closer to Him and can become more like Him in all that we think, say, and do.

I like to share with you a Daily Bread devotional authored by Adam Holz?

## UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Hebrews 10: 14 – For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

They just repaved this road, I thought to myself as the traffic slowed. Now they're tearing it up again! Then I wondered, Why is this road construction never done? I mean, I've never seen a sign proclaiming, “The paving company is finished. Please enjoy this perfect road.”

But something similar is true in my spiritual life. Early in my faith, I imagined reaching a moment of maturity when I'd have it all figured out, when I'd be “smoothly paved.” Thirty years later, I confess I'm still “under construction.” Just like the perpetually pot-holed roads I drive, I never seem to be “finished” either. Sometimes that can feel equally frustrating.

But Hebrews 10 contains an amazing promise. Verse 14 says, “For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” Jesus' work on the cross has already save us. Completely. Perfectly. In God's eyes, we are whole and finished. But paradoxically, that process isn't done yet while we're still on earth. We're still being shaped into His likeness, still “being made holy.”

One day, we'll see Him face-to-face, and we shall be like Him (1 John 3: 2). But until then, we're still “under construction,” people who anxiously await the glorious day when the work in us is truly complete.

**Prayer:** Faithful God, sometimes I get frustrated that my spiritual progress seems slow. Help me to remember that You're still at work in my life, shaping me and helping me to become more and more like you.

Because of Him -  
Prayers and blessings  
to you and your family,  
Mike Matthew

# PRISON NEWS

Hi everyone!

I just wanted to let you all know a little bit about current situation with our prison ministry. Like so many other things in the last month have changed our world drastically, so has our this ministry.

As you can imagine, all volunteers have been locked out, due to Covid 19. I understand there are approximately 120 offenders that have tested positive for the virus and are being quarantined. There are quite a few staff members also on furlough due to the situation. At least 4 has been tested positive for the virus as well.

Please keep the staff and the offenders in your daily prayers. Many are completely shut off from the outside world altogether, I cannot imagine the fear of the unknown and being completely isolated.

Our team will be sending letters to the ones we have associated with in our P.F. Hope services with hope this can bring a little comfort to some.

I received a memo regarding some items:

The offenders are still in need of shoes preferably tennis shoes, from 9-12.

Pants 32-38

Coats 2XL and 3 XL sweatshirts 2-4XL

Yarn

They are presently making masks. They have material, but NEED YARN!!!!

Please clearly mark any donations and put them where the rummage normally goes, behind the fellowship hall.

Thanks so much for your prayers, concerns, generosity and Love!!

Your Prison Ministry Team



## Portage First UMC 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 has been extended to May 31, 2020 due to the lack of recent church service caused by COVID-19.** 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.

We ask that you prayerfully consider the ways in which these funds can spread the word of Jesus Christ when you complete an application. Potential uses to consider include (but are not limited by) *Missions, Evangelism/Outreach, Education, Music, Worship and Arts.*



## A Message from the Green Team

April 22<sup>nd</sup> was Earth Day! Did you celebrate? While lots of the in-person community festivities around the day had to be cancelled, there are ALWAYS things we can do every day to celebrate Earth Day! This month, why not plant a vegetable garden?

Did you ever think about how the shipping and transport of non-locally produced food produces air pollution and increases greenhouse gases? Also, when we grow our own food, we can choose to do so with little or no pesticides and synthetic chemicals. Homegrown food is even higher in nutrients and minerals. Gardening can also be a great family project! Growing your own vegetables is fun, rewarding, and healthier for you and the earth! If you're not already a gardener, why not check it out?



# ReNEW VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

## By Heather Schulz

It's springtime and you know what that means...summer is just around the corner! I know we may be getting ahead of the calendar but it's time to start preparing for Vacation Bible School. We are really excited about this year's program: ReNew Vacation Bible School. ReNew invites kids to learn about Jesus, help build our community, and grow as they become stewards of God's creation.

At ReNew: The Green VBS kids will:

- Explore God's Word through Jesus' Parable of the Sower.
- 
- Learn about God's creation and what we can do to care for it.
- 
- Meet members of our community who are stewards of the environment
- 
- Make new friends and have a great time!
- 

VBS will be in the evenings Sunday, July 12 - Thursday, July 16

This year we will start every evening with a free community meal for attendees and volunteers. While the kids are going through their stations, adults can attend a bible study in the sanctuary, participate with the kids, or help lead an activity "booth" for a day or the whole week. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more details!





## SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE

### CDC Recommends

**Everyone can do their part** to help us respond to this emerging public health threat by following CDC recommendations:

Wear a [cloth face covering](#) in public settings to avoid spreading COVID-19 to others in case you are infected but do not have symptoms.

- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are considered critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders, as recommended by CDC.
- The cloth face covering is not a substitute for social distancing.

CDC continues to recommend that people try keep about 6 feet between themselves and others.

People who are sick

If you get a **fever or cough**, consider whether you might have COVID-19, depending on where you live, your travel history, and other exposures. [All of the United States](#) is seeing some level of community spread of COVID-19. You may ask to be [tested for COVID-19](#) by contacting a medical provider or health department, but it's important that you know there is no treatment for this virus. Most people who get the virus have mild illness and are able to [recover at home without medical care](#).

People at higher risk for severe illness

People **65 years and older** and people with **serious [underlying medical conditions](#)** should [take special precautions](#) because they are at higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 illness.



## ***From SPRC ...***

It is with a mixture of joy and sadness that we announce that Pastor Tara Keehn has received a new pastoral appointment by our Bishop, His Grace Julius Trimble.. Effective July 1, 2020 Pastor Tara will be promoted to Senior Pastor of Wheeler UMC in Wheeler, Indiana and will be leaving her service here at Portage First United Methodist Church. On behalf of the whole church we honor your ministry Pastor your ministry Pastor Tara Keehn! Thank you for all you have done and you will always have a place in our hearts and Prayers. Congratulations!

The SPRC Committee is pleased to announce that we have hired Janice Gryfakis as our new accompanist and praise team leader. Janice is a Master Organist, a piano and music teacher, has several degrees including a MFA in Church Music from Concordia University. Janice will be starting in August and work with Brendan Herr as they transition. Then when Brendan departs for the University in September she will take over all responsibilities for both our traditional and contemporary services. She will work closely with our Director of Music Heather Schulz and accompany the choir and participate in our Worship Design Committee. Janice is excited to join us. Let's welcome her to our church family with the Love and hospitality that Portage First UMC is known for!

### ***United Methodist Women***

**REVISED DATES FOR ALL-CHURCH RUMMAGE SALE**

**SUMMER SALE AUG 6 & 7**

**WINTER SALE OCT. 15 & 16**

**IF YOU CAN WAIT UNTIL AFTER QUARANTINE IS OVER TO  
DONATE RUMMAGE PLEASE DO.**

**IF YOU HAVE ANY MED/LG BOXES, PLEASE LEAVE BY BACK  
SHED.**

**THANKS RUMMAGE TEAM  
RUMMAGE TEAM**

PORTAGE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
FROM THE FIANANCE COMMITTEE

<b>March 2020</b>	
Non Designated Giving	\$24,383.26
Operating Expenses	\$26,241.55
Debt Reduction Giving	\$1,409.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$2,080.92
Apportionment Paid	\$2,616.57

<b>Year to Date 2020</b>	
Non Designated Giving	\$70,835.97
Operating Expenses	\$78,498.87
Net Year To Date	(\$7,662.90)
Debt Reduction Giving	\$6,297.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$6,242.76
Net Debt Reduction	\$54.24
Overall Net Current & Debt	(\$7,608.66)
Apportionment Paid	\$5,257.87

What is “Apportionment”? From [www.umc.org](http://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 conference 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 work. We combine our prayers, presence, gifts and services 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 raised \$5,700 through the month of March 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.

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*Check us out on Facebook!*

*[www.portageumc.org](http://www.portageumc.org)*

The Portage Trustee's office is accepting donations of non perishable food items for their Emergency Food Pantry in the Narthex in the purple tub. This Pantry is utilized for those who need food in Portage Township when the pantries are not open. Thank you!



## *Connection Center and Greeters Sign-Up...*

Looking for a way to serve? Have some time before services on Sunday? Consider serving as a greeter to those who come to worship at PFUMC. It is a great opportunity to welcome members, both those you know and may not know, and meet visitors! If you would like to

**HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY TO ALL  
THE PFUMC MOTHER'S !!!!!!!**





***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 '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 May Anniversary to ...***

01	John & Freda Black	23	Glenn & Martha Yerby
05	Rich & Patti Coates	26	Bennie & Vicky Wright
10	Joe & Sally Reynolds		

***Happy May Birthday to ...***

01	Don Morgenroth			23	Jennifer Long
02	Chuck Fowler	15	Ryan Kegley	24	Juliet Medina
04	Jaden Bright	16	Sally Nohr	24	Richard Pinarski
06	Jaden Bright	17	Bev Fitzgerald	24	Ethan Davenport
06	Jim Crisman	17	Paul Tarnow	25	Shellie Deperio
08	Riley Miller	20	Claudia Graham	27	Grant Monahan
15	Jim Helmecy	21	Heather Burns	28	Connie Ingram
15	Steve Massow	22	Chris Adkins	31	Donna Lenburg
		22	Margi Hamstrom		