

The Witness

ISSUE IV

APRIL 2019

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, 20 2019. 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...

Part of being a church is taking care of each other. Visiting each other in the hospital, praying with each other, bringing communion to those who are in the hospital or home bound. This Lenten season is a time for reflection. Reflecting on our work here, I would like to take a moment to thank Mike Matthew for heading our Communion to Shut-ins ministry. He is also a prayer warrior who makes many visits to those in the hospital. I would also like to thank Leigh and David Coffey for making beautiful cards that we send through prayer ministry. I would like to thank James Jordan for all he does with the blood drives and other activities. I would like to thank Lisa Hoover for being our behind the scenes cook extraordinaire. I would like to thank the people who volunteer to be greeters, ushers, volunteer at the connection center (looking at you Betty Evensen, Steve Massow, Mike, Tom Ellefson, Martha and Glenn Yerby). I would like to thank George Stewart for spending time to get our slides ready, coming to Praise Team and Choir practices, and volunteering on Sunday mornings. Thank you to the committee heads like Connie Ellefson, Lorri Davenport, Wendy Smith, Marcie Jordan, Mike Matthew, Steve Massow, Steve Davenport, Andrew Brown. I would like to thank Paul Keaton and Larry Livergood for all of their behind the scenes volunteering. Thank you to all of the Sunday school teachers and small group leaders. There are so many people that help and serve each and every week, I know I am missing many and if I didn't mention you by name know that I do see your contribution and I appreciate you. I just want to take a moment to say thank you and acknowledge all the hard work you do to keep us running. Thank you for your service, for your dependability. Thank you for making Portage First United Methodist Church a welcoming place. Thank you to all who are members and attend and make this church a living, breathing body of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am proud to worship with you and call you my church family.



Holy Week

April 14, 2019 – Palm Sunday

Will you be there?

Sunday Worship 9:00 & 11:15 AM
 Sunday School 10:15 AM

April 15, 2019 – Temple Monday

Were you there... When the tables turned?

Noontime Prayer and Soup 12:05 PM

April 16, 2019 – Temple Discourses

Were you there... when he taught in the Temple?

Noontime Prayer and Soup 12:05 PM

April 17, 2019 – Spy Wednesday

Were you there... when he lied?

Noontime Prayer and Soup 12:05 PM

April 18, 2019 – Maundy Thursday

Were you there... when he wept?

Noontime Prayer and Soup 12:05 PM
 Maundy Thursday Worship Service 7:00 PM

Declared Community Fast Until Sunset Good Friday

April 19, 2019 – Good Friday

Were you there... when he was crucified?

Hour of Commemoration 2:30 PM
 Good Friday Worship Service 7:00 PM

April 21, 2019 - Easter Sunday

Were you there... when he arose?

Sunday Worship 9:00 & 11:15 AM
 Sunday School 10:15 AM

April 28, 2018 - Children's Easter Pageant

"The Three Wise Dudes"

Sunday Worship 9:00 & 11:15 AM
 Sunday School 10:15 AM



From Kate Blakely, Director of Spiritual Formation...

Summer Camp Scholarships —

Camp Scholarship applications are now available at the connection center. District scholarship may cover up to 33% of the cost of camp based off of your family size and income. District scholarship forms need to be turned in directly to the INUMC. Church scholarship forms are also available and can be turned in to Kate Blakely. The deadline for turning church scholarships in is Sunday April 7. For more information about Camp please email Kate at portageumcyouth@gmail.com or call/text (574) 621-0070.

VBS —

This year's Vacation Bible School will take place July 14-18 and our theme is Camping with Christ. We ask for you prayers as we continue the process of planning and writing our own VBS this year and that you would pray for the potential children who will be coming. In the mean time we ask that you keep your eyes out for any camping-related decorations, prizes, or anything we might be able to use for VBS this year. Any donation can be placed in classroom 8 under the VBS Donations sign. For more information about this year's VBS, please contact Heather Schulz at (219) 617-2783 or Kate Blakely at (574) 621-0070.

Youth Group/MPK: Mission Portage Kids April Meeting Dates —

- April 14, 12:30-2:00 PM
 - April 28, 12:30-2:00 PM
-



From Heather Schulz...

Music Notes

Easter has been keeping us busy! The choir is working with the youth and will be performing as part of the Children's Easter Drama. Come see all the hard work that has gone into this performance on Sunday, April 28th. Invite your friends and family! The Easter Drama will take place during both services.

I know I'm jumping ahead a month or two but "summer vacation" for the chancel choir will arrive before we know it. After Memorial Day, the Chancel Choir takes a bit of a break until we resume after Labor Day.

To take the place of the choir, we would love to have special music every Sunday. There are so many talented musicians within the church. Please let Heather or Matt know if you would be interested in sharing your musical gift whether it be singing or playing an instrument. If you have a song in mind or need a suggestion, just speak with us and we will help set it up.

Also, Matt and Heather have been thinking about holding a music class over the summer on Thursday evenings. If you have ever wanted to learn how to read music either to play an instrument or to sing, this could be your opportunity! Please sign up at the connection center if you are interested. We want to know if this is something others are interested in or if it's just something us music nerds get excited about.



Portage First UMC Endowment Committee...

A reminder that the Endowment Committee is accepting grant requests for 2019. The amount of the total grant amounts set aside for 2019 is \$12,960. The deadline to submit applications is April 30, 2019. 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. Feel free to think outside the box and be creative.



Trustees Corner...

Well another month has flown by in the life of Portage First and the trustees have been very busy with many projects around the church. Thanks to the generous time and effort exerted by Larry & Lerryn Darnell and their Qpon fundraiser and our congregation for purchasing the coupon books we were able to offset the purchase price of four new toilets in our main fellowship restrooms by \$580.00. Hopefully everyone will notice a new “flush” in the toilets. In addition, a new sparkle has appeared in the fellowship hall, narthex, and education wing flooring. Along with this sparkle is our request to be mindful of not dragging objects across the floors and marring the finish or applying any abrasive cleaning liquids. Timely clean up with just mild soap and water is all that is needed. Spring is in the air as reflected in a fresh new color of paint applied in the main narthex entranceway and coatroom. Keep watch for the rest of the narthex transformation.

Going forward we will be focusing our attention in our kitchen. We welcome your suggestions in this project. Please feel free to submit your ideas for a color for the walls, and possibly painting the kitchen cabinets (there are pros and cons to that idea) and type of countertops. Just drop a note into the trustees’ box near the connection center. Flooring options are being finalized and installation is forthcoming. Funding is still needed to purchase a new double oven at a cost of around \$6,000 (we do have a donation of \$2,000 already designated towards this purchase) and a new grill, 6 burner range and oven unit for around \$4,000. It is an exciting time at Portage First.

Further, a contract was entered with a local IT company to upgrade our phone service, install additional security cameras in areas such as our office administrator, pastor’s office, sanctuary, nursery, and toddler rooms and at the rear of building where the air conditioners are to name a few. There will be internet capability in all the classrooms and fellowship hall televisions. New computers, computer network, and new data wiring have been installed.

Finally, our once a year “deep clean up” day has been scheduled for Saturday, May 4, from 9 AM to noon. There will be a sign-up sheet with specific areas needing attention with opportunities for all ages to help beautify our church properties. The board of trustees **REALLY** need your help. For you early birds, food and beverages will be provided at 8 AM.

Connie Ellefson, Trustee chairperson



Missions and Outreach Committee...

Portage First will be collecting all things "pasta" for the Portage Township Food Pantry this month! As always, donations may be placed in the shopping cart in the Fellowship Hall.

Also, be sure to mark your calendar for the American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life" coming June 7! We're getting a team together to walk again this year! This is such a fun and worthwhile event. Keep your eyes open for more information.

Community Meal —

At the Community Meal on Friday, April 12 at 6:00 PM, we will be having a Board Games Night. Bring your friends and your favorite board game. We will enjoy a good meal of BBQ chicken legs with sides, visit, and play games. Hope to see you there!

*With Blessings and Gratitude,
Your friends on the Missions and Outreach Committee*



Prison Ministry News...

Many of us may have a misconception of what prison actually is. As we embark on our 6th year of going into Westville Correctional Facility, I can tell you my personal perception and thoughts of the incarcerated have changed over this period of time.

Please understand I do realize that they are there for a reason and they are paying a price for making poor choices and or doing evil things, that's a given.

But after going deep, hearing their stories, understanding their upbringing, other some dysfunctional family's or non-existent families, you begin to see how poor choices are made and the evil one comes to steal kill and destroy what might be left of any light that they have in their lives.

Addictions are real, temptations are always present and for many souls it feels like there is no hope and that they are simply a lost cause.

THE LOVE OF JESUS SAYS DIFFERENT!

That's where Portage first comes in! Your prison team, (PF Hope) brings the light of Jesus behind the Walls of Westville and brings a glimmer of hope with the fruits of the spirit.

We ask that each of you pray along with us and with the awesome prayer team that meets on Tuesdays at 10:30 AM every week. We know that there is power in prayer and our God is mighty, continually changing lives for his kingdom!

We cannot begin to tell you all how gratifying it is to be doing God's work in Westville. But if this sounds like something you may be interested in or want more information on please let me, Steve Massow, Wendy Smith, Mike Matthew, or Melissa Sullivan know.

Or, just come with us some Wednesday night and see how God rolls! LOVE WINS!

Keep us all in prayer please. God Is On The Move! Yes He is!!

 **United Methodist Women...**

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

Set-up dates:

- Sunday, **April 28th** – Table setup, bring in all the goodies from the shed.
- Monday, **April 29th** thru Wednesday, **May 1st** – empty boxes, pricing, sorting, move over large items from the barns, etc. And, TWEAK, TWEAK, TWEAK!

Sale dates:

- Thursday, **May 2nd** (9:00 AM - 6:00 PM)
- Friday, **May 3rd** (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.

All proceeds go out to several missions. Donations are **ALWAYS** welcome and can be dropped off at the back of the church. Let's make this the best sale ever and show what we can do!

First Friday Fellowship

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2019

5:00 PM

MARTINI'S STEAK & SEAFOOD

1004 Calumet Avenue • Valparaiso
(must be 21 or older)

Please RSVP to:

Sandra Robinson at (219) 764-8433
no later than Thursday, April 4

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!!



Repair / Replace or Needs Servicing Request Forms...

Do you know of something that needs attention such as a repair or replacement in or around our church? Please fill out a request form with the information and place the form in the Trustee's mailbox. Forms are available in the Trustee's mailbox. Thank you!



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.

Portage First United Methodist Church Finance Update		Year to Date 2019	
		February 2019	
Non Designated Giving	\$28,174.56	Operating Expenses	\$50,897.01
Operating Expenses	\$22,418.43	Net Year To Date	(\$86.51)
Debt Reduction Giving	\$1,819.00		
Debt Reduction Expense	\$2,080.92	Debt Reduction Giving	\$3,572.00
		Debt Reduction Expense	\$4,161.84
Apportionment Paid	\$2,563.76	Net Debt Reduction	(\$589.84)
		Overall Net Current & Debt	(\$676.35)
		Apportionment Paid	\$6,965.67

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 2019-2020 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 26, 2019 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.



Royal Family Kids Camp Update...

Thank you one and all for the in-kind and monetary contributions received at our recent breakfast fundraiser. We now have \$1,450.00 to help subsidize the remaining purchases necessary to fill the backpacks in July. The backpacks have been ordered and an invitation will be forthcoming to come and help fill the backpacks. For more than 20 years Portage First has made a difference in the lives of more than 80 foster children ages 7-12 each summer. Truly the love of Jesus is displayed through the many kind acts by camp volunteers showing the children a week of fun and adventure. So, on behalf of the kids, THANK YOU!

JUST A LITTLE
Reminder

The Portage Trustee's office is still 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 volunteer, please sign up on the schedule at the Connection Center!



Easter Flowers...

If you would like to order Easter flowers for the altar, forms are available in the bulletins. Please be sure to attach payment along with the form and return it in the offering plate or to the office. Flowers may be taken home **after** the second service on Easter Sunday, April 21. Deadline for ordering flowers is Sunday, April 14.



***Would you like to be a part of
Portage First's Relay for Life Team
on Friday, June 7th?***

Go to <https://secure.acevents.org>, click on "Join A Relay," search by zip code, choose "Relay For Life Portage," and click "Join This Relay." You may also install the American Cancer Society FUNdraising app on your phone and follow the same prompts. Paper registrations will be available soon.

Contact Amber Welch with questions.



***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 Helmecec
26	Art & Alice Kurth		

Happy April Birthday to ...

01	Lisa Hoover	10	Lily Hamilton	16	Lorri Davenport
01	Sophia Dearing	11	Alice Kurth	18	Stephen Miller
02	Melissa Medina	11	Jeff Kaiser	18	Kim Corder
03	Jill Ryan	11	Vicki Mason	19	Aaron Cawthra
03	Kyle Adkins	12	Mike Liesch	21	Sydney Wasz
07	Carlella Rogers	12	Laura Piontek	26	Joy Azad
07	Mark Long	13	Sherry Pinarski	27	Kris Bailey
07	Ann Packard	14	Bob Kellams	27	Judy Kirkman
08	Ron Hall	15	Marvin Owens	28	Amber Welch
09	Virginia Lockenvitz	15	Kathy Manteuffel	30	Chuck Mason
09	Meghan Messer	15	Pauline Brown	30	Wendy Smith
10	Erica Bush	16	Danah Peterson	30	Gabrielle Sullivan