

The Witness

ISSUE VI

JUNE 2020

Portage First United Methodist Church

Pastors Michael Lawson & Tara Keehn

JUNE NEWSLETTER



A Message from Bishop Trimble: Pastors are Essential Workers

I was reminded by one of our clergy who serves as a Hospice Chaplain that pastors are essential workers and deserve our support and praise during this season of the Coronavirus pandemic. She was right. Among the thousands of leaders we depend upon during a crisis, pastors are certainly included.

As you navigate this protracted season of challenge and choice, I just want to say thank you, pastors. You have families, and many of you have secular jobs along with serving a church. You are being asked to do things you didn't learn in seminary or pastor's school.

The good news is that our charge to preach the Gospel and love the people has not changed. This is a great opportunity to lean into the Connection as United Methodists in Indiana. On behalf of the Extended Cabinet, I hope the recent worship resources made available can be useful as pastors take a weekend off.

On behalf of all United Methodists, both lay and clergy, we declare that God is good! As one layperson reminded me on a Zoom call, "Remember Bishop, we still have Jesus and live not as people without hope."

I end with the words of Paul, who accurately expresses my love and gratitude for each of you.

I Thessalonians 5:12-13 (ESV): "We ask you brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves."

Philippians 1:3-5: "I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers. I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it's always a prayer full of joy. I'm glad because of the way you have been my partners in the ministry of the Gospel from the time you first believed it until now."

Be encouraged,

Bishop Julius C. Trimble
Resident Bishop
Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church



Note from Pastor Tara...

I would like to start out by saying that I have greatly enjoyed serving as your associate pastor at Portage First UMC. However, as I have been appointed to serve as the pastor at Wheeler United Methodist Church beginning July 1st, 2020, my last date preaching here will be June 21st, 2020. While I am sad to leave so many friends, I am also excited as this opportunity offers new challenges and growth for me as a pastor.

I am incredibly grateful for the many years of memories and ministry together at PFUMC, and I hope you can forgive me for the areas in which I have come up short. The relationships I have made here over the years have been like family. I can still remember the first day Greg and I came to church around Easter and Mike Matthew showed us around the church. Ethan was only around 3 years old. We began attending, not too long after we got married, a year later Max was born and then was baptized here, and for the past 14 years you have watched my children grow. I and my family have watched many other families and children grow as well. I became involved in Stephen Ministry, and later Congregational Care Ministry. I volunteered at the coffee bar. Later, I received my "call" to ministry. You have been incredibly supportive of both my family and my "call." For this I thank you. I recognize that I may not have always had the right words to say, and sometimes there may have been hurt feelings. For this I apologize and hope you can find forgiveness towards me for my shortcomings. I hope that if we meet it is with joy and friendship. As I move to Wheeler, I may no longer be your associate pastor, but I will always be your friend. God Bless you and your continued ministry in Portage.



NOTE FROM TRUSTEES

This article is to let you know what has transpired since the pandemic crisis hit our country and especially how it has affected the way we can worship together. Since the middle of March, the trustees and finance committee have been working to secure funding for the flat portions of our church building. Through the help of the United Methodist Loan & Savings Association, we were able to secure a loan for \$40,000.00 which allowed us to grant A-Better Roofing a contract to replace our roof. The roof is now 99% done. Just a few minor steps to complete including new scuppers and downspouts and the project will be done. A great big thank you to Bill Miller and Paul Keaton for overseeing this extremely important project. In addition, the trustees and some members of our congregation have been busy doing some spring maintenance around the church. The main wall along the breezeway leading to our front door has been given a new paint color along with window frames and shutters. Ten new dwarf lilac bushes were planted along the south side and fresh mulch added. A new awning was placed over the west door of education entrance to help protect the keypad and those existing and entering. Thanks to Jim Jordon, Virginia Phillips, and Pat Jackson for painting the 3 connected nursery/toddler rooms. Classroom carpets have been shampooed, windows cleaned, and other minor painting completed in the education wing. We also secured a farm lease for 10+ acres of our crossroads property for this planting season. Tree trimming service has been obtained which will include the areas around the church building and the prayer path. A Big thank you to Lois Finney and Carolyn Lenburg for creating beautiful flower boxes. Nine prayer benches will be placed along the prayer path. So please take advantage by walking or jogging on the path or by sitting on one of the benches for reflection and enjoying nature. Unfortunately, we will not be able to have a “all church clean up” day this year. However, there are still several opportunities for our church members to help with small projects. If you are interested, please contact a trustee, or leave a note in the trustee box near the connection center. Wishing everyone a safe and healthy Memorial Day holiday.



Time for a “Thank You” Party!!

As many of you have heard, Pastor Tara will be reappointed as Lead Pastor at Wheeler UMC in July. Her last Sunday with our Portage First family will be June 21st. Plans are in the works for a celebration of her ministry at Portage First, however, in light of the ever changing social distancing guidelines, we’re not quite sure exactly what this celebration will look like or when it will be. After discussion with Pastor Tara, she is in agreement to come back for a party later in the summer or early fall when we will all be able to get together and visit more easily.

We are collecting a “Love Offering” for Pastor Tara to be presented to her on June 21st. If you would like to contribute, you may drop it off at or mail it to the church office, or place it in the offering plate - please be sure it is marked as “Love Offering for Pastor Tara”.

Watch for updates on the “when”, “where”, and “how” we will celebrate Pastor Tara’s ministry! In the meantime, please feel free to extend your well wishes and thanks to her with a card, email, or phone call.



MUSIC NOTES: by Heather Schulz

Choir will be taking it’s recess over the summer. We will resume after Labor Day as usual. If you have any special music you may want to share, please let me know.



VBS NOTES: by Heather Schulz

Due to the current state of things, we will be postponing Vacation Bible School this summer.



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 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



From the Green Team:

Have you had some extra time to do spring cleaning during our “Shelter at Home” time?? These are some reminders about how to dispose of your recyclable items.

Tips and Reminders During and After COVID-19

Keep plastic bags, masks, wipes, and latex gloves out of the recycling bin.

If someone in your home has COVID-19, treat your recyclables as trash.

Don't put your recyclables in plastic bags.

Clean and shake dry recyclables to ensure products get recycled.

Break down cardboard boxes and put them in the recycling bin whenever possible.

Put recycling and trash in the appropriate bins, not next to them. Leaving materials next to bins increases risks to sanitation workers and can attract pests.

Do not put lithium, lithium-ion or spent lead-acid batteries (e.g., car batteries) in your trash or recycling bins. These batteries can contain hazardous materials and can contaminate groundwater or cause fires at recycling facilities. Batteries from electronics and cars can be recycled at Porter County Recycling and Compost Site at 2150 W. Lincolnway (Hwy 130 - 1 mile west of intersection with Joliet St.).

If you are spring cleaning, consider setting aside things (batteries, paints, weed killer, plastic bags, clothing, other donations, etc.) to donate, recycle, or dispose of later when it's safe to bring them to a drop off location or collection event. Follow local guidelines. Many localities are limiting service (e.g., not picking up yard waste or bulk items at this time).

The “spring” UMW rummage sale has been tentatively postponed until Aug. 6th and 7th).

Return grass clippings back onto your lawn instead of bagging them.

CHURCH SAFETY ARTICLE-COVID-19 MASKS

BY DAN MCCOY

Making a Homemade Mask As Effective as a Medical or N-95 Mask

Question:

How can I make a mask that is as good as a surgical mask or an N-95 mask?



Answer:

If made with the right household materials, you can create a mask that may be as effective as a medical mask or even an N-95 respirator, according to two preliminary studies.

The first study, from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, found that many household fabrics can be as effective as the material in surgical masks for blocking droplets the size of the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) coronavirus. The blocking efficiency of a commercial medical mask was found to be 96.3%, while the blocking efficiency of a used dish cloth (85% polyester and 15% nylon) was slightly better -- 97.9%. In addition, most household fabrics were more breathable than the material in a medical mask. The dish cloth, for example, was twice as breathable as the medical mask ([Aydin, medRxiv 2020 --preprint](#)). (See the [CDC website](#) to learn how to make a cloth face covering.)

The second study, by researchers at Northeastern University in Boston, found that pulling an 8 to 10-inch tube of nylon (cut from a queen-sized nylon stocking) down over a regular mask and to the top of the neck significantly prevented air leakage around the mask and improved particle filtration efficiency, making the combined masking nearly as effective as an N-95 respirator which, unlike a medical mask, has an electrostatic charge and is specifically designed to prevent air leakage ([Mueller, medRxiv 2020 --preprint](#); [Godoy, NPR.org 4/22/20](#)).

CHURCH SAFETY ARTICLE-COVID19 MASKS

BY DAN MCCOY PAGE 2

Cloth masks can be washed in a washing machine. They can be used alone or with a [face shield](#).

The CDC [advises](#) that face masks should not be placed on children under the age of two, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who would not be able to remove the mask without assistance.

Be aware that masks labeled as "KN-95" are *not* N-95 respirators and their *filtration* may not match that of N-95 masks. KN-95 masks may also not have a proper *fit* to prevent air leakage and typically have "ear loops" rather than the head bands used on N-95 respirators. The [CDC has published its own tests of many of KN-95 and related masks](#), by brand, showing filtration levels as low as 13.6% to over 99%; however air leakage was *not* tested, so a KN-95 mask filtering 99% may be inferior to an N-95 respirator that provides a proper fit even though its filtration efficiency need not be greater than 95%).

The CDC also publishes a [list of approved N-95 respirators](#), and the FDA has published a [list of authorized N-95 respirators](#) from China that have not gone through the CDC (NIOSH) approval process but were approved in China. Note that some products that had been on this list were [later removed](#) after being tested by the CDC (NIOSH).

United Methodist Men – June Newsletter

Greetings and best wishes to our brothers and friends in Christ. We are now entering our fourth month of this virus pandemic. The children, college students, and teachers are now free for the summer. But just as school, and so many other things, being free for the summer has a whole new meaning for us this year. This virus continues to bring hardship in many ways, but hardest hit are the lives that have been lost (approx. 91,000 here in the U.S. - as of this writing). With how this pandemic is affecting us all, we are so grateful to our church leaders: Pastor Michael, Pastor Tara, our new Office Administrator Kim, our Praise Team leader Heather Shultz, and many many un-named more who continue to lead us here on the home front through these uncertain and difficult times. We are so thankful for you and all you do every week to keep us informed, sending us uplifting worship services, and meeting the many ongoing needs of our church's operation. There are many others too. We thank you all for your commitment and dedication to serving God's church and shepherding His people.

Regarding our men's monthly meetings and supportive ministry's (ie: Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Prison Ministry, etc) – these continue to be postponed until this corona virus substantially declines and/or is no more. This means the following scheduled events are still canceled:

05/31/20 – Mother's Day and Father's Day combined breakfast

06/06/20 – Tates UMM breakfast meeting (last before summer)

July / August – Rail Cats baseball game sponsored by UMM (Most likely canceled)

The one activity our men's group has been doing is for the **Prison Ministry** - to send assigned letters to **prison offenders**; who more than ever are in appreciation of receiving encouraging and supportive correspondence from the outside. We just sent out (10) letters at the beginning of May. And our hope is to do this each month through out the summer. Thank you to our UMM men who send these heartfelt letters out.

Starting in September it is our prayerful hopes that this virus pandemic will have passed, and that we can start back up with our regular UMM men's activities. Tentatively some of these for September are:

09/12/20 - 1st Saturday morning fall UMM Meeting in fellowship hall @ 8:00AM.

September – Men's Bible Study – entitled “The Class Meeting”. This is an 8 week study which we are currently planing for a weekday night - approx. one hour/session. It is a United Methodist study by Kevin Watson and the meetings are somewhat based off our church founder John Wesley's small group meetings. Along with a brief history of our Methodist faith, much more will be shared in the study. Will continue to advertize for this and have a sign-up sheet placed on the connection center for. Please consider joining us.

Whether we think of; or speak
to, God, whether we act or suffer
for Him, all is prayer, when we
have no other object than His love
and the desire of pleasing Him

John Wesley

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

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Hello Church!

We can't begin to tell you how much we miss seeing you all. Please know that we are thinking about and praying for all of you during this time we cannot be together. We are also encouraged by all the love you are sharing with each other and our whole community during this pandemic (and always). Thanks for all you do!

We wanted give you a brief update.

- Annette and her devoted crew of community meal helpers have decided there will be no community meals this year. They (and all on our Missions and Outreach Team) hope they will be able to continue in 2021.
- The Portage 4th of July Parade has been cancelled, however, if you're brimming with ideas for a float, jot them down and file them for next year!
- Royal Family Kids Camp has been cancelled for this summer, but they will be holding a picnic for the kids at the end of July, where each child will receive a backpack with a birthday box inside, and a whole lot of love. Please pray for these kids, as they may well be facing a great deal of adversity during these times.

We are grateful for all the folks who joined in the church's parade to bring some joy and sunshine into people's lives! What a blessing you are!

We're excited to learn that Family Promise will likely be able to begin serving homeless families in just a few months! How exciting! Stay tuned the next couple months for more information!

There is place off Indian Boundary Road in Chesterton which rescues truckloads of vegetables which are a little too old to sell by the truckload, but which still have a great deal of produce which is good enough to eat. They sell it at an incredibly low price. If you would like directions to get these vegetables for your own use, or if you would be willing to purchase some produce periodically to add to the church's grocery cart for the food pantry, please contact Wendy Smith for more information.

The Porter County Community Foundation has established the "We Are Porter County Emergency Response Fund" to help our community meet the basic needs of the individuals and families most significantly affected by COVID-19. We are donating \$400 to this fund to help folks who are hurting in our local community.

That's it for now. Enjoy the summer and enjoy some time outside!!



PORTGAE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FINANCE UPDATE

April 2020	
Non Designated Giving	\$31,275.00
Operating Expenses	\$25,500.25
Debt Reduction Giving	\$3,732.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$2,080.92
Apportionment Paid	\$2,243.48

Year to Date 2020	
Non Designated Giving	\$102,110.97
Operating Expenses	\$103,999.12
Net Year To Date	(\$1,888.15)
Debt Reduction Giving	\$10,029.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$8,323.68
Net Debt Reduction	\$1,705.32
Overall Net Current & Debt	(\$182.83)
Apportionment Paid	\$7,501.35

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 conference and local churches. For United Methodist 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 give a fair share of the church's work. When we combine our prayers, presence, gifts and service to make a significant difference in the lives of God's people.

The Indiana Annual Conference ask 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 paid \$5,800 through the month of April 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 aid this effort, perhaps through a weekly 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 our church.

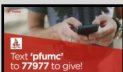
Happy June Anniversary to...



02	Ron & Karen Mauer	15	Doug & Teresa McKiddy
05	Ryan & Melissa Sullivan	22	Randy & Robin Wilkening
09	Greg & Tara Keehn	23	Richard & Sherry Pinarski
09	Chuck & Virginia Phillips	24	Robert & Joyce Shone
11	Andrew & Jenny Brown		
15	Kirk & Dawn Harbart	30	Bill & Amber Kramer

Happy June Birthday to...

01	Erin Davenport	07	Sandy Holzman	19	Keith Sharpe
01	Austin Shebel	07	Todd Warne	19	Amber Kramer
02	Nick Nickerson	07	Riley Syren	19	Marvis Schroeder
02	Debbie Rousselle	08	Zachery Sullivan	22	Todd Syren
02	Betty Smith	15	Patrick Cosello	25	Pat Hodgson
		15	Gabriel Harbart	27	Chuck Lorenz
03	Melinda Metz	17	Fran Berry	28	Matt Lopez
04	Jackie Green	17	Brandi Cosello		
04	Debbie Nelson	18	Jim Reeder	29	Jessica Karsten
05	Christy Cawthra	19	Bryan Dixon	29	Lily Regnier
05	Dee Nickerson			30	Carolyn Lenburg



*Here's 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.

