

## September Newsletter

First United Methodist Church  
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The Witness  
Issue IX  
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### From Pastor Michael...

#### Atari to Nintendo: Changing Systems

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for everyunder heaven..." - Ecclesiastes 3:1*

When I was a kid my brother and I shared an Atari 2600, the consummate video game system of the 1980's. It connected to our TV and with it we could play Space Invaders, Pac-Man, and my mother's favorite, Berzerk. The graphics were so simplistic to me now. They are basically animated cave drawings! However many an hour, many a party, and many an argument arose out of those old gaming cartridges.

After that, we upgraded to the Sega Master system that had a pair of 3D glasses. I remember playing "Missile Command 3D" where you tried to save West City and East City from nuclear calamity. You had to shoot the missiles before they reached the city. I looked at some pictures and videos of those games now and they seem so repetitive and dull. However many an hour was spend shooting missiles on those systems.

Now, I have a Nintendo Switch and on it I play a game called "The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild." This is part of a series of games I've been playing since the late 80's. These particular games tell an epic story of hero named Link who fights to rid his homeland of evil. The story over the years has grown and evolved. Link's unfolding story of is profoundly beautiful. As video games developed the Zelda franchise has moved from pixels and sprites to actual live action movies where you are the hero. At the center of the game are three basic virtues – Courage, Wisdom and Power. I can't wait to see where the adventure will lead me next.

However, this article is not so much about the games but the systems themselves. When you move from one gaming system to another it is incredibly frustrating trying to learn all the combinations and how it all works. In my case I can even get motion sick when I am learning a new game; I have to regularly stop in order to get used to the sensations. However, if I press though I'm rewarded with fun and new discoveries. Stories unfold, challenges are presented, and we have an adventure.

Here at Portage First, we are in a period of transition. Staffing changes, new Sunday School classes, new music, it's enough to make you motion sick. However, all this change and transition is also an invitation to adventure. We have so much to look forward to.

Will you plug in and join us on the grand adventure?

### Note from Pastor Tara...

School is now in full swing, and now so will our Christian Education/Sunday school! Sunday school is resuming September 8th for all young persons PreK-Senior High. We will be having separate classes for PreK-Kindergarten (Lorri Davenport and rotating volunteer), 1st & 2nd graders (Lil and Scott Falk), 3rd-5th graders (Rebecca and Tina Colby), 6th & 7th graders (Deb Massow and Greg Keehn), and 8th-12th graders (Pastors Tara, Michael, and new youth minister Zach Rudd on rotation). Youth group lead by Zach will also be starting September 8th.

Thank you to everyone who has helped make the photo directory a success! We've had a great response with people being photographed, turning in updated information, and assisting with checking people in as well as table set up and clean up. Thank you so much for making this a great event! If you are a shut-in and would like to submit a picture, please do so as soon as possible with a signed release form available at the connection center. Cost is \$10 for each submission, and you will receive an updated picture directory.

This month I will be back to taking 2 classes online from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (5 credit hours). I will be taking a Methodist History class and an Old Testament class. Wish me luck!

## Missions and Outreach Team ...

Mark your calendars! Our Church Picnic this year will be held 6:00–4:00 PM and will be blended with a special event at the farm to help people learn about Family Promise, a not-for-profit organization that will soon be providing help for homeless families. We're partnering with several other churches to make this happen, but we ask that you bring a dish to share. We'll have hot dogs and hamburgers, games for all ages, hayrides, tours of the Family Promise Resource Center (the farmhouse), City, and more!

During the month of September, we will be collecting canned vegetables for the Portage Township Food Pantry. Thank you, church, for reaching out to help those in need!

## Community Meal ...

September's Community Meal will be a bit different than normal. Annette McCarty and her team of wonderful cooks and kitchen helpers will be cooking up a buffet style dinner, but we (the Green Team) are asking that you bring a side dish made with fresh produce to share! Whether from your garden, a farmstand, or the market, fresh fruits and vegetables have remarkable health benefits for you and eating lower on the food chain is better for the planet! If you are able, please bring copies of your recipe to share with others! Join us for movie night starring Tom Hanks and Emma Thompson in Saving Mr. Banks. This is a story about the making of Mary Poppins. Hope to see you there!

## Boy Scout Troop 452 ...

We will be having a Breakfast Burrito fundraiser on Sunday, September 8 between services outside the main entrance. All money raised will be used for awards and upcoming camping events.

## Green Tip of the Month ...

Did you know that each person in the United States produces 4.4 pounds of trash each day? Unfortunately only 1.5 pounds that gets recycled. You purchase only things you really need, when you choose to avoid products with unnecessary packaging, when you reuse things, and when you recycle, you make a difference!

Plastic lids/caps, Oh my! What a month it has been for capturing plastic caps/lids from the members of Portage First and Augustana Lutheran Church. I just wanted you to know that your weekly donations to this program have seen significant. I am extending a great big thank you from Pines Village and the Porter Parks Department who are the grateful recipients of your efforts. Your continual donations make it possible for park benches to be molded from recycled plastics which would otherwise end up in a landfill. Please keep the lids/caps coming. There is a box in the fellowship hall for this type of collection.

Thank you, Connie Ellefson

## Endowment Committee Report ...

Portage First's Endowment Committee is excited to announce grants in the amount of \$12,960 were awarded for 2019. The 2019 recipients include:

- Portage First UMC for audio/visual media equipment for the worship service (\$10,600)
- UMM Scouts for needs-based membership scholarships for local cub and boy scouts (\$1,000)
- Family Promise for the purchase of computer equipment for their resource center (\$1,360)

The Goal of the Endowment Fund is to assist our church in fulfilling its purposes in Christian Ministry, Mission, and Outreach. Grant funding per our charter is intended for purposes that are not a part of the local Churches' established programs, which are funded, or should be funded, through the annual operating budget of the church and the regular giving of those attending. This fall we will place information on the connection center that will detail the 2020 grant process. We encourage everyone to start thinking of ways that our current ministries can be expanded.

Anyone interested in finding out on how you can contribute to the Endowment Fund may contact any member of the Endowment Committee.

Steve Davenport, Endowment Chair

## Music Notes ...

Regular choir practice begins Thursday, September 5 from 6:00-6:45 PM. We are always looking for new members. Come check out the fun we have and sing praises to the Lord! This year's cantata will actually be at the end of November so we will begin practice for the cantata this week as well. If you would like to sing in the cantata, please join us for practice either Thursday nights 6:45-7:30 PM and/or Sundays 3:00-4:00 PM.

### **Items Needed for Redbird Mission Trip ...**

Below is a list of items needed for the upcoming mission trip. If you are able to help, please have the items at the church by September 8. The team will be leaving September 15.you!

- Masking Tape • Diapers • Paper Towels • Children Chewable Vitamins
- Hand Sanitizer • Kleenex • Baby Wipes • Black & Red Sharpie Markers
- 55 gal. Trash Bags • Spray Bottles • Toilet Paper

### **First Friday Fellowship ...**

Join us on Friday, September 6 at 5:00 PM at Martini's Steak & Seafood, 1004 Calumet Avenue, Valparaiso. You must be 21 or older to attend this month.. Please RSVP to Sandra Robinson at (219) 764-8433 no later than Thursday, September 5.

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

Next meeting will be on Friday, September 6 at 9:30 AM. Summer break is over! Haven't attended one of our meetings before? ALL women of ALL ages are welcome!! Start the fall season by joining us for a morning of fellowship, conversation and breakfast snacks. Our speaker, this month, will be Carol Hoffman-McCoin from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Learn what services and programs they provide for mothers and children. Hope to see you there!

Operation Christmas Child ...

It will soon be time for our second (2<sup>nd</sup>) annual "stuff the Box' party for Operation Christmas Child. During the year the missions committee has been collecting medicine bottles and shoe boxes and repurposing them for this ministry. Thank you to those of you who have already contributed boxes, medicine bottles and child appropriate items for this project. We are still welcoming items such as underwear, socks, toys, craft kits, personal hygiene items and school supplies that would fit in a box. We are so grateful for a recent donation of more than 300 spiral notebooks which now completes the last basic item we strive to include in the box. We have successfully collected enough pencils/pens, wash cloths & bars of soap and toothbrushes to round out the five basic items needed. A Christmas box can be found in the Narthex for your donations. Thank you Portage First for continually striving to make a difference in the lives of children around the world.

### **Family Promise of Porter County Fall Funfest ...**

Mark your calendars and join in for an old fashioned picnic on October 6 from 1-4 PM at Crossroads, 2715 McCool Rd, Portage (the property next to our church). We will have hot dogs, hamburgers, games for all ages, hayrides, and more! There will be a free will offering to benefit Family Promise.

If you have any questions or are wanting to get more involved in Family Promise, please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Jennings at (219) 781-1924 or ajennings21@hotmail.com.

### **Rummage Sale ...**

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

Set-up dates:

- Sunday, September 15th – Table setup, bring in all the goodies from the shed.
- Monday, September 16th thru Wednesday, September 18th - empty boxes, pricing, sorting, move over large items from the barns, etc. And, TWEAK, TWEAK, TWEAK!

Sale dates:

- Thursday, September 19th (9a-6p)
- Friday, September 20th (9a-2p "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!

## **United Methodist Men...**

Greetings to all in the name of Christ our Lord and Savior. Hoping this finds everyone doing well in the Lord. If your summer has been anything like mine then you have probably been very busy. Summers are not meant to be a time to escape church and all the things that God's church is meant to be about. We should make going to church with our family on Sundays a weekly priority (even when we are away from home). BUT, summers are important to regroup with our families and acquaintances, and to maybe cut back on some of the church meetings and activities so that we can spend important time in rebuilding our family ties and relationships. I hope this has been a great summer for you and that you have been able to do just that, spending that extra time with your family doing some wonderful things, building forever memories, and strengthening those much needed family ties. You know this is all biblical and straight out of the bible that we do give our very best to our Lord and family, and make them 1<sup>st</sup> all our efforts. I know it has been a beautiful summer for our family and God has so... richly blessed us to this end. Wanting to welcome back all our United Methodist Men to our 1<sup>st</sup> meeting – Saturday, September 7th. Mr. Steve Massow has offered to supply us breakfast that morning and I'm sure between him and Mrs. Massow we will all be well fed and nutritionalized. And continuing with our further required spiritual feeding - our new bible study series "A Road to Discipleship" is lead by Ed Piontek. We will be on lesson #4 - "Disciples Don't Have All The Answers" studying from the book of Exodus Chapter 18. Please come join us for some good Christian men's fellowship, breakfast, and studying God's word as we continue to discern God's will in our life, our church, and the world. Following our breakfast and bible study we will have a short business meeting. We need your input and support for carrying out the work of God's church here at Portage 1<sup>st</sup> through our men's ministry.

### **UMM Saturday Morning 8:00 AM**

#### **Breakfast Meeting Schedule**

- September 7
- October 5
- November 2
- December 7
- January 4
- February 1
- March 7
- April 4
- May 2
- June 6 (breakfast at Tate's Restaurant)
- BREAK FOR SUMMER

In His Service, Mike Matthew

## **Coffee Talk ...**

On Sunday mornings at 10:15-11:00 AM, a group of adult studies is beginning its fall study with Methodism and Politics in the Twentieth Century by Mark Tooley ©2011. Covering the history of the Methodist influence on social issues from President McKinley, a Methodist, to the 9/11 attacks, the study is about the mainline denomination positions and voices for the social issues of modern history.

"This book is not about United Methodism's theological conflicts nor about its internal policies." It is a history of facts allowing the readers to draw their own conclusions. The group is anxious to begin this study. If you are a

student of history, want to learn more about where our church stood on social issues ranging from child labor to temperance to minimum wage and women's suffrage, then this may be for you.

So grab a cup of coffee or favorite beverage and join us in Room 1 each Sunday morning between the services. Not to worry if you miss once in a while, join us for lively discussion and a better understanding of John Wesley's mission for our church. Give voice to those too timid to speak for themselves.

## Trustees' Corner ...

Here are a few of the activities our trustees have been addressing during the month of August. IT'S A BOY! PLEASE WELCOME LANIER IMC3500. We are so excited about this new addition. In about 2 weeks Advanced Imaging Solutions will be delivering a new multi-functional copier/printer. This transaction was the result of a soon to expire 5-year lease we had on our current copier. With the help and knowledge from our administrative assistant, Betty, the trustees were able to secure a new copier/printer with some great features such as stapling, folding, and even making 3-whole punches. Please feel free to stop by and check it out.

In addition, with the help of several volunteers, we were able to move picnic tables & park benches from the red barn into the machinery barn. This has freed up additional needed storage space for the rummage folks. We are currently looking for a wood splitter and someone to operate it so we can split a huge pile of wood located in the machinery barn. If you know of someone that can assist in this task, please contact the trustees. Along with the wood pile, we need help in closing up the west wall of the barn. With the wind blowing through this opening in the building, it has caused the metal roofing sheets to be blown off. Any help would be appreciated.

Some attention was directed to cleaning and organizing the church attic. This is definitely a work in process. There are a few "water" issues being addressed in the church building. So, if you see ceiling tiles missing or see where furniture or fixtures have been temporarily moved, please do not disturb. The fall season is fast approaching, so the trustees need to address weather sensitive repair work at this time. There will also be some smaller painting jobs that will be finished during September.

We are working on an updated policy for borrowing tables and/or chairs. This information will be shared as soon as it is completed. The tables and chairs currently housed within the church building will no longer be available off site for personal use and only tables and/or chairs stored in the silver barn can be used.

Recently the trustees received a suggestion that we provide step stools in the bathrooms to assist our children in reaching the sinks and faucets safely. It was a great suggestion so expect to see step stools in the near future.

A recent review of our gas and electric bill for our church was done as the monthly budget amount has increased. There are several variables that have contributed to this increase, but we also ask our church members to more mindful to turn off lights when not in use and to avoid actions such as leaving exterior doors open that waste energy. Every little bit helps.

The trustees would also like to ask that those who desire to carry a liquid beverage into the sanctuary to please put a lid on it. Unfortunately, accidents happen but most of the spills that happen could be avoided had there been a proper lid on the cup or bottle. As a result, the church incurs labor and cleaning costs to rid the carpeting of spill and stains. So, if it isn't water, please secure a lid before entering the sanctuary.

As always, if you see a matter, big or small, that needs attention, please do not hesitate to fill out a form found in the trustees' box in the Narthex.

From the Finance Committee...

### PORTAGE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FINANCE UPDATE

July 2019

Non Designated Giving	\$26,400.65
Operating Expenses	\$28,414.40
Debt Reduction Giving	\$2,339.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$2,080.92
Apportionment Paid	\$3,384.02

YEAR TO DATE 2019

Non Designated Giving	\$196,281.15
Operating Expenses	\$195,536.85

Net Year To Date	\$744.30
Debt Reduction Giving	\$16,656.00
Debt Reduction Expense	\$14,566.44
Net Debt Reduction	\$2,089.56
Overall Net Current & Debt	\$2,833.86
Apportionment Paid	\$23,199.48

What '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 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.

Missions and Outreach Committee ...

Community Meal — Come join us for an evening of food and music. Matt Chelich will be providing us with this evening's entertainment. Dinner will be announced at a later date. Hope to see you there!

From the Staff / Parish Committee (SPRC) ...

The SPRC and Pastor Michael are realigning our staff positions here at Portage First. There are two positions to be combined: the second service worship leader and the director of youth ministry. After numerous applications were reviewed and interviews given, we are pleased to announce that we have hired Zachary Rudd.

Zach will begin his ministry at Portage First on August 11, 2019. He is a graduate of Portage High School and Olivet Nazarene University where he studied Youth Ministry and Music Ministry. His prior employment was with Real Life Community Church, where he has served as a worship leader and a youth mentor.

As a result of hiring Zach, a change in staff here at Portage First was necessary. It is important to stay within our budget and be good stewards with what God entrusts to us. Therefore, difficult decisions have to be made. It grieves us to announce that Kate Blakely will be ending her employment effective July 31, 2019.

For many years, Kate has served our church with faithfulness and dedication. She was a faithful volunteer prior to her employment with us in October of 2016. We are truly thankful for her ministry. We ask that you show Portage First love to Kate and make her final weeks as an employee some of the very best for her! Now is the time to express our appreciation to Kate as she prepares herself for new opportunities. We can show our love and appreciation with a "Love Offering" that will be displayed near the Connection Center on Sundays beginning June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Please pray for Kate and Zach during this period of transition. Also, please pray for our church leadership and committees that rely on God for discernment and guidance.

May God bless Kate, Zach, and each of you going forward – Opening Hearts, Opening Minds, and Opening Doors.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Massow (SPRC Chair)

Green Team Tip ...

Did you know you cannot put soft plastic bags in your recycle bin? Most recycling facilities are set up to handle rigid materials, so soft plastics cannot go through their machine process. So, are plastic bags still recyclable? Why, I'm glad you asked, YES! Plastic bags are very much recyclable! But what can we do reduce plastic bag waste? Well, reusable bags are a great option! So are paper bags. Great ways to reduce plastic pollution with grocery bags. But realistically, people accumulate plastic grocery bags. How can we recycle these bags if they can't go in my recycle bin? Many local stores have places to take bags. Here in Portage, Meijer, Walmart, Strack & Van Til, and Kohl's all

practice bag recycling! That's great news. And you know what? Your residential GREEN TEAM can help too! We are going to accept these bags at Portage 1<sup>st</sup> UMC. That is very convenient! Thank you for wanting to find ways to respect all of God's creation!

First Friday Fellowship

FRIDAY, JULY 5, 2019 • 5:00 PM

LAKE PARK RESTAURANT • 7 E. OLD RIDGE ROAD • HOBART

Please RSVP to: Sandra Robinson at (219) 764-8433 no later than Thursday, July 4.

Volunteers needed for VBS

We are looking for volunteers! Please sign up at the Connection Center if you can help. We're also seeking donations of camping themed decorations if you see or have any. They can be placed in the tub labeled "VBS Donations" in classroom 8.

VBS—CAMPING WITH CHRIST

JULY 14-18

6-8 PM

OPEN TO K-5TH

REGISTRATION FORMS AVAILABLE AT THE CONNECTION CENTER OR REGISTER ONLINE AT PORTAGEUMC.ORG

Please consider supporting our own

Cub Scout Pack 487 Fundraiser

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3

1:00-4:00 PM

CHURCH PARKING LOT

FREE WILL DONATION

Cub Scout Pack 487 is accepting new scouts K-5th grade anytime this summer and fall.meet every Tuesday from 6:30 to 7:30 PM here at the church.We start back in the fall beginning August 20th.you know Anyone interested starting this summer, please contact Chris and Kim Adkins at (219) 763-1301.

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.

Connection Center and Greeters Sign-Up...

If you are looking for a way to serve and have some time before services on Sunday, consider serving as a greeter or helping out at the Connection Center. It is a great opportunity to meet new people and see those you already know! Sign up on the schedule at the Connection Center!

Happy September Birthday to...

01	Debbie Shebesh	12	Gia Jordan	21	Emma Davidhizar
03	Henry Brown	12	James Smith	23	Shirley Ortiz
04	Helen Golding	12	Vicky Wright	23	Nathan Welch
04	Jake Liesch	13	Art Kurth	24	Amanda Liesch

05	Simeon Bright	15	Bob Dixon	24	Ed Piontek
05	Martha Yerby	15	Kim Adkins	25	Gloria Nystrom
06	Janet Sharpe	16	Mike King	26	Sherry Joyce
06	Shelly Kelley	17	Myra Dixon	27	James Jordan
09	Ross Falk	17	Sidney Miller	27	Bill Robinson
10	Bev Reeder	18	Skyler Cawthra	27	Leah Burns
11	Pat Jackson	21	Tatiana Colby	29	Mary Linoski
11	John Peterson	21	Chuck Coppess		

Happy September Anniversary to...

06	Mike & Kathy Matthew	20	John & Danah Peterson
12	Bill & Lynn Liesch	21	Jason & Erica Bush
15	James & Betty Smith	26	Ryan & Amy Kegely
17	Ed & Laura Piontek		