

MAY 2021

GRACE NOTES

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highlights

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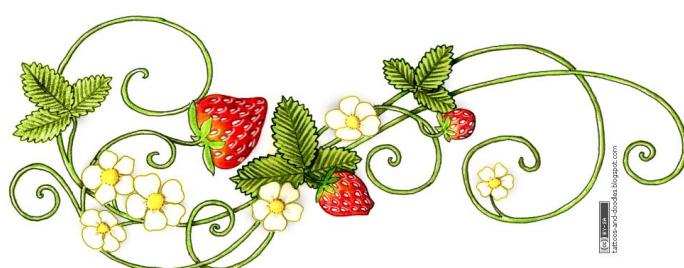
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I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:5-8



PASTOR'S CORNER

Thoughts, dreams and ramblings of someone who just wants to connect you to Jesus



Most of the time when I sit down to write for the newsletter, I try to find some uplifting item of our local church or inspiration for what we are about to do. This month I want to take some space to give everyone an update on where we are in the denomination.

For those who are keeping track, we have seen our denomination struggle with issues around human sexuality, ordination, and the structure of how we are the church together in a world-wide denomination. This is not a new struggle; you can find evidence of it from the late 1970's. In 2019 the General Conference (the denomination's governing body for the global connection) gathered and following that the relationships between what is considered a conservative caucus and the centrist/progressive caucus fell apart even further. Since then, there has been a major push for a denominational split around ideologies and theologies.

The conservative group had been organized as a group under the common banner of the WCA (Wesleyan Covenant Association), and they are now organizing as a formal denomination with the title of the Global Methodist Church. They have done the background work of setting up their own legal bodies, governance rules and foundational governing body. They are holding out for a proposal on separation called the Protocol for Reconciliation and grace through separation. This legislation would offer clergy and churches a means for leaving the denomination with relative ease. It would allow for them to pay out the pension liability, 2-3 years of apportionments, and the global body is seeking \$25 million in UMC assets for their departure. The group here also hopes to maintain language where an Annual Conference could leave the denomination with a 57% majority vote of the Annual Conference, forcing those who wish to stay with the UMC to then disaffiliate and pay out of the Annual Conference to re-join the UMC.

On the very far end of the progressive group is a small body who wish to form what they are calling the Liberationist Methodist Church. This group is more loosely connected and is also seeking an easier way for clergy and churches to disaffiliate. If the Protocol were to pass, this body could receive up to \$3 million in starting funds.

There is a group of Centrists who are joined by conservatives and progressives who still see value in the greater United Methodist Church and our ability to be in relationship with one another despite our differences. This group (whom I affiliate with) seeks to do organizational change to the UMC that would modernize its practices for the 21st century. It seeks to extend the ability for clergy and churches to act within their own conscience on issues of marriage by allowing churches and clergy to marry LGBTQ persons but not mandating that they do this; it is the same policy we have now for heterosexual marriage. This group desires to keep as much of the global church combined as possible but to also allow for regional autonomy so that issues that impact Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas that are unique or structurally different can be better managed. They propose this regional governance model while maintaining the support and growth that we experience as a global church.

These groups were to meet in 2020 but COVID-19 postponed that meeting. There was to be a May 8th, 2021, meeting for dealing with some of the legal requirements around retirement and our Bishops, and that meeting was deemed impossible to facilitate fairly across the globe, even with the use of multiple technologies. Today we anticipate a 2022 General Conference and 2022 Jurisdictional Conferences in the United States. These meetings seek to continue the conversations that are needed to guide the church through these times. As your pastor, who is also one of the 850+ delegates to our global gathering, I want you to know this and that I continue to work weekly with others on the visioning process that will guide our church into a season of resurrection and vitality into the 21st century and beyond. Please keep praying for all of us and for the people called United Methodists.

Peace + Grace,
Rev. Eric N. Swanson

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies
Director of Children & Family Ministry

We started off April with a glow-in-the-dark Easter egg hunt, and we had perfect weather! There were seven kids aged nursery to Pre-K and more than I could count for K-5th grade! Some families even attended that had never been to Grace UMC before. Jesus brought us together, and I pray that our reach continues to grow throughout 2021.



UNITEkids spent two weeks illustrating and then digging deeper into Holy Week.

Below, Lucas, Karl, and Amelia's group drew pictures of Palm Sunday, while Maisy and Kira read aloud from the Bible.





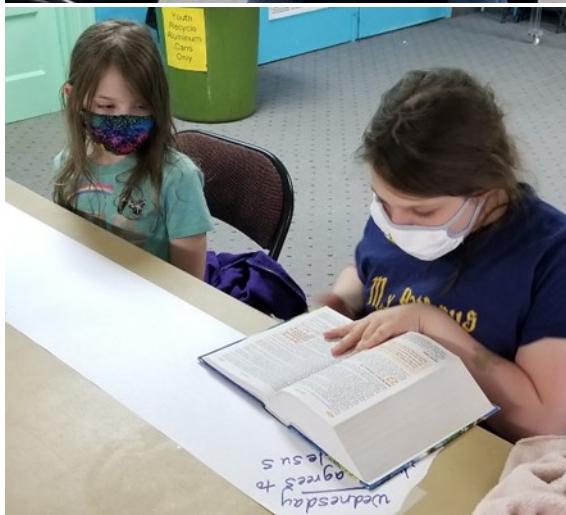
Mallory, Maegen, Amelia, and Alex checked out some of the dried palm leaves from Palm Sunday service while we talked about Holy Week. The 4th and 5th grade girls answered questions about Holy Week as we looked deeper at the pictures.



Miss Halle helped a group read about Jesus clearing the temple and teaching. Then, Alecia, Abbi, Parker, and Lainey drew the pictures.



Hayden, Hadley, and Owen had the big task of illustrating Good Friday and Holy Saturday.



Sisters Evie and Meara read about Judas agreeing to betray Jesus, while friends Elli, Maisy, and Mara drew out The Last Supper.

The next week, the entire project was put together so everyone could “journey” through Holy Week, and we could all learn from one another’s drawings.



UNITEkids has continued to grow in their faith lives and in their friendships with each other. I'd like to give a praise report that four children have asked for and received Bibles in the last month: two children at Pekin First and two children at Grace UMC. Our group of 5th graders is especially growing, mostly due to UNITEkids inviting friends along and due to the increased participation of neighbors. These kids are wonderful at including new friends and being helpful to one other – it is a great atmosphere for children new to church.

Please invite the kids in your lives! Wednesday nights 5:30-6:30 in the gym at Grace UMC for K-5th graders. The nursery is open with 3-5 kids attending there as well on Wednesday nights! Miss Jayme, from the nursery at Pekin First, is skilled at helping new “UNITElittles” get comfortable and enjoy the Grace UMC nursery.

GUMC Pantry/Café Quarterly Report—March 31, 2021

During January, February, and March, we distributed food during our monthly Pantry and Café times plus three extra giveaways. From these nine food giveaways, 430 families were given food which totaled 1,129 people being served! Yes, many of these families are regular clients, and they continue to receive more food each time they participate. Many times, we have new clients as well, often as a result of “by word of mouth” from others.

Throughout the pandemic, we have had Drive - Through giveaways, and “Grace Café” has turned into another food giveaway since we could not have the clients in the building and could not cook food during these times. For the past year, Midwest Food Bank has offered extra food distributions during the month besides our assigned Pantry day there.

Throughout the pandemic, we have also received many USDA produce/protein food boxes full of milk, yogurt, cheeses, variety of meats, fresh fruits and vegetables. In the past three months, we have received over 400 boxes! Along with these boxes, this food bank blesses us with more food each time we go there. “Abundance from God” just keeps growing by tons (sometimes literally!) during these tough times to help His people in need.

Our church is also blessed with a phenomenal team of Pantry workers and drivers who are always there to work hard and bless those who come to our distribution with kindness and care. When we had extra giveaways, they all stepped up to give their time to get out as much food as we could. We also have four dedicated volunteers who make over 85 phone numbers to clients when we want to remind them of our regular times or let them know about extra giveaways. As always, our Pastor, secretaries and custodian continually help us in many ways.

Last week, we delivered some USDA boxes to the Pekin Housing area. A mom of three children was asked if she needed food. She then explained that she did not receive her payment this month and had little food. As she carried her two boxes into her home, she yelled aloud for all to hear, “Praise Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!” Amen, indeed... God is Good All the Time.

Gloria Ranney

Kindred Spirits Book Sharing

New books on the shelf at Grace:

Never Say Never by Lisa Wingate

The Girl from the Train by Irma Joubert

The Summer Cottage by Viola Shipman

The Secret of Us by Roxanne Henke

Where Hope Begins by Catherine West

The Memory of Us by Catherine West

The Things We Knew by Catherine West

Confirmation will be celebrated at both services on Sunday, May 23.

Just wanted to thank you for all the literature you send me regarding the church and the Easter cards from the staff and the Grace UMW. It means a lot to me! Doing better and hope to start back on Saturday nights soon. Thanks again and God bless each and every one of you.

*Sincerely,
Pat McMullin*

The **Hospitality Team** is seeking greeters and ushers willing to help at the Traditional Service at 11:00 AM. Please call the office if you can help.

Pastor Eric has designated Monday, May 17, as **Staff Planning Day**. We will assess our new normal as we move forward and plan for our future at Grace. If you have any ideas or concerns to share, please speak to one of our staff members in advance of the meeting.

Grace UMC College Scholarships

Applications for Grace United Methodist Scholarships are available online or can be picked up in the church office. Deadline for the application to be returned to the church office is May 15, 2021. No late submissions will be accepted.

Altar flowers for May

May 2: In loving memory of Larry Stone; given by Willowdean Stone and Julie Espe



May 9: In loving memory of Jeffrey Stoner; given by Marshall and June Stoner

May 16: In celebration of Ryan and all those graduating this year; given by Tim and Amy Trantham

May 23: In celebration of Kendall's 13th birthday; given by Brian, Jill and Zachary Garman



Please consider letting the office staff know if you have received your COVID vaccination. We will never require anyone to tell us, but knowing that information can help us safely expand the reach our church can offer for onsite worship. For example, if our worship service is limited to 50 people, we can expand to 70 if we know 20 of the original 50 have been vaccinated.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

NAME	DATE	NAME	DATE
Kat Doering	1	Sydney Hinrichsen	17
Anna Booher	1	Roy Johnson	17
Dianna Miller	3	Dawn Turnbow	18
Kendra McDaniels	4	Harriet Canopy	19
Kyle Nelson	4	Chase Ranney	19
Joan Heiser	5	Michael Ripper	20
Lucy Whitman	5	Evan Pearson	20
Tom Dault	6	Jan Darnell	22
Marti Smith	6	John-David Cohoon	22
Joe Hunt	7	Vickey Farson	22
Kristen Hunt	8	Hailey Bucklin	23
Dale Hicks	8	Heather Harrison	23
Emmanuel Hunter	9	Neil Viviano	23
Marge Monroe	9	Kendall Garman	24
Devin Burks	10	Lucas Holly	25
Gene Wyman	10	Shirley Moore	25
Hailey Rodcay	10	Kelen McDaniels	27
Alexandra Betzelberger	12	Dustin Scott	27
Sharon Lohnes	12	Haylynn Scott	28
Tyler Miller	13	Miley Volz	28
Jill Garman	13	Sam McClain	29
Krue Scoles	14	Willowdean Stone	29
Mike Schaefer	14	Joe Stoner	29
Nick Hill	15	Seth Ranney	29
Cari Ranney	15	Andrew Hannan	31
Neal Johnson	16		

Connect!

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Worship Times
Saturdays 5:30p
Sundays 9:00a & 11:00a



Prayer Concerns

Norma Bell

Lois Eertmoed

Jane Evans

Tony Fulk, son-in-law of Kathy and Rick Manz

Jack and Margarete Hall

Barb and Duane Hill

Joyce Hill

Wes Icenogle

Rev. Tom & Sharon Neufer-Emswiler

Lee Oltmann

Gloria Ranney

Brittany Sharp

Jo Trombini

Marie Zaayenga

Kendra for healing

Anonymous concern about medical testing



Thursday, May 13
Drive-through Food Pantry at 4:00 PM

Saturday, May 15
Deadline for Grace UMC Scholarship Applications

Sunday, May 16
Church Committees at 1:00 PM
Church Council will follow at 2:30 PM

Saturday, May 29
Drive-through Food Giveaway, 11:00AM—Noon

