



Weekly Messenger

APRIL 3, 2020

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A WORD FROM THE PASTOR: HEADING INTO HOLY WEEK

This coming Sunday is Palm Sunday, and I ask myself how we could be growing so close to Holy Week? I think the rhythm of church life is off for me. Not being able to see folks on Sunday mornings, not being able to share a greeting, or a fist bump somehow throws off my sense of the procession of time. Perhaps you are feeling something similar. If I'm alone in this, humor me.

We have special plans for how we will observe Holy Week this year. On Maundy Thursday, you will want to find our posted video. We will share a video of the "Living Last Supper" from a few years ago. I know this production has always blessed and challenged me, and I hope you find it a blessing, as well.

We are planning something special for Good Friday, as well. Look for more information in next week's midweek Messenger.

Your church is still strong! We are meeting more needs through our food pantry than usual. In March alone, we served more than double the number of families we typically serve. The first two days of April, we are caring for almost as many families as we usually would in a month.

Your church is still strong! In a modified fashion, we are preparing to "host" our week of MCREST. We won't be able to host the MCREST guests here at the church this year, but we are still going to do all we can. In a modified way, we will provide meals for the guests. Because we are all needing to stay home as much as possible, we won't be asking folks to purchase food items; instead, we are asking for monetary donations to cover the food. Also, since the guests are staying at a motel, we are asking for donations of money to help defray the cost of housing. Please give generously, and witness to our faith, and how Christ calls us to live it out.

Your church is strong! The Easter letter went out earlier this week. This appeal and the Christmas letter appeal is how we fund much of the mission work our church does. Those we have pledged to support don't have some other source of funding, so please give generously, and witness to your faith, and how Christ calls us to live it out.

Finally, I am grateful for the thirteen folks who are calling our church members once a week. Please allow them to pray with you, share with them a concern you want me to be made aware of, or let them know if you are unable to watch our online worship services. Perhaps we can figure out a way to get you more connected.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Don

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Sterling Heights, MI
(586) 731-7667
www.UticaUMC.org

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Taxpayers, Tax Preparers Be Ready for Stimulus Scams

From Michigan Department of Treasury (released March 31, 2020)

Michigan's taxpayers and tax preparers should be extra vigilant for federal stimulus scams, according to the Michigan Department of Treasury.

With many taxpayers receiving federal stimulus checks directly deposited into their banking accounts, scammers are boosting their phishing attempts and phone scams to obtain personally identifiable information. In the latest round of reports, scammers are targeting taxpayers and tax preparers in an attempt to change direct deposit information so they can intercept federal checks.

"Taxpayers and tax preparers must be vigilant for direct deposit scams," State Treasurer Rachael Eubanks said. "It's bad enough when a single taxpayer is targeted. When tax preparers are also targeted, the personal information of many individual taxpayers could be disclosed all at once. Please be extra vigilant for scams during this unprecedented time."

In reported cases, scammers are asking taxpayers or tax preparers to verify banking information through a phone call or are asking individuals to click on a link that goes to a fake website, where an unsuspecting victim submits personally identifiable information to a criminal.

Taxpayers or tax preparers can report attempted phishing attempts to the Internal Revenue Service at phishing@irs.gov.

As a part of the federal stimulus package, the federal government is directly depositing stimulus checks to many taxpayers based on 2018 and 2019 tax year information from the IRS.

The Michigan Department of Treasury does not administer the federal stimulus program or have information regarding federal stimulus checks. Questions about the federal stimulus program should be directed to the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.

For more information about identify theft, go to www.michigan.gov/identitytheft. To learn more about Michigan's tax system, follow the Michigan Department of Treasury on Twitter at [@MITreasury](https://twitter.com/MITreasury).

Press Contacts: Danelle Gittus or Ron Leix, Treasury Public Information Officers, at 517-335-2167



Due to the current circumstances, our church will not be able to host MCREST this year in order to keep every safe. However, **the Utica UMC MCREST Team will still be providing meals** to the guests through the MCREST office. The team will do the shopping, prepping, and anything else that can be done.

The MCREST team is asking for monetary donations and/or gift cards from Meijer or Kroger.

You can give your donation via our E-Giving page on our website:
www.uticaumc.org/e-giving

Any extra money will be donated to the program to help with hotel costs where the guests are staying.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

Fund Dropdown optional

FUND

Just make sure to select the MCREST option from the fund dropdown.

AMOUNT

\$

MAKE THIS GIFT RECURRING

SUBMIT!

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

GRACE'S DEVOTIONAL:

"JUDAS"

I have always been fascinated by the story of Judas Iscariot. It is said that he was preordained to betray Jesus, but if that is true, then could he help himself? Not much is written about Judas before his betrayal of Jesus. We know that he controlled the money the disciples had and that he was interested in the poor, but was he truly? In John 12:6, John states that he [Judas] stole from the purse for himself. His act of betrayal was unfathomable to many of us. To some of us, it is "there but for the grace of God go I". Do we see ourselves in his act, in his life, his death, or in his weakness? Was Judas angry or was he manipulative? We will never know.. But we do see and read in the scriptures of the anger of the disciples. In both Matthew and Mark at the anointing



of Jesus with nard, an expensive perfume, until Jesus spoke up and defended the act. Judas is then seen as going to make a deal with the Chief Priests. Was Judas angry or was he hoping to manipulate Jesus into the action he desired -perhaps overthrowing the Roman rule? Perhaps 30 pieces of silver was just too tempting to one who loved money. Judas regretted his actions and after the crucifixion he hung himself. He regretted, but he did not repent. He was filled with remorse, but still did not seek forgiveness -at least not in what is written about him. Was he used or a user? How many times are we sorry for what we do, but do not seek forgiveness? Sometimes it is because we don't feel worthy... But by Christ's words and actions, all are worthy of forgiveness and salvation. It is only when we accept this gift that we are set free from our sins. When we accept that Christ died for each of us, saint and sinner alike, then we know the magnitude of his love. Christ's love was so great that he would have forgiven even Judas.

Matthew 26:14 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So, they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Lord be with us in this holy season. Our world is in turmoil, our hearts are hurting, our senses are reeling. We are beset by disease and greed. Help us to find our sanctuary in your love. It is our constant, our anchor, our hope and salvation. Be with those who are working to help, our medical personnel including assistants, doctors, nurses and those behind the desk and first responders, the pastors and priests and those who comfort those who are fearful and those who are ill and those who grieve. Be with those who mourn as they lose loved ones, be with those who are frightened may they find strength in you, be with those who feel alone may they feel your presence with them. Be with our Pastor and his family, bless his ministry as he seeks new ways to serve his church, be with us as we reach out and become the church. Be with those who have needs we can fill; may we seek them and find them. Be with our staff and leaders, bless them and guide them. It is in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Senior To Go Meals

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Macomb County Dining Senior Style lunch sites have closed. Until they reopen, the Office of Senior Services is opening **two** meal pick up sites.

Meals will be available:
10:00 am—12:00 pm
Monday — Friday

There are a limited number of meals available each day.

To qualify, you must be:

- 60 years or older
- Macomb County resident
- Show photo ID

***Limit one meal
per person***



Macomb
Community
Action

Brown
Bag
Lunch



Distribution Locations

Stillwell Manor (Parking Lot)

Starting Tuesday, March 31, 2020

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

26600 Burg Rd, Warren 48089

(Located off the 11 Mile Rd, near Hoover)

Mount Clemens Farmer's Market

Starting Wednesday, April 1, 2020

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

141 North River Rd, Mt. Clemens 48043

(located between the YMCA & the Gibraltar Trade Center)

**For more information, contact
the Office of Senior Services
at 586-469-5228 or
mcaseniors@macombgov.org**

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Ministry Team:

Reverend Don Gotham
srpastor@uticaumc.org

Contemporary Worship Leader

Christopher Heldt
chris.heldt@uticaumc.org

Music Ministry

David Fox, Organist, Bell, &
Chancel Choirs Director
FoxDavidL@sbcglobal.net

Communications Director

Beth Miller
bmiller@uticaumc.org

Secretary/Bookkeeper

Charlotte Ramsey
charlotte@uticaumc.org

Youth Leader

Suzy Palmer
suzy.palmer@uticaumc.org

Child Care

Caitlyn Wilson

Custodian

Rachelle Heldt

Sunday Worship Times:

Our Sunday Worship
will be available in video
form on our website and
Facebook page on
Sunday morning.



Our Mission:

To make disciples of Jesus Christ for
the transformation of the world.

Our Vision:

To reach and nurture our community
with the love of Christ.

Office Hours:

Please call before coming in
to the office.

Phone: (586)731-7667

Our food pantry is still available
by appointment only.

Like us on Facebook!

Utica United
Methodist Church
8650 Canal Road,
Sterling Heights, MI
(586) 731-7667
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Classes/Studies

While all activities
and gatherings are
on pause, please
stay in touch by
following our
Facebook page,
checking our website
(www.uticaumc.org),
and following the
Weekly Messenger.

If you are not signed
up for the Weekly
Messenger email,
you can do so on our
website by clicking
the "More" tab and
going to "Weekly
Messenger".

In addition, we have
set up an account
with Webex for
groups to meet via
telephone and video
calls. We will
continue to do our
best to keep
everyone connected
during our time apart.



You can donate online with
a one time gift or set up
automatic donations!

Visit our website to give
now!

www.uticaumc.org/e-giving

If you need assistance, feel
free to call the office!

Deadline Information:

Items for The Weekly Messenger,
The Weekly Prayer List, or
Announcements must be submitted
by the **Sunday prior to posting**.
Submit to bmiller@uticaumc.org,
contact the office, or complete a
form in the office.