

Weekly Messenger

December 18, 2020

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"Christmas Cards and Christmas Letters"

If you are like me, you pretty much know what day your first Christmas card will arrive. You probably also know who will hand sign the cards and the letters (if they include one). You might even be able to predict which of the friends and family who send you a card in which they have underlined certain words of the pre-printed sentiment.

Each year our first card comes from a guy who went to church with Laura and to high school with me. Mike is faithful to get his cards out early, and even though he lives in Maine, the card always arrives on the day after Thanksgiving. We also have friends who seem to compete for whose card will be the last to arrive. The competition took a surprise turn when one of these two ladies retired, and now her rhyming poem recounting the adventures of the year seems to wait until about mid-February.

Whether they arrive early or late, whether they have glitter or are foil-embossed, whether they have a scripture verse or a snowman, whether they have pictures of someone's grandchildren inside or not, I enjoy each one. Each card we receive brings memories to mind of time we've spent together, times of laughter, or times we've leaned on each other, and for that, I am grateful.

Scripture calls us to, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:18 I know 2020 has stripped away so much of what we cherish about this season of preparing to welcome the Christ-child. I know this year has been hard in so very many ways, but I still choose to find ways to celebrate and give thanks. I hope you do, too!

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Don



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Holiday Office Hours End of Year Giving

It's Christmas time already. The long awaited arrival of the baby Jesus is almost here. That means time off for our office staff!

The office will be closed on Christmas Eve - December 24th and Christmas Day - December 25th.

Don't forget to turn in your Christmas offerings by December 23rd. There is an option on the online giving site to give specifically to Christmas. This link will remain open through December 30th.

End of the year giving mailed to the church, must be received by December 30th to be counted in the 2020 giving year. Any mailed offering that arrives after noon on December 31st will be counted in the 2021 offering. Online giving will be accepted through the end of December 31st and counted in 2020 offering.

The office will be closed on New Year's Eve - December 31st and New Year's Day - January 1st.



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER



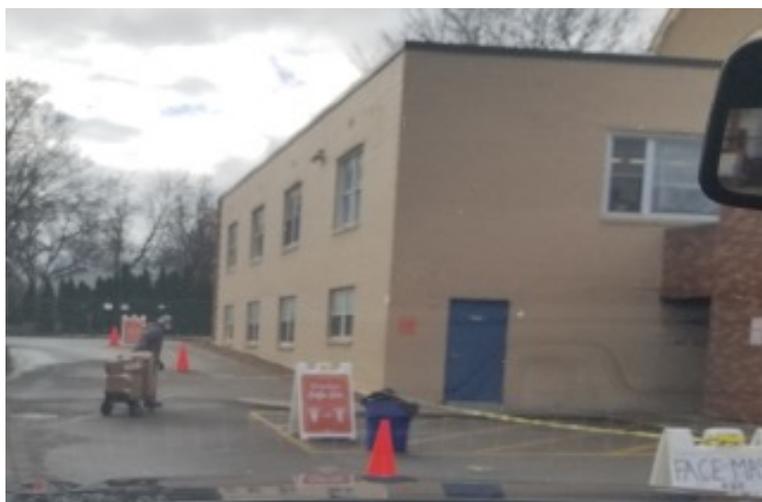
The Finance Committee is pleased to inform you we will meet all of our Operating Fund obligations by the end of the year. This includes resources for our ministries at Utica UMC and the ministries we support through the Conference (Ministry Shares previously known as Apportionments).

We cannot thank you enough for your generous and faithful giving which has allowed us to accomplish this. We were also blessed by the Conference forgiving 50% of every church's pension payments (\$5,467 in savings for Utica UMC). Additionally, we were fortunate to receive a CARES Act Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) loan which helped us maintain our staff and salaries throughout the uncertainty of the pandemic. We anticipate this loan will be forgiven in 2021, based on having utilized the loan in accordance with the requirements.

As of December 11, we have fulfilled 100% of our Conference obligations (Ministry Shares/ Apportionments). Income has been about 5% less (\$20,000) this year than last year. However, this has been offset by the PPP loan and approximately 5% in budget savings resulting from reduced contracted services, decreased utility usage, and other ministry savings.

This year has been a testament to being faithful and trusting God to provide the resources needed. We pray that God will pour out His blessings on all our faithful and cheerful givers.

The Baldwin Center Pie Delivery



It is with our heartfelt gratitude that we thank you for your generosity during the Thanksgiving Holiday period. Utica UMC donated 57 pies that were taken to the Baldwin Center on Monday, November 23rd. The photo shows the second of 2 carts loaded with pies being taken into the building to prepare for serving meals. Due to the pandemic, the mission leadership at Baldwin were both surprised and grateful when contacted to arrange delivery of the pies. The clients at the Baldwin Center were served a hot, take-out Thanksgiving Dinner that included pie for desert. Thank you Utica UMC!

Together In Mission (TIM)

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

For the Beauty of Each Day

When my husband was alive and we were able to get out, the thing he enjoyed most was simply going for a ride. He would point out to me constantly on these rides, different things. One day he pointed out every Blue Spruce Tree that he saw. He was obsessed that day with the pine trees. Another day he pointed out birds and was fascinated by birds sitting on wires or in trees, flying overhead or gathering. One day and this occurred quite often, it was clouds, he would gaze in wonder at clouds and their formations. One day we drove through several small towns and he would point out the local cemetery. I liked to take him to see the Christmas lights, it was always like he was seeing them for the first time. We had known each other a long time and for all those years the only thing he ever pointed out to me were cars, so this was a new path. I like that he was looking at the world as if it were new. Perhaps with his dementia, it was new to him. I want to remember to see the beauty of each day, whether it is to hear a bird singing, or a flower blooming, or even the clouds. This morning I saw beauty in a neighbor walking her dog. Her dog is blind, and she now patiently leads the dog across the cement drive to the green grass and they walk around the trees. She no longer takes the dog far for the dog tires easily. Some people would have given up on the dog, but she patiently cares for the dog. There is beauty in their devotion to each other. God has made the world beautiful and we need to see the beauty of each day. There is beauty in a flower blooming or in a leaf falling or clouds, or even in the bond between a woman and her dog. If I cannot go out or just do not feel like going out, I can look out the window and see my tiny portion of the world. I can find something beautiful each day.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time.

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the Lord's and everything in it and all who live in it.

*For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth over and around us lies. Lord of all to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

*For the Beauty of the Earth by Folliot S. Pierpoint

Lord, thank you for the beauty that reminds us of your love. May we treasure it and find your peace and joy in our world. We ask that you be with those that are suffering, with the hungry and the homeless, with those that are suffering illness and those who grieve. Be with those that are facing the loss of their livelihood, those that are facing loss of homes. May we answer your call to "Feed my sheep" to those who seek your word and those in need. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry. Be with our leaders and staff, may they find your direction and sustenance for their mission. Be with our church, may we be the hands and feet of Christ. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

Grace Epperson



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Ministry Team:

Senior Pastor
Reverend Don Gotham
srpastor@uticaumc.org

Ministry Leader Intern
Sunwha Hopgood

Contemporary Worship Leader

Mer Renne
mer@uticaumc.org

Music Ministry

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

Communications Director

Rachelle Heldt
rachelle@uticaumc.org

Secretary/Bookkeeper

Charlotte Ramsey
charlottte@uticaumc.org

Youth Leader

Suzy Palmer
suzy.palmer@uticaumc.org

Sunday Morning Child Care

Caitlyn Wilson

Office Hours:

Mon - Thurs 8am-4pm
Friday 8am-2pm

Phone: 586-731-7667

Food Pantry available
by appointment only.

Deadline Information:

Items for The Weekly
Messenger, The Weekly
Prayer List, or
Announcements should
be submitted by
Wednesday each week.
Submit to
charlotte@uticaumc.org
for announcements and
prayer list and to
rachelle@uticaumc.org
for the Messenger and
Electronic Sign
or call the office.

Our Mission:

Inviting people to rely
on Jesus to find
unexpected purpose,
peace and joy.

Keeping Connected

Stay in touch with Utica United Methodist Church by checking our website (www.uticaumc.org), following us on Facebook (Utica United Methodist Church) or subscribe to our YouTube Channel (Utica Umc).

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

We have an account with both Webex and also with Zoom for groups to meet via telephone and video calls.

Sunday Worship Times:

Find us on Facebook, Website
or YouTube channel for our
Sunday Worship Service at
9am.

At this time we are taking a
break from in person
gatherings. Please stay safe.
Stay home if you are sick.
Wear a mask when you go
out. Wash your hands or use
sanitizer often.

We will follow John Wesley's
summary of God's directives
to all people - "**Do No Harm,
Do Good and Stay in Love
with God!**"

Donate Online:

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!