



Weekly Messenger

February 12, 2021

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"Forty Days of Love during Lent"

This coming Wednesday, we mark the beginning of the season of Lent. I was inspired to ask the congregation to take a journey this Lent that is perhaps unlike our recent memories of how we have marked the season. While reading in January, I came across a story of a man whose church embarked on what was referred to as Forty Days of Love during Lent.

The man who had thought the whole concept of finding practical, inexpensive ways to show someone they are loved was not going to be a good use of his time, and he planned to show up for worship but skip any participation with frivolous expressions of love. The pastor was surprised to have the man ask to meet with him, especially when he left the message; the reason for the meeting was to discuss how he had experienced the program, given it was only the second week of Lent.

The man's voice quivered a bit when he began speaking to the pastor. He told the pastor what he initially thought of the pastor asking the church to express their love for each other and those beyond the church. Then, the lump in his throat rose as he began to tell what the letters he had received from others in the church who wrote and told him how deeply they valued his friendship, his talents, and more. The man who had once thought he wouldn't bother showing others simple acts of love decided such demonstrations were central to who God had called him to be as a Christ-follower.

Last year we had plans for how Lent would go. Then, COVID-19 upset our dreams, and over this past year, it has taken much from us that we hold dear. One of the most meaningful ways we can restore what we have missed is to take time in Lent to offer others a simple expression of love.

In many years past, we would offer a book study to complement the worship series. This year, I am asking you to read one of three books by Dr. Gary Chapman. Many of you know of his book, "The Five Love Languages." If you've not read it, I highly recommend it. It is written to help couples, so if you would prefer, you could choose to read "The Five Love Languages: Singles Edition, or "The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace." Each of these books will help us grow in our appreciation for expressing ourselves in ways that honor one another and help us communicate and accept love.

As we move forward through Lent, I will share some of the differences in the words scripture has to express love. As I ready my spirit to enter these Forty Days of Love, I keep coming back to the song, "They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love." How I pray this is precisely how the people of the Utica United Methodist Church will be known!

Today, I am sharing a list that was shared with me of ways children can express love in simple acts. It is my hope you will take these and springboard to your own unique expressions of love. I would be happy to receive and share your ideas, as well!

And the greatest of these is Love,

Rev. Don

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

ACTS OF LOVE AND KINDNESS

1. Share the International Sign Language symbol for “I love you” with someone.
2. Give someone your undivided attention.
3. Give someone a compliment.
4. Call and talk to a family member (e.g., grandparent, aunt or uncle).
 5. Call and talk to a friend.
6. Help someone with their schoolwork/homework.
7. Share a favorite song with someone.
8. Make a picture for someone.
9. Share toys with someone (e.g., friend, brother, sister).
10. Write someone a note or letter.
 11. Read to someone.
 12. Do an extra chore.
 13. Encourage someone.
 14. Help someone do something.
 15. Tell your parents “I love you.”
 16. Give someone a hug.
 17. Smile at someone.
18. Look in a person’s eyes when you talk to them.
19. Clean your room or make your bed without being asked.
20. Play a board game or computer game with someone.
 21. Tell someone a joke.
 22. Take a walk with someone.
 23. Tell someone they are terrific.
 24. Say “thank you” to someone.
25. Tell someone how much you enjoy spending time with someone.
26. Be respectful.
27. Try something new with someone.
28. Be understanding when someone has had a difficult day.
 29. Write a chalk message on the sidewalk.
30. Ask someone to help you with something or a challenge.
 31. Build something with a friend.
32. Make a sign for the mail person / delivery person.

Ash Wednesday Service

Our Ash Wednesday Service will be available all day on February 17th. You may watch it anytime on YouTube at Utica UMC, on Facebook at Utica United Methodist Church or on our website at www.uticaumc.org. Ashes have been put together in little cups with lids and are available in the church office during normal office hours for you to pick up. There will be a place in the service for you to impose the ashes on yourself.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Church, Our Center

Recently someone wrote on Facebook that without church on Sunday they felt they had lost their direction. They did not know what day it is. They were accustomed to starting their week on Sunday and Sunday meant church. It is where they became renewed and refreshed, ready to start a new week, and let the old week go and now there was no church. There life had lost its center, they had no compass. I have felt some of this and I am sure others have also. While I enjoy the online service and the message which always inspires, I miss so much. I miss just being there, the Altar rail, the prayers with others, the music that echoes our faith as we raise our voices in unison, the community with its inclusion and comfort, the hugs, even the fist bumps, the togetherness of communion and prayer and the gathering after at coffee hour.

I did not think of how church on Sunday centered my life until we no longer had the inside the building service or the service in the parking lot. Now I have no day to figure out what day it is. I cannot say Sunday I went to church then there was Monday and Tuesday, this must be Wednesday. My starting point was always Sunday. On Sunday I know that if I am busy or not feeling well, I can watch the service later. Previously if I missed Church on Sunday, I missed Church there was no watching it Monday or Tuesday and there was an empty spot in my week. I hope that this service will continue after we are once again gathered in the building for those that cannot physically attend.

Years ago, navigation was accomplished by looking for the North Star Polaris. Polaris sits over the North Pole and ships and desert caravans would use it to tell their direction. It was always there and always reliable. Christ is our North Star and even without gathering, it is from Christ that we find our center, maintain our focus, refresh our faith, continue to pray for each other, and follow our direction. He is always there and always reliable and following him is the most important focus we have in maintaining the life of the church.

Soon we will be back in church and we will have our center returned. We will continue to wear masks, to wash our hands frequently and to social distance until it is safe and by doing this, we will protect ourselves and show our love for each other.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

Lord be with us as we go through this seemingly unending pandemic. Lord we yearn for “normal.” Help us to see you in all things even in this season of trial. We thank you for each day and for the beauty of the sun upon the snow, for the Winter that brings the promise of Spring. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve, may they feel you with them and be comforted. Be with our Pastor and his family, bless his ministry. Be with our Staff and our leaders, give them your guidance and blessing. 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:

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Office Hours:

Mon - Thurs 8am-4pm
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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 out website to give now!

www.uticaumc.org/e-giving

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