



# Weekly Messenger

February 5, 2021

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## "When Will We Resume Meeting In Our Building?"

Given the length of time we have paused in-person worship, I expect many of our church family have been asking, "When will we resume meeting in our building?" Well, I write to let you know we hope we have an answer to that question. Let me give you some history before I get to the answer.

If you recall, we stopped meeting inside the building in November. Our bishop had asked us not to meet in-person through Christmas, as the rate of positive virus cases increased rapidly. Our leadership board complied with the request of the bishop. After the first of the year, the bishop sent out guidelines to help congregations decide how to decide when to resume in-person worship.

On Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, our Leadership Board met to discuss the current rate of positive virus tests for our county and how they measured up with the bishop's guidelines. The good news is that the rate of positive Covid tests is declining for our county. Last week, the rate was just under 9%. This week, the rate is just under 8%. The bishop (through consultation with epidemiologists) has asked that we use the standard of positive test rate of 5% or less. Given the trend in Macomb County, we are hopeful that the rate will be arrived at within a matter of weeks.

Because of the trend toward the spread of the Coronavirus slowing, the Leadership Board has decided to resume in-person worship beginning on March 7<sup>th</sup>. There is one known possible "wrench" that could get in the way. In Washtenaw County, the United Kingdom variant of the virus is present. Given our proximity to Washtenaw County, there is a chance the variant of the virus could enter our county and affect the infection rates here.

Like many plans we made since the pandemic began, these plans to resume in-person worship could end up being changed. We hold hope the vaccination rates will rise and the infection rates will drop, and we can resume gathering in the same place to worship God.

I look forward to seeing you in church and invite you to pray for the ceasing of the spread of the Coronavirus.

With Grace, Peace, and Hope,

Rev. Don

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Methodist Church  
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# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## Care Notes

Stephen Ministry has put out some new CareNotes on the table in the Narthex. These new notes are appropriate for the times we are living through now - Responding to Life's Challenges that are Out of Your Control and Prayers of Comfort for Times of Illness. Please feel free to pick them up when you are in the church.



## Pantry Items Needed

The food pantry at Utica is in need of some items. We have provided a list of items below. We currently are good with some of the main food staples and are asking for a little more unique items or everyday items that you might take for granted when cooking that someone else might be in need of. Please remember that donated items need to be shelf stable.

- Cooking Oil (vegetable, olive, sunflower, etc.)
- Canned meat such as Spam, canned ham, turkey, tuna, salmon
- All types of crackers (not saltines at this time, as I have quite a few of those right now)
- Nuts (snack packs would be good - low salt if possible but not choosy)
- Spaghetti (the pasta; sauce also but I have quite a bit right now)
- Staples like salt & pepper, sugar, flour, and any type of spice such as oregano, garlic, cinnamon, , etc.
- Ketchup, mustard, etc.
- Paper products - toilet paper, paper towels, Kleenex, napkins

## 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](http://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

## The Good Old Days

As I was taking the ornaments off the tree, I noticed that one had broken. Probably bumped when I was turning the lights on and off. It had a hole in the top and wasn't shattered. I looked at it and it was dated 1974. I thought about that year and while I have no definitive memories, I know that our children were 11 and 13 and that I had been working at the Red Cross for a month. We were happy, it was a good Christmas, and I thought about the things that we did not know were before us, my husband would be hit while walking the dog and his injuries while not life threatening would be severe. He would be in a wheelchair then crutches and unable to work for 3 months. We would have the joy and challenges of two teenagers. Our son would have back surgery and be laid up for a while and then twice more. Our daughter would go to college and get married to a wonderful man and they would begin their journey together. I would have breast cancer and undergo chemo. Our Son would be married to a wonderful woman and another celebration of love and another family begun. Life would go on with grandchildren, there would be travels and much joy but also sorrow as we lost family members and friends. We had so many more Christmases before us, 45, and a lot of joy. What if I had known in 1974 what was ahead? Would I have held loved ones a little closer, a little harder? Would I have appreciated the good days a little more? Would I have not become irate over the dumb things that didn't matter? My husband is gone, and Christmas has been strange. I looked at that ornament and felt sad but then I remembered all the blessings we had received in those years and children grown a son-in-law and daughter-in-law added and grandchildren and great grandchildren and I thanked God for the blessings and the joy and love given and received and for the plans he had for us.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Lord, we look back and see when you were with us, give us faith to know you are here in the present even on those days when we feel alone. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve. Be with those who are frightened, may they know they are not alone, that you do not leave us. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and watch over him and his family. Be with our staff and leaders, bless them and guide them. Be with our church as we are separated by the pandemic, May it only draw us closer. May we remember that the church isn't a building but the people who gather together. We are going through difficult times Lord, give us strength for the day and hope for tomorrow. In Jesus name, 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](http://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](http://www.uticaumc.org/e-giving)**

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