



Utica United
Methodist Church

Weekly Messenger

July 29, 2022

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“August Pondering and Prayer...”

Pondering: Do you ponder over serving Jesus? Do you ask yourself how much or how often should you serve? Do you measure your serving Jesus against doing things for yourself? In Matthew 4:18, Jesus gathers His first two disciples, Peter and Andrew. They were busy doing their job, fishing. Jesus is standing on the beach, and it is reasonable to assume others are also on the beach. Jesus said, “follow me,” and they did! Just like that, they follow. When you think of their response, it is astounding. Still, suppose the event happened differently:

Peter responds, “Where are we headed?”

Andrew comments, “How far do we have to walk? I must get these last four fish untangled and out of the net first.”

Peter wants to know, “What’s the plan? What are my tasks? Who carries my luggage?”

If that was how the call to serve and follow Jesus had happened, how would it impact your decision to serve and follow? The bible doesn’t depict the twelve disciples who served and followed Jesus as some strange version of stained-glass saints. The disciples were utterly human, and they were flawed. Still, what liberties would we claim with our serving if scripture pointed us to excuses instead of instant responses? Scripture points us to examples of those who respond and challenges the motivations of those who make excuses. In Isaiah 6:8, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here I am, send me!’” Further, Luke 9:57–62 records how Jesus responded to those who made excuses when He called them to follow and serve.

Prayer: Lord, the work you call us to as a church is essential. Please help us to see the urgency of what you call us to do in your name. Help us to be the people who look for every way to say yes when we are presented with opportunities to serve, even when we aren’t sure what we are getting ourselves into. Help us trust that those asking us to serve want the best for our church. Finally, Lord, give us the spirit of adventure to try new things, be open to serving in new ways and do so willingly, all for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

Thanks to Bob MacKool for helping craft the August Prayer Focus.

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THE WEEKLY MESSENGER



Thank you!



Below are a few pictures from our last week of STARS and XCEL. The kids all had a blast this summer. This program would not be possible without the generous donations of this congregation. Thank you to all who donated their time whether it was cooking, driving or sharing a gift with the kids. Thank you to everyone who gave money to this program. A giant thank you to all for the Pulled Pork Fundraiser - thanks to your generosity we raised **\$1,694.00** towards next years program! God is good!



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

FINANCIAL UPS AND DOWNS

Almost every day we hear about financial ups and downs. Gas prices are up (although recently they have been coming down). Inflation is up (when will it turn around?). Social Security payments are up and will likely increase again this year (but have they kept pace with inflation?). The stock market is down (a far cry from last year when it consistently set new all-time highs).

The same is true for Utica UMC – we are experiencing financial ups and downs this year. But we continue to be blessed by all God provides us. And we are grateful for the faithful giving and stewardship of our congregation.

As you might expect, our expenses are up this year compared to last year. This is to be expected since we are more actively doing things – a blessing. Total Operating Fund Expenses through 6/30/2022 were \$210,110. Conversely, our giving has been less compared to this same period last year by about \$10,000. Total Operating Fund Income through 6/30/2022) was \$167,225. Another blessing – our congregation gives faithfully.

To offset the difference (income vs. expenses), we have had to dip into the \$60,000 Operating Fund “year-to-year savings” we had at the end of 2021. This “year-to-year savings” was the result of stable giving levels the past two years (during the COVID pandemic) while we had significantly lower spending. Approximately \$20,000 of our savings was used to stay current with our Conference Ministry Shares (apportionments) payments. Another \$20,000 was used for salaries, office expenses, utilities, and other necessary expenses.

In June, Finance Committee delayed making our \$4,000 payment for our Conference Ministry Shares (apportionments) to ensure we had sufficient cash flow for salaries, utilities, and other required expenses through the summer. We remain committed to paying 100% of our Ministry Shares by the end of the year.

We understand expenses are up for everyone and “money is tight”. We are doing everything we can to keep Operating Fund expenses down. Please ensure your commitment to Operating Fund is up to date. And, if possible, give a little extra to Operating Fund. Every extra dollar or two now will make a difference by the end of the year. We want to ensure we are able meet all our 2022 obligations and also have some remaining to “carry-forward” into 2023 for first quarter expenses.

A note from Together in Missions (T. I. M.)

School supplies and toiletries needed

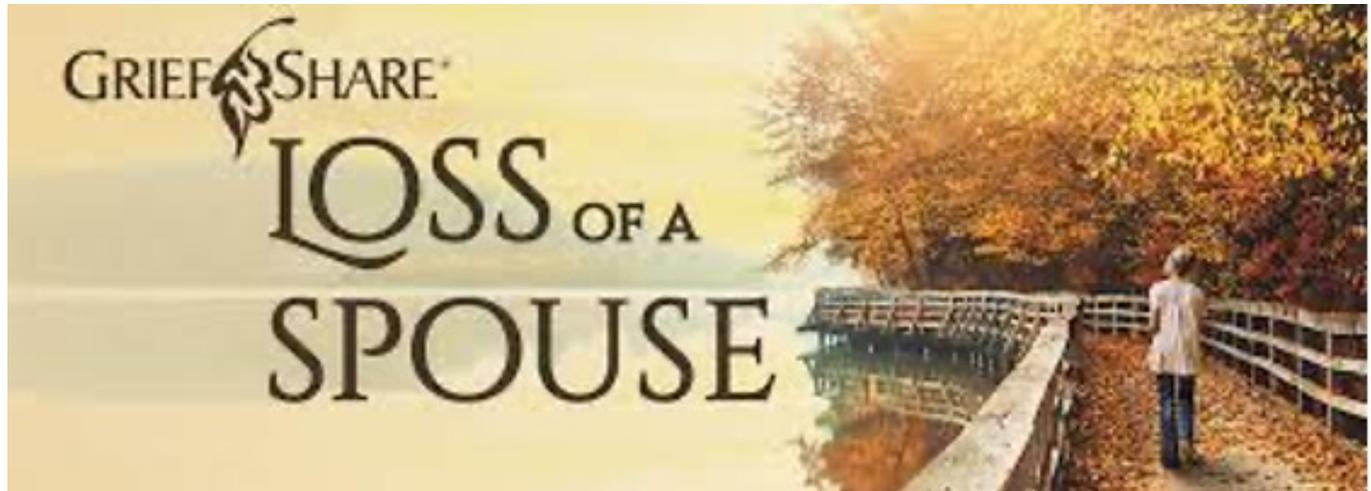
Each year the Church Conference asks the Mission Committee to select state, interstate and international projects and ministries that we would choose to support. For the month of August, we will be highlighting The Methodist Children’s Home in Redford Michigan, one of our state choices.

For over 100 years this site has provided a safe living environment for children. They house up to 70 boys and have added a site for boys aged 16-19 who are aging out of foster care. Recently, they began to offer specialized care for children and families who have been impacted by childhood trauma. See more about this vital ministry at mchsmi.org

We will be assisting their ministry with our donation of back to school supplies. This includes classroom supplies, backpacks, and young men’s toiletries such as disposable razors, shaving cream and deodorant.

Please place all donated items in the bin in the narthex or back entryway.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER



The passing of your spouse affects every area of your life. The death of a spouse brings a unique kind of pain. People who are widowed haven't just lost a loved one—they've lost an entire lifestyle.

This 2-hour free seminar will help you understand your grief and find comfort and direction during this time of pain and uncertainty. Come hear advice from counselors and pastors, as well as stories of men and women who have been widowed but who have found help and encouragement. You'll also participate in a time of discussion with other seminar attendees and leaders through the use of a short workbook.

Participants will also take home a valuable Loss of a Spouse booklet that includes:

- A video note-taking outline
- Devotional materials that help people find hope in God's Word
- Grief recovery exercises
- Journaling prompts

At a Loss of a Spouse seminar you'll discover:

- ✓ Other people understand and have found ways to make it through
- ✓ Why it won't always hurt so much
- ✓ Reasons for hope
- ✓ Practical tips for coping with the death of a spouse

It hurts to lose someone. GriefShare is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. You don't have to go through the grieving process alone.

Join us on August 18, 2022 at 6:30 PM in Fellowship Hall. If there is an interest, this seminar may be made available at other times. Contact: Ray Lake, Patsy or Bob Clark for additional information.

Just as a reminder, the 13 Week GriefShare Support Group starts September 8th.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

When All We Have Left is Prayer

I was thinking of people I had had in my life that were nearing the end of their journey on earth and I thought about the many times I had heard, "All we have left is prayer." I heard it often when someone was diagnosed with a terminal diagnosis, I thought it myself when faced with the death of a loved one and when faced with my own mortality. If prayer is all we have left, then we have a powerful tool in our lives. Prayer that goes to God is powerful, but prayer should be our first resort. An active presence in our lives. It should be the beginning of our day and the end of our day. Our morning and our evening. In the morning we thank God for another day, another chance to get it right. In the evening we thank God for having been with us for another day and we pray to get right those things that we have messed up. And in the light of day and the dark of night when we are faced with illness and hurt of our loved ones, God is there waiting for our prayers. God is on call every moment of every day. We praise God for being in our lives and we ask him for his continued presence in our lives. When I had cancer and had seen friends suffer with it and die, my prayers became a bargaining tool. But then something changed within me. I surrendered. My prayers were still asking for a reprieve, a chance to see my children married but ended with "not my will but your will." And as I did this a change came. I prayed for those I would leave but surrendered my life and the giving and taking of it to God. This was a pivotal moment in my faith journey. I learned that I didn't have all the answers, that I didn't even have the questions. I learned that there is a God that loved me from morning to night to morning. A God that had given me life and would not take it away just when it was getting good! I was going to be a grandmother! God had put wonderful people in my life, people of faith and courage and they gave me the gift of their caring and comfort and their prayers and God was with me. Thanks be to God.

Romans 12:9-12 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the day, for another chance to show your love to others. Comfort those that are ill and those who grieve. Be with our church may we be but a reflection of your love so others may come to know you. Be with Pastor Don, bless his ministry and be with him and his family. Be with our Staff and Leaders bless their work. May our church be a welcoming place, and may our service be a beacon that draws others to you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson

United Methodist Women Collection

We are still collecting paper towels, toilet paper and Kleenex for Turning Point now until September 4th. There is a grey tub outside the church office under the coat rack labeled UMW to place these items.



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES:

9:30AM

with Organ, Choir and Handbells
in the Sanctuary

10:30AM

with our Worship Band
in Fellowship Hall

Online Worship

A recorded service will be
available online on
Facebook, our church website and
on YouTube beginning at
9:00am each Sunday.

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday - Thursday

8:00am-4:00pm

Friday 8:00am- 2:00pm

Food Pantry

Our food pantry is
available to those in need
by calling the church office
and making an
appointment.

This institution is an equal
opportunity provider.

Keep Connected

If you are not signed up for our
Weekly Messenger email, you
can do so on our website by
clicking on the "More" tab, then
"Weekly Messenger"; on that
page you will find a place to
register for our weekly email!



*"Like" us
on
Facebook!*

Our Mission

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

Ministry Team

Rev. Don Gotham

srpastor@uticaumc.org

Music Ministry

David Fox, Organist, Bell, & Chancel Choirs
Director

FoxDavidL@sbcglobal.net

Mer Renne, Contemporary
Worship Leader

mer@uticaumc.org

Communications Director

Rachelle Heldt

rachelle@uticaumc.org

Secretary/Bookkeeper

Charlotte Ramsey

charlotte@uticaumc.org

Deadline Information

Articles for advertising/
announcements must be submitted to
the office by 4:00pm on
Wednesday of each week.

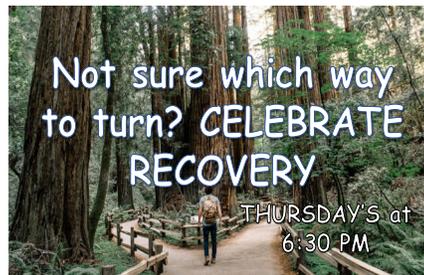
Messenger: Email to Rachelle Heldt
Prayer List: Email to Charlotte Ramsey
or call the church office.



Going on vacation; can't make it to church?

How about using E-giving so you can still give your offering for
those times when you can't be here **The E-giving tab is on our
church website: www.uticaumc.org**
If you need assistance, call the church office.

Celebrate Recovery



**Celebration
Place**

The Celebrate Recovery Children's Ministry
Thursday evening beginning at 6:30pm
in Room 305