

Weekly Messenger

February 24, 2023

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Waking Up In Africa

Within the first week of being in Africa, I picked up my phone and noticed someone had posted on my Facebook page. A parishioner at a former church had asked if I would write a devotion for their Lenten devotional booklet.

The request brought to mind something I'd not thought about until that moment. My revelation was that God had gotten it all. Let me explain. I wrestled with and resisted the call to ministry. I even tried to bargain with God offering to go to Africa as a missionary instead of being a pastor. I relented and followed God's call when it became more important for me to do what God wanted than what I wanted.

So, I woke up in Africa, serving as a short-term missionary and having served as a pastor for twenty-eight years. God had gotten it all. I've spent my life serving God and the church, and now, as a missionary in Africa.

As I've reflected more, I've come to treasure how this all worked out. Following the path God called me to travel has been a tremendous blessing. Indeed, my life has been blessed as I have gone where God has called me. Even more, I now embrace what I once thought of as a sacrifice. Serving as a pastor has been a tremendous blessing. Serving as a missionary in Haiti and Africa has been a rich blessing. My lesson and I hope yours: When we do what God calls us to do, God has wonderful blessings to lavish upon us.

In the season of Lent, we look deeply upon our lives as followers of Christ. If you can look back and see how God has been working things for your good and has been faithful beyond your fondest hopes, tell your story, for you will surely inspire someone. And, if your story has been one of struggle, and you can share how God has seen you through, tell your story, for you will bring someone hope. God is in your story; perhaps a Facebook post will help you wake up and see it.

Jeremiah 29:11-14

Rev. Don Gotham

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

United Women In Faith

All women are invited to attend the UWIF meeting in Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, March 8. The potluck Luncheon will begin at noon. Please bring a dish to share and your own place setting. Drinks will be provided.

The Program featuring **Prayer and Self Denial** will begin at 1:00pm.

Celebrate Recovery

Celebrate Recovery is a biblical and balanced program that helps us overcome our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. What does that mean? Substance abuse, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, co-dependency, domestic violence, perfectionism, guilt, anger, loss, worrying, gambling, control issues, boundary issues, pornography, sexual addiction, alcohol & drugs, emotional & physical abuse, childhood trauma, and more...

Celebrate Recovery is based on the actual words of Jesus, rather than psychological theory. It was designed as a program to help those struggling with hurts, habits and hang-ups by showing them the loving power of Jesus Christ through a recovery process.

Celebrate Recovery is not intended to replace any other support group. Nor is it a substitute for treatment centers or professional counseling. The focus of *Celebrate Recovery* is to provide a safe group environment where recovering people can gather together and share their struggles and victories. We encourage all people struggling with hurts, hang-ups, and habits, and you are welcome at *Celebrate Recovery!*

Concerned about anonymity? Be assured that attendance at *Celebrate Recovery* and what is said will remain confidential. Although some may choose to make it known that they participate, no one has the right to break the anonymity of anyone who attends. Your privacy will be respected and protected. If you know of someone who could benefit from being a part of *Celebrate Recovery*, or if you wish to be involved, please by all means, do so. **Don't be afraid to change.... Be afraid of staying the same.**



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER



Happy 200th Birthday Utica UMC!

Utica United Methodist Church is 200 years old this year. We have many things planned to celebrate this wonderful milestone. Currently there are polo shirts on sale on Sunday mornings. Cost of the shirts are \$30.00. We do have order forms available in the church office, you can stop in and place an order or call the office. A historical display is going to be going up on the wall in the Parlor in the next couple of weeks.

Please mark your calendars as we look ahead....

March - We will have a Taco and Trivia night on March 11th. See Below for details.....

April 23rd is our big kick-off celebration. Bishop Bard will be in to preach this morning. A meal is also in the planning process. Mark you calendars as you will not want to miss this Sunday of church.

May - Historic Driving Tours and Utica Cemetery Tours are being planned. Let's take a look at our roots and visit the graves of founding members of Utica church.

June - The Car Show will happen again this year on June 3rd. We are also looking at attending a Jimmy John's baseball game on June 23rd.

This year is going to be exciting and full of many different types of events. Start marking your calendars now.



Taco and Trivia Night

Taco and Trivia Night is one of our first kick-off events celebrating our 200 years at Utica. Join us on **Saturday, March 11th** at 5:30pm in Fellowship Hall. There you will enjoy a yummy taco bar along with fun games and trivia. Brush up on your church history as there could be questions regarding this church's past. We are asking for a donation of \$5.00 per person. Kids 5 and younger are free. This money will help offset the cost of this event. Sign up sheets will be out on Sunday. Sign up and invite your friends. This is a great setting to introduce someone to our church.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Blood Drive Results

Dear Al, Bob, and the Utica United Methodist Church Lifesaving Team – Thank you for all of your efforts on Valentine's Day! Great job! WOW – 5 power red donors for 10 units! Thank you.

Thank you for all of your lifesaving work!
Utica United Methodist Church February 14, 2023

TOTAL Actual Collection:31!
107% of GOAL
5 POWER RED DONORS!
29 Donors Registered (went with a staff for health history)
3 Deferrals (donors that were turned away for medical reasons)

The blood that you collected will help 93 Hospital patients! (This is the IMPORTANT PART) 93 LIVES SAVED (since every blood donor can save 3 lives)! You really made a huge difference in the lives of those in need- thank you for being a HERO to the community! Those units were so desperately needed! Thank you for preventing dangerous blood shortages! Thank you for all of your hard work on this life saving event!!! Great job!!! Thank you for making the WORLD a BETTER PLACE!!

Thank you for your kindness and generosity!!
Gratefully,
Bridget McCormick
Donor Recruitment Representative
American Red Cross

The God Dreams Group recommends the following book:

Leadership or servanthood? Walking in the steps of Jesus
author Hwa Yung

When you read a book, what are you looking for in its content? If you're looking for one that is both interesting and informative, try reading Leadership or Servanthood, Walking in the Steps of Jesus. The members of God's dream group have been reading this book and finding it helpful and enlightening and would like to encourage you to read it as well.

Yung reintroduces us to some basic bible teaching that has been pushed aside by today's common beliefs that leaders must be dominant and forceful. Being first and foremost has unfortunately been instilled in most of us since our childhood. Starting from being the first in the race to the playground slide, first in our academics, first to be picked for sports teams, we learn a desire to be number one. Yung's book calls us to change our thinking to that of becoming servant leaders and remembering the biblical concept of leadership.

Yung calls the church to have a critical evaluation of the current trends and to become more focused on servanthood as modeled by Jesus Christ.

Reading this book will give you a fresh perspective on reviving churches and rethinking leadership styles.

Book Review by Carol Morrell

Some books are available in the church office. These are previously read copies that may be highlighted or have notes written in them. You can also purchase your own copy through Amazon.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Lent

Lent means for Christians a time of prayer and reflection. We can become a better follower of Christ. How do we become better at being a follower of Christ? The biggest thing we can do is pray. We can follow the words of Jesus to love our neighbors, to feed the hungry, to help those less fortunate. We live in a time of anger and discourse, of fear and worry. What can we do about that? We can be kinder, slower to anger and words that put others down. I went into a dealership this week to have work done on my car which is almost as old as I am but I have no wish to go through car payments again. At 87 I have already stopped driving at night and worry that I may have to give up driving all together one day and it will be sooner than I would like. The Service Manager asked what I needed, and I started with an oil change but included but whenever you can do it, I can make an appointment if you are busy now. We went on talking and he said because he had no history on the car (I had not taken the car to this dealership before) it would need some other things. I accepted this and told him I had a recall on the car and forgotten the paperwork and if he needed that I could come back. He looked it up on the computer and said he saw the recall on it and would check for the parts needed. When he asked if I could come in on Friday (this was Tuesday) I said certainly that although I am 87 I still buy green bananas and could plan on Friday. He said that even though I was a little bit out of their area they would give me a ride home on Friday. I thanked him for the exception and said that would be great. He came around the counter and put his arm around me and kissed me on the cheek and said, "Happy Valentine's Day" I was stunned but extremely grateful for his attitude and his kindness in dealing with me. I didn't tell him I had chosen this dealership because the dealership where I had gone before was extremely rude to me on two occasions and the last time, I had gone in there because my check engine light was on, they told me I would have to make an appointment to make an appointment (yes, you read that correctly) and they were only doing warranty work. On Friday morning I took the car in to the new to me dealership, and they gave me a ride home and then called me in the afternoon to say it was done and the gentleman who had driven me home would come and give me a ride back to the dealership to pick up the car. This gave me another opportunity to tell someone about how adorable and clever my Great Grandchildren are. As I thought about the difference in this visit to the dealership and my other visit to the last dealership I marveled at the change in attitude. Perhaps it started with my attitude. I was willing to do whatever to make it easier on this dealership but with the other dealership I was anxious and upset about the check engine light being on but not aggressive or nasty, I only wanted to make sure the car wasn't going to quit and leave me stranded somewhere. I was not nasty or bossy just concerned and did not need a very tall gentleman with a very bad attitude to get in my face and tell me to make an appointment and they would look at it and make an appointment to get it fixed. They had already run a computer check and knew what was wrong. I asked for the computer check and gave it to my son who ordered the part and fixed it in 5 minutes then changed my oil and checked my tire pressure and I vowed never to return to that dealership.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Be joyful always. Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

We are given opportunities to be kind, patient, and polite. We are also given opportunities to be rude and condescending may we always choose the high road with kindness and patience. We may not always be treated fairly but may we remember who we belong to. We are in our time of Lent, let us follow Christ as we are led to Easter and the resurrection. Let us remember the one who was crucified for our sins and remember his forgiveness and salvation freely offered to all who believe. Let us remember we follow a risen Christ.

Lord, we thank you for each day you give us. May we use those days to honor you by showing kindness and forgiveness to others. Be with those who are ill and those who mourn. Comfort them. Be with those who carry burdens others cannot see but those burdens are known to you. Be with them. Be with those in other lands who are suffering through war, hunger, the victims of disasters, and poverty, may they feel your love surrounding them. Be with our Pastor, protect him and bless his ministry and be with his family. Be with our staff and leaders guide and protect them. Be with our church may we be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in all we do. Be with us in this time of Lent may we be a forgiven people. Be with our church may we be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ here in this place. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Grace Epperson

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 3:00pm 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, Thursday, 6:30pm

