

Weekly Messenger

February 10, 2023

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A Travel Experience...You'll Never Make It....

As the leader of the team of missionaries going to Africa, I repeatedly emphasized the importance of having all necessary travel documents. To get in and out of Guinea-Bissau, we had to either show proof of Covid vaccinations or proof of a very recent negative test. One of our group had not been vaccinated, so I made sure to get him a test when we arrived in Lisbon, Portugal since we would be flying the next morning to Guinea-Bissau.

When we arrived at our gate the morning of our flight to Africa, one of those who had been vaccinated had forgotten to bring proof with him. The agent was unrelenting; our team member had to show proof of vaccination or a recent negative test. We had just one hour until our flight was supposed to start boarding. The only option was for our team member to return to the airport's unsecured part and get a Covid test.

Since he was not with me and the other team member who had found the testing location at the airport the day before, I realized that if he had any chance of making it, I would have to go with him and show him where the testing was offered. Just after we started hustling through the airport, we encountered a man whose job it was to help passengers find where they needed to go. When we explained what we needed to do and how little time we had until our flight, he said, "You'll never make it." Then he said, "Oh, but you're Americans. You have a slight chance."

When we had completed our journey, having gone through passport control twice, the Portuguese version of TSA, and were back at the gate with fifteen minutes to spare, the man I'd sprinted through the airport with told me he'd have never made it without me. I had led him in cutting past at least 100 people in the multiple lines we were supposed to wait in. He said he would never have had the guts to do that.

I was like a determined protective parent. I knew what had to be done and how it had to be undertaken. I had to get this man to the gate, and eight others were waiting at the gate who needed me. We found the rest of our team in prayer when we arrived at the gate. They were praying for our success.

Oh, the things we can make happen with determination and the power of prayer! I pray we are found to be people who have steeled determination and are convinced of, rely on, and extol the power of prayer!

One last note: Being American had a definite advantage. There is a separate (and much shorter) line for those with U.S. passports, and I confess, we even cut ahead of our fellow countrymen in line.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Don

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Red Cross Blood Drive

We will be hosting the Red Cross Blood Drive on Tuesday, February 14th from 11am-5pm. As always registration will be done online at redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS.



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. More details will be available as we get closer to this date.

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.

Ash Wednesday

The season of Lent is upon us and it will kick off with our Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, February 22 at 7pm in the Sanctuary. There will not be Kids Club/Youth Group or simple supper this evening. Invite your family and friends to the Ash Wednesday service.

Messenger Articles - Vacation

Rachelle will be on vacation starting February 22nd. The messenger is going to be completed on Tuesday, February 21st that week. Any articles needing to be in the messenger for the week of February 24th need to be in to Rachelle no later than noon on Tuesday February 21st.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Servanthood

On Sunday, February 5, we asked the congregation to share the things you do to serve in our community. Examples could include MCREST, the Warming Center, coats for the kids, oil change, etc. There may be other things you participate in but may not be something that Utica UMC sponsors. For example, Meals on Wheels or helping at a Soup Kitchen. Whatever the event or group may be (here at Utica or not), we'd like to know.

As a reminder, in December, the God Dreams Group shared Utica UMC's focus for this year would be engaging more people in actively serving in our community and building relationships with members of our community. This fits well with the church's 200-year anniversary as we reach out to tell people about the things Utica UMC has done over the last 200 years and our hope and plans to continue serving in our community for years to come.

This is why we are collecting what people are currently doing. Once we have this information, we hope to share it in a creative way that shows we are the body of Christ and continuing His work.

Forms were available in the bulletin on Sunday, February 5th and more sheets are available at the church office to pick up and fill out. Please take the time to share the ways you are serving ... whether it is here at Utica UMC or out in the community. For those at home, you can mail in a sheet of paper with ways you help serve at the church or in the community.

Thank you and if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to anyone in the God Dreams Group.

COOK-OFF RESULTS

This is was the best Cook-off we have every had – for many reasons. We raised more money than we have ever raised before. We equaled the most number of entries we have ever had. Lots of people – including friends and family – attended. And, we had a great time! The total amount raised, which will be used towards our Conference Ministry Shares, was \$729.

Pastor Don was “crowned” as the Top Chef for his dessert entry of “Monk Tarts” which received the most votes in any category. The other winners in each category are listed below.

Thank you for whatever part you played (e.g., attending, bringing friends and family, voting, submitting an entry, counting votes, helping with set-up, serving, or clean-up). It wouldn't have been as successful without you!

Chili Category

- 1st Place: Greg Kamlay's “World Famous Chili”
- 2nd Place: Dave Miller's “Chili with Everything”
- 3rd Place: Patsy Clark's “Unnamed Chili” and
Charlotte Ramsey's “Texican Chili”

Soup Category

- 1st Place: Laura Dykstra's “Cream of Chicken & Dumpling”
- 2nd Place: Dave Miller's “Rustic Tuscan Soup”
- 3rd Place: Charlotte Ramsey's “Baked Potato Soup”

Dessert Category

- 1st Place: Pastor Don Gotham's “Monk Tarts”
- 2nd Place: Ruth Charlton's “Cherry Crisp”
- 3rd Place: Andrew Lawson's “Key Lime Pie Bites”



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Psalms 23 and Celebrate Recovery

The 23rd Psalms has always been one of my “go to” passages. It got me through the most difficult times of my life. Each of us have, and again will face challenges, valleys that we need to traverse. Over the years I’ve discovered that it is better to have God walk along side of us as we make this journey we call life.

Each of us need to revisit Psalms 23 again. Psalm 23 provides encouragement for the valleys we face in life—and today we’re facing some valleys. It may be the valleys of hurts, habits and hang-ups, it may be the valley of loss or of serious illness. The truth is in this life there are valleys. Each and every one of us have faced and will face valleys. There is no getting around that fact.

As uncertainties stretch across our world, our faith is tested, social issues test our resolve, and we’re facing increasing health and financial concerns. These are not just difficult days for those of us who attend Celebrate Recovery, these things affect everyone.

Psalm 23 provides tremendous hope for what we’re experiencing today, and hope whenever we face a new valley down the road. Through the 23rd Psalms, God reminds us of three powerful truths we can cling to when we’re apprehensive, uncertain of what lies ahead.

First of all God reminds us that we are not alone!

God is walking through the valley with us. Psalm 23:4 says, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me”* (NASB).

You deal with life’s shadows by turning to the light. You can’t see the shadow and look at the light at the same time. Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”* (John 8:12 NIV).

Stop focusing on what’s got you spooked, and focus on Jesus. He is with you right now. When you get your focus off of your fear, you can focus on God and what he wants to do through you. You may not be able to see him, but he is there.

Valleys are different for a believer than a non-believer. That difference isn’t the absence of the shadow. It’s the presence of *the Shepherd*.

Next God has a purpose for our problems.

Psalm 23 tells us over and over God works for our good. He gives us everything we need (v. 1), gives us rest (v. 2), gives us strength (v. 3), and leads us down the right path (v. 3). Psalm 23:6 says, *“Your (God’s) goodness and love will be with me all my life”* (GNT).

The consistent message of Scripture is that God cannot do evil. As we go through these valleys together, we need to remember that God will use these difficult days for our good, and ultimately for the good of others.

God loves to take the difficult times of our lives and use them to build our character. Paul tells us this in Romans 5:3-4: *“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation”* (NLT).

Hosea 2:15 says, *“I will transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope!”* (NLT). God will do this through the valley we face today as well. He will work it out for good.

As believers, we can be absolutely certain that there is a purpose in our pain.

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THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Continued from page 4...

And lastly, our reward will last forever.

No matter what happens to our earthly bodies, this is not the end of the story. Heaven will be worth any valley we go through today. There we will be rewarded for our faithfulness during our time on earth.

The Bible says heaven is real—and we'll be there forever. No valley, no matter how long it seems now, will last nearly that long.

I don't know what valley you're experiencing today. I don't know what fear keeps you up at night. I don't know what hurt, habit or hang-up has reared its ugly, but I do know that you have a Shepherd walking through this valley with you. I know God will work good out of this situation. I know the valley won't last.

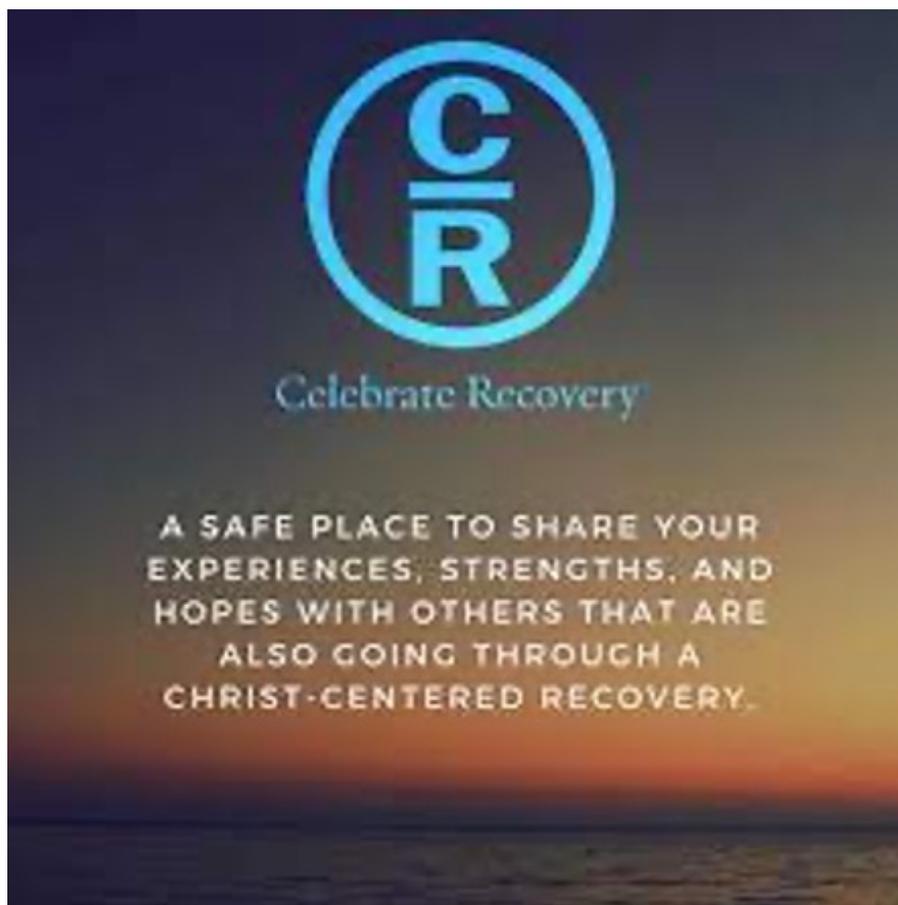
Take some time to soak in Psalm 23 today—not just for the people you'll walk through this valley with but for yourself and your family as well.

We'll walk through this valley together as we look at it in light of eternity. Revelation 21:4 tells us: *[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever*" (NLT).

This is not the end of the story.

Join us each Thursday at Celebrate Recovery, a place where you will find peace as you travel through those valleys.

Bob & Patsy



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

The “What If’s” of Life

Rev. Gotham said something in his sermon this morning that made me think about the “what if’s” of my life. What if that Sunday morning I decided to go to church I had listened to my mother and not gone and instead waited for her to go with me. What if when I arrived at that church no one had spoken to me and ignored my presence? What if I had waited the two weeks that my mother requested would I have ever gone, or would it have been just another empty promise in my life? What if the woman who told me to come and sit by her had ignored me? Would I have returned? What if I had never returned how different would my life have been without God in it. Would I have been just an empty shell? What would I have been like as a teenager without that woman who talked with me about my life or without the Pastor that encouraged me with hard truths? How would that faith which began in that small church have served me when I was a teenager and young adult becoming a nurse? How did becoming a nurse impact other lives? How did my faith impact my life? How did that in turn impact my children’s lives? I saw how that small church changed the lives of my mother and father and my brother and his family when they followed me to that small church. I saw the impact when years later my brother would call me and tell me that he had been forgiven for his sins. It may have taken years and may have happened in a Lutheran church up north, but it began in that small Methodist church in Madison Heights where they followed me. I have belonged to three churches in my life, and all have impacted me in some way. Although my growth began in that small church in Madison Heights it continued to grow in Washington where I first realized that God loved even me unworthy as I am. It continued to grow here at Utica United Methodist Church where I have remained for 42 years and grown even more in my faith with the love and fellowship of others and the wonderful Pastors I have encountered, especially Rev. Gotham who made sure I went to Emmaus and inspires me all the time. What would my life be like now without my faith. Would I have just been bitter about the cancer I had years ago and think that God had caused it? Or would I with my faith see how God had used it to make me better and more grateful for the life given. We all have what if’s in our lives, I am grateful that mine were there, and God was in the decisions. Thanks be to God! How has God touched your life?

Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me by still waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Dear Lord, we thank you for this day. Be with us Lord in all things. Be with those who are sick, and those who grieve, those who are homebound, those who are lonely. We thank you for the blessings we have received. We ask that you be with us in all things, in our days and in our nights. Bless and protect our Pastor. We thank you for bringing him safely back to us from his mission trip. Be with the others who left home and family to go to Africa to help the people there. Be with our church, may we be the hands and feet of Christ in this place. Be with our staff and leaders, guide and protect them. Be with those who are far from us, keep them safe and well and return them to us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

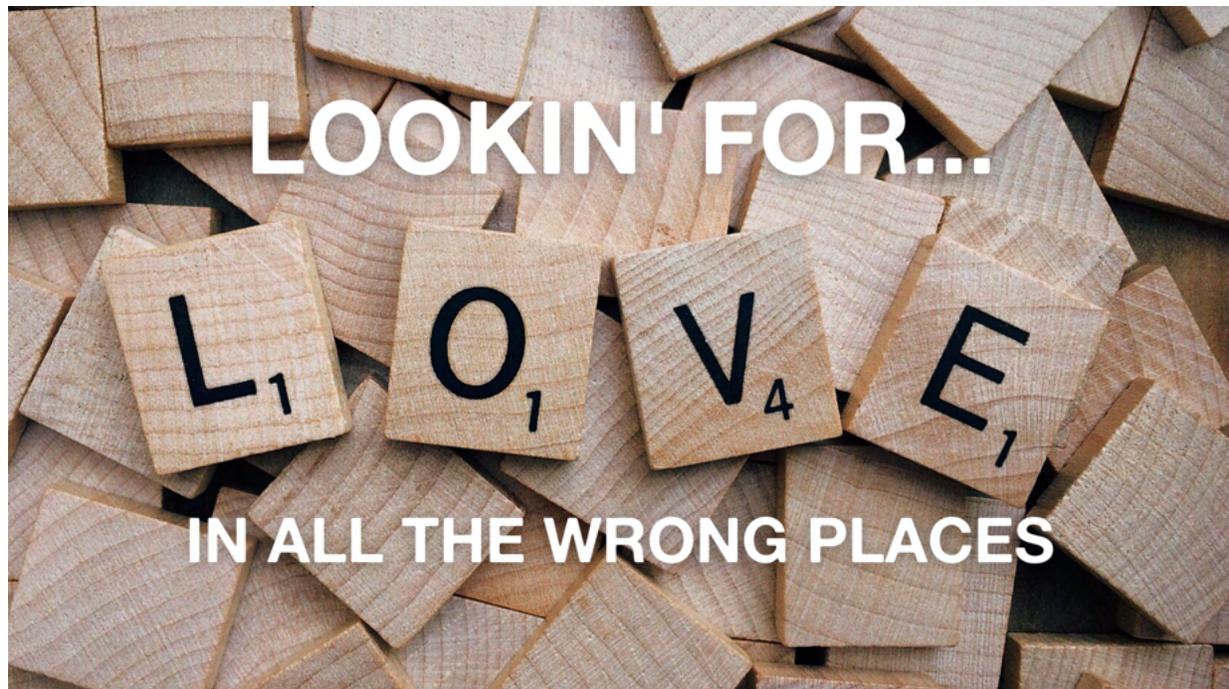
Grace Epperson

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER



Wishing Everyone a Happy Valentine's Day!

We will kick off a new Lenten Series titled "Lookin' For Love" on Ash Wednesday.



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

