



Utica United  
Methodist Church

# Weekly Messenger

December 29, 2023

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## "January Prayer Focus"

I Peter 4:10-11

Gifts...unwrapped and put aside....another Christmas is over or is it?  
Is the giving and sharing of gifts really done for another year?

On January 6th we will celebrate Epiphany, a day in which we celebrate the arrival of the Magi. Epiphany is so much more than the arrival of the Magi however for many that is what we remember. We remember the Magi, the Three Kings and the "gifts" they brought to pay homage as they worshipped our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As we prepare our hearts for the arrival of the Magi we should stop to consider what gift can we, a child of our Heavenly Father give to his son.... the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer of all mankind. In the weeks ahead we will begin learning about Spiritual Gifts and how we can worship Jesus Christ by using our gifts and talents to glorify His earthly kingdom.

Heavenly Father,  
Prayer is the vessel in which I will hear your voice and understand your calling upon my life. In praying I commune with you. In the stillness of the morning I can feel your mighty presence. In and through the power of prayer I will fully understand your desire for me as your disciple here on earth. Lord in whatever time I have left on this earth "let me be put to work for you". Teach me to "freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service." I pray and ask that you will reveal to me the gifts that you, O Lord have blessed me with so that I may humbly serve you.

Heavenly Father, every good and perfect gift comes from you. Open my eyes that I may see these gifts that you have blessed me with and that I will faithfully use these gifts to your glory.

In this I ask and pray,  
Amen.

Thoughts to Ponder:

Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God.

Written by Martha Powers

Utica United  
Methodist Church

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# **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. Please consider inviting your friends and family or neighbors to the different events we will be having. This is a great way to reach out to our community and extend an invitation to someone new.

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

### **December -**

- December 31st - 1 Service at 9:30 followed by a brunch in Fellowship Hall

## **New Years Eve Morning**

Everyone is invited to join us on Sunday, December 31st for 1 service at 9:30am followed by a brunch in Fellowship Hall at 10:30am. The sermon title is "Will you hold my baby?" based on Luke 2:22-35.

This service will be a wonderful reminder that God sent His Son into our care as a baby. How will we hold onto the gift of His child throughout the coming year? The brunch following will be a wonderful event to share in a meal and fellowship with each other to celebrate the coming new year.

## **Holiday Office Hours**

The church office will be closed on:  
Monday, January 1st

## **2023 Donations - Year End**

The end of 2023 is almost upon us. Please make sure that all donations that you wish to be included in your 2023 giving are to the office by Sunday, December 31st. All money received by/on December 31st will be included on your 2023 giving statement. Any money received after December 31st will be counted in 2024. Online donations need to be made by December 31st to be counted in 2023. As long as the online payment is initiated on December 31st you will receive credit for 2023 giving. Anything that is dated after December 31st will be included in the 2024 giving year.

## **United Women in Fatih**

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, January 10th in Fellowship Hall. We will begin with a potluck luncheon at noon. Bring a dish to share and your place setting plus something for the Mini Pantry.

At 1:00 we will have a speaker from the Leader Dogs for the Blind in Rochester.

All women are welcome to attend.

# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER



The loss of a loved one is not easy. It may be hard for you to feel optimistic about the future right now. When you've lost a spouse, child, family member, or friend, you've probably found there are not many people who understand the deep hurt you feel.

This can be a confusing time when you feel isolated and have many questions about things you've never faced before.

**"Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you're shivering."**

GriefShare will return to Utica United Methodist Church on:  
Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 6:30 PM in Fellowship Hall

If you or anyone you know could benefit from attending GriefShare contact:

Bob or Patsy Clark

or

Register at: [www.griefshare.org/findagroup](http://www.griefshare.org/findagroup)



It's hard to believe we've had an active Celebrate Recovery Group at Utica United Methodist Church for a full four years. This Christ centered ministry has changed so many lives, offered so many opportunities to help others get over the things that they need to get over.

Celebrate Recovery is a safe place, a place where it's OK not to be OK. We have a saying at Celebrate Recovery **"No perfect people allowed. All others are welcome."**

Join us on January 4, 2024 as we enter year five. We meet each Thursday at 6:30 PM in Fellowship Hall.

Let the healing begin!



# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## The Beginning

Christmas has come and gone but will we remember “the reason for the season.” It’s not the gifts under the tree, or the ornaments from long ago, or the ham or standing rib roast. It’s a small baby born in a stable and laid in a manger. We have reached the end of the journey but have we? We have seen Mary blessed with her mission, She and Joseph went to Bethlehem then the flight to Egypt, the three Wise Men and their journey. Now comes Lent and then Easter and we learn the true meaning of the birth of a baby. That little babe born in a stable didn’t just come so we would know Christ, he came to save us from ourselves. To save us from our sins, from every wrong we ever contemplated. He came offering with his death on a cross, our forgiveness. “I come that you may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10). What do we have to do in return but turn from our sins and seek forgiveness. Christ will do the rest even to the final sacrifice, his death on earth on a cross. When we were in Israel, we followed the route that Mary and Joseph would have taken to Egypt. They walked while carrying a small baby, we rode in an air-conditioned bus. It was hard to imagine that trek through desert with no roads and on foot. They stayed in Egypt until it felt safe to return home and resume his journey to the cross. But the cross was not the end of the journey. Like his birth it was another beginning. The beginning of the risen Christ. The beginning of the true mission, the beginning of another miracle. We had been to the tomb, to the hill, to the narrow streets of Jerusalem, and seen the small sign, “Ecce Homo.” Behold the man, the words of Pontius Pilate when he presented Jesus Christ to the crowd. We had been to the Mount where 5000 were fed, to Bethlehem, to the Jordan River where our baptism vows were renewed, to the Dead Sea, to the cave where Peter’s mission was told to him. We had been on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, we had looked across the Kidron Valley from the Mount of olives to see the walled city of Jerusalem. We related the miracles of the life of Christ and it all began with the birth of a baby. The virgin birth. The first miracle.

And Mary wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger for there was no room for them at the Inn. Luke 2:12

Lord, we thank you for the miracle of the birth of Jesus, for his life on earth, and for his love revealed even on a cross. Be with us that we may be worthy of the gift of Jesus brought to us as a little baby. Be with our church Lord, may we serve all your people always Lord in your name. May we use the gifts you have given us to serve others Be with our Pastor, bless his service, and protect him. Be with his family. Be with our staff and leaders, give them safety and inspiration and strength for their tasks. Be with the poor and hungry and help us to serve them in your name. In the name of Jesus, 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 - Friday  
8:00am-2:00pm

### Mini Pantry

Food and Monetary  
Donations are being  
accepted.

Suggested foods are eat  
and go items (tuna packs;  
cracker items; granola  
bars; fruit cups; salty  
snacks

### 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/Bookkeeper

**Rachelle Heldt**

rachelle@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 Rachelle Heldt

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](http://www.uticaumc.org)**  
If you need assistance, call the church office.

**Celebrate Recovery, Thursday, 6:30pm**

