



Utica United  
Methodist Church

# Weekly Messenger

January 19, 2024

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## "Have you noticed a theme?"

In the For Better Or Worse comic strip, the family is sitting around the breakfast table as Dad says, "Here we are in a brand new year. I think we should all make some resolutions, don't you?"

Mother responds, "Okay. I resolve not to criticize, to nag less, and bake more often."

The family cheers: "Right on. Neat! Yeah!"

Then Dad says, "I resolve not to lose my temper, and to fix all the things in the house that need repairs."

The family says, "Great. Okay!"

Daughter Elizabeth says, "I resolve to brush Farley (the dog), to keep my room clean, and not fight with Michael (her brother)."

Everyone says, "Good!"

Then Michael says, "I resolve to play road hockey, hang out with my friends, and watch more television."

"Wait a minute," says Mom, "we all made real promises; your resolutions are worthless."

Michael answers, "I know ... but at least mine will be kept."

With this newsletter piece, I've hit the note of how to approach a new year with purpose, three times. It's still January, and there is a whopping majority of the year left in front of us. We can take the opportunity to purposefully pursue the real blessings that we listed from last year. We can decide to make a real difference in our church and in our community by volunteering in new ways. We can decide that we are going to make changes in how we approach life and resolve to truly keep our resolutions by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let's make 2024 the year we hoped for. Let's dig into our faith and grow as disciples. Let's bear witness to the love of God in this world in such a way that those who don't know love will see it in us.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Don

Utica United  
Methodist Church

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[www.UticaUMC.org](http://www.UticaUMC.org)

# **THE WEEKLY MESSENGER**

## **Mini Pantry Update**

As our Mini Pantry enters a new year we have learned much in a very short period of time. We believe the folks frequenting the pantry are not necessarily homeless but those suffering from “food insecurities” for various reasons. We have determined that the microwaveable food items, convenient food items and snack items are going rather quickly, while the foods that provide a meal and/or side dish for a family meal are all too often left behind.

So...where do we go from here?

January, February, March and early April will continue to provide challenges due to the potential severe weather which limits the food that we can use to stock the pantry. We cannot place items that will freeze and potentially explode. Signage has been placed inside the Mini Pantry to inform our donors of the concerns going into the long winter months. There is still much we can do, we just need to “think outside the box”. We are asking for donations of food staples that will not be compromised in severe temperatures.

A “communications board” will be placed next to the **Wagon of Hope** with updated needs for the Mini Pantry. We are moving towards a system that will allow us better and more accurate monitoring of the food items donated and utilized by those seeking our help. We believe this has been a wonderful outreach ministry for UUMC. The congregation has richly blessed the success of this outreach and for that we are truly grateful. Our community has provided both financial and food assistance as so many have learned of this incredible outreach.

Please watch for updates via the Communications Board, The Messenger, UUMC Facebook and occasional announcements from the pulpit.

If you have questions and/or concerns please feel free to contact:

Melanie Kuzia  
Jim and Liza Young  
Ron and Martha Powers.

## **End of Year Giving Statements/Stewardship Commitment Letter**

The end of year giving statements are ready to be picked up. During the 3rd quarter I ran into trouble with trying to e-mail statements. It was decided that I would just print all statements and you could pick up at your convenience. I was also able to complete the commitment letters. If you turned in a stewardship pledge card, you will receive a letter along with your statement confirming your pledge for the year. If you had marked giving weekly, your weekly pledge was multiplied by number of weeks in the year to get an annual giving total amount. If you marked monthly, then that amount was multiplied by 12 months to get an annual total. If you have questions concerning this letter and the amount please e-mail the office at [office@uticaumc.org](mailto:office@uticaumc.org) or call 586-731-7667, or stop in to chat during office hours 8am-2pm Monday-Friday.

Please stop by the table outside the church office and pick up your envelope. Some statements have already gone out in the mail to those who do not attend on a regular basis. If you are somewhere warm for the winter and would like your statement mailed to you at that location - please verify we have your address here in the office and I can mail the letter to you.

Thank you,  
Rachelle

# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## **Congregation, Celebrate the love of Jesus!**

Happy New Year (2024) from the Endowment Committee,

We hope that this letter finds you and your family in good health and ready for the challenges and joys of the New Year. What a wonderful year it was, celebrating 200 years of church life in the community. Just think of how many hearts were touched by the love of Jesus Christ over all those years.

**Al Manning:** for the past 16 years I have been the Chairman of the Endowment Committee, and during that time the Fund has shown continuous growth and has been able to provide additional support to many ministries. We have certainly been blessed, and I want to thank all of you that have made this happen, with both your support and donations over the years. This year will be my last year as Chair of the Endowment Committee. I feel it is time for new leadership, with some fresh ideas.

2023 was a good year. Compared to 2022, the Fund account grew by about 13%. We ended 2022 with a balance of \$230,711. The balance for 2023 was \$261,367. Just as a reminder, the Endowment Fund is managed by the United Methodist Foundation of Michigan; they have done a wonderful job with our investments over the years. Last year, 2023, we disbursed \$7,240, listed below is where the money was used:

\$4,500 - church 200 year anniversary celebrations	
\$1,000 - STARS/EXCEL Programs	\$240 - Stephen Ministry Conference
\$1,000 - MCREST	\$500 - Methodist Children's Home

Please consider the Endowment Fund in your estate planning or weekly giving (beyond your regular pledge). If you have any questions about the Endowment Fund, please contact one of the members listed below. The purpose of an Endowment Fund is to provide income on a long-term basis to the many ministries that make our church a vibrant church, a church in which people will find the love and fellowship that only God can provide. You can now send money to the Endowment Fund through the E-giving feature on the church website. We feel this is your Fund and we want the money to be used to support the ministries of our church.

**"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." 1 Corinthians 3:6.**

**Endowment Committee:** Al Manning (Chair) David Clark, Tim and Barb Fisher, Bob Mowers, Martha Dolenga. We would like to wish you and your family a safe and prosperous New Year.

## **LAST CHANCE SHIRT SALE!**

We still have a few more commemorative Utica UMC polo shirts and some of the previous navy blue "serving the community for nearly 200 years" tee shirts. We will be selling these at reduced prices starting Sunday, January 28, while supplies last! If you wish to purchase one, please stop by the table in the Parlor or Fellowship Hall after services or contact Mary Dolenga. The shirts will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. Thank you!

# 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

## A Lesson Learned

Several years ago, I had a tire that lost air every day. I was stopping at least once a day to put air in this tire. I mentioned it to my husband that I needed new tires. He agreed and said he would go with me to buy new tires. However, the time was never right for over a month, and I continued to stop and put air in my tires daily. I began to get a little aggravated and so decided to take care of it on my own. I went to a local tire store and asked for their best tires. They said, "Michelin." I said, "I'll take 4 of them." When I arrived home, I told husband that I had taken care of the tires. He asked what kind I had purchased, and I told him. He became a little irate and said that those were the most expensive tires, and I could have gotten something cheaper. I just said, "I had to do it myself and this is what I chose." Then Christmas was coming, and we needed to get a tree. Once again, I was unable to get his help. So, I stopped at a tree lot and saw this most gorgeous tree. It was tall, full, and perfect. The man at the lot said, "That tree is expensive." I said, "Good." And I bought the tree. I arrived home with the tree, and we took it in the house. My husband raved about what an excellent job I had done to find such a beautiful tree. Then he asked the final question, "How much did it cost?" I said, "A lot, it's a Michelin." The next year we bought our last "real" tree and the next time I needed new tires he was not able to help me and I bought them on my own and they were not Michelin's. Perhaps I was being prepared for that day when I would have to do it on my own.

Jesus needed Saul and he changed him.

Saul was on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:3-9 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" "Who are you Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." He replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So, they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything.

Saul became Paul and the man who had once stood by at the stoning of Stephen and persecuted Christians became a man who wrote letters to followers from prison, who led a movement, who drew converts to Christ, a man willing to die for his Savior.

Lord, we ask your blessings on this day, be with us in all we do and say. Be with those who suffer illness and grief. Comfort them. Be with our church, help us to take in the stranger, to comfort and support those around us and to live lives worthy of followers of those who went before us. Be with our Pastor, bless his Ministry, grant him your blessings in all he does. Be with his family. Be with our Staff and Leaders guide and protect them. We thank you Lord for all you do in our lives, for the blessing of each day we are given, for all the mercies you have shown us, for the love and forgiveness you offer us each day, In Jesus name. 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**



**CELEBRATE RECOVERY**  
God Never Wastes a Hurt!