



Utica United
Methodist Church

Weekly Messenger

January 26, 2024

IN THIS ISSUE:

Mini Food
Pantry

Blood Drive

2023 TIM
Results

Shirt Sale

Tuesday Bible
Study

Devotional

Back Page
Info

"Are You Bringing Glory to God?"

As children of God and members of His Church, we are called to spread His word and to share the gift of grace He has given to all the world. Maybe you have the desire to serve God, or have done so in the past, but are uncertain as to how you can serve God today. The God Dreams Group and Leadership Board wish to invite you and encourage you to join us on a journey this year to strengthen our understanding of servanthood and the spiritual gifts God has given us to serve together as a body of Christ through Utica UMC.

Spiritual gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit for each of the believers in our Lord, Jesus Christ. Each of us has been given spiritual gifts to use to bring glory to God. As you are transformed into his likeness, you may find your spiritual gifts have grown into new abilities to share your faith with those who need to find hope, peace, and love.

While some of us have taken the opportunity to discover our spiritual gifts in years past, we are called once again to re-examine the gifts God has given us. For some, this will be a new opportunity to learn about the gifts God has given to them. Either way, this opportunity will help you to discover if new gifts or existing gifts can be used to serve God today.

As we offer you this opportunity to learn of the spiritual gifts God has given you, we will also explore ways you can apply your gifts to serve God. We hope you will embrace this effort to learn how each of us is provided with gifts which can be used to spread the word and bring God's love to others. Let us pray.

Dear Lord,

Please put it on our hearts to earnestly search for ways we can serve which will bring glory to you, most heavenly Father. We thank you for your gift of grace and the hope for eternal salvation brought to us through your son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. We want to serve you dear God by using the Spiritual Gifts given to us so others may come to know and love you. We ask you to bless each of us with your Holy Spirit to help us to discern our calling to serve you in accordance with your will. The Lord asked, "whom shall I send", and I responded, "send me Lord".

In the name of our precious savior Jesus, Amen.

God Dreams Team and Leadership Board

Utica United
Methodist Church

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Sterling Heights, MI

(586) 731-7667

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.

Blood Drive - February 13th 11:00 - 5:00

There were three blood drives last year at UUMC, with a total of 73 units of blood collected. Each unit of blood saves three lives. This calculates to 219 lives saved in our community. That is an amazing accomplishment. A big thank you to all the people who took the time to donate their blood, you know who you are.

Again this year there will be three blood drives, all on Tuesdays from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. The dates are: **February 13th, June 11th and October 8th**. If you are able please consider donating blood this year, it is a very rewarding experience.

To make an appointment you can contact the Red Cross at www.redcrossblood.org or call them at 1-800-733-2767.

Remember, you can not buy blood at Walmart. If you are not able to give blood, but would still like to volunteer you can help out at the canteen table. A couple of hours would be helpful, plus you get free goodies. There is also a need for help at the end of the drive to put all the tables and chairs back to their original location. Another way to help out is to bake some home baked cookies, a dozen or two is plenty. Contact Al Manning or Bob Baldwin if you are interested in volunteering your time.

Blood Drive Team

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

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!



Tuesday Morning Bible Study

The Tuesday Morning Bible Study will begin a new study on Tuesday, January 29th at 11:30 in the Conference Room.

The Story Continues
The Acts of the Apostles for Today
by J. Ellsworth Kalas.

This is a 12 week study with questions and discussion at the end of each chapter. This book is available on Kindle or through Amazon Prime. Please contact Martha Powers at (586)703-1668 with any questions.

2023 Year End Statements

At this time any year-end giving statements that had not been picked up at church have been sent in the mail as of Wednesday, January 24th. If you do not see your giving statement by the end of January, please contact the church and I can either send it again through the mail or if you have an e-mail address I can send it via e-mail. Thank you!



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

2023 Together-In-Missions Result

During 2023 the Utica United Methodist Church celebrated our 200th year anniversary as a beacon of God's love in this community. Praise God! With many opportunities throughout the year to bring a spirit of joy and peace to our neighbors and our church community, we are grateful for those who came before us to establish a home for God's faithful children. For 2 centuries this congregation has offered the faith, love and hope of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, not only to the Utica community, but also to many parts of Michigan, the United States and the world.

The year began with our church hosting the Warming Center once again for many homeless citizens of our community. A warm place to sleep and hearty food to comfort the soul are a blessing to those on the street. Shortly after, we experienced disaster once again hitting the USA with a tragic wildfire in the beautiful paradise of Hawaii. Through our UMCOR offering in February over \$1300 was collected to aid with the relief efforts. This amounted to more than 4 times our church's pledge to UMCOR, but underscores the compassion of our church membership to extend a hand to those in need.

Our Easter offering was used to fulfill 2/3 of our pledges to our missionaries, Randy Hildebrandt of the God's Country Cooperative Parish in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Temba Nekomozepi of the Mujila Falls Agricultural Center in Zambia, Africa. Following Easter, our church hosted the MCREST community at their new home in Mt. Clemens. Men, women and children were fed by volunteers from Utica UMC during the first week of May through donations provided by our church.

Several ministry highlight updates were introduced during worship services through Mission Moments and Messenger articles during the year with special collections being held during the summer for back-to-school supplies and in September for winter coats. School supplies were sent to the Methodist Children's Home in Redford, while gently used winter coats were sent to the Baldwin Center in Pontiac. Temba, our missionary from Zambia, visited our church in October to share the many advances the ministry has accomplished with the Lunda tribe. In November our traditional sharing of pies for those who attend Thanksgiving dinner at the Baldwin Center delivered over 60 pies to the homeless. And finally during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season, the Love Loaf and Christmas offerings provided nearly \$3,500 toward the fulfillment of our pledged support to mission work.

While 2023 was a very busy year at Utica UMC, we hope to improve our outreach efforts in 2024 in an effort to be a light in our community. We pray that our neighbors will discover the many opportunities at our church to share God's word locally, regionally and worldwide through our ministry programs at Utica UMC. May our prayers recognize the many blessings provided to us by God. May our hearts feel human compassion toward those searching for a relationship with our heavenly Father. May we be the hands and feet of God by supporting our ministry partners with our gifts and services. Thank you, Lord, for our brothers and sisters in Christ and may you strengthen our ministry efforts to bring glory to you, our God!

Utica UMC Together-In-Mission (TIM) Team:

Barry Croteau – Leader
Linda Baker – Secretary/Treasurer
Peggy Miller – Member
Colleen Croteau – Member

Kathy Weaver – Member
Ron Borgacz – Member
Debbie Foskett – Member

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

“God Has A Plan”

I have a file called “Ideas for Devotionals”. When I am stumped about what story to tell or what to write about, I go to that file. I went to it this week and it was blank; I had used up all my ideas for devotionals. I thought about what I could write, and not only was the page blank, but so was my mind. For some reason the old TV program “The Naked City” came to mind. If you remember, at the end of the program, they would say “There are eight million stories in the Naked City, this has been one of them”. I would reply, “then why do we have to watch reruns”! There are eight million stories in our lives and there are no reruns, but we do have forgiveness and do overs. I was talking with a long-time friend and discovered that our lives had been similar. We both came from dysfunctional families with someone in the family who had been a strong presence in our lives. For me, it was my brother, and for her it had been a sister. For both of us, those people had taught us to stand up for ourselves and that we could be more than what others thought of us. My brother pushed me all the time about the importance of education -to not give up as he had done, and to use it to better my life. Her sister told her she was better than the life that had been given to her and to rise above those that belittled and shamed her. We both found our way out of the lives that had put us down and found our way to our faith. It was a journey that culminated in a church and newfound faith. I believe that the journey started a long, long time ago, even before our birth. God loved us before we knew him, before we were formed, and he had a plan for our lives. We may not like that plan, we may suffer in that plan, and we may not follow that plan... But then we get a second, and even a third chance. Our strength is in knowing we are loved, and held as precious, by a loving, forgiving and ever-present God. It is in that plan we can give hope, love, and witness to others.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart.

Isaiah 55:6-8 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

Lord, we thank you for your presence in our lives. May we live lives that are worthy of your love. Be with those who mourn, those who face illness, those who are suffering, those who hunger, and those who are lost. Be with our church that all who enter our doors find the living Lord. Be with our Pastor and our staff as they lead us. Help us Lord to be the hands and feet of Christ for it is in his 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 - 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**

If you need assistance, call the church office.

Celebrate Recovery, Thursday, 6:30pm



CELEBRATE RECOVERY
God Never Wastes a Hurt!