



Utica United
Methodist Church

Weekly Messenger

January 5, 2024

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"What Were You Most Thankful for in 2023?"

On December 31st, I asked the congregation to write down what they were most thankful for in 2023. Below are the submitted responses. I encourage all to read through these, reflect on them, and consider what we've found most important to us in 2024. I believe it can offer us some help in how we map out and prioritize our 2024.

The gift of health, family, and friends
support one another!

Helpful friends willing to help and

Restoration of daughter's health
blessings Good health

My health

There were so many

You being here with me
thank God, I recovered!

Thank you, Lord

Life! I was very ill, and

The blessing of financial security, no quarantine, good friends, this church!
Family The Lions

My wonderful recovery from injury
Church

I am thankful for my new house trailer

Family and friends, and good health!
caring church family

I am thankful for good health and a

Family
everything

Jesus: who is my peace, my hope, my comforter, my provider, my

Medical technology

Family and freedom

Good health

This church and the opportunity to serve

At the beginning of this new year, we get to choose how we approach it and where we spend our time and effort. I pray we all spend 2024 with our faith, family, and friends as a priority. I also pray each of us chooses to be grateful for the blessings God provides.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Don

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THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

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.

YEAR-END OPERATING FUND UPDATE

Finance Committee is pleased to inform you we met all of our Operating Fund obligations for 2023. We achieved this through your faithful giving and conservative spending by our staff and ministry leaders. Thank you for your stewardship! And, praise God for providing the resources needed for our ministries.

In total, we received \$411,500 for the Operating Fund in 2023. This is a 10% increase in income from last year. Our Operating Fund expenses for 2023 were just over \$405,000. This is a 5% reduction in expenses. Combined, this enabled us to meet all of our obligations and have a little carry-forward available to pay some of the bills we will receive early in January.

The 2024 Operating Fund budget is \$425,000. This is a decrease of \$13,000 from the 2023 Operating Fund budget. With God's help, all of our faithful giving, and watchful spending we will again work together in 2024 to wisely use the resources we are provided in order to accomplish the ministries God has entrusted to us.

We are also grateful for your generous designated giving for our missions ministries (through Easter, Love Loaves, Christmas, and other offerings). And, for your generous designated giving for church ministries such as MCREST, STARS/XCEL, Mini Pantry, Bells/Organ/Music, Friend in Need, and Oil Change. Over \$39,000 was designated for these and other ministries in 2023.

Additionally, over \$30,000 was received for Brighter Future Building Fund. This, along with previous gifts received, allowed the sanctuary ceiling to be repaired, the parking lot to be resealed/repared, and the stair treads on the stairs leading to the upper and lower level classrooms to be replaced. Your continuing gifts to Brighter Future Building Fund are appreciated so we will have resources available when larger projects/updates arise.

In 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NLT) it says: "And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others." We are grateful, thankful, and blessed each of you have faith God will provide all you need and you in turn share your "plenty" with others.

Off to Africa

Pastor Don is leading a group to Guinea-Bissau, Africa once again this year. He left on Thursday, January 4th and will return on January 19th. Please keep Pastor Don and the mission team in your prayers. Please pray for safe travels, for good weather, for the work that will be accomplished and for the health and safety of the team. Let the light of God shine through each of them as they work and interact with the people of Guinea-Bissau.

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 18th 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



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



Randy Hildebrant

On Sunday, January 14th we welcome Randy Hildebrant, a missionary in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to our church. Randy is one of two missionaries that we support through Together in Missions. Please plan on attending service that Sunday and consider a donation to Randy or to God's Country Cooperative Parish. Please write either Randy Hildebrant or God's Country Cooperative Parrish (GCCP) on the other line of your offering envelope and we will get all donations received in January to Randy and God's Country Cooperative Parish. A special offering will be taken on Sunday, January 14th for Randy, but you can turn in donations any Sunday during the month of January.

Randy Hildebrant is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church assigned as a Church and Community Worker at God's Country Cooperative Parish, based in Newberry, Michigan.

The parish consists of seven churches. Randy works with them in community development, leadership development, special projects, and in hosting volunteer-in-mission teams. He travels among and speaks often in the churches. God's County Cooperative Parish has been a transforming community for 30 years.

Randy was formerly with the Rural Revitalization Project of the Elkhorn Valley District of the Nebraska Annual Conference. The Elkhorn project was both spiritual and programmatic, seeking to engage an outward-directed sense of ministry among the laity.

In his congregational revitalization work, Randy asks congregations to answer three questions:

1. Why do people need Christ?
2. Why do people need church?
3. Why do people need this particular church?

"As they answer these questions, they will find their vision and purpose of the congregation," he says.

Prior to his service in the Nebraska Conference in June 2011, Randy was assigned for 10 years to the Jubilee Project, an Appalachian ministry based in Sneedville, Tennessee in the Holston Annual Conference. He has a strong commitment to rural ministry. Earlier in his work, he was assistant pastor of the Franklin United Methodist Church in Franklin, North Carolina.

Randy was born in Oklahoma and studied sports administration at East Central University in Ada. He and his family now live in Plainview, Nebraska, where he is active in both the Crawford Valley and Plainview United Methodist churches.

He is married to Aletha Hildebrant and the couple has two children, Grace and Adam.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

A New Year

It is 2024, another year has gone by. Personally, I never thought I would reach this year. If I would have known I would be around this long, I might have taken better care of myself. New Year's is a time of reflection. We think about what we've done and what we want to be better at. We think of the changes we want to make in our lives. Things that will make us healthier, wiser, happier, more fulfilled. These are mostly good things; flaws we see in ourselves. The frustration comes when we want the same thing year after year, or when we do well at our changes and then comes February and our lives slip back into the same habits. Why do we fail? Is it perhaps because we trust our flawed selves instead of relying on the one who calls to us. Are our changes just cosmetic and don't address the areas that we are weak in. Do we admit to God our failures, ask him to change us and then blame him when we fail? I am puzzled by people who don't accept the blame for their own conduct. Was it Flip Wilson who always said, "The devil made me do it?" A good excuse but won't get you a free pass. The devil tempted Jesus and offered him the world if he would deny God. Jesus denied the devil's power, we too are tempted by earthly things, and in our temptation, we look away from the God who loved us before we were born, even before we were formed in our mother's womb, and had a plan for us. Let us remember Jesus called us to service, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to serve those less fortunate.

1 Corinthians 13:2-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking; it is not easily angered. It does not keep a record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Almighty God, let us heed your call, to serve you, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and help the unfortunate. We ask that you help us to comfort the sick and the grieving. We ask Lord that you be with our Pastor as he serves people in Africa, grant him safety and good health, be with him in his travel, and in his service to the needs of others. Be with those who are serving with him. May all they do be in your name almighty God. Be with our church, may we serve others always, may we be the hands and feet of Jesus now, in this place, in your name. Be with our staff and leaders, bless those who take on new roles this month, guide them and bless their work. May all we do be pleasing to you almighty God. 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 - 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!