



Utica United
Methodist Church

Weekly Messenger

February 9, 2024

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"February Prayer Focus"

In the book of John 4, Jesus is at Jacob's well in the middle of the day. All his disciples have gone into a Samaritan town to get food, and a lone woman arrives to draw water.

Here in the year 2023, we know that none of these events are a coincidence. The question I ponder is WHY? Why did it happen, and why was it important enough to record in the Bible. I am confident that many brighter biblical scholars have delved into these same questions. There are a couple of points of great interest to me. First, I am impressed by the disciples' willingness to follow Jesus' command without hesitation (reminder to self). For myself, I might have complained why must we get "to go" food and bring it back. We could just easily walk into town and eat.

Secondly, she arrives and sees a lone man with no companions, and she doesn't turn around and go back to town. He speaks first and asks for water. Knowing he is an Israelite; she does not rebuke him with some well-chosen words and tell him to get his own water. I would think that her fellow Samaritans would applaud these remarks. I like to think she sensed something divine in Him, after all she still proceeded to the well while a lone man was there and who was considered an enemy.

Then we read further and see His great response regarding who is the Messiah, Jesus says "I, the one speaking to you - I am He" So Jesus decides to tell this lone person, who is considered a resident of a NO contact people, that He is the Messiah.

"I am HE" Can't deliver a more direct statement. No wiggle room, no further rhetoric to prove his statement, no lengthy diatribe. But why her??

I like to consider that He is speaking to all gentiles, and all the future Christians that will follow in the next 2000 years.

Thus, my prayer for myself and you is simple. Dear Jesus, when those rough times that foster doubt within our soul, (these are the times that try men's souls) please help us to focus on that three-word statement of fact, "I am He". Help us to fixate on the words and their truth, and all else will follow.

Written by: Bob MacKool

Utica United
Methodist Church

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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

Ash Wednesday - February 14

You are invited to join us this Lent season as we kick off the Lenten series "What r u up 2?" on Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday Service is February 14th at 7pm in the Sanctuary. Let us explore how we can be up to something and doing something of service to God instead of giving up something this season.



CHILI, SOUP, AND DESSERT COOK-OFF Sunday, February 25, 2024 4:00 PM



It's time to look for your favorite recipes and some new ones. We will be having a Chili, Soup, and Dessert Cook-off on Sunday, February 25 at 4:00 PM in Fellowship Hall.

- Sign-up sheets will be available starting February 11. You may enter in one or more categories and you may enter more than once in each category.
- Prizes will be awarded for the top 3 entries in each category and for the top overall entry.
- Come Sunday, February 25 at 4:00 PM and sample all the entries. You don't need to enter to participate. "Vote" with your dollars (or \$5's or \$10's or more) for your favorite entries in each category. Vote as many times as you wish.
- Bring your friends and family – they will enjoy wonderful food and fellowship with us.
- Proceeds will be used to support the United Methodist Conference through our Ministry Shares.

Brighter Future Building Fund

The Brighter Future Building Fund was started in 2018 to enable us to be proactive about making updates and repairs to our facilities and properties. On behalf of Finance Committee, Trustees, and Leadership Board, thank you for your commitment.

Below are some highlights of the Brighter Future Building Fund.

- The balance, after our remaining committed projects are finished, will be \$82,471. This includes \$50,000 which has been reserved for updates/repairs for the rooftop HVAC units.
- In 2023, we made repairs to the sanctuary ceiling (\$6,125), replaced the church stair treads (\$2,643), resealed the parking lot (\$15,075), and started the parsonage rear patio project (committed costs \$26,800; remaining expenses \$9,300).
- The second phase of our fundraising ended September 30, 2023. We are grateful for the gifts totaling \$109,630, we received during this phase. We are also grateful for those who are continuing to make contributions to BFBF.
- Since the start of Brighter Future Building Fund, we have received \$425,948 in contributions from the congregation and rebates. We also received \$170,677 from the sale of the Canal Road parsonage.
- Since the start of Brighter Future Building Fund we have spent \$498,193. An additional \$17,050 is committed to projects which are in process. Major things we have done over the last 5 years include: lighting & technology updates, resealing the parking lot 3 times, repaying the conference loan for previous projects, resealing the flat roof, updates to the parsonage, and replacing the boiler with a forced air system and air conditioning.

Thank you for your on-going commitment to enabling a brighter future for everyone. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Dolenga.

Office Closed

The church office will be closing early on Thursday, February 22nd and will be closed all day Friday, February 23rd for vacation. Please make sure all business with the office takes place prior to Thursday or it will be handled on Monday the following week.

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

PRAYER

Prayer is defined by Webster as “A supplication or expression addressed to God.” Jesus told us how to pray. In Matthew 6:6 Jesus says “Go into your room and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” I pray daily and often. Those tiny prayers offered up for ourselves and others are heard just as well as the prayers at the beginning or end of the day. Sometimes I think my prayers are too rote, that they do not express the wonder of prayer. That we have a God that loves each and every one of us and will listen to our prayers is a wonder and a miracle from our maker. I remember standing at a beautiful spot in Austria and staring in wonder and awe at the view and my prayer was one of gratitude for how beautiful God had made the world and that I could be in that time and place and see the magnificence of that scene. Or the first time I saw my children and grandchildren and great grandchildren and my gratitude at the miracle of birth. I need to thank God for the miracle of each day that is given me. For the wonder and magnificence of his love, for where he has placed me, for the journey that has been given to me and even for the hard things. For those who are gone but left me with their love and the memories of the times we spent together. I recall making decisions when a teenager that changed my life and looking back, I know that it was not my words but the words of my brother that strengthened me and gave me the resolve to choose a good path. God gave me that gift. God gives us each the gift of prayer. What a powerful gift! Jesus told us how to pray and this prayer is used whenever we gather to worship.

Matthew 6:9-13 This, then is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us your debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. (NIV Study Bible)

Lord, we thank you for the gift of prayer. We thank you for each day, for the beauty in a sunrise and a sunset. For the miracle of birth and the wonder of life. We thank you for those who are in our lives, for those who touch our lives and hearts with your love, may we reach out to others with that same love and understanding. We ask Lord that you be with those who are suffering illness and grief, that they feel your healing touch. Be with our Pastor and bless his ministry as he brings us your word and your comfort. Be with our Staff and Leaders, bless them in all they do. 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!