



# Weekly Messenger

January 10, 2025

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## "What Promise Have You Made?"

What promise have you made? (Or, what promise will you make?)

I recently asked the youth group what they were committed to accomplishing in 2025. Their answers were varied, and then the adults around me began to chime in. I shared my own promise to myself for 2025 with the group.

I have purchased and am reading through a chronological Bible this year. I've read the Bible through before, but when a colleague shared the impact reading a chronological Bible had on them, I decided to give it a go.

I still hear one of my theology professors urging us to understand the context to fully interpret scripture. I'm convinced reading God's word in this manner will help me better understand the context and how I can apply God's Word to my life.

What promise have you made to yourself for 2025? We aren't much more than a week into the year, so there is still time. My new Bible arrived a couple of days into the new year, so I had some makeup reading to do, but I got it caught up. Don't pass on an opportunity to make a commitment that will nourish your life.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Don



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# **THE WEEKLY MESSENGER**

## **2024 YEAR END FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR GOD'S GLORY!**

2024 is "in the books". And, the Operating Fund income of \$392,207 was sufficient to fulfill our Operating Fund expenses of \$391,334 (net \$873). This allowed us to maintain our year-to-year carry-forward reserve of \$25,000. Thank you for your generous and faithful giving. Truly, your gifts were for God's glory!

The Operating Fund provides the foundation of our ministries. It includes staff compensation, conference pensions and ministry shares, office technology and supplies, communications, administration, property upkeep, utilities, insurance, music, and Christian education resources.

Additionally in 2024, \$53,370 was given for specific purposes/ministries. These gifts are the primary source of funding for these things. Funds received are designated for the individual ministries and they are only used for these specific things. The gifts included:

- \$3,621 for Special Offerings (World Communion, Student Day, UMCOR, Human Relations Day, Native American Awareness, and Peace with Justice)
- \$4,440 for Winter Shelter, MCREST, Oil Change Ministry, Mini Pantry, and Friend in Need
- \$4,952 for STARS, XCEL, and Youth programs
- \$10,736 for the Pipe Organ Fund
- \$13,055 for Build Beyond the Building projects
- \$16,566 for Together In Mission projects

Similar to the parable of the bags of gold, hear your master saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:21 NIV)

So, let us share in our master's happiness today. And, let us look forward to what we will be called to do for God's glory in the year ahead. As good stewards of our resources, the Operating Fund budget approved for 2025 is comparable to 2024. We also anticipate our ministries will require comparable financial and other resources in 2025 to what were needed in 2024. I can't wait to see all the places God will lead us and how God will use us in 2025!

A few giving notes:

If you are bringing your offering envelope to church, please do not seal it and don't tape it shut. It is also appreciated if you put your name on your offering envelope.

We are able to receive contributions in the form of cash, checks, stocks/bonds/mutual funds, etc. We also have e-Giving available for your convenience. If you would like to make a gift of stocks/bonds/mutual funds or a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA please let the office know so we are aware to watch for this.

Thank you in advance for your continued generous and faithful giving.

### **End of Year Giving Statements**

End of year giving statements will be available for pick up starting this Sunday, January 12th. If you submitted a pledge card to the office, you will find a pledge summary statement as well. It is a total of your pledge for the entire year regardless if you pledged weekly or monthly. Statements not picked up in the next two weeks will be mailed out to you.

# **THE WEEKLY MESSENGER**

## **ANGEL ORNAMENTS AND COOKIE WALK UPDATE**

Thank you for supporting the angel ornaments sale and cookie walk. Seventy individuals were remembered or honored with angel ornaments on our remembrance trees this year. The angel ornament sale raised \$960 to help meet our year end obligations.

Also, thank you for supporting the cookie walk – as bakers, preservers, sale helpers, and purchasers! This year our sale included cookies, sweet breads, sweet treats, apple butter, apple sauce, and jam. The two-day sale raised over \$2,700 which was used to help meet our year end obligations.

Through the cozies and quilted items sale, Martha Powers and Debbie Foskett also raised over \$1,500 toward our ministry shares. Thank you to those of you who purchased these items. And, thank you Martha and Debbie for sharing your time, talent, and resources to make and sell these items.

Thank you again to all of you who supported these sales which helped us meet our 2024 obligations.

### **Quilted Item Update**

We would like to thank the congregation for your incredible financial support buying Soup Cozies and Quilted Items. A total of \$1564.00 was raised to help offset the 2024 apportionments.

Our God is such and AWESOME God and it was a true blessing to honor him using the gifts and talents he blessed us with.

With Grateful Hearts,  
Debbie Foskett and Martha Powers

### **United Women in Faith**

Our UWIF Meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 15th in Fellowship Hall. We will begin with a potluck luncheon at noon. Please bring a dish to share and your own place setting. Drinks are provided.

At 1pm, Carolyn Faulkner, will present a program about Abigayle Ministries and the Tiny Home Community for unwed mothers.

All women are invited to attend.

### **Warming Center**

We will be helping to support the Warming Center the week of February 2nd-8th. We will be making meals to deliver to the warming center guests. Mark your calendars for this upcoming event. Many hands make light work. More information will be coming in the next couple of weeks.

### **Thank You Note**

Dear Church,  
Thank you for honoring me with an Angel on this year's Angel Tree. I was humbled by your gesture and will continue to do my very best to honor you, the church and most importantly our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Serving brings me incredible JOY and I am blessed in ways that are truly immeasurable.

With a Grateful Heart,  
Martha Powers

# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## UTICA UMC – TIM Year-end Report for 2024

To our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, welcome to 2025 and Happy New Year!

As we look forward to a year full of God's blessings, we look back to thank God for His guidance and blessings in 2024. God is GOOD! With the leadership of our Together in Mission team, the Utica United Methodist Church family brought glory to God through the many ministries supported by all of us. May God continue to bless this church family at UUMC as we reach out to our community with His love to care for the needy and to bring hope to the lost. Through our many initiatives in 2024, we were able to bring spiritual growth to many through our services and generosity to the ministries we support. Here is a summary of the ministry events for 2024:

**January** – While Pastor Don was absent on an African Mission Trip, we had our missionary from God's Country Community Ministries, Randy Hildebrandt serve as our spiritual leader. Shortly after this Sunday worship, Utica UMC enrolled a team of volunteers to serve GCCM on a mission trip in June.

**February** – UMCOR administrative and Natural Disaster Relief contributions were heavily supported by Utica UMC raising in excess of \$2000. With the many natural disasters in Florida, the east coast and the west coast, our donations have been put to good use in restoring the healing and bringing a sense of peace to the victims.

Through our Easter Offering, we enabled financial support for our Missionaries – Randy Hildebrandt of God's Country Community Ministries and Temba Nkomozepe of Mujila Falls Agricultural Center in Zambia, Africa.

**April** – In addition to our meal support for up to 90 people of the MCREST community, which is now located in Mt. Clemens, a small group of workers spent a Saturday afternoon helping with the Hands with Detroit work day at Cass Community Services.

**May** – About a dozen members of Utica UMC attended a walking tour of the Methodist Children's Home Society grounds located in Redford. We learned of the many child and youth programs offered at the site and of the many services staff provides for the fostering community to place children in the care of a loving home.

**June** – The Utica UMC Mission Team hosted several fundraising activities and a collection of household goods to support the Church Mouse program leading to our trip to God's Country Community Ministries in the Michigan Upper Peninsula. In addition to completing several construction and renovation projects, the largest ever attended Church Mouse shopping event occurred during our time in Newberry, MI. The UUMC Mission Team was blessed with a very rewarding experience in God's Country sharing the love of our church family with the members of the community.

**August** – During a Mission Moment at the beginning of services, Kathy Weaver provided an update on the progress achieved at the Mujila Falls Agricultural Center. Through the ministry led by missionary, Temba Nkomozepe, we have been able to follow the improvements being introduced to the Lundy tribe to bring more productive harvests and new forms of income to this needy area of northwestern Zambia.

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# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

**September** – Once again with our Christian partners at Trinity Lutheran and King of Kings Lutheran churches, Utica UMC hosted a free oil change event led by Ron Borgacz and members of our church family. Over 55 low income guests were able to receive an oil change, served a meal and have a brief conversation with our servant volunteers. The recipients of these services are truly grateful for the warm love received during their visit to our church.

**October** – As we prepared for the time of harvest and thanksgiving, a Love Loaf Collection began that ultimately netted offerings to be used to support the many ministry pledges of our church. The collection totaled over \$1600 toward the pledges. Praise God!

**November** – In addition to the Love Loaf Collection that was completed prior to our Thanksgiving Day celebration, Utica UMC collected 78 pies for the Baldwin Center. The pies were served to the guests of the center as a part of their Thanksgiving Meal. Thank you for your generosity.

**December** – Thank you so much for your Christmas Offering. The collection provided funding to fulfill pledges to the Methodist Children's Home Society, Cass Community Services and the Baldwin Center. In addition, support was provided for the Haiti Children Project and our local Good Shepherd Coalition. May we all be thankful for the opportunity to serve God through our Utica UMC church family.

As we reflect back on the many examples of being Together In Mission, we are grateful to lead our brothers and sisters at Utica UMC in bringing glory to God through our heartfelt support of multiple ministries serving a wide variety of God's children in need. As we begin 2025, ask yourself if you feel drawn to take a more active role in your service to God? If you hear a calling to answer, watch for the many opportunities to offer your services in support of local ministries or by joining our Mission Team for a week-long trip to God's Country. Many blessings and thanks for the generous support of our church family in our Utica UMC ministry outreach program. May God bless us all.

Yours Truly,

The TIM Leadership Team:

Barry Croteau

Linda Baker

Debbie Foskett

Ron Borgacz

Colleen Croteau

Peggy Miller

Kathy Weaver

## **Mini Food Pantry Update**

As we move into the very long brutally cold winter days here in The Mitt we need to rethink the food items placed in the Mini Pantry. Please refrain from purchasing items that can freeze, especially food in glass containers.

**Suggestions:**

Boxed potatoes (any kind), Stuffing, Packets of Gravy, Cereal, Tuna in pouches, Pancake Mix, Knorr's Soup, Bear Creek Soup, Hamburger Helper

Please contact any of the Mini Pantry Team if you have any questions. You have blessed this outreach ministry with your gracious and generous hearts. We are forever grateful!!!

Melanie Kuzia, Jim and Liza Young, Ron and Martha Powers

# THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

## Happy New Year

Happy New Year, a wish we give each other, a time of good wishes for all... A time of renewed vows to get it right this year. A time of promises to ourselves and others, and sometimes God that we will change and become better people. We'll give up desserts, alcohol, and empty promises. But then life steps in and we are soon on the same path we were on in December. Or people become like me and avoid resolutions because we have failed too many times. Resolutions can be the promises we make to ourselves or even to loved ones but what about the promises we make in our faith life. I will pray daily, I will love God's people more, I will help the hungry, I will be kinder and more understanding. I will attend church or join a religious class. The promises we make to God. They are easy to make and easy to break and easy to ask forgiveness for. We have a God who made us mortal, a forgiving God, a patient God, a God who hears what is in our hearts. A God who knows our breaking point, a God who knows our sins, and a God who knows the plans he has for us. A God who we sometimes disappoint daily. A God who made us who we are. Remember Flip Wilson who would proclaim "The Devil made me do it?" An excuse for all kinds of things. We have the possibility for change in us not just on New Years Day but in every minute of every day we are given on this earth. We can do the things God calls us to, to feed the hungry, not only those that need food but those who need to hear the word of a forgiving God. Some hunger for food a real need, and others hunger for salvation and that is also a real need, and we are called to provide it.

If you make resolutions this New Years, may they be resolutions that make this world a better place. Give to the hungry, lift another person up, talk to the stranger in church, pray for the sick and the lonely and those in need of a friend. Pray for our country and the children in schools, pray for the depressed, and those that grieve. Pray for those who live with wars, and poverty, and terrorism. Pray for our world and all God's people, those that are sick in heart and mind. and for the children who deal with violence in their lives. May your resolutions and your prayers help all God's children the young and the old.

Father God, may you hear our prayers for those who are suffering, for those who grieve, for the sick and the lost. Lord may the violence and school shootings cease, may we find ways to reach those who are tortured by their thoughts and the sorrow and anger in their hearts and minds. May we be a kinder and gentler nation. Be with our church may we greet the stranger, feed the hungry, care for the sick and those in need. Be with our pastor and bless his ministry. Be with our staff and leaders, guide and lead them. Be with the sick and the lonely and those who are still afraid of a pandemic, may they find you waiting to strengthen and comfort them. Be with our children in schools keep them safe. Be with those in countries that suffer from terrorism, help the people in places like Haiti where violence rules and those countries that are at war, may they find peace. Be with the sick and lonely in our midst. May we be what you have called us to be, your people in this place and in this time. In Jesus name we pray.

Jeremiah 29: 4:11" For I know the plans I have for you ", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future."

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 canned  
meat, pancake mixes and  
syrup, small peanut butter  
and jelly, boxes of  
crackers.**

### 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

Announcement Loop/Vertical TVs—

**End of day on Tuesday** each week  
Messenger Articles and Prayer List by

**Noon on Wednesday** each week.  
Announcement made during service

by 1pm Friday

E-mail rachelle@uticaumc.org or  
office@uticaumc.org

## E-Giving

**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**

