



Weekly Messenger

February 7, 2025

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"A Lesson from Africa"

When I lead a mission trip, I try to give the team members more than just a work experience. Sure, work is a key part of the reason we make the trip, but I try to offer people on a mission team an experience where they relate their day-to-day time on the trip to the practice of their faith. Having led more than twenty mission trips, I can testify to learning lessons each time I go. I want to share some lessons I learned on my recent trip to Guinea-Bissau, West Africa.

First, everyone has wisdom to share. Mission trips, where you live and work with the same people for a couple of weeks, allow you to get to know people more deeply than occasional interactions. While I was teaching someone to paint and training them on techniques, I asked what training they offered. I discovered they had a deep well of skills, none of which I would have known had I not asked. If our interactions had remained as short and casual as they had been for years, I wouldn't have discovered what God had taught them. Each time I go, I learn that folks have a wealth of experience that I otherwise wouldn't have come to know.

I wonder how we can better find opportunities to learn what our brothers and sisters have to share. I know we would all be better off finding out.

Second, I learned that different approaches to a common task can bring new solutions to my life. A conversation with another team member (who was about half my age) illuminated my way of looking at trying new things. He came from a family of innovators, and when he received a call from home telling him one of the innovations he had spearheaded was not working, he began to buzz with creative solutions.

I wonder how often we shut down creative solutions because we think the way we have always done it is the best way to do it. He recalled the story of three generations of women who always cut off the end of the ham before baking it on Easter. Her new husband asked the youngest why she did that, and she answered because my mom did. They asked her mom, and she said she did it because her mom did. When they asked her grandmother why, she said she did it because the ham wouldn't fit in the pan unless she cut off the end. Habits can be helpful, but if they are just habits without reason, we should be willing to make changes, especially if new solutions arise.

I pray you find the places and spaces to learn lessons and find ways to allow them to impact your life.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Don

Utica United
Methodist Church
8650 Canal Road,
Sterling Heights, MI
(586) 731-7667
www.UticaUMC.org



SOURDOUGH DEMONSTRATION

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

UTICA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

8650 CANAL RD., STERLING HEIGHTS, MI 48314

COST: \$40

DEMONSTRATION CLASS INCLUDES:

- Learning how to keep & feed a starter
- Overview of the sourdough bread process
- Gain knowledge on benefits of sourdough
- Q & A's

WHAT YOU WILL RECEIVE:

- Sourdough starter
- Recipe guide
- Sourdough loaf to enjoy at home!

Call or text Jennifer to secure your spot
(586)-838-7287

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Mini Pantry Update

A second “Wagon of Hope” has been placed in the small hallway leading into Fellowship Hall. Please place your Mini Food Pantry donations in the wagon and the “Team” will facilitate moving them to the storage shelves downstairs. Moving forward the needs continue especially as we face cold/freezing temperatures in the weeks ahead.

Some ideas for donations:

Powdered Milk in boxes or pouches

Tuna pouches

Mac and Cheese

Instant Potatoes (box or pouches)

Gravy (pouches only)

Adult and Children Gloves, Hats, Scarves

Bars of Soap

If you have any questions please contact the team and we will do our best to answer your concerns.

Melanie Kuzia, Jim and Liza Young

Ron and Martha Powers

Tuesday Morning Bible Study

Please join the Tuesday Morning Bible Study beginning March 11th from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm as we dig deeper into our own personal Lenten Journey, why Jesus chose the nails and what God did to win our heart. This can be ordered on Amazon.com. If you don't have an Amazon Prime Account please text or email Martha Powers 586-703-1668 or ron_martha@att.net and I will order the book for you. If you have any questions please see me after church or call my cell.

Is your heart unsettled by the chaos of the world? Are you heavy-laden with bad moments, mad moments, or anxious moments? Today, rest in God's self-giving love and leave all your troubles at the foot of the cross.

In *He Chose the Nails*, Max Lucado observes that the last moments leading up to Jesus' death were not left up to chance. God chose the path; he selected the nails. Our Lord planted the trio of crosses and painted the sign. God was never more sovereign than in the details of the death of his Son. And in those details are gifts Christ provided for us...the cross. The thorns. The nails. His seamless robe. The empty tomb.

God didn't have to give us all these things, you know. The only required act for our salvation was the shedding of blood, yet he did much more. So much more.

In this Easter season study, Max will help you:

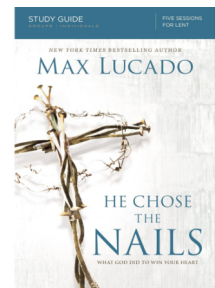
- **Experience Lent** as a time not to just give up something, but to prepare to receive good gifts from God.
- **Take comfort** that Jesus understands everything you face in this life.
- **Receive the grace** of Christ's work for us, and **cooperate** with God's work in us to make us more like him.
- **Stand firm** in the promise that you are forgiven, and you are welcome in God's presence, no matter what you've done.

Search the scene of the cross and listen for God's gentle whisper, “I did it just for you.”

The *He Chose the Nails Study Guide* includes video notes and discussion questions, Bible exploration, an individual application activity, and a Lenten practice to complete between meetings.

Sessions include:

1. He Chose to Be One of Us
2. He Chose to Forgive Us
3. He Chose to Invite Us into His Presence
4. He Chose to Love Us Forever
5. He Chose to Give Us Victory
6. He Chose to Give Us Confidence (optional session for Week 6 of Lent)



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

CHILI, SOUP, AND DESSERT COOK-OFF

Sunday, February 23, 2025

4:00 PM



Once again, our Chili, Soup, and Dessert Cook-off will be on Sunday, February 23 at 4:00 PM in Fellowship Hall. Start looking now for some new recipes or some you know are tried and true.

- Sign-up sheets will be available starting February 2. You may enter as many categories as you'd like, 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 23 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.

United Women in Faith

On Wednesday, February 12th at noon in Fellowship Hall the United Women in Faith will be meeting for a potluck luncheon. Please bring a dish to share and your own place setting. Drinks will be provided.

At 1:00pm a speaker from Grace Centers of Hope will be presenting information about their program.

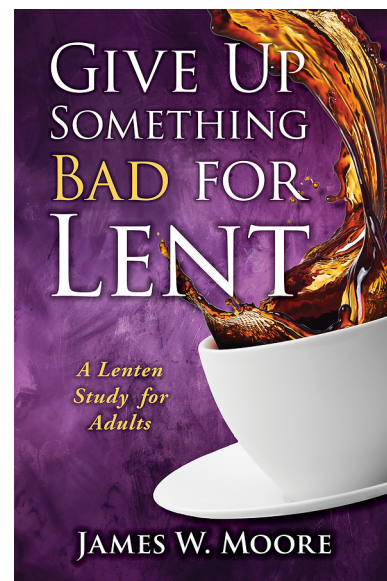
All women are invited to attend.

Lenten Bible Study

During Lent each year, Christians give up something as an act of sacrifice and spiritual discipline. Often it is something like chocolate, knowing that after Easter Sunday they can once again enjoy what they have given up. James Moore challenges readers to take it further—to give up something spiritually that they would be better off not doing. He invites all to seek God's help to focus on eliminating one habit or attitude that is destructive. Imagine giving up envy, jealousy, self-pity, apathy, procrastination, gossip, resentment, or negative thinking, how much better life would be.

The forty days of Lent are ideal to use this study and prepare to give up something bad while preparing to fully embrace the Good News of Easter. Study includes seven sessions, one for each Sunday in Lent and Easter Sunday. Each session features a Scripture reference, a personal reading, questions for personal reflection or group study, and closing prayer.

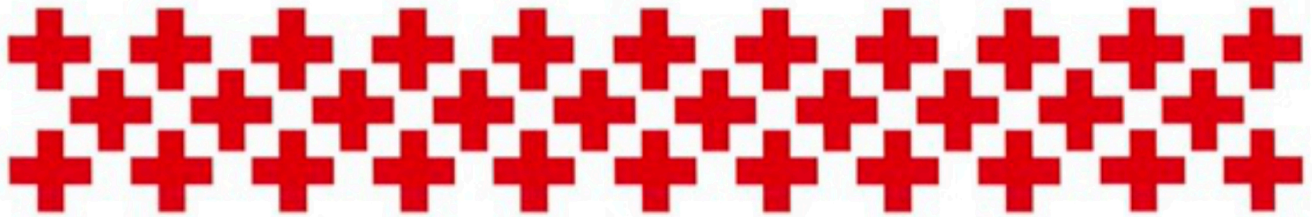
This study will be held on Monday's at 11am starting on March 10th through April 14th. The book will be available in the church office for \$12.00 .



THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

American Red Cross

Give blood. Help save lives.



Blood Drive

Utica United Methodist Church

8650 Canal
Sterling Heights

Wednesday, February 19, 2025
11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

To schedule an appointment, please visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter sponsor code: UTICAUMC or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Streamline your donation experience and save up to 15 minutes by visiting RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass to complete your pre-donation reading and health history questions on the day of your appointment.



Scan to be directed to RapidPass.

Create a flurry of hope! Come give blood Jan. 27 to Feb. 28 for a \$15 e gift card rcblood.org/flurry



Scan to schedule an appointment.

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | redcrossblood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

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[19] - Order ID: 1705422 - Item ID: 8036038 - Qty: 1 of 10 - 208815 - 2025APR-2013 - ARCL - 247259

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Tragedy and Hope

It was wonderful this week to see our Mission Team returned safely from Africa. Our worry about them increased due to the tragedy with the plane crash-over the Potomac River in New York. It was devastating and horrific. So many lives lost some in the beginning of their careers and sports. People in the prime of their lives and of all ages. In such times we may question where God was, and it becomes hard to believe that he was there. God doesn't cause or prevent horrific accidents, but he does weep with us. When I had cancer, a casual acquaintance asked me where my God was now. I was shocked at the question. I never believed that God had given me cancer. Errant cells in my body gave me cancer. Just as God didn't cause a helicopter with three souls aboard to run into a passenger plane causing the loss of life nor was it Traffic Controllers or the Pilot of the passenger plane. It was a tragic accident, and blame will be found with the investigation. God does not cause cancer or crashes. But he is with us and weeps with us. People, mechanical failures, mistakes, cells in our bodies cause them. God has given us free will and bodies that fail us and we make mistakes. It took me a long time to realize that my brother's body had failed him, that he died of a kidney disease that God was with me in my loss and that God wept for him too and took him into his loving arms when his body failed him. It's hard to accept tragedy in our lives. My heart goes out to the families and friends that have hearts that are breaking now. My prayers are that God is with them giving them comfort and understanding and gratitude for the time they existed here among us. One of my favorite bible verses is, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29-11. I believe that sometimes things happen that aren't in God's plans but human frailties. In 1984 we were getting ready to go on a trip to Israel. My oldest brother called me and was upset that I was leaving and would be so far away. He had called me to tell me that he had confessed all his sins to God and that he had received God's forgiveness. I was happy for him and glad he had turned his life around and had received forgiveness and a new start. He was very concerned about me leaving for Israel and called a few times asking how they would get in touch with me if something happened. I finally told him that my children who were both over 20 at the time would always know where I was and how to reach me. That seemed to settle him down and he was pleased with that solution. I called him when we returned home, and he was so pleased that we had had a wonderful trip but mostly that I was home. Two weeks later I received a phone call, that big brother, my last sibling, had died from a Heart Attack while on the way to the hospital. I only have memories of my brothers and my mother and father now, but I trust that through God, I will see them again and I pray that God will comfort those who lost loved ones in a tragic accident.

Jeremiah 29:11-12 "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."

Dear Lord, we thank you for each day we are given. Be with us and may we do your will in all our days. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve and those who have suffered so much loss. Comfort them and may they feel your loving arms around them. Be with Pastor Don, we are so grateful for his service to us. Bless his family and be with them all. Be with our staff and leaders, guide them and protect them. May our church be your church and may we all do your work. May we be open to new ways to serve you. 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 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



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

