

Methodist the messenger

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God cares about you



and so do we

Journey with Us Through Lent to Easter

APRIL 2025



I am a passionate nerd when it comes to social history. When I was in graduate school, I loved my music history class so much that I became my professor's unofficial student assistant—singing a Gregorian chant for her undergraduate class when she needed examples or showing the embellishments of concerted madrigals. Learning about the performance practice of a music period (Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, and the like) and the country of the music made for an exciting interpreta-

tion that went beyond the notes. Knowing the “why” behind a “what” helped me address a piece with curiosity and hopefully, give life to the music as they were intended to be experienced.

The same nerdiness continues with Biblical and Church histories and how God's people throughout generations have been proclaiming life fully lived in God. Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience help me figure out the social malaise of our time and how we can learn from our forebearers and understand what God is calling us to be and do in such a time as this.

One issue I have been reading up on and mulling about is the problem of loneliness that leads to depression (or worse, suicide) when we are so connected technologically. It's astounding how we can talk with our friends and family from all over the world. Churches survived the Pandemic when worship services were held online (either live streaming or via Zoom). I can “meet” with groups from all over the US for different organizations without leaving Wisconsin. We can even have food, groceries, and other goods delivered to our homes, so we don't have to spend time going out and dealing with people. We can “talk” or “communicate” with someone any time of the day through texts/ messenger and all other phone apps. We can “google” anything anytime, anywhere, and have answers to our questions.

And yet, we flounder and feel more alone. Social media and other ways of “communication” have helped us feel connected. Sadly though, we really aren't connected in the way that is needed. If you will, there is a barrier—an invisible film that hinders real connection. We have an illusion of belonging when what is going on is isolation or “othering.” Loneliness happens even as we “connect” with others technologically. The social state of our lives has the illusion of “belonging” when we really don't belong. Families can be in the same house and not connect when members are all on their phones. (Chris and I are not exempt.) In fact, I would even say that social media has made “othering” easier to do than belonging. We can state our opinions without forethought. Uninformed opinions have now become truths. And we rage about those unfounded and malicious “truths,” feeling safe behind that invisible film that hides the person. All the information in the world has not necessarily become knowledge. We cherry-pick information to suit our opinions. Social media algorithms have exacerbated that problem.

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Belonging is biologically crucial to humans. It's part of our DNA. Belonging needs human contact and interaction. We need our physical presence to be impacted by other physical presences. We grow emotionally, spiritually, and mentally when we exchange joys and concerns in person. There is an exchange of energy and spirit. We learn from one another. In-person communication happens when we share not only words but also our time, body language, listening ear, vulnerabilities, and authentic self.

Much like being a Christian. We cannot practice our Christian faith in a vacuum. Christianity happens together. Belonging to God means giving ourselves in ways that may not be convenient or comfortable. That's how we can know God: by loving, living, and learning from others who are seeking the same life as God. Belonging to God through Jesus Christ means learning from strangers around us who we are called to love and befriend. God saves us through Jesus Christ and one another.

Our call is to be with one another and others, making the reign of God real while we are here on earth. Heaven on earth. We need each other in person to grow together profoundly in God. Venture out to proclaim like Mary, "I have seen the Lord!"

May we "see the Lord" together.

Pastor Grace



Palm Sunday: April 13th - 10:30 am Worship-Sanctuary/YouTube and 11:45 am Palm Sunday Brunch in Fellowship Hall.

Join us on April 16th at 6:30 pm for a guided labyrinth walk followed by a Jesus is Risen Celebration. This event is open to AWANA Clubbers, families, 3K-5th Sunday School Class, grandparents, and grandchildren.

Maundy Thursday: April 17th - 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Walk and Pray the Labyrinth (Fellowship Hall) and 7:00 pm Worship/Holy Communion: Sanctuary/YouTube - The Maundy Thursday Service will prepare our hearts and spirits to remember and experience the Last Supper as Christ indeed intended while we share a meal as a congregation.

Easter Sunday, April 20th: Join us as we joyfully celebrate the resurrection of Jesus! The morning starts with a lively celebration from 9:00 to 9:15 am, followed by donuts, coffee, and a gathering time in Fellowship Hall. At 10:30 am, our Easter Celebration Worship Service will be held in the Sanctuary and streamed on YouTube, featuring special music. Bring your family and invite your friends to share in this meaningful occasion!

The Labyrinth will be open for walking on Thursday, April 17th, from 9 am to 9 pm. It will be located in Fellowship Hall and will feature multiple seating areas for meditation, a finger labyrinth, and a table for journaling, drawing, and coloring. There is no right way to walk a labyrinth; there is only one path that leads to and from the center, and you simply need to enter and follow it. Your walk can embrace a variety of attitudes: it may be joyful or somber, filled with gratitude, reflective, or prayerful. It can serve as a form of walking meditation. We encourage you to take time out of your busy schedule to find a quiet center by walking the Labyrinth. If you are interested in participating and have any questions, please contact Alyssa Roberts.



A Message From Our Lay Leader, Tom Bolton

Church Values: First, I want to say that I hope your Lenten preparations are going well--that you are spending daily time in prayer, worshipping with others, and participating in a Lenten study group. May God richly bless you and fill you up.

I also want to talk to you about our Church values this month.

"A value is more than a word or phrase – it drives the church's behavior." #effective_church

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - Acts 1:8

In 2022 and 2023, the Church underwent a major examination process to define our goals and strategic plans for the church. Most of us participated in some or all of those work sessions and decisions. We established goals and multi-year plans, finalized in November 2022. We have used that information in many of our committees to prioritize the work and activities of the church. We did not document the values of the First Church at that time, even though we had some discussions about our values.

We believe it will now help us to define the core values of the church and anticipate we will proceed through several steps to capture the values of our congregation. This first step will be to compile a list of values from each of you, and then we will add and combine from the list and finally the Church Council will discuss and discern the four or so major values of our church family.

“The most important single element of any corporate, congregational, or denominational culture is the value system.” -Lyle Schaller, church consultant

The core values of a congregation answer the question, “Why do we do what we do around here? A ministry based on clearly articulated core values drives a fixed stake in the ground that says to all, ‘This is what we stand for; this is what we are all about; this is who we are; this is what we can do for you.’

No two churches are alike--even churches of the same denomination. Differences arise out of geographic location, demographics of the community, size of the active membership, its history (age), and particularly the people who have shaped the ministry of the church and helped to form its personality and values. Each church is a system that affects how it interacts and ministers to its communities.

The greatest challenge in uncovering a congregation's core values is individuals' willingness to release their personal agendas and allow a sense of corporate values to emerge. This takes great objectivity and can be challenging to do. Once the values are discerned and articulated in a statement, it is imperative that the congregation allow the understood values to shape ministry, guide decision-making, set goals and priorities, plan budgets, and determine the best use of human and material resources. This focus can maximize a congregation's potential for living into its God-given mission.

We will be surveying groups of our members and staff this year about what they prayerfully discern are core values of First Church. We will conclude with the Church Council discussing, combining, and defining our final list of core values for FUMCWA at this time.

So, please think and pray about the values of our congregation. What is FUMCWA all about?

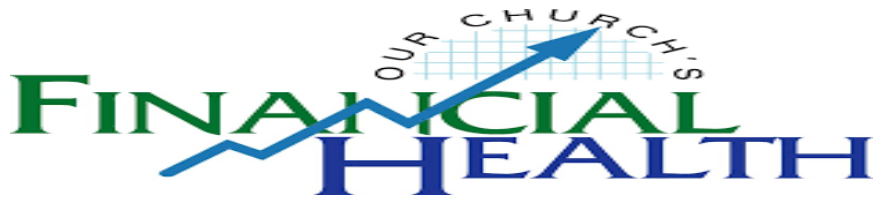
Tom Bolton, Lay Leader

414-704-5478

God loves you and so do we.

Discipleship Never Ends.





The Church Financial Statement of Activities ending February 28, 2025:

	Year To Date Actual
Giving & Other Income	\$46,442.37
Expenses	\$72,178.72
Operating Income/ (Deficit)	\$(25,736.35)

Our hope with prayers is that members will continue to give generously as we envision a better and brighter future with goals and strategies to keep FUMCWA healthy, growing, and vital. God cares about you and so do we. Thank you for your financial support to the life and the mission of FUMCWA.



SCRIPTURE READINGS & THEMES APRIL 2025

April 6, 2025, Fifth Sunday in Lent/Communion

Texts: Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

April 13, 2025, Passion/Palm Sunday

Texts: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22:14-23

April 20, 2025, Easter Sunday

Texts: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; John 20: 1-12

April 27, 2025, Second Sunday of Easter

Texts: Acts 5: 27-32; Psalm 150; Revelations 1:4-8; John 20:19-31



WELCOME: In March, FUMCWA had the honor of welcoming six new members to our congregation: Diane Anderson, Amber Hammond, Karl and Brenna Akert, and Samson Folle and Nardos Diden. We are delighted to have you here and look forward to getting to know each of you better.

FUMCWA MINISTRIES

Church Library Ministry (The Bernice Nailen Memorial Library): April is a month to celebrate libraries. The American Library Association is celebrating "Drawn to the Library" as National Library Week April 6-12, 2025. We invite you to visit The Bernice Nailen Memorial Library throughout the month. Volunteers can assist you on Sunday mornings from 11:30 to 11:50 am. The library is also open for self-serve check-out at various times during the week. A new bookmark has been designed specifically honoring our church library. The bookmark will be available on Sunday, April 6th.



Food Pantry Ministry: We want to thank the UMM for the wonderful monetary donation from the proceeds of the Shrove Pancake Breakfast. All monetary donations go toward the purchase of food. We have a wonderful congregation that supports this great mission of helping those in need.

The weather is warming up, and our numbers are increasing. We appreciate all the help we can get with not only monetary donations but with any non-perishable food items. Not only do our guests receive pre-bagged food, but they can choose two items of their choice from the table. Personal care items such as shampoo, conditioner, body wash, shavers, deodorant, and hand lotion are also needed. We also provide home cleaning items such as dishwashing liquid, liquid hand soap, disinfectant cleaners, laundry soap, plastic wrap, and foil. We have a wonderful crew that is dedicated to this mission and strives to help and support each person who walks through our doors. Not only do our guests receive food and personal care items, but they meet a friendly face and words of comfort and support.

Thank you to all who have been donating money and food. We appreciate your generosity! Remember when donating food from your own food pantry to check the expiration dates.

The March Good Samaritan Offering: \$600.00

PANTRY ITEMS NEEDED FOR APRIL:

PASTA SIDES OR CRACKERS (ANY VARIETY) AND BODY WASH

United Women in Faith: A big thank you to Val Holzman for leading our Lenten program on the meaning of the Agape Meal. Our next meeting will take place on April 14th. We will have a Treasure Swap! Each person may bring something that they like but no longer treasure. We will tell where it came from or something about it, and then when everyone has shown their treasure, we can swap that for something else they prefer. We have had this before, and everyone enjoyed it, so we decided to repeat it!

Upcoming programs include a presentation on new books added to the church library by Church Librarian Betty Grypp, a session on Bone Health by Pat Shapiro, a discussion about Scams by Captain Brian Saftig from the West Allis Police Department, and a talk on Reiki by Laura Molleson. We invite you to join us for these programs. Our meetings take place at 1:00 pm in the Fireside Room on the second Monday of each month. We would be thrilled to see you! Any questions, please call Annette Intravaia at 414-257-4166.





Laurie Halvorsen, Senior Ministries Coordinator: The Senior League 50th Anniversary Celebration Party will take place on Wednesday, June 4, 2025, featuring a social gathering at 11:30 am, followed by punch and luncheon at noon. Tickets will be available for purchase starting April 2nd at Senior League meetings or in the church office for \$20.00 per person until May 25th. We are offering three meal choices: chicken cordon bleu, stuffed pork chop, or steak tenderloin, along with a salad, potatoes, vegetables, a French roll, and Danish layer cake. Our entertainment for the 50th party will be the Caribbean Eclipse, a Steel Pan and Marimba Band. This celebration will be full of surprises, delicious food, fun, fellowship, and great entertainment! Don't miss out, so please save the date! Everyone from the church is welcome!

Meetings in April

- April 2** **12 Noon-** Tortellini Alfredo, Garlic Bread and Spumoni Ice Cream
Program: Milwaukee Co. Zoo: From Exhibit to Eco System Conservation Stories Across our Zoo
Devotions: Lillian Guansing
- April 16** **12 Noon-** Baked Potato Bar
Program: Craig Siemsen; Musician Guitarist
Devotions: Annette Intravaia

Fireside Coach Trip: Friday, June 13th "The Church Basement Ladies in The Last (Potluck) Supper

Sign-up is now available at Senior League meetings or in the church office. Cost \$110.00. Reservations required. Leave Franklin at 9:00 am, FUMC at 9:30 am.

Come join Senior League in our 50th Year for Fun, Food & Fellowship in 2025!

Senior League Chef Needed: Our current Senior League chefs step down at the end of December 2025. Responsibilities include menu planning, shopping, meal preparation, and clean-up. Training will be provided. Senior League meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month from noon to 2:00 pm. If you have culinary skills or know someone who does and would like to take on this role, please contact Laurie at First United Methodist Church, 7520 West Lapham St., at 414-774-5500.

FUMCWA LOCAL MISSIONS



Second Saturday Servants: Spring is approaching fast, and we need more hot breakfast casseroles for Saturday, April 12th. Please ensure your casseroles are delivered to the church kitchen by 7:45 am. Our guests rely on your generosity, and our dedicated volunteers are ready to quickly pack the food for our hungry neighbors. Thank you to everyone who consistently contributes each Second Saturday morning; your efforts are

April's Coins of Love will support **PLAYA**--Short for Pine Lake Active Young Adults. PLAYA is a camp for young adults with differing abilities who are full of life and eager to have lots of fun!



February's Coins of Love - Street Angels Showers of Hope - \$289.73

March's Coin of Love - Sunday School Lenten Mission Project - \$212.26



Wesleyan
Care
Team
Listener

Wesleyan Congregational Care Team (WCCT): Our team of caregivers is ready to walk alongside anyone who is going through an unexpected life event or someone who just needs a listening ear or shoulder to lean on. No matter how small or big

your concern may seem, please know it matters to us, and so do you. You can reach out to Pastor Grace or Laura Molleson or call the church office (414-774-5500). Our team of caregivers can also be identified by the badge above on Sundays.

FUMCWA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Adult Christian Education: The Lenten Season gives us a special opportunity to strengthen the weave of our relationship with a caring and forgiving God who loved us so much that God did not hesitate to accept taking on the humble form of human life itself, with all its risks, even to that life itself.

In the most sacred prayer God's son taught us to pray daily, including "give us today our daily bread," we are reminded that this bread is uncommon and life-saving. As we partake, we grow and are sustained in ways that allow us to become life-saving for each other, especially in times when life's risks become overwhelming and seemingly without hope of redress. This is a covenantal, communal undertaking that we can readily enjoy in many ways, including attending weekly studies here at First UMC!

Our Lenten study series of the Last Twenty-four Hours of Jesus' life, written by Adam Hamilton, takes us right to where it happened, by this well-respected pastor and biblical scholar, in a video accompanying each chapter and study session. This gives us a real taste of what it means to be authentic in our profession and discipleship, especially when faced with the disheartening and difficult moral challenges of our times and places.

Lay Leader Tom Bolton's ongoing study of Jesus in the Gospels continues to refresh our minds and hearts in these endeavors. Monthly reflections on our community, nation, and world's critical ethical concerns allow us to exercise UMC Social Principles recently revised with a global perspective. You are invited to join us!

Book Discussion Group: This month's book discussion will take place on Monday, April 28th, at 1:30 pm. We will discuss ***Spiritual Practices for Soul Care: 40 Ways to Deepen Your Faith*** by Barbara L. Peacock (Spiritual Growth). In this world of frantic activity and constant entertainment, it can be hard to identify and embrace the rhythms that lead to true flourishing. Here, author and spiritual director Barbara L. Peacock offers a way to integrate inner growth into the realities of your outer life through 40 ways to help put spiritual disciplines into action each day. From prayer and meditation to serving and socializing to resting and healing, these simple, restorative practices will help readers develop the kind of Christian Walk they desire. The group meets in the church library and welcomes anyone who loves reading!



FUMCWA EVENTS



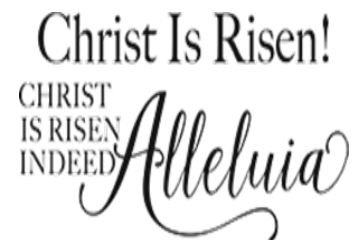
Lance Lambert / Events Coordinator:

This month's Events center on our Holy Week celebrations...

Palm Sunday Brunch - Sunday, April 13th: Following our special worship service, please join your church family in Fellowship Hall for our traditional Palm Sunday Brunch. We'll enjoy a wonderful meal and learn a bit about the Passion of Christ and have crafts for kids of all ages. Great fellowship and a perfect event for you to bring a guest to learn about our church.

Maundy Thursday - Thursday, April 17th: Our church labyrinth will be available for your contemplation from 9:00 am - 9:00 pm in Fellowship Hall. All are invited to our special Maundy Thursday Worship at 7 pm. This service focuses on Jesus and the Last Supper. Please plan to attend this service, which is so much a part of the Passion of Christ.

Easter Services - Sunday, April 20th: Passion week culminates with our very special services celebrating the Risen Christ. There will be a very brief "Sunrise" Service at 9 am, followed by donuts, coffee, and juice at 9:15 am. You won't want to miss our Easter Celebration Service at 10:30 am with all the wonderful music and joy as we share in the meaning of Christ's victory over death. All Easter People are welcome, so bring a friend or neighbor!



FUMCWA FAITH COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS



Thank you for your cards and prayers for us during Ken's hip replacement surgery and Carmen's medical treatments for her feet and legs. Our church family helped us recover. We are blessed. Ken and Carmen Ilseman

Our Prayer Chain Team connects us through prayer. To join this ministry, contact the church office. You'll receive prayer requests via email and be asked to pray for them daily. **Submit prayer requests** by contacting the church office. Updates on prayer requests are also welcomed.



Recycle Socks and Raise Funds for Northcott Neighborhood House: We will continue collecting holey socks for a spring shipment. Please help us spread the word to your neighbors and co-workers, encouraging them to clean their sock drawers and upcycle their old socks. The funds raised will support local employment training programs at the Methodist Church. Thank you!

Towels for Dogs (& Cats) - ongoing outreach: Wow! What a success this is!! Lance has delivered approximately 200 towels to help shelters care for pets. First Church REALLY cares about all of God's creatures. THANK YOU!! Keep it up - the basket is in the Narthex.