

# United Messenger



## *Ponderings from the Pastor's Pen*

Thank you to all of you who have been praying for my mother-in-law, Norma. Due to continued health setbacks, she decided it was time to move to an Assisted Living apartment this summer, so in mid-June my family traveled to southern Wisconsin to help move her personal belongings out of her former home.

While we were in the area, we also visited my parents on the farm where I grew up. It was dusk by the time we arrived, but Ryan and I went for quick walk to get a little more exercise since we had spent several hours of our day in the car. As we made our way down the half-mile long gravel driveway, fireflies flickered over the farm fields on either side of the driveway—hundreds and hundreds of fireflies as far as the eye could see. Ryan marveled that it seems like we see more fireflies there than we do in Menomonie. We have fireflies in our backyard too, but we never see so many at once. The fireflies were so lovely that we even walked back up to the house to invite Lucas to come see the fireflies with us since he had likely never seen so many fireflies in all of his six years of life. As we walked down the driveway, he was a little afraid of the growing darkness around us and wanted to retreat to the farmhouse at first, but he was intrigued by the fireflies and watched eagerly as Ryan caught one for him to see up close.

Later, I reflected on that evening and thought it seemed like an apt metaphor for the Christian life. Even in the darkness, we can shine a light. It may seem too dim and insignificant to make a difference, but when we *all* shine our little light faithfully and repeatedly, it transforms the darkness from a space of

fear and growing gloom to a space of breathtaking wonder and beauty.

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus calls his disciples to be salt and light, and in Galatians 5:9 Paul notes that “A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.” Even if it seems like we’re outnumbered and overwhelmed, our faithfulness in shining God’s love on the world around us does and will make a difference, transforming a world of fear and anger and animosity into a world of light and love. May it be so!

I look forward to worshiping with you again soon, whether you worship with us in person, online, by CD, or with a written devotional on each week’s message. Stay well, and keep shining God’s light!

In God’s love,  
Pastor Wendy

FEAR NOT, WITH YOU. I AM YOUR GOD. I WILL **strengthen** YOU. I WILL **help** YOU. I WILL UPHOLD YOU WITH MY **righteous** RIGHT HAND. ISAIAH 41:10

### Inside this Issue:

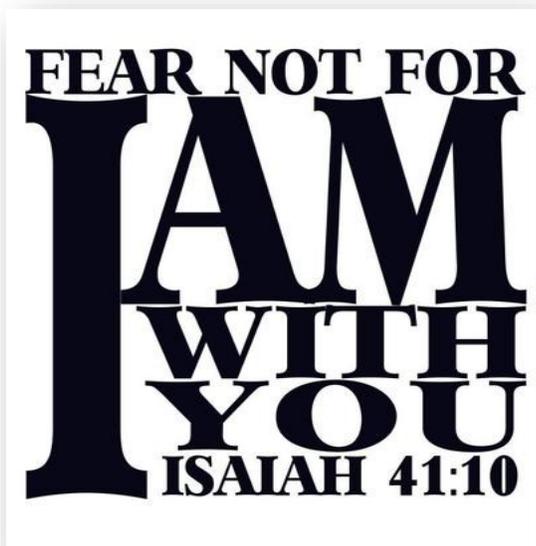
Ponderings from the Pastors Pen .....	1
Grant Received and Matching Challenge Offered for Video Upgrades, Survey Results .....	2
Survey Results Continued.....	3 & 4
Children & Family Ministries.....	5

## **Grant Received and Matching Challenge Offered for Video Upgrades**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation has offered a \$1000 New Way Grant to churches throughout the Wisconsin Conference to help cover expenses incurred as we adapt ministries to safer methods during the pandemic. After discussion with the Accountable Leadership Board, Pastor Wendy applied for the grant and we were awarded the full amount of \$1000. We hope to purchase video recording equipment and software in order to provide a consistent, quality recording each week for those who worship online since that is the way most members indicated they will be worshipping while the pandemic continues. (Currently we have been using the personal cell phones or camcorder of whichever volunteer was recording each week, but the quality of sound varies among these borrowed devices.)

We are grateful for the grant we have received, but the cost of the equipment upgrades recommended to the Facilities Team exceeds \$1000. A church member has generously offered an additional matching challenge of up to \$1000 to cover the remaining expenses. If you'd like to contribute toward the video upgrade matching challenge, please mark "Matching Challenge" on the memo line of your offering check or enclose a note indicating the amount you would like to contribute to the matching challenge.

Pastor Wendy will be working with the Facilities Team to purchase and install the new video equipment and software. If this is an area of interest and expertise for you and you'd like to be part of the project team that installs the equipment, please contact Marvin Whitman (Technology coordinator on the Facilities Team) or Pastor Wendy.



## **Survey Results**

As you may recall, in June you received a survey from the church asking for your feedback about how ready you are to return to in-person worship or other church gatherings, and what precautions you'd want the church to take when resuming activities. Thank you to all who responded! We have compiled responses from all 48 households who replied, and your feedback has been helpful as we've made decisions on how we will gather this summer.

Over 90% of respondents indicated that either they are "high risk" or they live with someone who is, and therefore they are not yet ready to return to in-person worship until the risks are lower and/or a vaccine is readily available. Only four households indicated they are ready to return to in-person worship this summer, and some of those are households who were already part of the worship team or tech crew leading the online worship services anyway. So far, our summer worship attendance has still been well within the "less than 25 people" recommendation from the Dunn County Health Department for all indoor gatherings. Based on the high percentage of people who plan to continue worshipping online only for now, the Accountable Leadership Board decided that continuing and improving our online worship services is a priority. Our online services have continued to reach new people outside of our church family as well, so this seems to be a useful outreach tool in addition to being a way for members to stay connected while remaining physically distant.

Some of the larger churches in town have required their members to make a reservation before coming to worship in order to ensure that they do not have more people in worship than they can safely accommodate. That idea was not a popular one among our survey respondents, with over 72% of respondents indicating they are not willing or able to make advance reservations. Since our in-person attendance numbers have been very low anyway, we have decided that this measure is not necessary for our church at this time.

We also included a question about face masks in the survey. Over 77% of respondents said they are prepared to wear a face mask when attending worship, and the remaining respondents indicated they plan to continue worshipping online only. We do have both reusable and disposable face masks available near the entrance so that all can participate in this precaution. (Thank you to Mary Ellen Lidgerding for sewing several dozen reusable cloth face masks for our church

members to use!)

Outdoor worship was another option considered. Most respondents (82%) were open to worshipping outdoors, but only eight respondents indicated they'd also be willing to help with set up and/or tear down each week, and of those eight only one was among those who were planning to return to worship this summer. Even if all church members bring their own chairs, we'd still need to move a keyboard, speakers, microphone(s), and recording equipment outside, plus possibly a small canopy to protect the electronics in the event of rain. We will likely revisit the idea of outdoor worship this fall to see if more volunteers are available to help make this possible. For now, it doesn't seem feasible with only one volunteer currently available to help with set up and tear down.

Nearly 82% of respondents indicated that they understand communal singing is not recommended at this time, and the remaining 18% chose to continue to worship from home so they can sing along with the recorded services.

In general, folks were in favor of the church taking all necessary safety measures (face masks, 6 feet of distance between households seated in the sanctuary, no passing of offering plates or communion trays, no lingering for snacks after worship, etc.) and, for most respondents, avoiding in-person worship entirely at this time is one of the safety precautions they plan to take until the infection rate goes down and/or a vaccine is available.

The Accountable Leadership Board will consider sending another survey at the end of August to get updated information regarding how and when church members may be prepared to participate in church activities this fall. Thank you for your helpful feedback as we continue to navigate the ever-changing realities around us!

### Opportunities to Connect

There are many ways you can still participate in the church even if you still prefer to avoid crowds or still need to shelter at home. If you'd like more information about how to participate in any of these ways, please contact the church office for assistance.

### Worship

- *In person:* As of July 5, 2020, the building has been open for worship on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m., although we continue to closely monitor the latest coronavirus data for Dunn County each week and may have to close the building again if warranted by public health experts. If you are healthy, not in a high-risk category for coronavirus infection, and willing to take all recommended safety precautions while you are here,

you are welcome to come to worship at your own discretion. You are asked to wear a face mask, sit at least six feet from people from other households, and refrain from singing in order to protect the health of all who attend.

- *Online:* You can join us for online worship via Facebook Live by going to [www.facebook.com/MenomonieUMC](https://www.facebook.com/MenomonieUMC) and clicking on the video that appears at about 9:00 every Sunday morning. Even if you do not have a Facebook account, it is possible to view this video. If you do have a Facebook account (which can be created at no cost), you can also type a comment and interact with others who are watching the worship video. If you prefer to avoid Facebook entirely, you can also find a recording of each week's worship service on YouTube. Links to the YouTube videos are posted on our church website as well at [menomonieumc.org](https://menomonieumc.org). Just click on the "From the Pastor" tab at the top of the page and you will see bulletins and videos from all the recent worship services.
- *Via CD:* If you do not have internet access, we would be happy to send a recording of the service on CD to you in the mail. We can loan a CD player to you as well if you do not have your own.
- *Written copy:* For a completely low-tech option, we can mail you a written copy of the prayers, scripture readings and sermon each week for you to use.

### Prayer

- *Breakthrough Prayer:* Our building is located at 2703 Bongey Drive, so may our address remind us that we have 2 opportunities every day to pray this prayer for our church at 7:03 a.m. and/or p.m. from wherever we are! Our Breakthrough Prayer is: "Just as the sun breaks through the clouds with a ray of light, please send your Holy Spirit to break through our clouded minds and hearts. Shine your light and guide us in the ways we are to serve and make disciples for You in our community and beyond. We trust in You and will follow the path You light for us." Additional laminated copies of this prayer are available in wallet size or in large print upon request.
- *Prayer walks:* We start from the church and walk around the neighborhood, praying as we go on Tuesdays at 9:30 am and 6:00 p.m. (weather permitting). This has been a great way to meet more of our church neighbors. Several neighbors have even walked along to pray with us!
- *Centering prayer:* Join Sarah Zarbock on the patio behind the Fireside Room on Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. for centering prayer. Staying centered in God is a great way to combat the anxiety and stress we face these days! (In the event of inclement weather,



centering prayer will take place in the Fireside Room. When meeting indoors, bring a face mask or wear one of the face masks provided near the church entrance.)

- *Prayer shawl gathering:* On August 13 at 4:00 pm, all who knit or crochet or are eager to learn are invited to gather in the Fireside Room to work on prayer shawls to be given to those in need of prayer in our church and community. Contact Sarah Zarbock or Margaret Hastings for more information.
- *Email prayer chain:* Since we haven't been able to share joys and concerns during worship the way we used to, we recently started sending a weekly email message of all the joys and concerns shared by church members. If you haven't been receiving these email messages but would like to be added, please call Lori in the church office so she can add your email address. If you don't use email and would like us to mail you a hard copy, please call the church office so we can add you to the mailing list. Thank you for your faithfulness in praying for our church community!

**Giving**

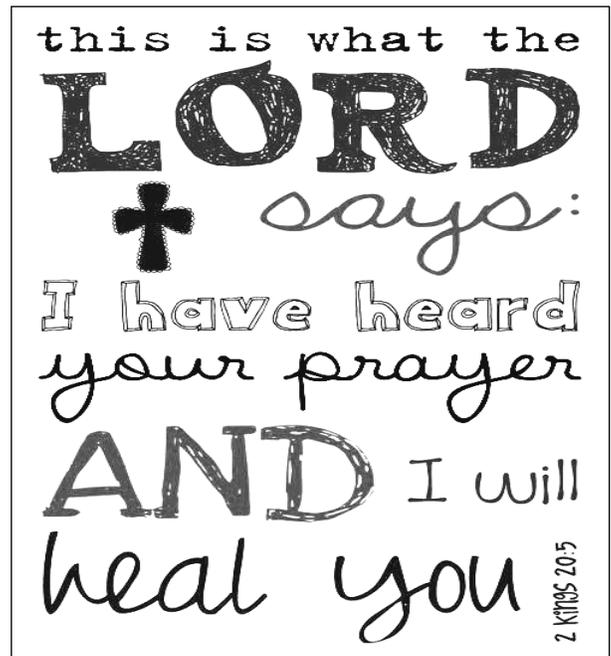
- *Mail:* You can mail your offering check to us at 2703 Bongey Dr, Menomonie, WI 54751.
- *Text:* You can give by text by sending the letters "MMUMC" to the number 77977.
- *Online:* You can give electronically through the website: <https://www.menomonieumc.org/serve> Just click on the "secure, electronic gift" link.

**Fellowship**

- *Phone tree:* We made a concerted effort in March to contact every member and active visitor of the Menomonie UMC. (If you didn't hear from us, we likely don't have up to date contact information for you in our records.) During that phone conversation, we invited you to be a part of the phone tree—to make or receive a call from at least one other church member each week. Some of you politely declined to receive a phone call, but if you find you're missing the voices of your church family now that the pandemic continues longer than we hoped, we'd be happy to include you at any time. Just call the church office to let us know you'd like to participate.
- *Coffee Hour via video conference--coming soon!* Email Pastor Wendy at [pastor@menomonieumc.org](mailto:pastor@menomonieumc.org) if you'd like to receive a link to join a video conference on Sunday mornings after worship or occasionally on week days. Although you'll need to provide your own coffee and snacks, you can visit with church friends you may not have seen lately!

It is possible to participate in the conference by phone too if you don't have internet/video capability, so let us know if you'd like us to send you the phone number.

- *Youth Group:* For middle school and high school students, our Youth Ministry Coordinator, Amanda Kausie, continues to plan fun, outdoor and/or socially-distanced activities. On August 12, we'll help pack curbside meals for Wednesday's Table at Christ Lutheran Church at 4:45 pm, followed by a picnic in Wakanda Park. Contact Amanda at [vi-ana.family.5@gmail.com](mailto:vi-ana.family.5@gmail.com) if you'd like to participate.



*Happy 70th Anniversary!  
Keith & Carol Sommerfeld  
August 12th*

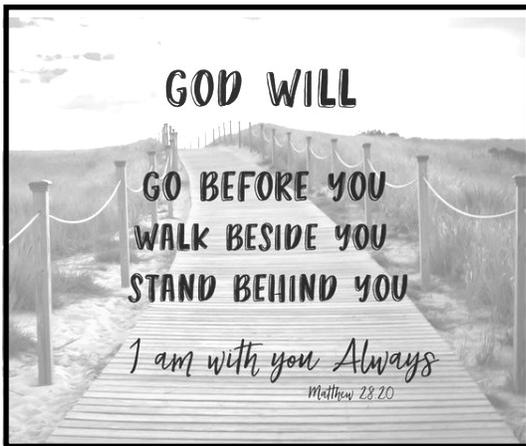
*Happy 97th Birthday!  
John Wreford - August 20th*

Find us at:  
[www.menomonieumc.org](http://www.menomonieumc.org)

## Sunday Study 2020-2021 Update

Hi all,  
I hope that you have had a safe and fun summer with your families.  
The Education Team will be meeting next week to discuss options for Sunday Study this fall. We will be discussing both in person and contact-less options as we venture into the school year. There are a lot of unknowns, but we do know that God will be with us, as He always has been! Our goal as an Education Team is to find meaningful ways for your family to study and Worship while taking into consideration necessary safety precautions.  
Please be watching your emails for the latest updates, if you do not typically receive Sunday Study emails from me, but would like to be added to the list please send me an email at [cyfministry@menomonieumc.org](mailto:cyfministry@menomonieumc.org) and I will get you added to the list! If email is not the best way to communicate with you, but you would like to stay in the loop, please give me a call at 402-658-4344 and we can discuss other options.

Blessings,  
Amanda Tireman  
Children and Family Ministries Director



### Prayer Centering Meditation

Every Thursday during August.  
6:00PM  
We will meet at the church back patio.  
If rain will meet inside.  
Bring mask for inside.



### Prayer Walking

Tuesdays, August 4, 11 & 18  
9:30-10:00 AM and 6:00-6:30 PM  
We will meet at the church and walk around the neighborhood.  
If rain will cancel. Mask optional.

### Office Hours Reminder

Office hours will vary during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please call before you stop in to verify that someone will be here to assist you.

**Thank you!**



### Prayer Shawl Meetings

2nd Thursday of the month  
4:00 PM Fireside Room  
Contact Sarah Zarbock  
or Margaret Hastings  
for more information



Find us at:  
[www.menomonieumc.org](http://www.menomonieumc.org) 