

"A Symphony of Praise
and Service to God"



105 E. Main
Street
Ionia, MI
48846
Service
9:30 am
www.ioniafirst.
com

July
2017
Newsletter



From the desk of Pastor Jonathan

"Pressing On"

...whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Paul's letter to the Philippians, 3:7-12 (RSV)

Dear Friends,

Well.... what does one say to a group of folks one has never met? I suppose I could tell you that I turned 39 years old last March, that I'm married to Jessica, and that we're expecting a baby boy in October. Or perhaps I could tell you about the operatic career I had in the performing arts before I went to seminary. Some might find it of interest that part of answering a call to ordained ministry was the end of my first marriage. Or maybe some would be curious to find out that my mom, Nancy, is a Presbyterian pastor... or that my dad, David, is gay. Still others might take note of the fact that I play the drums and the guitar and enjoy an eclectic variety of music and art. Still others may be curious about the poems I've been writing since I was 16. And some may wonder at the fact the we have moved here from the hot, humid Tennessee delta, but grew up in Eastern Canada. You may be wondering about me... as I have been wondering about all of you!

I could tell you all this, and I'm sure we'll get to it over the coming months and years, by my ministry among you cannot have my biography for its focus. You see, the context for all of this is that, no matter how much we fail or succeed, all our thinking and doing and feeling is bookended by the reality of Death. In the end, our demise defines our biology, such that "the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus" takes on a significance above all else. Whatever came before, and whoever I thought I was going to be, shepherding the Body of Christ in the ongoing discovery of the reality that God has not left us here to die in vain has become the purpose of my life. All is not lost, dear friends, and we must live as those prepared to die – and die as those who go forth to live: for all things are bound up in the redeeming work of the Father, his sending of the Son and the Spirit to find us and lead us home.

So it is with great anticipation that I write this first letter to you, and I look forward to finding out what God has in store in bringing us together. Joining you on the journey of discipleship fills me with excitement and curiosity as we open our lives to each other... hope and longing as we begin to grapple, in Jesus' Name, with the sin and brokenness of our lives and our world... anxiety and hesitation as I contemplate the challenges before us... humility and thankfulness as I experience anew the assurance of the Spirit... and, most importantly for me, an overflowing joy that we will know together the abiding grace of Jesus, who loves us with an everlasting love.

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I come to you with a sense of urgency for the work that is set before us. We live in a time when there are many who have lost touch with the church, given up on the church, rejected the church, or simply never heard our story. Cultural Christianity is no longer relevant or interesting to a majority of Americans, and some of us no doubt struggle to determine the relevance of what we do on Sundays with the rest of our lives. So we must return again and again to the dramatic tension between the Institutional Church and the Body of Christ. On the one hand, we participate in the affirmation of the beliefs that give meaning to our lives. On the other hand, we ask questions of our religion to discern whether it remains the outward form of a living and vibrant trust in the righteousness of Christ and the power of his resurrection. The Institution is a means to the end of organizing ourselves for mission; but is not worthy of our love, and to slaver with anxiety over the decline of the church is an idolatry for which I have no stomach. The Body of Christ, however, looks outward to a dying world and risks the life-giving love of Jesus. So what we do *at* church must form us to *be* the Church – the Elect of God, a Royal and Holy Priesthood, called in Baptism to a life of compassionate self-emptying for those whom God gives to us as neighbors. If you don't leave worship ready to risk your life for your neighbor, we have failed to understand "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus." But if you DO leave worship ready to enter the suffering of others – then.... *then...* the Good News becomes credible and relevant to everyone, no matter what his or her poverty might be!

We must press on, and consider all we have gained in this life as loss for the sake of Christ. For the world is dying all around us with no hope: the inmates in our prisons and the underpaid guards who hover over them; the bewildered people suffering from chronic illness and those who care for them; the individuals in our communities suffering from domestic and sexual abuse; the individuals in our communities addicted to overwork, pornography, alcohol and other drugs; the children in our community who are illiterate or hungry or unloved... **We must press on!** Whether our church thrives or dwindles away, all we have is this moment in which God has called us to spend our lives to prove his love. We must decide what to do with the time, wealth, and talents that are given. We are not yet perfect, but no one retires from being baptized; and salvation is better thought of as a way of life rather than a life event. Indeed, we must strive for the goal set before us by the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, even Jesus Christ our Lord. May his peace keep our hearts and minds in the work set before us until his coming again.

See you soon...

Every Blessing,
Jonathan

recognitions and for the late summer trash and treasure sale. The pay is to feel the sense the satisfaction experienced when y
reached out and improved someone else's life, knowing that you perhaps have been that "one little candle." The bonus is that
have bonded more closely with members of you own church family and enjoyed a priceless fellowship, that you have received a
support to those with which you have worked.

OPPORTUNITIES

UMW BOARD

The UMW Board has openings for several new members. Meetings are scheduled for the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30p.m. No particular talents are essential. Input of new ideas and incentives are needed for traditional and new events.

CASSIE STEWART CIRCLE

To volunteer to participate in Hands on Mission Projects, plan to join the Cassie Stewart Circle which meets at 1:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month. Attendance at each meeting is not a requirement. Just come and assist whenever convenient. We promise a great fellowship, a time to share and get acquainted in addition to participating in a mission project. Activities vary each month.

BRUNCH POTLUCKS

On April 23rd we started what we hope will be a new tradition. There will be a potluck brunch at 10:30 following our church service. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. This will be a once a month meal, and beginning in May, it will take place on the 3rd Sunday.

NURSERY

We are in need of ladies to help in the nursery on Sunday mornings at 9:30. The more volunteers we have, the less often you will be asked to help. Contact Marie in the church office (527-1860)

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

Several positions are open on this board which meets the 2nd Monday of every other month at 7:00 p.m. For details as to qualifications, please make an appointment with Pastor Jon by calling the office (527-1860).

CHURCH GARDENS

If anyone would like to bring flowers and plant them around the church AND take care of them, you are welcome to do so. We will not be ordering geraniums this year.

St. Joseph, MO Mission

I have found a mission for prescription bottles in St. Joseph, MO. There is a large public clinic that is accepting used prescription bottles.

DO YOU LIKE GARDENING?

Judy Roseboom has been taking care of our church gardens and picking up around the property for a long time. She would like to have someone who could help with these projects. If you would be interested, please call the church office at 527-1860.

Join us for Brunch July 16th at 10:30 In Fellowship Hall

Our Potluck Brunches will be the third Sunday of every month. If you are wondering what to bring that doesn't have to be kept warm, here are a few suggestions.

Fruit, juice, salads, deviled eggs, sandwiches, donuts, cinnamon rolls, rolls and butter.

This is a great time for getting to know each other better, and perhaps developing ideas to help make our church family stronger.

New Pictorial Directory

We are nearly finished with the new pictorial directories. They should be ready the first week in July. Thank you to all of you who had their pictures taken, and a big thank you to Mark Workman who donated so much of his time taking the pictures. This will certainly be a great help to our new pastor in getting to know us.



Some of our members are working hard with the Music on the Green Committee. This year we'll bring some wonderful talent to the Green for your entertainment. Make plans to attend on Tuesday evenings June 13, 20, 27, July 11, 25 and August 1st.

Answers to June Fun Page

1. - e

4. - j

7. - b

10. - c

2. - h

5. - d

8. - f

11. - g

3. - a

6. - k

9. - l

12. - i



During the Celebration of Creativity worship weekend in May, the Community Prayer Tree initiative was launched. This endeavor is growing and developing organically through the leadership of Amy Buckingham.

Purpose: Ionia First UMC working in our community to create a deeper experience and a beautiful way to connect with others via the practice of "Prayer".

The tradition of creating a prayer tree -- was noted in Sandra Ingerman's book "How to Thrive in Changing Times" -- comes out of Siberia.

When we can experience our gratefulness for life we transform our perspective about what is happening in our own lives, our church, our community, our state, our country, and around the world. When we feel grateful, we can experience the beauty instead of the pain. We want to acknowledge those who are suffering and feel compassion. At the same time it's important to experience the beauty and the gifts that life brings us. This comes from ancient teaching that has been passed down through many cultures and many generations.

Let us together hold a positive vision for our community. Let us embrace ourselves, our loved ones and all of life with love. Love heals!

The Community Prayer Tree has been introduced to the audiences during the "Music & Art on the Green" events in June. Your participation is welcomed and we trust that you will encourage friends and strangers in our community to visit this place. . .and take the opportunity to add their prayer to the tree.

*Welcome
Pastor Jonathan
Bratt-Carle*

Maybelle Drake would love to hear from us.
201 Allred Rd.
Apt. 501
Byron, GA 31008
Phone: (478)654-6899
Email: maybelle.drake@yahoo.com

PLEASE PRAY IN THE NAME OF THE LORD FOR:

(E-mail prayer requests to sharron67@charter.net)

Prayers for those in the military:

Adam Cook-Green Beret, Afghanistan
Nick Murray-Aircraft Carrier, Bremerton WA
Andy Hoort-Nurse, Ret. Royal Oak, MI
Ross Marshall, Navy, Submarine, Groton, CT
Daniel Zander-Major U.S. Army Ft. Lewis-McChord
Duane Baliff
Austin Campbell - Air Force

Prayers for:

Carol Newkirk
Stuart Weisgerber
Phyllis Whitelock
Steve Lampman
Julie Englehart
Don Fell
Elisha & Crystal Stock
Robert Zander

Doris Simpson
Elizabeth Smith-
Bryant Adams
Jimmy Griffith
Joy Hood
Mark Workman
Mary Cusack
Barb Helmer

United
Methodist



Women

UMW Board & Cassie Stewart News

"Silence is Golden." Many years ago, three little girls were staying at their grandparent's. One evening as they were supposedly on their way to bed, they got to jumping on their bed. Now this was a big heavy bed with a feather-tick mattress. I am thinking that most of you do not even know what that was, but that is another story. The bed just could not withstand all the activity, and suddenly just collapsed with a big "bang" into a big heap on the floor. Grandma came running into the room to view the disaster. She said not a word. Grandpa followed. He said not a word. He surveyed the situation, left the room, returned with an armload of tools, and began rebuilding the bed, still not saying a word. When the bed again was up on all four of its legs, the feather-tick mattress in place, and the bed made, Grandpa left the room.....still not saying a word. Grandma very tenderly kissed each little girl on the forehead and, too, left the room not saying a word. The three little girls, very subdued, climbed into the feather-ticked mattress bed, said their prayers while shedding tears, and fell asleep. They, too, not saying a word. I cannot remember a word being said about the event afterward.

However, the girls truly felt sorry for all the trauma they had created. they knew how much they were loved. The "silence" was probably the most effective reprimand that could ever have been given. No words were spoken, but it is one event in my early life I will never forget.

And so it is here a First. We are family. Whatever is done, whatever you do is appreciated. We know that there are many spending hours, much effort, sharing expertise and knowledge, creating and motivating, making our mission statement, "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of Ionia" a reality. It is with love, compassion and caring that you as a member of our church family do what you do. Please know that you are loved and appreciated in turn. Even if the magic words, "Thank you" are not spoken, "Silence is Golden."

Your United Methodist Church Women's Board has met many challenges this last year as has our church as a whole. But let it be known, we are going to continue to do our best for you, our church, and all the missions we support. We are striving to find new incentives, new methods, new goals. We need very much to strengthen our board by adding a few new members. Please consider this opportunity. The board meets the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m., and Cassie Stewart Circle meets at 1:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month. During July and August, we will not officially meet, however, special meetings may be called if needed. For further information call Peg Fell (527-2433).

Monthly report: Cassie Stewart Circle and the UMW Board members met and made the nametags for Vacation Bible School.

In the meantime, enjoy the Music on the Green Concerts. If weather permits, UMW will have hot dog sales. The proceeds support our mission efforts.

Romans 12:9-13

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in Zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

	Attendance	Giving	Needed
May 28	46	\$1,566.00	\$3,000
June 4	41	\$3,912.00	\$3,000
June 11	56	\$1,475.21	\$3,000
June 18	51	\$2,682.00	\$3,000
June 25	44	\$727.00	\$3,000

Finance Report

Back before Lent, a letter was sent out asking everyone to give a little extra. That our church was in financial need. And you responded! Thank you.

Well, here is the good news. We are no longer in the red, BUT we are by no means back in the black. Financially speaking, we are keeping our heads above water. The bills are paid and we do not have a negative balance in the bank. And the bills we WERE behind on are being caught up.

So, Where is the money going?

Let me give you a brief overview of the bills we have.

Utilities for both church and parsonage (Power, water, phone, insurance, etc.)

Administrative expenses

Building repair and maintenance (for both the church and the parsonage)

Payroll and other staff expenses (we have to pay the pastor, secretary, organist and custodian)

Apportionments & Ministry expense

(There are others, but these are the MAIN ones)

As of June 23rd this is what we've done

Bill	All year	This month
Utilities	11,088.26	955.29
bldg. repair & Maint.	6,100.66	988.33
Payroll etc.	48,388.86	5,522.58
Apportionments & Ministry	1,242.48	663.02
Administrative expenses	864.78	217.00

PLEASE keep in mind, we have only paid TWO of the SIX monthly Apportionments to the West Michigan Conference at this time. We hope to change this trend soon.

An auditor was here on June 27th, and our finances are in order. From this point on we hope to have a clearer picture of our financial standing.

BIRTHDAYS

July

4 Sheila Ransom
5 Nic Van Dop
8 Judy Gregory
10 Sarah Hamilton
18 Joel Kilgore
19 Don Fell
23 Andrew Badder
23 Isabella Teunissen
26 June Faulkner
27 Christina Frost
27 Glenn Joy
28 MacKenzie Mercer
29 Sue Manciu
30 Ron Roseboom



July Anniversaries

*6 Bill & Sharon Hartman
10 Jon & Darcie Van Dop
25 Mitch & Sari Mercer*

July

Greeters

July 2 Nancy and Wendy Haight
July 9 Lucille Leslie
July 16 Ken and Ann Felice
July 23 Al and Marge Irby
July 30 Ron and Judy Roseboom

Note: If you have agreed to serve as a greeter on a Sunday morning, but find that you cannot do so, please call Peg (527-2433) or the church office (527-1860).

July

Nursery

July 2
July 9
July 16
July 23
July 30

We can always use more people to help in the nursery. If you would like to volunteer, please call Marie Church (616-755-3207) or the church office (527-1860).

July 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Mission: P.E.T.						1
2	3 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	4 9:30 am Friend- ship Committee	5	6	7	8
9 Communion Noisy Offering	10 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm Trustees meeting	11 7:00 pm Music on the Green Mindy Hensley & Daugh- ters/Three Hus- bands on the Loose	12	13	14	15
16 Mission Sunday 10:30am Potluck Brunch	17 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm Ad Board	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm VBS	25 7:00 pm Music on the Green	26	27	28	29
30	31 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm Missions	Praise Bands Newsletter Deadline				



**105 E. Main Street
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Service 9:30am

Check it out!

www.ioniafirst.com



July 11th

Three Husbands on the Loose and
SoZos' Mindy Hensley & Daughters

July 25th

Local Area Praise Bands Featuring
Assembly of God, Lyons-Muir, Outreach Church,
The Well & Zion UMC

