

From the desk of Pastor Jonathan



**105 E. Main
Street**

**Ionia, MI
48846**

Service

9:30 am

**www.ioniafirst.
com**

**March
2022**

Newsletter



“The Blue Healer”

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” (Mark 1: 40-41)

The other day I was walking in our neighborhood and I passed by a woman walking a blue healer. I knew that’s what kind of dog it was, because blue healers have a distinctive coloring: a seemingly random mixture of browns, blacks, grey and whites. Along with those distinctively perky, pointy ears, and the way a healer always seems to be smiling, there was no mistaking this dog. As we came towards each other on the sidewalk, the dog looked up and me and made as if to say hello. So I knelt down on one knee and held out my palm in condescension to the sniff test. I said to the woman, “What a beautiful dog.” “Thank you,” she said, “I got her from a rescue. I couldn’t believe they were going to put her down. But her time was up. So even though I was looking for a Boxer, I came home with her. There wasn’t even much wrong with her. She’d been underfed and had some worms, but all that was easily sorted out.” “Enjoy your walk,” I said, having gotten a full dose of doggy snuggles. “Thanks,” the woman replied with a wide, warm smile. She obviously took real pleasure in how well her dog was doing, and how she had been in the right place at the right time to give life to this beautiful creature.

I thought about my encounter with that dog for the rest of my walk. What if that lady hadn’t rescued that dog? What if I had decided on that Tuesday, that because the weather was akin to yesterday’s pea soup, it would be better to simply continue reading theology? What if I had just nodded a greeting as they passed, instead of kneeling down on the wet cement to find out if that blue healer smile was genuine? If any of those things had been true, that dog and her story would not have filled my life with hope.

The choices we make in the small moments of our lives matter. In fact, these are the most important choices of our lives. We think otherwise though. We suppose that who we choose to love, or what job we choose, or whether we go to college or not, or whether and/or how many kids to have, or whether we’ve chosen the right religion to be saved... etc. We suppose these to be the life-altering choices that will irrevocably shaped the rest of our existence. But it isn’t true. These choices have significant consequences, but they do not define *who we are*. Rather, each one of us defines who we are in the tiny, almost-imperceptible, split-second decisions we make every day to be either open or closed.

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A publication of
**First United Methodist
Church**

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Jesus always chose to be open. And it defined who he was... it defines who he *is*. Even when Jesus was wasted with fatigue or aggravation (see Mark 7 for dramatic and pointed examples), he always found his big ideas being overridden by his love, the same love he had received from the One he called Father. As we enter into the season of Lent — a season meant to draw us closer to Christ in the recollection of his Passion, Death, and Resurrection — let us not give up things because we think that doing without something that makes us happy will somehow provide us with an understanding of Christ's experience and ministry. You can give up cheese burgers or chocolate, or scotch and cigars, or what have you... You'll be no better a Christian after 40 days. That's because these big decisions don't matter in the end. Rather, in all the moments when despair comes to crush your heart, let it go. When grief comes to cut your faith to shreds, give it up. When anger and self-righteousness are robbing you of sleep and peace: give them up for a Holy Lent. And if you feel powerless, like the leper in the passage above, the come to Jesus and ask him: "Lord if you choose, you can take away my despair... my shame... my sin... my grief... my self-righteousness... my self-deprecation... my hapless lethargy... my unfulfilling trust in things... Lord if you choose, you can make me well." Say that to Jesus, and see if he doesn't speak directly into the deep places of your hearts with the simple words: "I do choose." Trust him, brothers and sisters. Put your whole trust in his grace. And in your small choices then, become like him as you open yourself to the joys and agonies of the world.

In his Name, and for the sake of his Love,

Pastor Jonathan

COME LORD JESUS ODE FOR BLUE CHRISTMAS

He's old, this one I've come to know.
Pops they call him, so I do too –
though his name is Charles...
crinkled 'round the eyes,
long mustache at odds with his mouth,
tobacco stains on the whiskered white,
selling papers to save his life,
haltingly, on this Memphis curb –
a child of God, but
every minute a moment of strife.
Why should it be so?
this one in suffering so far from my image
of the One who made us –
Does God look like this? I cannot think it...
I know it must be true.
O Son of God come down!
Come down Jesus!
Since you're really there...come quickly.
Do not be far from us. Do not delay.
Here we are. Here we weep
and do not understand...
I do not understand.

You are silent –
though I hear you softly singing the blues
as you take my coins and look at me.

support to those with which you have worked.

*Music on the Green
Will return
this Summer!*

*The dates will be: Wednesday, June 8
Wednesday, June 15
Wednesday, June 22
Wednesday, July 13
Wednesday, July 27
Wednesday, Aug. 3*

We have chosen the talent. As soon as we set the dates for each of them, we will let you know.

Community Drawers

Hi Everyone,

I hope that everyone has stayed safe and healthy this month. Joe and I have enjoyed the mild weather even though it's been awful cold, most of the days we have to go to Grand Rapids for my appointments, the weather has not been too bad.

I am happy to report that we have received a grant from the Midwest District in the amount of \$1,000.00. That amount of money allows us to operate Community Drawers for approximately two months. Maybe two and one half months. Please do not forget that although we are up and running we still need you. Please remember that the noisy offering comes to Community Drawers, as does the money from the bottle return. These are not big money makers, but every little bit helps us. \$3.00 buys one bed pillow at Dollar General. Last month we were able to get 6 on these for people who do not have any pillows. To keep this worthy project going, we need a lot of help. From people who help us the third Wednesday of each month to those who come down and fold, mark, put away the clothing, linens and personal items that have been either donated or purchased.

I would also like to remind everyone that we are still collecting and donating to the IM-Kids project. Please remember to bring individually wrapped cereal bars, snack crackers, boxes or bags of cereal, juice boxes, peanut butter, jelly, sandwich bags and brown lunch bags. There is a complete list of needs in the church office. When you bring in your donation, please take it up to the sanctuary and place it in the front pew. This group works on donations, and we need to help them.

These are two very needed projects for our community of Christians and we really need to help them. Please read Mark chapter 25. You will then understand why we should be helping with these projects.

Thank you,

Becky

Items Needed for Community Drawers

Toothpaste - small tubes

Boy's underwear - sizes 6 thru 14

Boy's socks - all sizes

Women's underwear - all sizes

Women's Sleepwear

Long underwear - all sizes, men, women & kids

Bed pillows - please see Becky Brown

And most importantly, masks for little (smaller than school age) children, and larger masks for school age children.

Deodorant - any kind or type

Little Girl's underwear - sizes 4 and up

Girl's larger sleepers or P.J.s - larger sizes

Girl's socks - all sizes

Men's underwear - small & med. sizes

Men's T shirts - small & med. Sizes

Children's Sleepers - 4T and larger

Family Matters

If you would like to submit an article for Family Matters, we would love to hear from you. Just a half page about your family will help us to get better acquainted with each other.

Remember First Sunday Sundae

We hope to be back at Cook's & Co. in April, but if they are not open yet, we will meet here at the church for ice cream and fellowship.

PLEASE PRAY IN THE NAME OF THE LORD FOR:

(E-mail prayer requests to bluebirdm66@yahoo.com)

Prayers for those in the military:

Adam Cook-Green Beret, Afghanistan

Ross Marshall, Navy, Submarine, Groton, CT

Daniel Zander-Major U.S. Army retired

Duane Baliff

Austin Campbell - Air Force

Brent Spencer - Air Force

Prayers for:

Family & friends of Norma (Sage) Thurlow

Family & friends of Kathy Brown

Jim Van Sycle

D.S. Margie Crawford

Katherine Asher

Kathy Berry

Liz Bode

Dave & Gloria Cook

Hunter Wagner

Elisha & Crystal Stock

Maybelle Drake

Lisa Dvork

Sharon & Bill Hartman

Marge Bowne

Fred Rainey

Joanie Carle

Loren Carle

Phil Kahl

Millie Bartholomew

Joe Felice

Penny Wineman

Roxanne Stiles

Becky Brown

Elaine Dollarhite

Sue Pierson

Trustees News

Trustee meetings are the third Sunday of the month in the conference room upstairs. The meetings are at 10:30 after Service.

We are looking at different repairs needed around the Church. Some of the repairs include re-surface of the front doors, resurface of the east door, replace/restretch the carpet in the office and Chancel area, repair of the Parapet on the west side of the church, etc. The list seems to go on and on.

We welcome anyone who would like to sit in and give us their opinion, or just see what we do to join us. We also welcome Michell Rux Boehm to our little group. We look forward to working with her.

We do need someone to shovel the side walks on Sundays before service. If able and willing, please let one of us know.

Please stay safe and warm.

Joe

S.P.R.C.

With hopes that the Covid pandemic will be abating, we plan to begin a search for candidates for Sunday School teachers and nursery attendants.

We appreciate our staff members and thank them for their service to the day to day functioning of our church.

Ann Felice

FINANCE REPORT, MARCH, 2022

Remaining Balances as of 1/31/2022

Special Funds (Designated Giving)

Memorial Fund	\$5,642.83
Board of Trustees	\$2,881.03
Capital Campaign	\$30.00
Children's Ministry	\$3,115.50
True to You	\$2,500.00
Camp & School Scholarships	\$2,350.00
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$102.13
Community Drawers	\$2,655.54
Music on the Green	\$1,846.95
Holiday Concert	\$1,560.00
Soup Kitchen	\$2,858.18
Monthly Mission	\$235.00

General Fund (Church Budget)

Income	\$20,999.06
Expenses	\$11,127.81
Surplus (Deficit)	\$9,871.25
YTD Surplus (Deficit)	\$9,871.25

We do not have the figures for February yet, as Pastor Jonathan and Ronda have not been able to get together to work on the figures. We will send out a finance report as soon as we can.

MARCH MISSION

R.A.V.E.

Relief After Violent Encounter offers free and confidential services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Jonathan Bratt Carle
- 4 Dick Christiansen
- 6 Mayeilleen Bartosh
- 7 Kendra Badder
- 8 Deanna Hotchkin
- 9 Karson Hagen
- 10 Marge Bowne
- 14 Nancy Haight
- 17 Eric Asher
- 20 Steven Manciu
- 22 Gene Clark
- 29 Katie Mayer



March Anniversaries

23 Jesse & Kelli Alfaro

*Jesus lives
in the
community.
He only visits
the church
buildings.*

March

Liturgists

- March 2 Deanna Hotchkin
- March 6 Ann Felice
- March 13 Eric Asher
- March 20 Jan Powell
- March 27 Deanna Hotchkin

If you are unable to serve on the day for which you are scheduled, it is up to you to switch with another liturgist, and notify the church office.

March 2022

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2 6:00 pm Ash Wed. Service Followed by Bible Study	3	4	5
6 1:00 pm First Sun- day Sundaes 1:30 pm Music on the Green meeting	7	8	9 6:30 pm Bible Study	10	11	12
13 Noisy Offering 1:00 pm Potluck Lunch	14	15	16 1:30 pm Commu- nity Drawers 6:30 pm Bible Study	17	18	19
20 Mission Sunday RAVE 10:30 am Trustees	21	22	23 6:30 pm Bible Study	24 6:30 pm Ad Board	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



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Check it out!

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