

"A Symphony of Praise
and Service to God"



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

**February
2018
Newsletter**



From the desk of Pastor Jonathan

"The Old Life and the New"

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

Dear Friends,

The past month has been a gracious moment in my life with uninterrupted time to bond with my little boy as he begins to grow and thrive. I will cherish this experience always – this pause on the fulcrum between the old life and the new – and I want to thank everyone for your support through this period of leave. In particular, I need to offer gratitude to the Rev. Al Irby (Ionia First) and Pastor Charlie West (Lyons Muir) for their loving and generous leadership during my absence. You have all been in my prayers, and I want to acknowledge that while I have been away and focused on my family, you all have also had very full lives. I look forward to catching up and reconnecting.

Now, as the year unfolds before us, it is with great anticipation that I return to our work together as the Body of Christ. This will be an important year of discernment for our churches, and we must diligently seek "what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Much like this moment in my personal life, I believe we need to pause on the tipping point between where our churches have been and where God is leading us. This seems like a daunting task, one that poses the question: "Where do we begin?" But following the sequence of the Christian year affords us once again a means of grace. In two short weeks we will come together for the observance of Ash Wednesday, a day of confession in which we admit our mortality and the reality that the "old life" of a dying world still very much holds sway. So we need not look for a starting point in our discernment, because the Season of Lent beckons us to introspection, sacrifice, repentance, and renewal. As the year unfolds before us, we must each prepare for the coming adventure God has prepared for our churches by carefully considering our individual discipleship and love of Jesus.

The passage above offers us Paul's insight into the purpose for which we undertake the spiritual practices of Lent: the transformation of our lives by the renewing of our minds. Everyone must choose for him or herself how to go on this journey; but, no matter how we choose to participate, what we do needs to renew our minds. Often people think of "giving (or taking) up something for Lent." This practice is not without merit if it points us to Christ – but *only* if it points us to Christ. Christ is the One who renews our minds: in the healing and promise of his earthly ministry; in the revelation of his suffering, death and resurrection; in the sending of the Spirit to comfort and guide us; and in the onset of his kingdom of justice and mercy, visible to all with eyes to see. Rather than an arbitrary debit or credit to our schedules, gym habits, eating, or drinking, a better way to consider the spiritual practices of Lent is to ask what the renewing of our minds has to do with sacrifice. Paul says, "do not be conformed to this world," yet we are utterly conformed to this world.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Pastor Jonathan's Letter	1-2
Youth Group News	2
Opportunities	3
Sunday School News/Creative in Christ	4
Trustees Report/Prayers	5
UMW/Cassie Stuart	6
Financial Report/S.P.R.C./Missions	7
Birthdays./Anniversaries/Schedules	8
February Calendar	9

A publication of
**First United Methodist
Church**

**105 E Main
Ionia, MI 48846**

616.527.1860

www.ioniafirst.com
ioniafirst@gmail.com

By and large, we are Americans first and followers of Jesus second – I know that’s true for me. We “drink the cool-aid” of the consumer politics which suits our taste. We give in to the insidious advertising that bombards us, wasting our resources on needless stuff. We gloss the sexual and martial violence of popular culture and, in fact, find that we are entertained. In the end, lulled by these cultural opiates, we allow ourselves to imagine that the holiness of the Living God is not the dangerous and perfectly terrifying reality that it actually is. Sacrifice, then, has to do with the renewing of our minds because we must free our imaginations from the gospels of the world – pride, greed, and violence – and fill our imaginations with the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: compassion, unflinching charity, and peace. Personal sacrifice means spending more time in the Word than we do watching TV or shopping or eating or working. Sacrifice means using more energy praying and fasting than we do festering over the minutia of our lives and what other people think about us. Sacrifice means behaving in our daily lives as though Jesus is actually Lord, such that his commandments are bidding and not optional. To renew our minds, *we must make our culture submit to our faith*, unequivocally. No one can do this for another; no one can prescribe this for another. But we all must do this together if we hope to experience the shared vision that will enable us to “discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” I invite you to walk with me during Lent in the footsteps of Jesus towards the Cross. What awaits us beyond the tipping point is the New Life of the Resurrected Son. Thanks be to God!

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*

With love and anticipation,
Pastor Jonathan
January 31, A. D. 2018

LAUNCHING YOUTH MINISTRY

In prayer and conversation, and just by looking around, it has become clear that God is calling the wider church to do ministry with our youth. In response to this prompting of the Holy Spirit, First UMC in Ionia will be launching a new youth ministry on Sunday, February 4th. The program will begin at 3:30 in the afternoon, concluding with a meal from 5-5:30. All youth are welcome and will be encouraged to attend Sunday and other worship services at their local church. Youth from 6th through 12th grade are warmly invited to participate. The group will focus on developing a culture of openness and inclusivity, leadership skills and gifts in our young people, responsible and life-giving responses to social issues facing youth today, fellowship, and spiritual formation. Please contact Pastor Jonathan for more information.

Adults 22 years and older are welcome to join the leadership team for this ministry. Please be in prayer as we work toward faithfulness to God’s call for our community.

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.

BRUNCH POTLUCKS

Since most people prefer to have a coffee fellowship after church rather than the potluck brunch, it has been decided to discontinue the potluck brunches at least for the time being. We learned in December that we cannot do both on the same day. There were 6 for brunch; the Café was full.

THE IONIA COUNTY LITERACY COUNCIL

is looking for volunteer tutors to help adults improve their reading, math or English speaking skills. Are you looking for a meaningful volunteer project? if this sounds like you, please visit our website: www.ioniacountyliteracycouncil.org and call us at 616-389-8529 or email: ionialiteracy@gmail.com We are also reaching out to those who need our services!

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. Stripping the labels before washing the bottles makes the labels come off much easier without leaving the bottles sticky.

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.

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)

YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING

YFU is looking for volunteer mentors in the Ionia area to work with foreign exchanges students. This will take only about two hours per month. If interested in more information, contact Rachel Walker at 202-774-5230 or yfuusa.org

LENTEN POTLUCKS

Our Lenten Potlucks will begin Feb. 14th, Ash Wednesday, and will continue every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. through March 21st. Please plan to join us for good food, fellowship and reflection. Lent is a most important time of the church year, When we gather together it is to remind us of what Jesus did for us, and to guide us to be better followers of the example of our Lord and King.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Dear Family in Christ;

Our walk since Christmas has taken us on the path of Abram and Lot. We are learning to trust our Father even when faced with immense adversity. Remember Abram was 99 years old when the Lord appeared to him. "I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless, and I will make a promise between me and you."

The chapter 17 of Genesis, is where Abram became "Abraham" meaning "Father of many nations." Sarai became Sarah, as she was also blessed with a son AND to be "Mother of nations; Kings of people shall come from her." At 99, Sarah, and 100, Abraham became parents of Isaac. This story is the basis of many of our future stories; Ishmael, angelic visitations, Sodom and Gomorah, the "pillar of salt".

We bring these stories in to the New Testament by reinforcing the Law, but also recalling miracles of our Lord, travels to testify, and that with God, nothing is impossible.

Focus Bible Verse

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and your thoughts will be established."



Watch for exciting things to happen over the next few months. The Music on the Green Committee has had it's first meeting to start planning for summer of 2018. We are very excited about the possibilities.

Trustees Report

The January meeting of the Trustees was a busy one.

Joe Brown was elected the new Chairman with Ken Felice the new Vice-Chairman. Phil Fedon was re-elected Secretary.

The steps leading to the front door of the church need to be patched. This will be taken care of when the weather breaks.

The Boiler issues are still being worked on.

The organ has been tuned, and the pipes that were sticking have been fixed. I'm sure we can all hear the difference.

Some of the chairs in the fellowship hall need new cups on the feet, and some have broken welds on the backs. These issues are being worked on.

We plan to have a clean-up day in the spring. More to follow on this.

We will be setting a priorities list of things that need to be taken care of. If anyone has concerns about things they have noticed, please let one of the trustees know so that we can look into it.

The Trustees will meet the second Monday of each month.

**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:

**Family and friends of Doris Simpson and
Lois Johnson**

Carol Newkirk

Stuart Weisgerber

Bryant Adams

Hunter Wagner

Arlene Roland

Mark Workman

Elisha & Crystal Stock

Barb Helmer

Penny Wineman

Scott Burkman

Mike Nelson

Jerry Lawrence

Nancy & David Carle

Terry King

Elizabeth Smith-

Steve Lampman-

Julie Englehart

Amanda Bishop

Gary Hanson

Robert Zander

Katherine Asher

David May

Nicole Rhodes

Sharon Prinz

David May



UMW/CASSIE STEWART CIRCLE UPDATE

Did you ever wish that you knew more than you know? Often I have wished that wish! Just when I think that I have become knowledgeable about a certain subject, oops! I find I don't know as much as I thought, or should know. My printer recently had to be replaced. After installing the new device, my daughter just flippantly said, "Now, don't worry! It's just like your old one." I soon discovered that even though it was just like my old friend, it really was not. It also had many new features which I know I should have anticipated. Yesterday, when I attempted to print a document, I received the message, "No paper in tray." I opened the paper tray. There was paper. I took it out, turned it over, turned it end-to-end, and reinserted it. Still, "No paper in tray." It surely looked as if I had paper. What does it mean? I checked to make sure all was plugged into the correct outlets and again reexamined the paper tray. Then I referred to Google and the printer manual. I found the suggestion that perhaps the "Manual Feed" was open. Manual Feed? What's that? After again conferring with my daughter and opening and shutting tightly anything that would open and shut, my printer was happy to comply with my wishes and print. I'd found another new feature, "Manual Feed", and now I am viewing my new printer in a new perspective.

For some reason, I had never really thought about that word, "perspective" until Al Irby focused on it in his sermon a few weeks ago. Since then, I have encountered the word every day in various places. Last month, in surveying the projects the UMW Board anticipated pursuing, I said we would be doing some of the traditional missions, but with a new twist. A new perspective! I could see it coming, and already it has! At our January meeting, it was decided that we would rather put our efforts into assisting our own kids rather than do our usual Health Kits or Education Kits for UMCOR. How?

Well, during Lent we are going to put "**I M Kids**" foremost in our thoughts. At each Wednesday night Lenten potluck, we are going to offer you, our church family, the opportunity to donate to "**I M Kids**". Just in case you do not know or have forgotten, each school day there are approximately 1,000, yes, that is correct, **One Thousand** sack lunches sent home with children from Ionia and Montcalm Counties so that they will have something to eat for an evening meal. You will be receiving more information pertaining to this program in the next few days. I will also include a list of food items that can be used in these sack lunches. So, please, read this information and then assist us and the **I M Kids** volunteers in caring for and showing love for our own local kids. Your UMW Board has evaluated our efforts of giving to help children with a "**New Perspective...**"

Talking about a new perspective, did you attend our complimentary thank you Soup & Salad Supper? We hope you did, because we truly wanted you to know how much we appreciated all of you assisting us as we endeavored to spread love and compassion here in Ionia, in our country and throughout the world during this last year. Thank you!

Remember Lent begins on Valentine's Day, February 14th, and that Easter is April 1st. During Lent, it is our custom to host potluck suppers each Wednesday night. Serving time is 6 o'clock. Following a 35-40 minute time of enjoying not only each other's delightful food, but a time of wonderful fellowship, we are planning a short, but sweet surprise. So, put Wednesdays, February 14, 21, 28 and March 7, 14, and 21 on your calendar for a night out at FUMC. Bring your own Table service and a dish to pass (with something yummy in it, of course), and you and your family.

Then on Saturday morning, March 24th, we will have our annual Lenten Breakfast. I cannot reveal all the plans at this time, but you can be sure that it will be an hour that you will thoroughly enjoy. We can tell you that Ken and Ann Felice will again be preparing the morning brunch and that we will have an inspirational speaker. So, again, mark this date on your calendar. **Remember**, this is **not** just for the women alone, but for all you guys as well. Also, **remember**, invite family members, neighbors, and your friends from other churches. This is a community, ecumenical outreach event. There is no set charge, but donations will be appreciated. I am not promising Spring, but we will be Seasonal!

There, you have the information for February and part of March. Just mark your calendars, keep smiling, greet each day with a positive attitude, and remember to give thanks for all the blessings you have received.

	Attendance	Giving
Jan. 7	49	\$5,101.00
Jan. 14	46	\$ 751.00
Jan. 21	55	\$5,320.00
Jan. 28	62	\$2,206.00

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hi there!

As I just took this seat I am still in the midst of sorting out our finances and "bottom line". However, it has come to our attention that our beautiful facilities are in need of several upkeep repairs that together will be rather costly.

As stated in the Trustees report, the steps leading to the front door of the church need repair

The boiler issues are still unresolved. Last month alone nearly \$500.00 was spent on this problem.

The organ has been tuned/repared at a cost of over \$900.00.

Some chairs in fellowship hall need repair.

On to things that are not in the Trustees report.

The parsonage fascia needs aluminum cladding. This could cost over \$1,000.00.

The eaves troughs need cleaning, and covers should be added to keep them clear of debris.

The window wells need to be dug out and reset to prevent water damage in the basement. The sooner this is done the ore likely we are to save money.

There are trees that desperately need to be trimmed or removed. This can be costly.

So, just to tell you we truly appreciate your financial support. If you would like to donate to a "specific" cause on this list, please add it on your memo.

Again, God bless you and thank you!

Jana Fedon, Treasurer

STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The committee has worked hard in January to bring you good speakers and musicians. Thank you to Al Irby, Jon Hausserman, Craig Adams and Bill Haggard for stepping in for Pastor Jonathan while he was on paternity leave. (This has not been a vacation.) Also thank you to Mel Weaver, Joel Kilgore and Greg and Betsy Adamus for the wonderful special music. I hope you all took the opportunity to thank Bill Haggard for helping to secure Jonathan as our pastor. Also Bill will be retiring this summer.

The committee met on January 22nd. Part of that meeting was a review of our employees.

MISSIONS MOMENT

For the month of February, the Missions Committee has chosen RAVE, right here in our own community as our mission focus. For some women, this is a tough time, particularly after the holidays. Pray for them that they may find peace.

Also, keep in mind that mission giving may change depending on the circumstances throughout the world.

Remember "And he shall be like a tree planted by the river of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalms 1, v 3. Let us be that source of water to nourish those who are in need.

BIRTHDAYS

February

- 1 Andy Badder
- 8 Jan Powell
- 9 Jessica Teunissen
- 10 Marie Church
- 13 Joan MacDonald
- 14 Adam Frost
- 15 John Ransom
- 16 Lucille Leslie
- 17 Janice Fate
- 18 Jerry Winter
- 21 Roberta Sterner
- 23 Robert Zander
- 23 Jennifer Stout
- 24 Sharon Hartman
- 27 Larry Ransom
- 28 Jana Fedon



February Anniversaries

8 Joseph & Rebecca Brown

February

Greeters

- Feb. 4 Ruth French
- Feb. 11 Marge Bowne
- Feb. 18 Avis White
- Feb. 25 June Faulkner

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).

February

Nursery

- Feb. 4
- Feb. 11
- Feb. 18
- Feb. 25

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).

February 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 8:00 am Quilters	2	3
4 Communion 3:30 pm Youth Group	5 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	6 9:30 am Friendship Committee	7 8:30 am Morning Prayer	8 8:00 am Quilters	9	10
11 Noisy Offering 3:30 pm Youth Group	12 1:30 am Cassie Stewart 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm Trustees	13	14 8:30 am Morning Prayer 6:00 pm Ash Wed. Potluck	15 8:00 am Quilters	16	17
18 Mission Sunday 3:30 pm Youth Group	19 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm Ad Board	20	21 8:30 am Morning Prayer 6:00 pm Lenten Potluck	22 8:00 am Quilters Newsletter Deadline	23	24
25 3:30 pm Youth Group	26 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	27	28 8:30 am Morning Prayer 6:00 pm Lenten Potluck			



**105 E. Main Street
Ionia, MI 48846**

Service 9:30am

Check it out!

www.ioniafirst.com

*Ash Wednesday is on Valentine's Day.
What a perfect time to begin preparing
Our hearts for Easter.*

