

"A Symphony of Praise
and Service to God"



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

**Service
9:30 am
www.ioniafirst.
com**

**January
2017
Newsletter**



From the desk of Pastor Jon

The Love of Listening

"Bear one another's burdens." This command of scripture is a blessing and a challenge. In an age of instant communication we can see what someone on the other side of the world thinks as fast as they can type it. But, we struggle to know the person next door. Our society has learned to "connect" via social media, but we've forgotten how to be social.

Any community of faith has to be based on a common cause. The love of Christ and those in our community has to lead us. In a sense, community is the mission. But, sometimes we get stuck with a satisfaction in the community that we already have instead of following the great commission to share our faith and love with everyone.

This month we'll be pondering how we can share love. Saint Francis reportedly once said, "Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." This doesn't make a lot of sense on the face of it. What is a sermon without words? Yet, love, is often just being with someone. The ministry of presence and understanding is quite underrated and *not just for pastors*.

The challenge that I have for you, right now, is to take a few minutes and intentionally think about and pray for people that you could listen to. Maybe a family member or a co-worker. Maybe someone you haven't spoken to before. If you're like me, there are quite a few options available.

I want to take a moment to highlight the paragraph you just read. You have a choice to make this month. You can come to church, sing some songs and listen to the sermon and go home. You can nod your head and say that was good and go about your life. Or... you can get in the game. You can decide that you are going to be a better listener this month (kind of like a New Year's resolution, but it has a 31 day goal). Don't mistake me, this isn't easy. The moment you decide to listen you'll be tempted to talk. Once you decide to make a conversation about someone else, you'll quickly realize how fast you really want to make it about yourself. Good listening is a skill and it takes practice to develop.

So as the temperatures drop, let's meet a friend for coffee and see what they have to say. And if you have something to say, drop by the office and let me know. I'll be listening too.

Grace & Peace

Pastor Jon

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A publication of
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UMW NEWS

We are told that one of the most important things to do after completing a project is to evaluate. As your UMW Board evaluates its 2016 activities, we have to agree that it was "surreal", to use Merriam-Webster's word of the year. One of the synonyms of "surreal" is "fantastic", and fantastic it was! Members are still remembering the night we lost electrical power and we had a Lenten candle-light potluck and program. Fantastic! Then there were the major mission projects: the 56 school bags donated which amounted to 11% of the total Heartland's district contribution, the Samaritans Purse shoeboxes, the amazing Festival of Tables concert and social hour, the hosting of the Harvest Bazaar, the hosting of the Church Walk Finale, and our traditional Christmas Basket Mission benefiting 14 families. Then there were the "little" things in which we played a part: Making name tags for Vacation Bible School, participating in the P.E.T. Mission project, promoting the ecumenical Music & Art on the Green concerts, providing two camperships for our youth. How did we accomplish all this? Through your support of our Hot Dog Sales, the Noisy Offerings, the Trash and Treasure Sale, and the "at random" contributions. Yes, you truly were "Good Samaritans" "voluntarily rendering aid to others in distress although under no duty to do so."

"What a 'year' this has been! What a rare mood I'm in!" I'm already looking forward to the new year, 2017, and all the opportunities we will have again to serve others. "SURREAL!"

"We give thanks to God for all of you, constantly remembering you in our prayers"

1 Thessalonians 1:2

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.

GRIEFSHARE

Will begin on Tuesday January 3rd. At 7:00 p.m. This is a program reaching out to those who have suffered a loss and would like to join with others in a similar situation. Please join us for this 13 week program.

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).

SUNDAY MORNING SMALL GROUP

Would anyone be interested in having an adult small group for Bible study on Sunday mornings after church service. If so, please contact the church office. 527-1860.

THANK YOU CASSIE STEWART CIRCLE for taking on the Operation Christmas Child project. You are very much appreciated!! 23 shoeboxes were packed and sent .

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 September through June. 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)

MALAWI MISSION

I have recently learned of a mission for Malawi. When the people there receive medicine, they have no way to transport and safely store their pills. Your used prescription bottles can be collected and sent to a distribution center in Indiana to then be sent on to Malawi for the use of the people who are now carrying them home in their hands. This would be a great mission for our church to take on which would require very little time or effort.

If interested, contact Marie in the church office.

MEN'S GROUP

We have several opportunities for the women of this church to meet with each other, I wondered if there might be some men interested in starting a men's group. Perhaps getting together for breakfast and maybe a Bible study on Saturday or Sunday morning. Any men interested can contact the church office (527-1860).

Cassie Stewart Circle

The Cassie Stewart Circle has continued to be active despite having several members cope with illnesses and disabilities. Reviewing the past year, Projects have included remembering our “shut-ins” with Poinsettias, cookies, and cards, cutting out all the school bags, hosting the Happy Birthday Jesus Party for the children and gifting them a book, working at the Christian Service Center sorting donations, packing the Samaritan ‘s Purse Shoeboxes and supporting all the UMW projects. We are really praying that more of our church family can join us on the second Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. thus enabling us to to continue our mission efforts and perhaps even increase accomplishments.

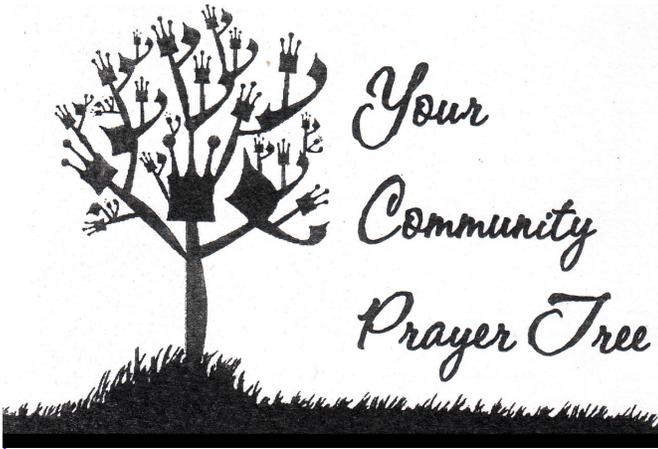
“May the Lord reward you for your kindness”

Ruth 1:8



We got together to decorate the church for Christmas on Nov. 28th.
We will meet again after the first of the year.

If you didn't figure out the drawing of the Chrismons on the December Fun Page, see Marie Church.



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.

Thank you to those who took time on Christmas morning to go caroling to our shut-ins. They really appreciated your gift of song.

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:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rick Borup | Carol Newkirk |
| Kay Gardner | Arlene Rowland |
| Stuart Weisgerber | Elizabeth Smith |
| Colleen Thompson | Phyllis Whitelock |
| Ron Beach | Lucy Dickenson |
| Steve Lampman | Jimmy Griffith |
| Julie Englehart | Jack Unger |
| Ken Keyt | James Ruehs |
| Don Wickerham | Gladys Stout |
| Amanda Stewart | Jean Clark |
| Darren Stewart | Don Fell |
| Joyce Slomski | Jane Ransom |
| Bailey Fedon | |

	Attendance	Giving	Needed
November 27	46	\$998.00	\$3,000
December 4	70	\$2,246.25	\$3,000
December 11	62	\$5,607.81	\$3,000
December 18	58	\$3,901.50	\$3,000
December 25	18		\$3,000

Missions Report

I hope that everyone has experienced a wonderful Christmas this season, and now we can look forward to a new year. May all of us find happiness and hope in 2017.

The Mission Committee continues to work closely with the women of First United Methodist to promote our mission agenda. This was particularly true when we delivered presents and food to families that may be in need. Ruth and I found that true when we delivered to a sweet family who were so appreciative. God be with all those families. A special thank you to Peg and her committee who make this a possibility.

For those fortunate enough to go on our expedition to Holland this fall to witness the creation of a P.E.T., you will be happy to learn that the group has now shipped out its 3,000th child's P.E.T. We helped make that possible. The committee will decide if it may be wise to send our offerings of P.E.T. directly to Holland. We will also investigate whether it is possible to send some of these vehicles on to Elisha and Crystal Stock.

A special thank you goes to our elf-in-residence, Becky Brown. She faithfully knitted about fifty scarves to go to those in need. Joan and I distributed some to the soup kitchen children; the rest will be delivered to St. John the Apostle Episcopal church for distribution to the local school children. Thank you Becky.

We thank all for your continued support of missions. First United Methodist is truly a global mission church.

January's mission is the Groves who have made such a wonderful commitment to their area of Africa.

Keep all our friends in your prayers.

Jan

BIRTHDAYS

January

- 1 Mark Hotchkin
- 2 Marge Irby
- 8 Miller Hotchkin
- 10 Michelle Castle
- 10 Adam Frost
- 14 Jack Manciu
- 16 Frances Carr
- 24 Forest Schumacher
- 27 Al Irby



Anniversaries

January

- 4 Allen & Joan MacDonald*
- 28 Bill & Frances Carr*

January

Greeters

- Jan. 1 Ruth French
- Jan. 8 Marge Bowne
- Jan. 15 Phil Kahl
- Jan. 22 Jan Powell
- Jan. 29 Avis White

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).

January

Nursery

- Jan. 1 Marie Church
- Jan. 8
- Jan. 15
- Jan. 22
- Jan. 29

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).

January 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 Happy New Year	2 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	3 9:30 am Friendship Committee 1:30 pm UMW 7:00 pm Grief-share	4	5	6	7
8	9 1:30 pm Cassie Stewart 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 6:00 pm Trustees 7:00 pm Ad Board	10 7:00 pm Grief-share	11	12	13	14
15	16 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	17 7:00 pm Grief-share	18	19	20	21
22	23 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen	24 Grief Share	25	26	27	28
29	30 6:00 pm Soup Kitchen 7:00 pm Missions	31				Mission The Groves

Fun Page

Match these Bible verses with where they are found in the Bible.

1. Then they said to one another,
"In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us and we would not listen; therefore is this distress come upon us."
2. And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the lad? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."
3. And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Behold, David seeks you hurt'?"
4. And he came near her; and the woman said, "Are you Jo'ab?" He answered "I am". Then she said to him, "listen to the words of your maidservant", and he answered, "I am listening."
5. "If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."
6. After three days they found him in the Temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions.
7. Many of his disciples, when they heard it said, "This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?"
8. because you are especially familiar with all customs and controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.
9. who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 3:7, Genesis 42:21, 1 Samuel 24:9, Matthew 18:15, Acts 26:3,
2 Samuel 20:17, John 6:60, Genesis 42:22, Luke 2:46



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*Happy
New Year*



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