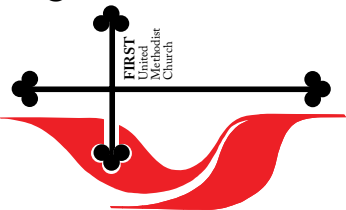
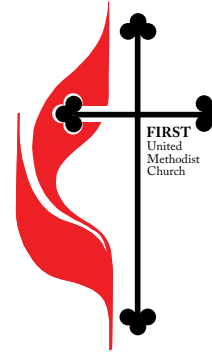


Place
Stamp
Here

100 W. Jefferson St.
Ottawa IL 61350



Mailing Label



The Beacon

February 2024

From the Pastor's Pen:

Loving the Unlovable

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

– Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 5:43-48, New Revised Standard Version).

I was recalling recently a biography on the life of Dorothy Day, a perennial candidate for sainthood in the Roman Catholic stream of Christian tradition for her transformative and enduring work with the poor in the United States. Day was particularly concerned with serving what she called, with some humor, the "undeserving poor", including folks whose personality and

(Continued on next page)

worldview are simply abrasive, and not conducive to living in community with other human beings. In reading a review of the biography, written by her granddaughter, Kate Hennessy, and subtitled, “the world will be saved by beauty”, I was struck by how Dorothy Day’s ministry exemplified the claim the Jesus makes on his followers in the passage above from the Sermon on the Mount, and how relevant this is for those of us who claim to follow Jesus today.

How easy it is for us to love the people who are like us. How easy it is for us to love, or at least tolerate with equanimity, the people who agree with us; who think like us, talk like us, dress like us, eat the same foods, watch the same TV shows.

In recent years, those who disagree, those who are different, have been cast as enemies. Whether they harbor us ill-will or not, on account of their difference it has become acceptable to reject them, to ignore their pain, discount their suffering, silence their cries, and even devalue their claim on our common humanity. As politics and economics have been increasingly presented as a zero-sum game, where one group can win only if other groups lose, our public discourse has become increasingly hate filled. We are too ready to see the neighbor who disagrees with us as an opponent, and if an opponent, then an enemy, and if an enemy, then only deserving of hate.

Jesus cuts through all of this with a radical call to extreme hospitality, to a generosity without judgment, neighbor or enemy, it makes no difference to Him. We’re sometimes challenged to consider terrible figures from history – Osama Bin Laden, Jeffrey Dahmer, etc. – as the test for this perfect love. But really, it’s the people we struggle to relate to in our daily lives that are the true test. Can we truly desire blessing, and even work to bless the people that we disagree with, who aggravate us, frustrate us, disappoint us, and even oppose and insult us? Jesus says we can, and we must. This is the work of those called to be the saints of God.

Pastor Seamus

“Do all the good you can...in all the places you can...to all the people you can, as long as ever you can” - John Wesley

Our Mission giving for Northern Illinois Conference is now called “Living the Beatitudes”. This replaced the “Rainbow Covenant”. Each year we are to select at least one project in each of the 7 giving categories that link with at least one of the Beatitudes.

This missional or connectional giving [meaning we are connected to others] is called the Advance and considered part of our church’s apportionments. It is “a portion meant for others”. Our gifts, along with other churches gifts, allow us to do together what no church, district, or conference could do alone. “We “advance” the cause of Christ!” “The Advance represents “second-mile” mission giving, the “first mile” being apportionment giving.” 100% of Advance giving goes to the projects we select.

The different categories are:

- Special Sundays
- Global Advance Projects
- Missionary Support
- UMCOR/Emergency Relief Projects
- US-Based Advances, Northern Illinois Conference Projects, and NIC District Projects.

There will be articles in future Beacons on the different projects we selected to give to in 2024.

Thank you for all gifts to the Mission Fund to support these projects and other local ministries!!

The Missions Team

“Let your words be the genuine picture of your heart.” – John Wesley

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

Charles Wesley
UM Hymnal, No. 384

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) was a prolific hymn writer of the 18th century. Coming from a musical family, he left a lasting legacy of congregational song.

The youngest of 18 children, Charles possessed prodigious talents that soon blossomed. Little did he know that “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” would rise to become one of the most popular and consistently vocalized Christian songs.

Writing hymn texts that are solidly based on the Scriptures gives them an appeal across denominational lines. It is estimated that during his lifetime, Wesley penned more than 9,000 poems of a spiritual nature, 6,000 of which are hymns. His writings were passionate and well-crafted, conveying the true essence of Christian teaching.

A substantial number of his writings were completed while riding on horseback to his evangelical meetings. What really set Charles apart from other hymn writers was his effective use of scriptural allusions, providing a spiritual roadmap whereby individuals could imagine a Christ-centered life.

Scholars suggest that he was able to compose about 10 lines of verse daily for 50 years. Charles’ brother John sometimes served as editor to his hymns. John’s typical response was, “some were good, some were mediocre, and some were exceptional.” John can also be credited with improving the singability of Charles’ hymns.

We are fortunate to be the recipients of the poetic genius of Charles Wesley. He influenced Methodism more than any other hymn writer. Upon hearing of Charles’ death, an elderly Londoner asked, “Who will write poetry for us now?” What better way to be thought of, than by your poetic and spiritual impact on congregational song?

To read more: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-love-divine-all-loves-excelling>

SANCTIFYING AND PERFECTING GRACE
 384 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

1. Love di - vine, all loves ex - cell - ing, joy of heaven, to
 2. Breathe, O breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - ery
 3. Come, Al - might - y to de - liv - er, let us all thy
 4. Fin - ish, then, thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less

earth come down; fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing,
 trou - bled breast! Let us all in thee in - her - it;
 life re - ceive; sud - den - ly re - turn and nev - er,
 let us be. Let us see thy great sal - va - tion

all thy faith - ful mer - cies crown! Je - sus, thou art
 let us find that sec - ond rest. Take a - way our
 nev - er - more thy tem - ples leave. Thee we would be
 per - fect - ly re - stored in thee, changed from glo - ry

all com - pas - sion, pure, un bound - ed love thou art; vis - it
 bent to sin - ning, Al - pha and O - me - ga be; end of
 al - ways bless - ing, serve thee as thy hosts a - bove, pray and
 in - to glo - ry, till in heaven we take our place, till we

WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1747
 MUSIC: John Zondel, 1870

BECKER
 87.87 D
 All. text: HYFRIDOL

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 1 James Baxter, Maddie Pratt
- 2 Jim Brooke, Austin Marshall
- 4 Billie Erickson, Ginger Brainard
- 5 Dean Hess, Julie Lane
- 7 Tom Pearse
- 8 Ken Martin, Amy Cooper
- 9 Kendra Mejia
- 10 Robert McConnaughay
- 12 Alec Jones, Harley Stillwell
- 13 Joshua Boaz
- 14 Renee Harris, Scott Stevenson
- 15 Krista Duggan, Gary Patton
- 17 James Rice, JHoanne Hohlman
- 18 Karis Brainard
- 20 Joshua Carrier, Jeff Mackiewicz, Levi Husted
- 26 Lindsay Carrier Stalker
- 29 Bev Miller

We give thanks to God for the gift of you!

ACTS OF LOVE AROUND THE CONFERENCE

Shelter at First UMC in Elgin warms bodies and hearts

Elgin's unhoused people are being well taken care of by the community, including **First United Methodist Church in Elgin**.

This winter, the fellowship hall of FUMCE is set up nightly for their guests. One Collective Elgin, a nonprofit that identifies community needs and organizes collaborative responses, oversees and facilitates the shelter. It provides services to address immediate needs, such as counseling, therapy, and case management to help people to successfully move out of homelessness.

"The biggest goal of One Collective is making sure everyone has access to food, freedom, and forgiveness," says Bobby Jackson, an OCE catalyst (coordinator).

While the local PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) helps many of the unhoused, it is not able to accommodate all who need it. The FUMCE warming shelter can house around 60 adults and has been near or at capacity since it opened.

For the past two years, FUMCE partnered with New Life Community Church to provide an emergency warming shelter for unhoused folks in Elgin on nights when the temperature sinks to 15 degrees or colder. This had worked out well, but the churches found it hard to coordinate volunteers and let guests know when the shelter was open, given the unpredictability of weather.

The City of Elgin approved FUMCE and OCE's request to keep a shelter open every night from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., Dec. 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. Elgin's assistant city manager, fire marshal, and police department check in with the church to make sure they have everything they need.

"We have very good support from our community—other churches, the city, public services, everyone," says Rev. Felecia LaBoy, FUMCE's pastor. "The church is proud of the work they are doing. **The world isn't looking to hear a sermon, they are looking to see one.**"

To Read More: <https://www.umcnic.org/news/shelter-at-first-umc-in-elgin-warms-bodies-and-hearts>

PRAYING FOR

Our World Leaders

Bishop Dan Schwerin
DS Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert
The Family of Jo Olsen
Ottawa PADS Shelter
Gretchen (Hughs) Laska
Jarrett Papineau
Bill Clayton
Beth Snyder
Cecil & Margaret McAdams
Baby Clarke
Connie Oberholz-Stone
Linda Krepps
Kristen
Sharon Nelson
Wren Brooke
Debi Clausen
Betty Gillette
Brent Schaefer
Joanne McCallister
Reverend Jim Bell
Jeanette Walters
Amy Cooper
Sheila
Family of Patricia Munari
Cathy Davis
Family of Esther Stone

Long-term Prayers

Korie
Selena Meyers
Judy Claus
Fred Woltering

PVL

Maxine Twait
Pat Wagner

Pavilion

Connie Stone-Oberholz

Prayers for our Servicemembers

Josh Papineau: US Army,
stationed in Hawaii

SFC Johnathan Oberholz,
Illinois National Guard - Army

PFC Timothy Lingle, US Army,
Ft. Hood, Texas

MMFN Nicholas Fletcher, US
Navy, USS Washington

MSGT Paul Rogalla, Illinois
National Guard, Camp Arifjan,
Kuwait



Easter flowers

There's still time to submit a virtual flower donation. Call the church office or submit an order form by **March 22**.

ACTS OF LOVE AROUND THE WORLD

Church in Madagascar feeds hungry

Members of the first United Methodist church in the island nation of Madagascar took their ministry on the road to help a community facing food challenges.

In Faratanjona, located about 75 miles from Antananarivo, Madagascar's capital, many of the village's 1,500 residents lack basic commodities and the community doesn't have infrastructure, including schools, clinics and roads. Also, climate change and other natural factors have greatly reduced crop production in the regions, hindering planting, producing and harvesting.

Led by lay preacher Jean Aime Ratovohery, 12 adults and several youth from Ambodifasika United Methodist Church in Antananarivo visited the village for four days in November to conduct an outreach mission.

"The choice of this rural area was in response to their request to assist them with foodstuffs," Ratovohery said. "The community faces drastic challenges." The support, financed by the local United Methodist church, was well-received.

"We are very happy and grateful to the Madagascar UMC," said Dada Naivo, who received foodstuffs. "No one has ever done something so important for us in this place. Our souls and bellies are full, and we thank God for touching your hearts and sending you to provide food support."

In the absence of schools or open spaces for communal meals in this rural area, families set up a makeshift dining area near the preaching site.

Following the food distribution, the deputy chief of Faratanjona spoke on behalf of the residents, expressing profound appreciation and a desire for continued support.

To Read More: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/church-in-madagascar-feeds-hungry>



ACTS OF LOVE AROUND THE COUNTRY

First Korean reimagines Christmas celebrations



In a heartwarming departure from tradition, the members of the First Korean United Methodist Church (FKUMC) in Wheeling, IL, celebrated Christmas morning with a unique twist that embodied the spirit of love and giving.

While FKUMC has a long-standing tradition of hosting their Christmas worship service in the sanctuary, this year, the congregation decided to break away from the norm. Instead, they gathered in the fellowship hall and the lobby of the church, creating an intimate and festive atmosphere for the special occasion.

Naming the day **“Love Your Neighbor Day,”** FKUMC took the celebration beyond the church walls, infusing the Christmas spirit with acts of kindness and generosity. The Advent candles, typically a fixture in the sanctuary, found a new home in the center of the lobby, surrounded by a beautifully decorated Christmas tree and a special cake in celebration of Jesus’ birth.

In collaboration with the Chicago Sanctuary Church Network, FKUMC actively participated in the ‘Big Hug Campaign (Season 2).’ This partnership turned the day of celebration into a day of action, as members of the church and the organization packed hundreds of care packages. These packages included essential items such as innerwear, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, Kleenex, body lotion, Tylenol, socks, feminine products, along with heartfelt Christmas cards and moon pies – each package of \$50 worth.

(Continued on next page)

CALENDAR

- 4 9 a.m. Worship
- 6 9 a.m. Fix-it Squad
10 a.m. Bible Study
6:30 p.m. Choir
- 7 7 a.m. Ecumenical Men’s Group
6 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal
- 11 9 a.m. Worship
10:15 Missions
10:30 Finance
- 13 9 a.m. Fix-it Squad
10 a.m. Bible Study
6:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
- 14 7 a.m. Ecumenical Men’s Group
7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service
- 18 9 a.m. Worship
10:30 a.m. Ministry Council
- 20 9 a.m. Fix-it Squad
10 a.m. Bible Study
NO Choir Rehearsal
- 21 7 a.m. Ecumenical Men’s Group
8 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal
- 25 9 a.m. Worship
10:30 Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee
- 27 9 a.m. Fix-it Squad
10 a.m. Bible Study
NO Choir Rehearsal
- 28 7 a.m. Ecumenical Men’s Group

DEVOTION

All-Church Memory Verse for February 2024

John 13:34

“I give you a new comandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other.” ~ John 13:34

The Challenge to Love

“I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other.

My first reaction to this was – John the Baptist did not have to work in customer or public service! If he had, he would have realized that there are people who are very difficult love.

While I believe everyone deserves God’s love, sometimes I’m not so sure they all deserve my love. But, in an attempt to follow God’s and John’s words and because I know it’s the right thing to do, I try to put myself in others shoes to figure out why people act as they do and why some of them may need (I didn’t say deserve) my love.

The guy who complained the streets weren’t plowed may not get “snow days” and won’t get paid if he doesn’t go to work. If he doesn’t get paid, his rent doesn’t get paid and his family doesn’t eat.

The woman who sits in front of her window looking for things to complain about may be lonely and have no one to talk to and feels she is being helpful.

The man who calls someone stupid may have been bullied all his life and doesn’t know how to express his feelings in any other way.

The woman who did not get the call back she was promised may be so overwhelmed she feels she has no control over anything else in her life but that call.

The person who talks incessantly may not be listened to at home by anyone who makes them feel what they say matters.

This list could go on and on.

I do believe most people are good. I also believe if I look hard enough I will find it.

Back to John ... do you think anyone ever complained to him that the water was too cold?

ACTS OF LOVE AROUND THE COUNTRY (cont.)

(Continued from previous page)



SPREADING CHRISTMAS CHEER TO REFUGEES

The generosity didn’t stop there. The members of the church and Sanctuary Church Network filled hundreds of plastic bags with donated items, most of them new, ranging from winter coats and blankets to socks and gloves. These bags were then personally delivered to refugees who had been invited to a special Christmas service and luncheon hosted by the All Nations Community Church, a partner church of the Sanctuary Church Network.



JOYFUL PARTICIPATION AND GRATITUDE

Approximately 70 people took part in the combined efforts of the ‘Love Your Neighbor Day.’ Those who participated expressed their happiness, describing it as a Christmas that was not only joyous but also deeply meaningful.

Lead pastor Sun Hyung Jo shared, “When Jesus said, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ he must have meant to fill our lives with real joy that flows from doing things that serve our neighbors. It must have been a greater birthday gift to Jesus than any Christmas service they held. It was a Christmas where we had the joy of worshiping not only inside the sanctuary but also outside the sanctuary.”

This unique celebration at FKUMC serves as a heartwarming reminder that the true essence of Christmas lies in the spirit of love, kindness, and selfless giving.

ACTS OF LOVE AROUND THE CLUSTER

Coldest Night of the Year Walk

Feb. 24, 2024

Please keep this date on your calendar! Join our Ottawa First United Methodist Church walking team, sponsor a member walking, help at our Hospitality center (church), or just cheer us on in prayer.

Enjoy a mile walk in the cold to raise awareness of the harsh reality of homelessness. This is a unique opportunity to make a positive impact in our community.

Start/Finish. 4:00 PM. Jordan Block

Send Off. 5:00 PM

Light Meal. 6:00 PM

Conclusion. 7:00 PM

IV PADS (LaSalle and Ottawa) provide safe shelter, meals, and access to life changing services in the Illinois Valley area.

Bonus: Pastor Seamus will walk in his wool kilt if our pledges meet \$1,000.00!!! Let's Do It!!!

Go online to cnoy.com to find our team. Any questions, please see Carol Pearse or call the church.

You can sponsor one of these walkers or donate to the whole team. Put your pledge in an envelope and place in the basket on the alter.

Walkers:

Bob Cavanaugh
Gloria Holcomb
Ilse Bute
Rick Morahn
Ann Russell
Melvin Baerga
Jamie Pratt
Pat Zachary
Amanda Ocepek
Kennedy Ocepek
Linda Asta
Lori Kline
Barb Frey
Bill Cooper
Linda Cooper
Marianne Perino

ACTS OF LOVE AROUND OTTAWA

Come enjoy a FREE lunch!

Several churches in the Ottawa, including First United Methodist Church, host monthly free lunches. The lunches are open to all. Volunteers are always welcome at the FUMC Fourth Sunday lunch. Join in the fun and fellowship of the act of love!!

FREE LUNCH
Sundays at Noon

Enjoy a hot homemade lunch
in a comfortable setting

1st Sunday - Christ Community Church
807 LaSalle Street (11:45 am - 12:45 pm)

2nd Sunday - Open Table UCC
910 Columbus Street
(Jackson St. entrance)

3rd Sunday - First Presbyterian Church
114 E. Jefferson Street

4th Sunday - First United Methodist Church
100 W. Jefferson Street

5th Sunday - Christ Episcopal Church
113 E. Lafayette Street
(served by Trinity Lutheran Church)

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Bear Necessities is a Personal Care Product Pantry that opened its doors on December 17, 2016. The Pantry is open the 3rd Saturday of each month from 10:00 until Noon at both the Serena & Norway United Methodist Churches. Families are eligible to receive products from the pantry by showing their current LINK card and photo ID. Each family receives the following items which are not able to be purchased with the LINK card: Laundry Detergent, Toilet Paper, Bath Soap, Toothpaste, Dish Soap and Shampoo. Contact Numbers Karen * 815-488-0253 · Melinda * 815-973-1961.

Open Table UCC Ottawa

We fed over 90 persons of all ages on Christmas Day with egg casseroles, homemade baked goods, fresh fruit, and beverages. And Walt the Therapy Dog was a hit!

Emmanuel, God was With Us, indeed!



First UMC Spaghetti Supper April 11, 2024