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100 W. Jefferson St.
Ottawa IL 61350

The Beacon

March 2026

From the Pastor's Pen:

Resurrection as a Season

As we enter the month of April we're moving from our journey through the season of Lent into the joy of Easter. But Easter isn't just one Sunday, it's a season in the life of the church, stretching into May, concluding with Pentecost. We call it Eastertide, and it's a particularly good time to focus on what the Resurrected Christ does before his ascension. As Christians, we're always "Easter people", but it's worthwhile to consider how we might experience a special season of Resurrection.

In our worship, we'll look at the ways in which Emmanuel, God-with-us, continues to draw us closer and closer, and to draw closer to us, even after the cross. We'll keep doing the things that lead us in this new life, and we'll keep looking for ways to practice hope. This issue of the Beacon contains some examples of both, including a new feature that invites us to share stories of our faith. Even as we conclude our Lenten journey, we're taking up a new practice with our Holy Saturday Prayer Vigil.

Of course, this season also holds the wonderful tradition of our annual Spaghetti Lunch and Supper. I invite you to consider that this event is much more than a fundraiser. For one day, somewhere between eight and nine hundred of the people of Ottawa are in essence sharing a meal. As a church, we come together with many hands to serve and to invite our neighbors to partner with us in all the ministry we do. We're not selling spaghetti, we're nourishing souls, one noodle at a time.

We're hosting a wedding on April 12th, the first of three scheduled for us to host this year and an opportunity for us to provide hospitality to United

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PASTOR'S PEN (cont.)

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Methodists from across the country (Delaware, Maryland) and around the state (Danville, Mahomet). At the end of the month we'll be hosting the Prairie South District Lay Academy on successive Saturdays, equipping Lay Servants, Speakers, and Ministers for service to strengthen congregations and the mission of the church. From the flowers inside the church and out to our preparations for May missions with Feed My Starving Children and an adult trip for long-term recovery in Greenfield, Iowa, we're continuing to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously as we deepen our discipleship. It's always a good time to invite someone you know to church, but this season is especially fitting.

Resurrection season is Jesus' "handoff" to the disciples. It's a chance for us to take a firmer hold of what it means that death is defeated. The empty tomb means that the worst thing doesn't have to be the last thing. As life springs up all around us, how can we participate in resurrection?

Some of the ways will be small and practical – a couple of new sections of floor in the east stairwell, continuing to clean rooms, touch up paint, and so on. Others will be the kind of change that stretches us as we answer the call of God to give our testimony, to help a neighbor, to forgive an enemy. Collectively, we'll continue to have opportunities to support our community, and to lean into our connectedness as United Methodists. In all things, regardless of the season, we remember our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

I pray that as we come to the cross, and discover that it is not the end, you find new life in this season and draw closer to God.

Blessings

Pastor Seamus

PRAYING FOR

Our World Leaders
Bishop Dan Schwerin
DS Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert
Ottawa PADS Shelter
Pet Project Inc. Marseilles
Ottawa High School
Jarrett Papineau
Bill Clayton
Marleen Tellefson
Jake Book
Healing for A.
Beverly Hucker
Linda Krepps
Joanne McCallister
Connie Oberholz-Stone
Roberta Kandell
Carla Newell
Jeanette Walters
Earle Lecki
Viki Olsen
Don Tellefson
Jerry Mettille
Michele McConville
Cathy
Kyle
Patricia Terry
Jackie Gama
Carlos Gama
Jim Brooke
Tina Kannel
Jean Hess
Debbie Dixon
Jonah Durdan
Bob Smith
Barb Frey
Janeva Harwell
Vincent Connell
Evelyn Mutzabaugh
Chris Lecki
Debbie Valdez
Marissa
Charlie Reed
Julie Stillwell

In Christian Sympathy
Gary Patton Family
Dan Munson Family
Logan Sommer Family
Scott Colle Family
Nancy Endres Family

Long-term Prayers
Selena Meyers
Fred Woltering
Debi Clausen
Erin Zander

Pavilion
Sharon Nelson

Prayers for our Servicemembers
CW2 Josh Papineau: US Army, Ft. Eustis, Virginia

MSGT Johnathan Oberholz, Illinois Natl. Guard - Army

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

MMFN Nicholas Fletcher, US Navy, USS Washington

SSG Kyle Rendell, US Army, Ft. Jackson, SC

Kavne Robinson, US Air Force, Quatar

SPRINGFIELD ADVOCACY DAY

Led by the Northern Illinois Conference Commission on Religion and Race Legislative Action Committee

WED., APRIL 15
ABOUT 5:30 A.M. TO 8 P.M.

COST :

- **$25** - Round-trip transportation, morning snack and lunch.
- **$15** - Morning snack and lunch (you provide transportation)

ONLINE REGISTRATION

**Note: Registration will close on March 31 to ensure time to solidify trip plans.*

THE NIC CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON RELIGION AND RACE LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE IS LEADING A TRIP TO SPRINGFIELD, IL. WHILE IN SPRINGFIELD, THEY WILL MEET WITH STATE LEGISLATORS ABOUT ISSUES RELATED TO RACIAL JUSTICE THAT CONCERN US, AS UNITED METHODISTS, BASED ON THE UMC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES, IN THE AREAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, IMMIGRATION, AND EDUCATION.

Round-trip transportation leaves from two locations:

- **6 a.m. - Bolingbrook: Friendship UMC**, 305 E Boughton Rd.
- **5:45 a.m. - Chicago: St Mark UMC**, 8441 S Saint Lawrence Ave.

You are also welcome to carpool with others, or possibly stay overnight the night before (at your own cost). Please note your preference on the registration form.

In the registration form, you will need to list your **Illinois State** Representative and Senator. If you do not know this information, you can find it here.

ONLINE ORIENTATION

- **Sat. March 28,** 9:30-11 a.m. on Zoom
  The link will be sent after participants have registered.

MISSIONS

The Missions Committee continues to be very busy. We made the following donations thanks to your generosity:

- $200 to Bare Necessities at the Norway Methodist Church
- $250 to UMCOR

Please continue to help us stock our local mini pantries by bringing in treats for the homeless. There is blue box outside the kitchen on the office side for your donations.

We are looking for volunteers:

Camp Tuck: Consider helping Camp Tuckabatchee prepare the grounds for their upcoming season on April 11-12, and/or helping with repairs to cabins and buildings April 18-19th.

Sunday meal: Grab your church group, church committee or just friends to volunteer to prepare and serve a Fourth Sunday Community meal.

Feeding kids: May 26th will be our next Feed My Starving Children work day. We'll leave the church around 9:30 for Aurora. If you have any questions about any of our missions please ask any of us. There are opportunities for everyone to help.

As always, thank you all for your support in so many ways for our church family's giving.
Carol Pearse, chair

DEVOTION

All-Church Memory Verse for April 2026
Psalm 27:14
"Hope in the Lord! Be strong! Let your heart take courage! Hope in the Lord." – Psalm 27:14

My Mazy

A devotion by Jodi Spurling

While reading this scripture my mind was drawn to "Be strong! Let your heart take courage." These words jumped out at me because they're what I'm needing more of right now. Lately I've watched my precious golden retriever, Mazy, begin struggling more with her back legs. She's 13, soon to be 14 on May 30th, and has been my child since she was 8 weeks old. I'm not blinded by the fact that 13 is old for a golden. She has strong family genes, since her grandpa lived to the age of 15. But it's her age and arthritis in her back legs that are causing her to move much slower these days.

If you know me, you know that I have an immense love for animals, especially dogs and horses. Since having dogs my entire existence, I'm well aware that their lives are much too short. I sacrifice my heartbreak at the end for all of the amazing love and joy dogs have brought me while they're here. Like all of my dogs, Mazy has brought me unconditional love, joy, laughter, and countless hugs. And when she's no longer here, the silence will be deafening. But I will be strong for Mazy's sake. The second her legs cause her pain, I know that God will help me with the courage I need to say goodbye.

Over the years Mazy has put up with having thousands of photos taken, including this cover shot for my employer's quarterly magazine.

PRENATAL CARE TRANSFORMS GREIF INTO JOY

By Chadrack Tambwe Londe

For five long years for Marie Otshumba and seven years for Aimérance Yema, the dream of motherhood turned into a repeated cycle of grief and despair.

Like many women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, they went through the devastating ordeal of infertility and repeated miscarriages, accompanied by shaken faith and social status.

Beyond the physical pain, these childless years exposed the women to intense social pressure and emotional trauma, undermining their status within their own homes.

Today, thanks to rigorous monitoring at the Lokole United Methodist Health Center as part of The United Methodist Church's Maternal, Newborn and Child Health program, their tears have turned to joy."Each loss was an immense pain that shook my confidence," Otshumba confides. "I was beginning to lose hope."

The program, supported by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, combines clinical care, health education and family support to ensure a continuum of care from pregnancy through the early years of a child's life. By supporting initiatives such as the treatment of acute malnutrition and the monitoring of pregnant women through community messaging systems, the program demonstrates the church's commitment to combining the proclamation of the Gospel with the practical promotion of the dignity and health of every mother and child.

For The United Methodist Church, this work is a form of ministry.

"The program continues to work to ensure that every pregnancy is a promise of life and not a source of anxiety," Manafundu said. "This is how we affirm our commitment to healing bodies and restoring hearts broken by suffering."

To read more: https://www.umnews.org/en/news/des-soins-prenatals-transforment-le-deuil-en-joie-pour-des-meres-congolaises.

Marie Otshumba, one of the beneficiaries of The United Methodist Church's Maternal, Newborn and Child Health program, holds son Amisi alongside nurses at Lokole United Methodist Hospital Center in Kindu, Congo. Photo by Chadrack Tambwe Londe, UM News.

TORNADOES TRIGGER RESPONSE

The Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church is actively helping communities affected by a series of tornadoes and straight-line winds that struck Southwest Michigan on Friday, March 6, 2026. These storms caused significant structural damage, injured people, and tragically claimed lives. Four people lost their lives, marking March 6 as the state's deadliest day for tornadoes since May 13, 1980.

The United Methodist churches in these areas were not damaged, but the communities are shaken, and people of faith are reaching out to support their neighbors.

Soon after the news broke, members of the Conference Disaster Response Team, including our long-term disaster recovery ministry, After the Storm, mobilized as details unfolded. While trained first responders worked diligently to save lives and protect property, the Conference Disaster Response Team began assessing the situation and engaging in discussions with state and local agencies to determine next steps and how United Methodists can respond.

What can United Methodists do right now in response to these storms? You can take three actions: pray, donate funds to After the Storm, and be better prepared for the next disaster.

Pray, as people of faith, for those who have lost loved ones, for those whose property was lost or damaged, and for everyone helping with initial relief efforts and long-term recovery. When disasters like this strike a community, it is common for those providing aid to quickly experience fatigue and burnout as the situation becomes overwhelming and complicated.

Financial contributions to After the Storm will support long-term recovery efforts in the affected communities of Southwest Michigan.

A community liaison from Aetna in Kalamazoo contacted Rev. Heather Nowak to see if the church could use and distribute hygiene products, snacks, soda, juice, and water. Nowak agreed, and the liaison delivered the items (shown above). Photo courtesy Heather Nowak

APRIL WORSHIP

HOLY WEEK

April 2 – MAUNDY THURSDAY Cluster Service, First UMC, 6:30 p.m.

April 3 – GOOD FRIDAY Service of Shadows, First UMC, 7 p.m.

April 5 EASTER SUNDAY; Mark 16:1-8; Series:God on the Move - "God moves… from the Tomb"

April 12 – John 20:19-31; Series: Closer and Closer - "Reach out and Touch"

April 19 – Luke 24:13-35; Series: Closer and Closer - "Walking with Jesus"

April 26 – John 10:1-10; Series: Closer and Closer - "Someone to Watch over You"

April

1	Victor Bennett
10	Donna Bennett
14	John Meyers
26	Esther Sommer
27	Zander Houk

May

3	Dennis Day
7	Carol Lowry
11	Muriel Desranleau
13	Jessica Lowry
14	Joanne McCallister
19	Matt Patton
26	Alyson Williams
26	Sue Koeppe
26	Kathy Olson
30	Johnathan Oberholz
30	Debbie Dixon
30	Lorraine McCallister

We give thanks to God for the gift of you!

The First UMC praise band gets ready for their March song. Pianist Matt Dulian not shown.

AROUND THE CLUSTER & COMMUNITY

Test your Bible IQ

1. From what tree were Adam and Eve not allowed to eat?
a. tree of life
b. giving tree
c. tree of knowledge of good and evil
d. tree of wisdom and happiness

2. What watered the Garden of Eden?
a. rain
b. a river
c. a pond
d. an angel

3. Before God made Eve, what did He do to Adam?
a. He clothed him with fig leaves.
b. He gave him a credit card.
c. He woke him up.
d. He put him to sleep.

4. Who named the animals?
a. God
b. Adam
c. Eve
d. They came with names

5. Eve was made from what part of Adam's body?
a. rib
b. nose
c. thigh
d. heart

Answers:
1. C (Genesis 2:17)
2. B (Genesis 2:10)
3. D (Genesis 2:21)
4. B (Genesis 2:20)
5. A (Genesis 2:21)

April 23, 2026
Spaghetti Supper

June 22, 2026
Culver's Night

July 20-24, 2026
Vacation Bible School

BRUNCH & BASKETS

First UMC congregants gathered on the 5th Sunday of March for a brunch and fellowship after worship. After the meal, everyone teamed up to make and fill Easter baskets for nursing home residents. Thanks to Marianne Perino for organizing this mission project.

APRIL CALENDAR

1	7 a.m. Ecumenical Men's Group 6:30 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal
2	6:30 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service, First UMC
3	7 p.m. Good Friday Service, First UMC
5	Easter Sunday: He is Risen! 9 a.m. Worship
7	9 a.m. Fix-it Squad 10 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice
8	7 a.m. Ecumenical Men's Group
12	9 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Finance
13	11:30 a.m. Emmaus Reunion Group
14	9 a.m. Fix-it Squad 10 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice
15	7 a.m. Ecumenical Men's Group 6:30 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal
19	9 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Ministry Council
21	9 a.m. Fix-it Squad 10 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice
22	7 a.m. Ecumenical Men's Group 6:30 p.m. Spaghetti Set Up & Group Photo
23	2026 Spaghetti Day!
26	9 a.m. Worship 10:30 Trustees
28	9 a.m. Fix-it Squad 10 a.m. Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Choir Practice
29	7 a.m. Ecumenical Men's Group

PRAIRIE SOUTH SPRING 2026 LAY ACADEMY

Sat., April 25th
8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Sat., May 2nd
8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Cost $40

Cost includes light lunch

Youth may attend at no cost as long as they are accompanied by an adult taking a class

Ottawa: First UMC 100 West Jefferson, Ottawa

Class Options: (one course per academy)

1. For the Common Good (Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts) (required class)
This course helps participants identify their spiritual gifts, abilities and calling. **Book:** *For the Common Good: Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts* by Christine Harman
Instructor: Jeany Gewin

2. Life Together in the United Methodist Connection (UM Polity) (required class)
This course gives participants an overview of the structure and oganization of The United Methodist Church.
Book: *Polity, Practice and Mission of the United Methodist Church* by Thomas Edward Frank.
Instructor: Karen Newby

3. Leading Public Prayer (required class)
This course on praying in public will help the participant grow in confidence and skill in public prayer and enrich their personal prayer life.
Book: *Shaping the Prayers of the People: The Art of Intercession* by Samuel Wells and Abigail Kocher.
Instructor: Marcia Peddicord

4. Congregational Care Ministry
This new advanced course equips participants with tools for deep listening and grows their capacity to care in difficult situations of loss – all within healthy boundaries and thoughtful awareness.
Book: *The Caring congregation Ministry: Implementation Guide* by Karen Lampe and Melissa Gepford
Instructor: Buzz Wheeler

All books may be purchased at your favorite bookseller.
All class times must be attended to receive course credit.

Questions? Contact Marcia Peddicord, marcia.peddicord@gmail.com.

Register Online: umcnic.org/calendar/prairie-south-lay-academy-spring-2026

BIBLE IN A YEAR: APRIL 2026

Bible-in-a-Year Daily Readings: April 2026

Apr 1	Judges 6-7	Apr 16	Psalms 56, 120, 140-142
Apr 2	Judges 8-9	Apr 17	1 Samuel 25-27
Apr 3	Judges 10-12	Apr 18	Psalms 17, 35, 54, 63
Apr 4	Judges 13-15	Apr 19	1 Samuel 28-31, Psalm 18
Apr 5	Judges 16-18	Apr 20	Psalms 121, 123-125, 128-130
Apr 6	Judges 19-21	Apr 21	2 Samuel 1-4
Apr 7	Ruth	Apr 22	Psalms 6, 8-10, 14, 16, 19, 21
Apr 8	1 Samuel 1-3	Apr 23	1 Chronicles 1-2
Apr 9	1 Samuel 4-8	Apr 24	Psalms 43-45, 49, 84-85, 87
Apr 10	1 Samuel 9-12	Apr 25	1 Chronicles 3-5
Apr 11	1 Samuel 13-14	Apr 26	Psalms 73, 77-78
Apr 12	1 Samuel 15-17	Apr 27	1 Chronicles 6
Apr 13	1 Samuel 18-20; Psalms 11, 59	Apr 28	Psalms 81, 88, 92-93
Apr 14	1 Samuel 21-24	Apr 29	1 Chronicles 7-10
Apr 15	Psalms 7, 27, 31, 34, 52	Apr 30	Psalms 102-104

The online Conference support group meets the second Wednesday of the month from 7:30-8:30 pm on Zoom. Visit https://www.umcnic.org/news/read-the-bible-in-a-year-with-us for the registration link.

SPAGHETTI LUNCH & SUPPER

Oh, the smell of sauce cooking! It has begun!

Here is some important information:

Cake Drop Off Day
Wednesday, April 22 from 9am – 6pm

Final set up & group picture
Wednesday, April 22 @ 6:30 pm

SPAGHETTI DAY!
Thursday, April 23
10:30am – 1pm Curbside Pick Up & Business Delivery
4pm – 6:30pm Curbside ONLY

Ticket sales are going on now. Contact the church office during business hours to purchase some or pick some up to sell. Cake pans can be picked up in the church office starting Monday, April 6. Sign up sheets are in fellowship hall. We still need some cakes and some volunteers to check in cakes on Wednesday, April 22 from 9am-6pm.

When making donations, please use the special Spaghetti Supper donation envelopes that can be found in the sanctuary. You may also mail your donation to the church and mark it Spaghetti Supper 2026. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or text me at 815/343-7729.

Traci Leemhuis – Chairperson

PRACTICING HOPE

By Rev. Victoria Rebeck

United Methodists and Muslims broke bread and barriers at the Muslim-Methodist Iftar (breaking the Ramadan fast), March 3 at the Islamic Center of Wheaton. The Northern Illinois Conference and the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago offer these dinners annually to build relationships and affirm common values.

"Part of Ramadan is fasting from indifference," said Dr. Muhammad Abdulghany Hamadeh, chairman of CIOGC, in his welcome of participants. Referring to the dinner's theme, "Confronting Displacement and Dehumanization of Our Neighbors," he said that "Coexistence is possible when dignity is protected. "When we dehumanize each other, we all are diminished." "The playbook that creates migration is authoritarianism," observed Bishop Dan Schwerin of the Northern Illinois – Wisconsin Conference. "Instead of calling people out, let's call them forward. That is hopeful," he said. He used the metaphor of mushrooms. Mushrooms that appear above the ground after a rain are the visible part of a vast underground fungus. "They are connected in a great network," he explained. "Networks move things forward for mutual benefit."

Rev. Lindsay Joyce, who organizes the NIC Rapid Response Team to monitor Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in the region, named the "collective vocation" of standing in solidarity with our neighbors. The rapid-response work entails watching and witnessing ICE activity, participating in protests, and offering pastoral care to those in the Broadview, Ill., ICE facility. Because clergy were denied access to detainees, they shouted to people being held in the building to show they had not been forgotten. "Part of our faith is that if you come for one of us, you come for us all," she said. "We need each other. We can borrow courage from each other."

The continual attacks on Palestinians in Gaza were described by William As four, who originates from that region. Having seen his own family endure violence, displacement, Imam Sheikh Fahmi Abdelkawy of the Islamic Center of Wheaton concluded the evening by stating that "Dehumanization does not start with policy, but when relationships break down." "Diversity is divine intent," he said. "We are not meant to fear each other but to know each other."

Friendships and common ground were established over a generous meal.

HIS STORY. HER STORY. OUR STORY.

By Barb Frey

I was raised on a farm in Blackstone Illinois, 10 miles east of Streator Illinois. My dad was a farmer who I adored and my mother was a bookkeeper for grain elevators and rural mail carrier.

I was born into the United Methodist Church! My great-grandparents met while the building the church in Blackstone in 1876. He was a stained glass salesman from Chicago and she was the daughter of a farmer. She was Almeda Grey Griggs Dodd. My grandmother, Francis Marie was her only child with her first husband, Stephen Griggs.

My life revolved around church and school. That's the way it was in the 60s in rural areas. We went to church on Sundays. Everyone went to the service and then on to their respective Sunday School classes. The ladies had a salad luncheon. Our church fundraiser was a homemade ice cream social. Hand cranked back in the good old days with milk straight from the farm! There was MYF, a group for the Youth.

I have never been without God in my life even though there's been times I wasn't worshiping him. I would have attended a wedding or a baptism and feel drawn back to my safe place, but for many years, nearly 15, I did not attend church. You see, one day my dad had open heart surgery for the second time and never came home! I don't ever remember blaming God, but I often wondered why he would let my dad go away from me. I needed him so much.

I am positive that God has kept me alive in spite of myself. I have two amazing children and two wonderful grandchildren.

I feel closest to God in nature! I feel him in the wind and hear him whisper to me in the breeze. I see his wonderful works in the trees. How each one of them are special and elegant even with no leaves. I love the water he's created. I feel him in the lakes, rivers and oceans. His promises come to me in the spring with the new flowers. Our magnificent God is everywhere to wrap his loving arms around us. Praise the Lord.

His Story. Her Story. Our Story

A new addition to the Beacon

Share the story about your life in the Methodist Church.

Email or text to:
Mperino7582@yahoo.com
815-587-5089

FINANCE UPDATE FEBRUARY 2026

General Fund

	Monthly	YTD
Income	$13,659	$37,429
Expenses	$17,321	$33,220
Difference [Surplus / (Deficit)]	($3,662)	$4,209
Estimated General Fund Balance		$17,692
Projected Year-end [Surplus / (Deficit)]		($11,063)

Missions Fund

	Monthly Income	Monthly Expenses	YTD Income	YTD Expense	Fund Balance
WHOO	$100	$250	$985	$1,971	$2,431
Missions	$3,458	$3,464	$4,853	$3,752	$2,256
Total	$3,558	$3,714	$5,838	$5,723	$4,687

Apportionments ➔ On track to pay 100%

Highlights:

- By God's abundant grace and steadfast provision, our church finances for February are progressing steadily and remain closely aligned with our budgeted expectations. We praise the Lord for His faithful guidance and countless blessings as we steward these resources together.
- Although we expect a projected year-end deficit of about $11,000, we trust that God will continue to provide as we strive to carry out His mission of making disciples and transforming the world. Let us persist in praying for God's provision and wisdom. If you haven't returned your pledge card, there is still time, place it in the offering plate or drop it by the church office.
- Our Missional Funds through February reflect the generous and compassionate heart of our church family. We celebrate that $5,723 has been shared to empower vital work in our local community through the WHOO fund and broader mission efforts. Your heartfelt support of the PADS program—especially through the inspiring Coldest Night of the Year Walk—vividly demonstrates Christ's call to love and serve those in need.